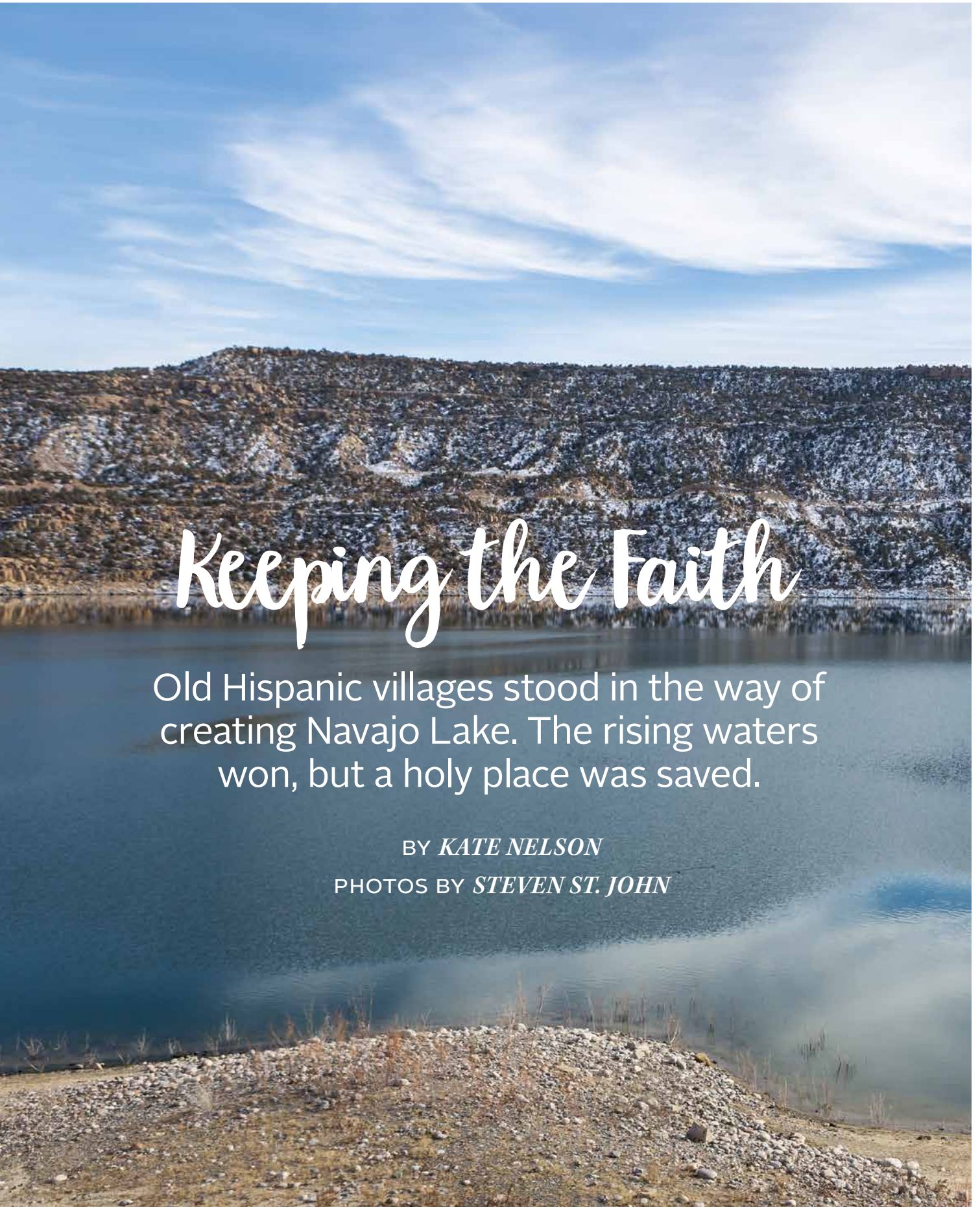




A Spanish choir opens Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Facing page: The snow-dotted shoreline of nearby Navajo Lake.



# Keeping the Faith

Old Hispanic villages stood in the way of creating Navajo Lake. The rising waters won, but a holy place was saved.

BY KATE NELSON

PHOTOS BY STEVEN ST. JOHN





Evelyn Archuleta decorates the church for its annual Mass. *Facing page:* A helper lights bonfires for the closing procession.

**T**HE MORNING SUN has yet to warm the sandstone bluffs, hoodoos, and rockslides of the San Juan River canyon and the twisting road that leads to a lonely little chapel. The building is hard to miss, set so high on a chewed-up hill. I aimed to arrive first on this important day, but woodsmoke already chugs from the church's chimney, and a pick-up truck sits out front. The December chill hastens my stride toward the white-plastered adobe walls. Inside, a sole parishioner faces the altar, silently praying. I feel an awkwardness envelop me, the visiting stranger, a non-Catholic in a locals' shrine. The woman praying, I know, is Susan Archuleta, mayordomo of this church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, a mile west of Navajo Dam in New Mexico's northwestern corner. I also know she has work to do.

"Can I help?" I ask when her prayer is done, the sound bouncing off well-worn pews and a pressed-tin ceiling. She nods at the door. Soon enough, I've wrestled Saint Anthony from her truck and wriggled him onto a shelf already crowded with the prayer mementoes of other drop-in strangers over the past months.

"He's a stout little fellow," a satisfied Archuleta says,

patting the bulto's belly. For 364 days of the year, Anthony and the church's other statues live in her bedroom, down the road in Turley. Month by month, Archuleta and her family ensure that the church's belongings are safe, its walls stand sure, and its door remains always unlocked. But their task requires more than mere maintenance. Together, they are the earthly defenders of the ghosts of another time, the villages that lined the canyon beginning in the 1870s—Los Martinez, Rosa, Los Pinos, Los Arboles. They protect the intangible memories of bountiful orchards, mule pens, fiestas, funerals, dances and romances, acequias and droughts, the sinners and the devout.

They have committed themselves to this place—and the places that once were—so that none may be forgotten beneath the cold, deep waters of Navajo Lake. Its construction, beginning in the late 1950s, marked the final days of village life here. Residents, poorly compensated by the federal government, scattered to nearby Aztec, Bloomfield, Farmington, and farther—Colorado, Nevada, Oregon. Although construction of the earthen dam clawed off most of the church's broad hill, for some reason the contractors never demanded the portion it perches upon. To keep it holy, a consecrated place of worship, the church, just once a year, welcomes back the families—their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—along with strangers like me, to celebrate a Guadalupe Mass. Today is that day.

I had traced a different route to the church the day before, approximating the trail that traveling priests once followed on horseback: straight west from Dulce, across the forested eyebrow of New Mexico, along mountain roads whose beauty and peril alone are enough to draw a person closer to God. These days, that route includes curling up the long sweep of hill that tops out on Navajo Dam, the bulwark of a 37-mile-long fisherman's paradise. You can see the church from there—back down another hill, through the valley, and up a short, steep road—and perhaps imagine the lives and even the deaths that were uprooted. Cemeteries from the villages in the lake's path were dug up, and the bodies reinterred in Guadalupe's graveyard. Next to nothing else was left behind. Some reaped only a sixth of what their land was worth, and nothing for their water rights. Thrifty folks pulled every fence post and roofing nail they could. Los Martinez sat to the west, on the dry side, but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers needed to scrape land from it, too. Residents moved their chicken coops and window frames along with everyone else.

An iron-pipe fence now surrounds the church, and





Father Jim Walker talks to visitors about the church's history. *Facing page:* A 1950s family photo of old Los Martinez shows Manuel Martinez, father of the sisters who care for the church, with his sons Chris and Alfonso.



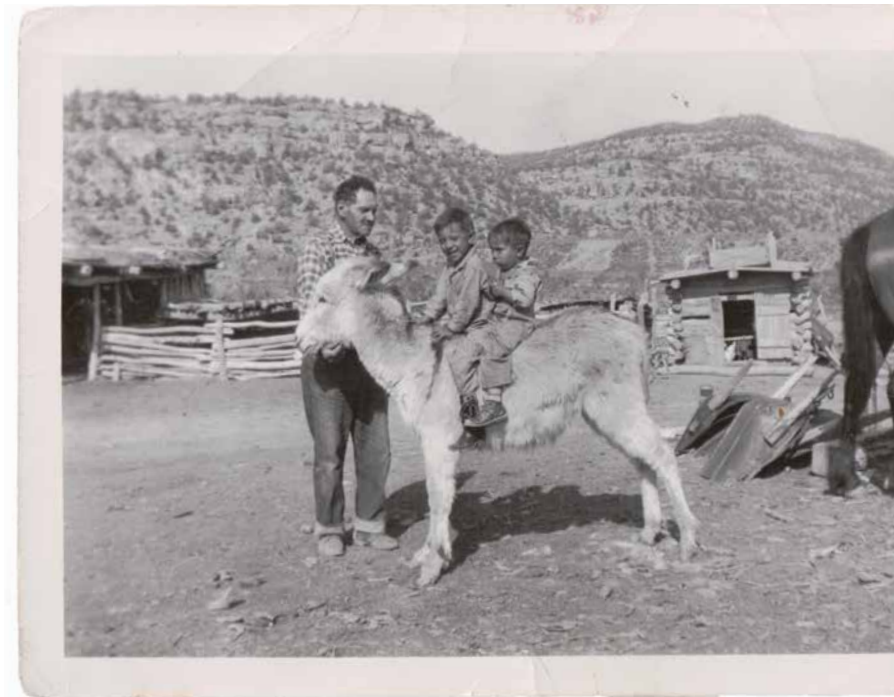
bunched-up beds of old irises still flaunt green leaves in December. An apricot tree on the west wall bears nostalgia-inducing fruits each spring. Behind, the graves bear the lyrical names of a New Mexico sadly past: Francisquita, Atanacio, Ramoncita, Rafelita, Erminia.

On this day before the Mass, I find Delia Velasquez at the church, along with her niece, Evelyn Archuleta, and Evelyn's son, David, a jack-of-all-trades who provides the horsepower for the upkeep. He can build, weld, and butcher. "I even do my own sewing," he says, smiling. He's been trimming weeds while his mother and aunt clean inside the church, built in 1920 to replace a *morada* of Los Hermanos, the lay fraternity of Penitente brothers who once oversaw Catholic rites in place of distant priests. Velasquez was born in Los Martinez and later married a boy from Los Pinos, where they lived until 1956, when preparatory work for the lake made it hard to even get to their home.

"They paid us \$2,000 for 26 acres," she says. "We had a real good orchard when I was a girl—80 peach trees just below the dam. Up above, where we lived, there were plums, peaches, apples, pears. Four acres of gardens and four acres of corn to feed the animals. We'd fatten a pig every fall, butcher it around this time. I guess God took care of us."

The family members inherited the mayordomo duties, to them as sacred a calling as a priest's vows. In the 1960s and '70s, after the lake's construction, the church held a fisherman's Mass each Sunday during the summer. Fly-fishing rods would lean against the chapel's back wall as prayers were spoken—for the souls of men and for a bounty of trout. As years passed and the ranks of priests thinned, the services stopped. For a while, the family locked the church, but vandals broke in. They stole several pictures from the Stations of the Cross, busted a couple of the statues. (Susan Archuleta fixed Saint Anthony by stuffing his cracks with paper and Elmer's glue.)

Finally, the family removed the statues and let anyone drop in. The vandalism stopped. Lookie-loos got their peek. Prayers were offered, fetishes left behind. A guest book reveals visitors from Ohio, Kansas, Pennsylvania, and New Zealand. "We have everything from Mormons to atheists come through," David Archuleta says. Thirty-some years ago, someone stole the cast-iron steeple bell, and he's still unhappy with the *thunk* of the aluminum replacement. Old-timers say the peals from the original one could be heard from miles away.



Despite the family's ministrations, the adobe walls must reckon with the ravages of time. Some of the plaster's cracks bear signs of repair; others are just beginning to raise concerns. Susan Archuleta, Delia Velasquez, and their other sister, Teresa Martinez, lament that they're too old for climbing ladders and give thanks that David still shows up with his construction brain and brawn. Duty compels them to continue, as if the graves bear a mandate, calling the families home.

David Archuleta stacks firewood in mounds around the church, ready to be lit when a three-times-around-the-church procession of the Our Lady statue concludes tomorrow's Mass. Before the flood, Velasquez says, Mass was preceded by a December 11 *visperas* at the church, followed by coffee and posole at the mayordomo's home. In recent years, Father Jim Walker has held the Mass on the Saturday nearest Guadalupe's December 12 feast day, so that more families can travel for the reunion. The evening vespers, he figured, were a hardship on the little congregation's aging members. Instead of late-night coffee and posole, the three sisters and their children prepare all the food necessary to feed anyone who cares to come to an after-Mass gathering at their congregation's mother church, Saint Rose of Lima, in Blanco. Some years, they feed 50 people; others, more than 100. Tonight they'll finish a month's worth of pressure-cooking beans, roasting turkeys, simmering pots of green and red chile, assembling enchiladas, and baking bizcochitos.

"It brings back memories of old times," Evelyn Archuleta says. "You see people you haven't seen in a long time. We took it on as a dinner and then, when my grandma passed away, she asked if we would take care of the church. Her last request was to not ever let them knock it down."





People begin arriving for Mass around 9 a.m., when the church still huddles in a morning shadow. The oldest parishioners grab seats closest to the potbellied stove. History buffs come. Tourists. Friends of parishioners. Some bring folding chairs to expand the seating. Everyone else crowds together in the back. Spanish songs and hymns pour from a group up front. “Las Mañanitas,” “Buenos Días Paloma Blanco,” “O Madre Querida.” Father Jim stands next to me while waiting for the deacon to drive up with his vestments. I tell him that this is often the part of the story where we lament that a tradition may fade as adherents age and their children move on. He looks surprised.

“I’ve never thought about it,” he says. “I would say the end’s certainly not imminent. That’s how continuous this tradition is.” Looking out, I count about 70 heads, but I know I’m missing many of the children seated between parents—the future heirs of these duties.

The vestments appear, the tiny space fills with incense, and Father Jim begins his homily.

“We celebrate the Feast of Guadalupe,” he says, “but more than that we celebrate so many things that are personal to us as a faith community. So many people who lived up and down this valley—people who had to work a lot and suffer a lot.” He retells the story of Juan Diego, a poor, indigenous man in Guadalupe, Mexico, who beheld a vision of Our Lady and thereupon changed the face of Catholicism in the Americas. Her message, the father says, was simple and timeless: *Accept all people*. “You and I,” he says, “share that same dignity.”

The old pews creak and the wooden floors pop as people come forward for Communion. I remain seated, as do other visitors, but something has changed in the hour we have all been together. Fused by history and our individual commitments to be here, together, in this place, we who once were strangers have been welcomed in. We follow the procession outside, where a parishioner holds a cross, deacon Pat Valdez swings the incense, and four family members, young and old, hold the litter that carries Our Lady from bonfire to bonfire. They arc around the church, the choir singing, the bell thunking, the sun beaming, finally, on everyone—those who walk and those who watch.

It takes a while to complete three passages. The older believers move slowly. At one point, Evelyn Archuleta starts to stumble, and her corner of the litter wobbles. Valdez turns back and wafts incense over Our Lady. The pilgrims move on, a parade of time travelers in sneakers, cowboy boots, work boots, and Sunday’s best.

“This Mass,” Delia Velasquez says later, “means to us that we still belong over here.”

Afterwards, everyone lingers out front, chatting for whatever amount of time is considered neighborly. Soon people split off, bundling into cars that will take them to a buffet laden with platters of turkey and pork, vats of corn and beans, a tableful of cakes and pies, and a pot of red chile so dense with flavor that I will beg a recipe off its maker. All that will come. For now, I savor this moment, extending it just a bit longer. When I step inside the church, that same sole parishioner again says her prayers at an altar that has heard the prayers of so many. Taking a seat in the last pew, I close my eyes. ■

Interim editor in chief **Kate Nelson** believes in handmade holiday cards, singing along to Christmas music, and the diamond-speckled wonder of December’s night sky.

## THE GATHERING

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, near Navajo Dam, celebrates its annual Mass on December 9 at 10 a.m. Bring an extra chair if you can. All are welcome to the meal afterwards at the Saint Rose of Lima parish hall. To donate to the church’s upkeep, send a check to Saint Rose of Lima, 307 N. Church St., Bloomfield, NM 87413, and write “Care of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church” in the memo field.



Parishioners carry the Our Lady statue around the church. Facing page: Deacon Pat Valdez prepares for Mass.





# The Ride Stuff

Saddle making is a family affair for Willi Baughman, her grandmother, Rosemary Wilkie, and her sons, Patton and Jefferson.

**A national arts program propels a Carlsbad woman into becoming a master saddle maker. The future of her craft? It's all in the family.**

BY *KATE NELSON* PHOTOS BY *KATE RUSSELL*



**IN THE BEGINNING**, there was a pony. Rosemary and James Wilkie got it for their five-year-old son. But the Carlsbad couple freely admits they had no business owning any property of the livestock variety. “We were so poor,” Rosemary remembers, “that we couldn’t even pay attention.”

How they would pay for oats, hay, horse-shoes, vet bills, and tack was a notion that galloped too far ahead of their love for the horse. So they nosed around. James asked his grandfather what he had left over from his cowboy days. The old man dug up some tattered bridles. “I got out my sewing machine,” Rosemary says, “and we bought a bundle of junk leather, and I started making headstalls so we could ride.”

That boy is grown now, with a grown-up younger brother, and both of the Wilkie sons have children, and some of those children have babies. In all those years, enough horses have come into the Wilkies’ life that Rosemary can only cheat a side-ways glance about it before breaking into a guilty grin. Along the way, her maiden effort at reforming one worn-out bridle turned into a hobby, then a career, and now a nationally recognized legacy as a master saddle maker who helps preserve an endangered art, in large part by keeping it in the family.

“She’s so modest. She’ll say, ‘I’m not an artist. I’m not a master artist.’ But she is—and she’s an amazing teacher,” says Lilli Tichinin, folk art coordinator for New Mexico Arts, a part of the state’s Department of Cultural Affairs. “Her work itself is spectacular.”

She’s no show pony, and her saddles aren’t the gussied-up and glittering kinds you see in parades (although then-Governor Gary Johnson did once ride one of Wilkie’s in a parade). Rather, exacting precision puts her in high demand by those dwindling numbers of working cowboys who still ride the New Mexico range. For all the romance of purple sage, campfires, and yippee-ki-yay, those folks require a saddle that can’t be even an eighth of an inch off in any of its measurements.

“That’s the difference between people making things by hand and people who have sort of assembly-lined it,” says Wilkie,

*Below: Master saddle maker Rosemary Wilkie in her Carlsbad shop. Bottom: Willi Baughman leans on a saddle she made for her husband.*



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Attaching the rigging works best with four hands—two to stretch and hold the leather in place, two to tack it down.



who also earns raves from local sheriff's deputies for her tooled-leather holsters.

She didn't achieve that renown on her own and is quick to lay praise where it's due: on her own master-artist teacher, Billy Cogsdil, on advice she gleaned from legendary saddler Slim Green, and on a few twists of fate that she prefers to call the hand of God. One of those twists involved a horse in her little-girl Texas days. A herd dog spooked the horse, the horse bucked wee Rosemary, badly, and instead of turning her into a horse-fearing woman, it nestled something mysteriously opposite of that deep inside her heart, something that would refuel her artistic passion whenever the leather fought back, whenever blades cut her flesh, whenever she despaired of learning the craft right.

"Always my whole life," she says, "all I wanted was another horse."

**WE'RE DRINKING** sweet tea at a dining table in the one-story rock-and-stucco house the Wilkies built on the western, wildland edge of Carlsbad in 1974, back when they couldn't even afford to pay

attention. Daughter-in-law Sandi, wife of youngest son Mark, and their daughter Willi Baughman have joined us to explain how all three women came to surround themselves with horses and the craft of horse stuff. A saddle stand separates us from the kitchen. Two saddles are on display in the living room. Around the corner, a utility area holds a makeshift work space for quick leather repairs. And next to a nearby comfy chair, a toy bouncy horse awaits one of Willi's young'uns.

The real horses are out back, beyond the Wagon Trail Riding Equipment commercial tack shop, home to Trinity Saddles, which long ago displaced James' once-dreamed-of home workshop. His space just wasn't meant to be. Not when you, your wife, and your kids choose to live less in the house and more in the barn, just to be closer to the horses.

In the early days, all of them thumbed through copies of *Western Horseman* magazine, admiring the animals and the saddles. Rosemary particularly liked the ads for the Ferdinand Big Bull sewing machine. Sure,

the thing cost \$7,000, but it could do everything she couldn't. Besides, she says, "I'd already tore up my sewing machine."

James was working in the potash mines, and every extra cent went into building the house. Rosemary got in touch with a tack wholesaler who said she could buy at cost and sell at retail, but only if she bought \$50 worth. "I didn't have \$50," she says. "But it was the sweetest thing ever: My boys cleaned out their piggy banks. I had some money and, with theirs, we came up with \$60. I bought some tack, and my friends came and bought it, just so we could get into business."

With that, she tripped along, selling and mending other people's work and dreaming about that Ferdinand Big Bull. One day in 1991, an ad in *The Thrifty Nickel* stopped her cold: "Saddle Shop for Sale."

"It had a Ferdinand sewing machine in it," Rosemary says. "I freaked out. I threw it down and walked off. About a week later, I looked at it again." The place was in Hobbs, an hour's drive away. She called the owners and asked if, maybe, they'd just sell her the

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machine. Well, sure, they answered, “but we’re only asking \$5,000 for the whole shop, and \$3,500 of that is the machine.”

She and James went to look at it. It wasn’t a Big Bull, but a nice Ferdinand, for chaps work. There were also 100 well-made tools. Plus a stack of leather. Still, that price. The Wilkies stepped away to pray about it. When they came back, the owner offered to throw in an unmade saddle. That clinched it, and, in retrospect, Rosemary says, good thing. “I didn’t have a clue. That shop was worth way more than he was asking before the saddle came with it.”

Her grandpa had loaned them money, and Rosemary wanted to pay it back by assembling the saddle and selling it. She bought eight hours’ worth of saddle-making videos and began fumbling through the process. In the meantime, a fellow popped into her tack shop one evening, and only later did she learn he was Billy Cogsdil, an experienced leather man right there in town who could do everything from boot repair to saddlery. When she finished her saddle, Rosemary steeled her nerves and asked him to critique it.

“I sweated blood, I was about to panic and run away from him,” she says. “Billy had a way. He was really gruff and grouchy. But he began to tell me what a nice saddle I’d built—which it wasn’t—but, he says, ‘Next time, I want you to do this and do that.’ He was teaching me! I guarantee you, Billy Cogsdil taught me more in 20 minutes than any eight hours of videos ever did.”

Rosemary went on making a saddle here and a saddle there. In 1994, Cogsdil heard about the National Endowment for the Arts’ folk art apprenticeship program. New Mexico helps fund a branch and uses it to match master artists with people who show signs of excelling at the crafts. Masters can get up to \$2,000 in cash; apprentices up to \$2,000 for materials and travel. The program matches furniture makers, basket makers, colcha embroiderers, singers of Zuni lullabies, violinists for matachines dances, and other artists.

Cogsdil bit, and picked Rosemary for an apprentice. “I felt like a million bucks,” she says. “He helped me fill out the paperwork and everything.”



Rosemary advises her friend Orlando Villegas on lacing a pair of suspenders. He hoped to become her apprentice, until his recent untimely death.

Under his tutelage, she built her eighth and ninth saddles and, most important, learned to look at her creations with no regrets. “At number 10, I was a saddle maker.”

**HERE’S THE THING** about saddles: They need to feel comfortable to both horse and rider, and what the horse and rider do together may vary from a gentle trail ride to barrel racing, reining, cutting, roping, and more. Maybe you need it only occasionally. Maybe you sit in it eight hours a day, seven days a week. For the best fit from a manufactured saddle, Rosemary advises forking over at least \$1,400. If you can go another \$1,000 (for starters), then a custom handmade saddle will buy you all the difference in the world.

And it will likely be a one-of-a-kind piece of art that lasts twice as long as the manufactured kind.

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Later they’ll figure out ways to wrench the leather up around the horn, hand-stitch



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An original Sandi Wilkie belt, one of the products at the Recycled Cow, a shop she owns with husband Mark Wilkie.

it, tool unique and lovely designs into it, dye it, decorate it with silver conchas, attach handmade stirrups—and, already, anyone with an ounce of horse sense has smacked their forehead at this gross simplification of the craft. Know this: It's complicated.

"There's a good part of saddle making that's actually sculpture," Sandi says. Besides a lot of parts, there are a lot tools. Crescent knives. Round knives. Swivel knives. Knife grinders. End punches. Strapping cutters. Stamps. Bevels. Mallets. Petal lifters. Jerk needles. And, you bet, sewing machines. Yes, plural.

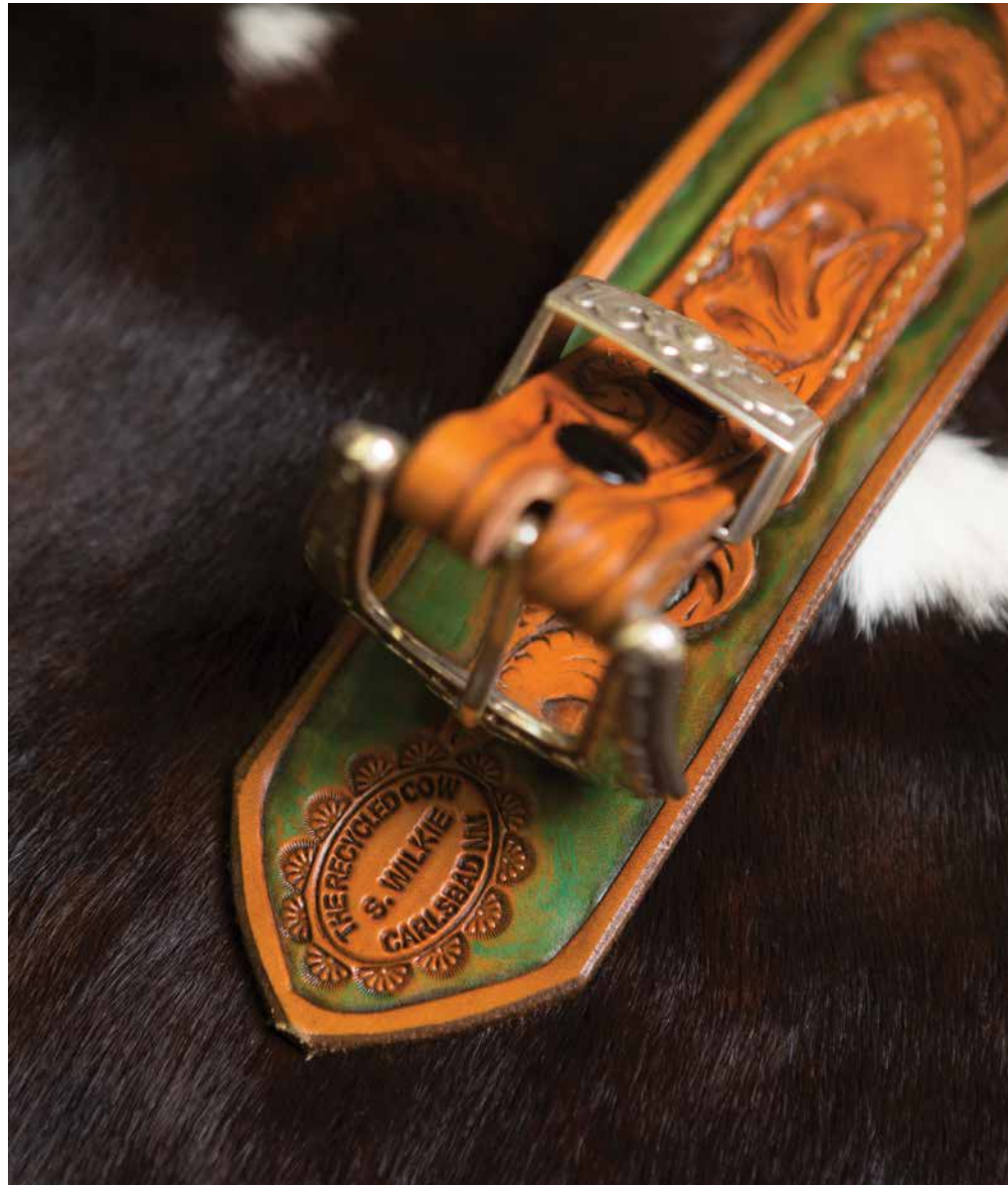
"I don't put dirty stuff"—i.e., repair work—"on my Dorkopp Adler," Rosemary says of her favorite machine. "When I finally decided I couldn't afford the Ferdinand Big Bull, I thought this was the next best. Turns out, it's a Cadillac."

We've moved from the dining table to the tack shop, its interior heady with the aroma of fresh leather—"the smell of money," according to one of my horse-nutty friends. The front half holds the bounty of what a well-equipped rider needs, including a few manufactured saddles. The back half is where the magic happens. There, on workbenches and at sewing machines, Rosemary has trained a small parade of apprentices, including Sandi and Willi, neither of whom thought they'd bother to make a second saddle after struggling through their first one.

These days, Sandi pores over research to revive the lost art of historical saddles, such as an 1880s half-seat that so confounded her she called Slim Green and asked for advice. By the time she got to his home in Las Cruces, "He had started one just to show me. Then he really fussed at me while I was making it."

Her saddles aren't for everyone, and she produces them bit by bit, preferring to whip out chaps, holsters, and leather hair accessories. "If you just want a good roping saddle," she says, "I'll probably pass you on. I'm more the prima donna *artiste*."

Willi grew into the family business while sitting on her grandma's lap and wondering why customers couldn't repair their own gear. While home from college one winter, she got it into her head to make a Christmas saddle for her sister, Timi, and pulled a few



sunset-to-sunrise sessions with Rosemary learning the ropes. It only made sense that when she got engaged to Tyler Baughman, she'd gift him a saddle, too. She's since carved an original design of prickly pear cactus into one saddle and left another nearly bare—a spare and rough look that her rootsy, millennial tastes prefer.

One year, the trio took four saddles to a horse show in Wichita Falls, Texas, including one by Timi, who mostly pursues other interests these days. Rosemary's sample was her 54th. Given the general

male domination of the craft, folks were plenty impressed.

"I think we're probably the only town that has four women saddle makers, three generations, all in one family," Sandi says.

**SANDI AND WILLI** both got NEA apprenticeships; Sandi twice. Five other wannabes won similar chances, but non-NEA apprentices have passed through Rosemary's hands as well. One who nearly made it was a close friend, Orlando Villegas, a lifetime resident of Loving, New Mexico, who endeared himself to

the family in part by helping around the tack shop. "He's the only person I ever trusted with my animals when I went away," Rosemary says, awarding him the highest compliment country people give. In September, a congenital illness took him at a far-too-young 44, and his death still puts a stopper in Rosemary's throat.

Losing someone who thirsts for the craft deepens the wound left by the fact that the craft itself is dying—even in a state with as rich a tradition of horses, *vaqueros*, ranchers, and rodeos as New Mexico. "Agricultural markets can affect our business," Sandi says. "The actual working cowboy is going by the wayside. The hobby people pick up some of it, but there's less people making their living in a saddle now."

The apprenticeship program bridges some of the gap, critically so for a trade that requires investments in expensive tools and leather.

"That stipend is a lot of money for somebody just trying to get materials to make things—especially young people," Willi says. "And it plants the seed. You can sell the saddle and get money for the next one."

Willi and her family live on the Wilkie compound, enabling her to blend saddle making with baby wrangling. Sandi and Mark took their skills and purchased the only shoe repair shop left in Carlsbad. The Recycled Cow sells and repairs boots, hats, saddles, tack, gun leather, chaps, and more—just one example of how the NEA program pivots from nurturing the arts to building an economy.

In the years since the Wilkie women took up the craft, both Slim Green and Billy Cogsdil have passed on. Lucky owners of their saddles still use them, and museums have acquired a few, too. Inside Rosemary's shop, their legacy joins with hers as she

happily bypasses retirement in favor of churning out work—most recently 1,000 tooled holsters that Cabela's liked so much, the company bought 650 of them off the top. We wander outside and slowly make our way to my car, then stop to watch the sun hang lower over a sweep of land that the town of Carlsbad never did catch up to. Nothing but a hill interrupts our view. Rosemary reminisces a bit about how her kids grew up out there, riding the scrubby acres and exploring their way through a childhood she now gives to Willi's boys, who soon enough will graduate from bouncy horses to the real thing.

"Land, horses, and sky," she says softly. "That's our culture." ■

Managing editor **Kate Nelson** occasionally sees horses of the wild variety wander near her Placitas home.







Craig Martin, at home in the Jemez Mountains.

# A FORCE OF NATURE

He loved his fire-scarred forest and wanted his trails back, but he needed help. How a jazz-playing, stay-at-home dad rallied Los Alamos “labbies” into an unstoppable crew.

BY *KATE NELSON*

PHOTOS BY *MINESH BACRANIA*







**O**N MAY 10, 2000, high winds exploded through a prescribed burn in the Jemez Mountains. For weeks, flames thrashed across Bandelier National Monument, Santa Clara and San Ildefonso pueblos, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and the lab's tidy neighborhoods. It leapt from the crowns of old-growth ponderosa pines and wolfed the choked undergrowth of grasses and shrubs. Hundreds of Los Alamos families lost everything. Even those who still had four walls and a green lawn could only stare dumbly, helplessly, at the charred remains of 47,000 acres, once the bucolic backdrop to their lives.

As embers from the Cerro Grande Fire cooled, Craig Martin, a resident renowned for his trail know-how, headed out with a National Forest Service team to assess the damage. "You'd take a step and there'd be a big puff of ash," he says. "I thought, It's all gone. My life is gone. Why I live here is gone."

Then he spied a baby aspen tree, just two feet tall. "Wait a minute," he remembers thinking. "There is a mechanism to recovering this. That changed everything. That gave me hope."

Martin drew a line in the debris. He would stay in Los Alamos if he could figure out how to heal the landscape and ease the fire-induced trauma of his friends and neighbors. And maybe, he thought, that effort would kindle a bond between those of us who sometimes venture into nature and all the flowers, grasses, trees, birds, butterflies, reptiles, and animals that cannot live without it.

In 1987, the only line Martin drew was this: He would happily serve as stay-at-home dad for their daughter if his wife, June, pursued a hydrology career in a place near decent trout streams. She picked Los Alamos National Laboratory, and he got his mountain waters. Somewhere among the 30 days a summer he spent casting a line, he and June had a second child. Dad and the kids fell in with a group of moms, and he organized parent-child hikes for all of them. It's easy to do in Los Alamos, the onetime secret city north of Santa Fe. Some trails ramble right through the center of town. Others start where the houses end. Schooled in plant ecology, Martin learned about local wildflowers and shared his knowledge with young and old. Like happy ducklings, they toddled behind his elfin energy and wiry frame, keeping an eye out for their guide's short, unruly ponytail and ever-present ball cap.

Now 64 ("though feeling fortyish, except in the morning, when I creak out of bed"), he set a standard for his life in Los Alamos that persists today. "Getting kids on a trail is a priority for me," he says. "My son had his first hike when he was two weeks old—the Tsankawi Trail, with him on my back. But it's not just being outside; it's building a connection to the outdoors. And putting names with plants helps."

Wander a trail with him and you'll soon hear him call roll. Field chrysanthemum. Scarlet gilia. Fetid goosefoot. On a recent hike, he pulled two spent blossoms, turned them over, and used the undersides as a teaching tool for discerning an aster from the nearly identical fleabane.

AP PHOTO/SARAH MARTONE

Over the years, Martin has put his own name on a series of books about the outdoors—trout fishing, mountain biking, hiking, hot springs, and wild plants—plus one about the history and lingo of neighborhoods built by the U.S. government for scientists building a bomb. (A "Group 18 Two-Bedroom" may not mean much to you, but if you're what locals call a "lab-bie," you get it.)

When Cerro Grande came, most of the town evacuated, children's bikes hastily abandoned out front, all but the most precious possessions locked inside. "I remember seeing a friend's house burn on TV, and then having to watch the station play it over and over," Martin says. "First you're concerned about those people, but we're also talking about an entire community that values its outdoors. It's an important part of a lot of lives in Los Alamos to walk out the door and be on a trail. As the recovery starts, I realize I can't help people who lost their homes. So what's next? Let's help everyone by recovering the landscape."

Agencies overseeing the aftermath asked Martin to help. "I had the reputation of being the trail guy in town," he says. The Forest Service ponied up funding for tools and ponderosa pine seedlings. Martin rounded up helpmates and, together, they put out the call. John Hogan, a self-described "pathological volunteer," was one of them, and the community response floored him. "We had up to 500 people a day coming out to help," he says. "The first year, we planted 10,000 trees. All we had to do was direct traffic."

Early on, Martin reached out to an elderly resident who had lost her home, but not her love for the trees she once saw from it. "Granny was 75 then, and we had a special planting where she put the tree in the ground," he says. "Her family came back and watered it every day." Today, that pine, near the Mitchell Trailhead on

the northwest edge of town, is commonly known as "Granny's Tree." Still young, it stands taller and wider than Martin. Sweeping up the foothill beyond it, more trees thrive, along with scrub oaks and wildflowers, nestled amid fallen trunks and skeletal snags—important reminders of all that cannot be recovered.

To teach the town about fire ecology, Martin strove to include educational activities into the work and to involve all ages. The youngest and oldest couldn't swing Pulaskis to loosen fire-hardened soil, but every school and senior center taught them to make seed balls that others scattered in the burn areas. "We thought it was watershed restoration," Martin says, "but really it was helping people feel a part of the restoration and heal from the loss."

He hooked up with the Youth Conservation Corps and trained teens from Los Alamos, Española, and nearby pueblos to rebuild trails. He tapped a then-teenage Sylvan Argo as a crew leader, indirectly setting her on a career course. In college, she saw Los Alamos cited as a national model for its community response to tragedy. Later, she worked in places like a homeless shelter in Philadelphia, tugging always on her mentor for long-distance advice. "At one point, I wrote Craig and said that I miss working with kids," she says. By then he had a job as the county's open-space specialist. He wrote to Argo, "I have funding. Come back."

She did. Now director of the Los Alamos Teen Center, she oversees that same YCC program, which still builds and maintains trails.

Even after what Martin calls "the Herculean time," those first years of whisking himself and others all over the afterburn with their seedlings and seed balls, favorite trails remained off-limits. He figured their rescue was too difficult and bound to fail. "They're gone," he said at the time. But in 2004, he

**Facing page:** Smoke looms during the Cerro Grande Fire. **Above:** Martin delights in the return of gaillardia flowers and streamside plants to the burned area.



## Down to a Science

Robert Oppenheimer picked Los Alamos for the nation's super-secret atomic bomb project in part because he held happy boyhood memories of rambling in its forested hills. The opportunity to combine science careers with a love for the outdoors still draws residents, who started dreaming up a nature center 17 years ago. After piecemeal attempts at programs in local schools, the **Pajarito Environmental Education Center** officially opened its doors in 2015.

Inside, the PEEC boasts a planetarium, hands-on learning stations with snakes, tarantulas, and lizards, an exhibit area, a wildlife-watching room overlooking Acid Canyon, and a shop with every guidebook you'd ever need around here, plus works by local artists. Outside, nature trails explore both native and xeric landscapes, logs and sticks invite kids to build towering forts, and a retired labbie's success at collecting and hybridizing penstemons will soon erupt. "We'll have 65 to 70 varieties, with more than 1,000 plants—reds, blues, purples, white, bicolors, a few yellows," says Larry Deaven, who once worked on the Human Genome Project.

PEEC's ambitious programming schedule, which won a 2016 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence, includes star parties, wildlife lectures, guided hikes, yoga classes, and what director Katherine Watson likes to call "Craig Martin in a box." The local trails hero helped develop the Los Alamos Trails app ([nmmag.us/LATrails](http://nmmag.us/LATrails)), a free download that details some 50 miles of adventures with caves, petroglyphs, wildflowers, and wild animals.

The staff encourages drop-ins before visitors begin explorations of **Bandelier National Monument** and the **Valles Caldera National Preserve** to learn more about what they'll see. But beware, Watson says. "On TripAdvisor, you see posts like 'I thought I would have a short visit, but my kids played for three hours.'"

## Volun-Tour

The **Valles Caldera National Preserve** can set you up with a regular volunteer gig or match you with drop-in opportunities that include working in the field with local scientists. (575) 829-4100; [nps.gov/vall](http://nps.gov/vall)



asked June what she wanted for her birthday. "I want to hike the Water Canyon Trail," she said. He pulled together a crew. It took a year, but June got her favorite trail back.

Six years later, another fire, Las Conchas, ripped through three times the acreage of Cerro Grande, coming dangerously close to the major tree-restoration area, and destroying the Water Canyon Trail. Once again, Martin rallied his trusty trail rats. "I think I've tackled every mile between here and the rim of the Valles Caldera, some of them twice," he says.

In his lifetime, he knows, the forest will never look as tall, green, and "dog-hair thick" as before. But joy on the trails has returned. Ask him for a favorite and he'll take you to Acid Canyon, an easy stroll behind the award-winning Pajarito Environmental Education Center (which, naturally, Martin helped found). But for a longer hike with views of both old-growth and recovering forest, plus "amazingly high" wildflower counts, he takes people to Water Canyon. "It's the best-designed trail anywhere—I learned from the first time. There's a meander in the middle, an old reservoir, cattails. And I always get to tell the story of June's birthday."

**Above:** Children learn how to build a healthy watershed at the Pajarito Environmental Education Center. **Left:** One of Martin's work groups toils on a trail in Water Canyon.

Check the packed schedule of events, lectures, and yoga classes at what labbies call "the PEEC," and you'll likely find a monthly hike guided by Craig

Martin, usually designed with kids in mind. Or you could join him on a service outing at the Valles Caldera National Preserve, where he helps eradicate noxious weeds and documents trees that bear old shepherds' marks. You might also run into him at a Los Alamos joint with the Craig Martin Experience—"a bunch of very talented musicians who let me play with them." He's the guy on tenor sax as they backbeat their way through Ellington swing, bebop, and "the soul-gospel-funk-jazz that makes it impossible to keep your feet still."

In 2001, the Points of Light Foundation named Martin its national volunteer of the year. In 2012, Los Alamos County declared him a Living Treasure. Earlier this year, the Santa Fe National Forest awarded him the agency's Golden Pulaski Award for decades of service, and Los Alamos County councilors declared January 11 Craig Martin Day. Mention his name to pretty much anyone in town and you'll hear even more praise.

"You can't possibly say enough good things about Craig," Hogan says.

June fills a scrapbook with his accolades, but Martin is almost too busy to notice. Officially, he's retired, but he admits, "I'm not very good at that." He's midway through co-authoring a three-volume set of books about plants in the Jemez Mountains. His combo has logged time in a sound studio for a potential CD. He dreams of building a trail that loops hikers from the highest outpost to the nearest brewpub. His fishing gear has gone too long unused, and, frankly, he'd rather go hiking than accept another award. That's where his heart beats best: out on the trail, in a pair of boots so well worn that the tread is gone.

"Taking advantage of the inspiration you get from the landscape and putting it to use in your community—that's what matters," he says. "I told my kids, 'I want you to be cheerful, caring, and curious—and it's all got to be related back to community.' Learning as much as you can—that's curiosity. Appreciating the history and the landscape—that's the caring."

As for the cheerful part, he shrugs. "I only do things I really like to do," he says, then laughs. "I'm a little late on my taxes." ■

Kate Nelson is featured in "Storytellers," p. 8.





# OPEN

Artist Randall Davey's murals grace both the exterior and interior of his house in Santa Fe, now home to an Audubon Center and Sanctuary.



BY KATE NELSON PHOTOS BY MINESH BACRANIA

# SECRETS

Step away from the Plaza and into four Santa Fe insider's delights—including a fabulous Native museum behind three locked doors.



## An Artist's Aerie

After turning from pavement to dirt, Upper Canyon Road squiggles so far into the Sangre de Cristo foothills that the first time I drove it, I feared I was lost. But no, the destination appeared precisely where the road ended: at the **Randall Davey Audubon Center**, a pastoral mix of history, art, the great outdoors, and the avian sciences.

"It's a true gem of Santa Fe," says Julie Weinstein, executive director of Audubon New Mexico, while working in the onetime stable of Davey, a polo-playing standout of the Santa Fe Art Colony. One of his heirs transformed the horse barn into a gallery-cum-meeting space overlooking a native-plants garden that attracts deer as easily as birds.

The history of this bucolic nest goes back to an early path connecting Pecos Pueblo to Santa Fe—area pueblos. In 1847, the U.S. Army built a sawmill on the site to prepare lumber for Fort Marcy's not-so-nearby quarters. Frontier entrepreneur Ceran St. Vrain later used it as a gristmill, grinding flour for the soldiers' bread. It then passed among various hands, including those of a onetime Indian agent who hoped to create a resort around some since-dried-up hot springs. One day in 1920, just after the birth of the Santa Fe Art Colony, artist Sheldon Parsons put his good friend Davey on a buckboard to check out some tempting acreage east of town.

"We have no idea what the condition of the property was and we can't find the deed for what Davey paid," says docent Kim Strauss. "One record says fifty dollars."

Even if it was actually 10 times that, Davey scored a deal on 135 acres of prime forest in the heart of the Santa Fe watershed. Just beginning his career, the New Jersey native eventually found national fame as a painter, sculptor, and printmaker, but most especially as a portraitist. The property he renovated in eccentrically artistic fashion bears a host of his works. Visitors can step inside the onetime mill, which he converted into a living area furnished with a mishmash of Victorian and Spanish Colonial antiques (his wife, Isabel, liked the former; he liked the latter) and a tucked-away Prohibition-era speakeasy. He added a second floor for a sitting area, a kitchen with a kicky olive-green stove, and a suite of bedrooms, one of which bears Davey's perplexingly inaccurate murals of tropical birds. Next door, his studio still holds his brushes, paints, and canvases—a still-life homage to the maker behind the art.

Strauss likes telling people how Roger Vadim filmed part of a 1988 remake of *And God Made*

*Woman* here, with Rebecca De Mornay. The property also starred as a Santa Fe art colony in *Twins*, the Danny DeVito/Arnold Schwarzenegger romp. Keep close to Strauss and he'll fill you in on Davey's love affairs, divorce, remarriage, and fatal car crash in 1964 en route to see a (much) younger (and married) paramour.

You'll also learn about which birds appear when, where the nature trail goes, and what intoxicating adventures a person could have had hanging out with the Daveys. "I met a woman a few years ago from Taos, who told me about the time her family came to visit the Daveys when she was nine years old," Strauss says. "They were invited to a picnic, and all the Daveys brought were deep-dish apple pies and thermoses of martinis."

**Randall Davey Audubon Center & Sanctuary**  
1800 Upper Canyon Road; (505) 983-4609;  
randalldavey.audubon.org

Self-guided tours of the grounds, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., Monday–Saturday, free.  
Docent-led tours of the Davey house and studio, 2 p.m. Fridays, \$5.  
Bird walks with experts, 8:30 a.m. Saturdays, free.

## The Unknown Museum

First the iron bars, then the lead door, and don't forget the computer code. Getting into the collections vaults at the **School for Advanced Research** takes a few tricks, all of them worth it. Behind the security, a premier collection of mostly Southwestern Native materials crowds onto shelves, fills up drawers, and swings from hanging rods. Some 12,000 objects in all—baskets, weavings, jewelry, pottery, paintings, and effigies—began arriving in the 1920s, thanks to the fabled White sisters and friends like Edgar Lee Hewett, creator of the Museum of New Mexico.

Intrepid travelers and eccentric entertainers, Amelia and Martha Root White built their adobe compound on Garcia Street, not far from Canyon Road. They named it El Delirio ("The Madness"), after a bar in Seville, Spain, that they claimed always gave them their geographic bearings during foreign rambles.

Designed by artist William Penhallow Henderson, their main house resembles Laguna Pueblo's church, but the objects of worship were art, anthropology, Irish wolfhounds, and some of the most outrageous

Just beginning his career, Davey eventually found national fame as a painter, sculptor, and printmaker, but most especially as a portraitist.



**Facing page:** Davey's art studio is preserved largely as he left it. He stashed his paintbrushes in a Zuni olla.





“While they’re here, they discover this art, connect to it, and find ways for it to influence their work.”

**Brian Vallo pulls textiles at SAR’s Indian Arts Research Center. Facing page: Pottery collections represent a variety of Native peoples and eras.**

costume parties the city had ever seen. The ladies ran with the Santa Fe Art Colony, joined archaeological expeditions, bolstered the careers of artists like Acoma’s Lucy Lewis and San Ildefonso’s Maria Martinez, and promoted Native art around the globe. From those travels, they returned with ornate chandeliers, wrought-iron gates, a church bell, and an enormous Guatemalan altar screen that likely featured saints unfamiliar to the Whites.

“I don’t think they were church ladies,” SAR director Michael F. Brown drily observes. “So their friend Gus redid the paintings.”

The more fancifully secular designs that “Gus” designed are just one legacy of famed artist and printmaker Gustave Baumann. On a nearby wall, his whimsical map of the property includes details like “Lindbergh’s Shadow Played on This [Tennis] Court.” Drinks for all were served by a butler at 5 p.m. sharp in the house’s ballroom, adorned with

art beneath a latilla ceiling painted to resemble a Navajo rug.

Elizabeth bequeathed the compound to SAR upon her 1972 death. Over the years, the organization slowly altered a few things and oh-so-quietly opened to the public. Visitors today can stroll the eight landscaped acres (which include a well-populated wolfhound cemetery), tour portions of the Whites’ home, and step into those fabulous vaults in the separately housed Indian Arts Research Center, with either a docent or the center’s director, Brian Vallo. “Everyone comes,” he says. “The art collectors, the tourist who happens to stumble onto our property, occasional anthropologists and archaeologists, and, thankfully, more and more Santa Fe residents who discover that the place on Garcia Street that looked a little spooky is actually open.”

The center’s collection runs a span from Ancestral Puebloans to cutting-edge creators, many of whom

score an artist-in-residence gig and repay the honor with donated works. The center works closely with Native peoples to ensure that sensitive materials are held respectfully and with limited access. A new program uses some of those items in a therapy program for Native women and children who experienced abuse. A prize of the collection, Cheyenne chief White Antelope’s blanket, is hidden from all. Worn as he sang his death song during the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, it returns to Colorado every other year for tribespeople to give it their honor.

Although the center loans items to museum exhibitions, it opens mainly to researchers seeking to piece the past to the present—and to inspire artists in residence. “Some might have no interest in Southwest art,” Vallo says of artists from other regions, “but while they’re here, they discover this art, connect to it, and find ways for it to influence their work.”

#### School for Advanced Research

660 Garcia St.; (505) 954-7200; sarweb.org

Docent-led tours of the Indian Arts Research Center, 2 p.m. Wednesdays, \$15; reservations required at (505) 943-7205.

Docent-led tours of the historic campus, 10 a.m. Wednesdays and Fridays, \$15; reservations required at (505) 954-7213.

Private tours, \$20 per person.

#### Change of Heart

Ernest Thompson Seton came to New Mexico as a hired wolf killer in 1893, but the wild beauty of the place so transformed him that he grew into one of the world’s greatest conservationists—as well as an artist, author, and co-founder of the Boy Scouts of America. In 1930, when he began building his oddball castle south of Santa Fe, in Arroyo Hondo, or what he grandiosely dubbed “the last rampart of the Rockies,”



On August 13, Seton's birthday celebration will include a new gallery exhibit and family activities designed to motivate change.



Seton couldn't have known the seeds of further transformation he would sow.

For years, the surrounding Seton Village benefited from the founder's embrace of artists, writers, thinkers, and Native reenactors (who today would fairly define "politically incorrect"). But by the time the **Academy for the Love of Learning** acquired the "Indian Tudor" castle and its 86 acres in 2003, neglect had given tragedy a deadline.

The nonprofit wanted to use the site to expand its workshops aimed at energizing the way teachers, children, elderly people, and others harness their creativity to refashion their lives. David Gordon, an artist and the center's development director, was two years into dutifully renovating the castle's ramshackle parts when the place caught fire. In two hours, it was gone. Only a few stacked-rock walls remained.

After the shock wore off, Aaron Stern, who co-founded the academy with legendary conductor Leonard Bernstein, began rethinking the project, the enormous costs of rebuilding Seton's whimsy to modern-day standards, and the program's growing needs for even more room than the original plan would have provided. With Gordon, he dreamed up a new campus—a LEED Gold-certified compound combining 39 geothermal wells, five solar arrays, rain runoff, and locally harvested, sustainable materials. It opened in 2011 and just happens to have the ruins of a nearby castle for eccentric effect.

"A lot of our work incorporates the arts," Gordon says as he points out his own sculptural water wall and an eighth-century bodhisattva statue in the bright and soulful main building. "They're a metaphor for a way of learning."

Seton's wildlife artwork—considered on a par with that of Audubon—earned a gallery in the building. Inside it, his handmade and fancifully decorated furniture shares space with paintings, drawings, drums, and Seton's correspondence with like-minded folks, including Theodore Roosevelt. Curator David L. Witt is there the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, ready to share the Seton story with drop-in visitors.

Other tours cover the building, with its womb-like meeting-and-meditation rooms; the xeric landscape and its rich orchard of apples, pears, cherries, and peaches; and that castle. Its ragged walls reinforced with steel supports, it satisfies the curious with its oddly splayed layout, carved-snake gate, totem-like charred pillars, and Seton's murals of kachinas and a peacock that somehow survived the inferno. "Everything was blackened here," Gordon says of the rock wall holding



the murals. "It's part of the mystery of New Mexico, but the two kachinas got whiter."

Occasionally, the academy invites the public to hear Seton stories around a campfire and under a full moon. Gordon holds out hope for using the castle ruins as a backdrop for poetry and plays. On August 13, Seton's birthday celebration will include a new gallery exhibit and family activities designed to motivate change.

"Seton was a role model of transformation," Gordon says. "He went from killing animals to a real conservationist. We've come full circle with what we're doing here."

**Academy for the Love of Learning**  
133 Seton Village Road; (505) 995-1860;  
aloveoflearning.org

Self-guided landscape and castle tours,  
9 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday–Friday, free.  
Building and gallery tours by appointment;  
donations welcome.

David L. Witt curates the Seton Legacy Project, which includes artwork, correspondence, and handcrafted furniture. Facing page: The partially restored ruins of Seton's castle.



## The House on the Hill

Stand in the governor's backyard and you can see all the way to Sandía Peak, in Albuquerque—a fitting visual reach, given the occupant's job. Perched atop a hill north of downtown Santa Fe, the Territorial-style home has hosted governors since 1954. (Previous residences were the 1610 Palace of the Governors and an 1870 neoclassical building so neglected that it essentially collapsed in 1950.) You can't peek into about a third of the sleekly designed 12,000 square feet; governors do deserve some privacy. But the public areas—living room, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, and yard—offer a reason to visit that's even more compelling than the vicarious thrill of spying on an elected official.

One of the perks of the state's top job? Getting to choose art from pretty much any museum or gallery you want. You can switch it out at will, too. That makes a visit to the **Governor's Residence** both a

cool art stop and an opportunity to connect each era's politicians to their personal tastes.

"That's a 17th-century bench you're sitting on," docent Frances Fernandes tells a visitor, before leading a group of them to *Bear Lake*, a 1931 Georgia O'Keeffe painting. Four Gustave Baumann prints adorn one wall, and pieces by Ernest L. Blumenschein, Willard Ayers Nash, and Will Shuster crop up on others. A massive Alan Houser bison sculpture commands the yard. Glass sculptures by Elodie Holmes, a favorite artist of Governor Susana Martinez, appear in nearly every room. Images by Martinez's favorite photographer, Amadeus Leitner, nearly cover a dining room wall; his uncle Arturo Chavez's *Luminous Twilight* painting graces another.

Perhaps the neutral tones in the living room's décor play a role in calming partisan disputes. While relaxed, one hopes those politicians pay attention to the architectural details as well. Architect John Gaw

Meem, patron saint of Santa Fe Style, designed the one-story building with classically assertive lintels and baseboards. The ceiling beams in the dining room are intricately painted in the style of El Escorial castle in Madrid, Spain. A colonial-style tin chandelier gleams upon a pine table that can seat more than 20 people. Throw in the backyard space and you could invite 150 of your closest friends to a bash here.

And people do just that. Big-time people. King Juan Carlos and Prince Charles have stepped across the entryway's Great Seal of New Mexico rug and surely puzzled over the state's *Crescit Eundo* motto ("It Grows as It Goes"—whatever *that* means). Actors Harrison Ford and Calista Flockhart got hitched here during Bill Richardson's administration.

Fernandes, a member of the commission that oversees the residence and raises money for its upkeep, loves giving tours to people from all over the world, but espe-

cially schoolchildren. And even more so in winter, when the regular tours go dark. During December, the commission offers two especially family-friendly open houses, with bizcochitos, five decorated trees, and a pianist playing sing-along Christmas carols. People don't just attend, she says. "They take their Christmas-card portraits in front of the trees."

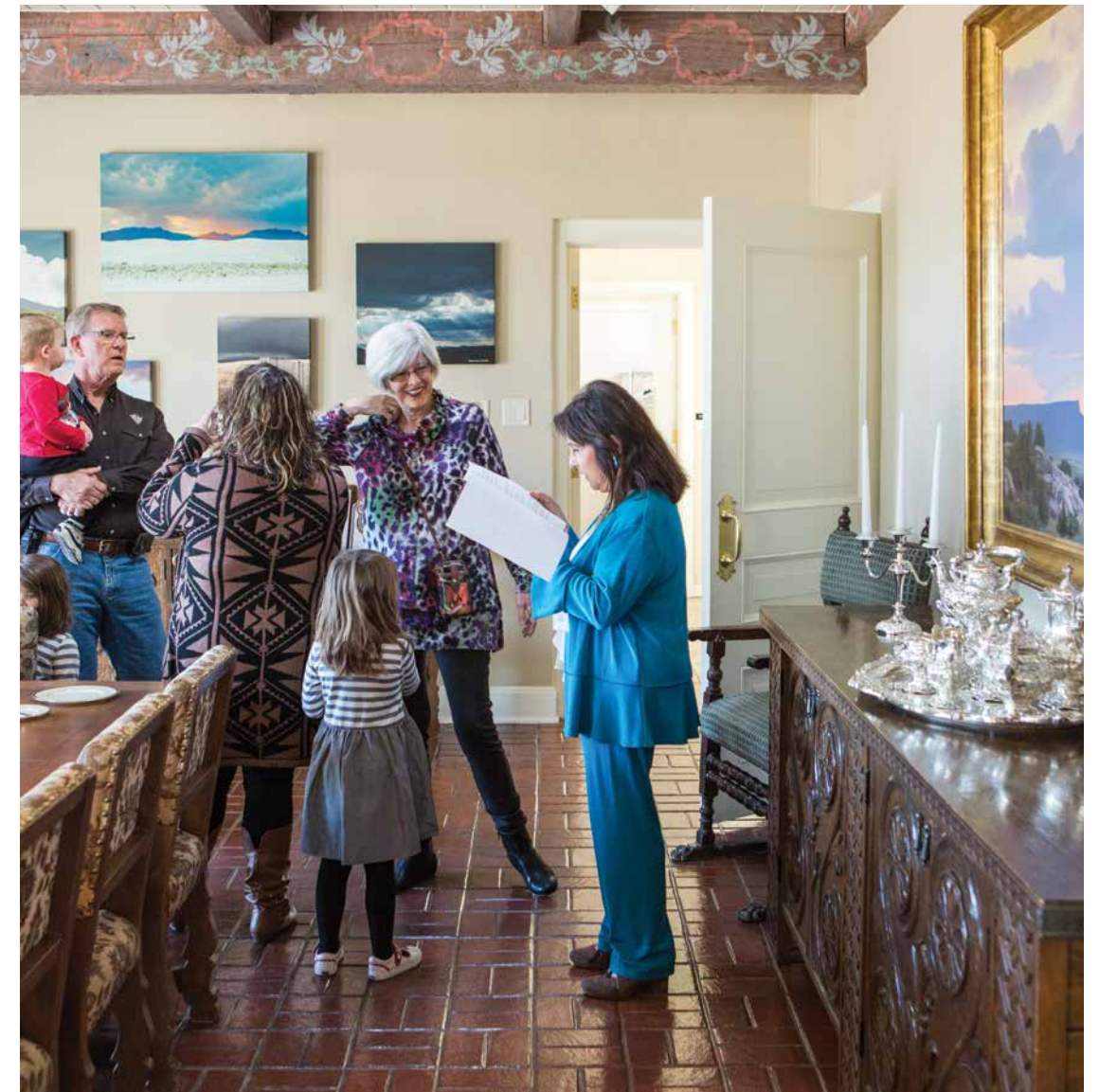
### Governor's Residence

1 Mansion Dr.; (505) 476-2800;  
newmexicogovernorsmansion.org

Docent-led tours, 1–3 p.m., the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, April–November, free.  
Private tours by appointment. ■

Managing editor **Kate Nelson** shares some of her other secrets on the magazine's popular Facebook page.

A young visitor peruses a book in the Governor's Residence living room. Facing page: Docent Frances Fernandes checks her notes on the artists represented in the dining room.





# The Beauty of the Feast

BY KATE NELSON PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS MERRIAM



Norma Naranjo teaches Diana Loomis, of Portland, Oregon, how to place food in the horno.

**From their house at Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, Norma and Hutch Naranjo dish up feast-day cooking classes mixed with history and culture.**

HOURS BEFORE THE FIRST students arrive, Hutch Naranjo fires up his handcrafted horno while, inside the house, his wife, Norma, dons a Virgin of Guadalupe apron and whips together some classroom basics: a pot of beans with chicos, coffee, and a table set with the fixings for prune and apricot empanadas. For them, it might be just another day of teaching people how to cook Pueblo style, but for students of the Feasting Place, each class delivers a smorgasbord of New Mexico history, Native culture, cooking know-how, and a great meal.

The Naranjos can likely lay claim to being the only pueblo-based cooking school in the nation. Norma grew up in Ohkay Owingeh, Hutch in nearby Santa Clara. They inherited the onetime HUD house from her mother and spent years adding on here, adding on there, even as the kids moved out, and friends and family asked, "Why do you need so much room? It's just the two of you."

"When Santa Clara has a feast day," Norma says, "I go and help, and when we have a feast day, they come help me. It's all family. That's why I had to make my house bigger. When you come on feast day? This house is small."

Handy thing, then, that all the space on the edge of Ohkay Owingeh with a view of the Truchas Peaks also accommodates a school about feast-day cooking that has thrived since its accidental creation 18 years ago. After cooking for a friend's wedding, Norma fielded dozens of questions about how to cook. She saw an entrepreneurial opportunity, got some professional advice, spread the word, and, a year later, won a statewide business award. Now she caters events as large as Indian Market galas, runs the school, and knows so many people that she sees a stream of them pour through the house on Ohkay Owingeh's feast days. Typically, she says, vats of traditional dishes join modern-day favorites in a comical mix of enchiladas, green chile stew, macaroni and cheese, and fried rice. All day long, visitors fill plates between stops at the church service, dances, and crafts markets. How do you prep so much food so fast? That's what Norma teaches for \$100 a person, one class at a time. »





Empanadas cap a meal of lamb chops, beans, calabacitas, and bruschetta.

“A lot of people all over the world have no idea that we exist here in New Mexico,” she says. “Or they think Native people are all the same—Navajo, Sioux, Pueblo. We’re very different, and in the Southwest, as Pueblo people, we have a lot of history in terms of the foods we eat, how we grow it, and how we make it.”

I get there early and am already grilling Norma about the day’s lesson plan when the other students arrive—a retired couple from Albuquerque and another couple from Portland, Oregon. We’re five strangers—seven, if you count Norma and Hutch—about to learn who can roll the thinnest dough, mix up the best pico de gallo, and most expertly wield the wooden paddle that guides food into the horno.

First things first, Norma says: “It’s *OR-no*. You don’t pronounce the *h*.” And if you don’t see one of the domed adobe ovens in someone’s backyard, you probably aren’t at a pueblo home. Hutch has built two, because feast days demand that much cooking. As he carries a platter of lamb chops outside to be seared, Norma loses every single student from the dining room. Trailing behind him, we devolve into our primal selves, gazing at the glory of fire and meat.

“Let’s get class started,” Norma says, pulling us back inside. She scoops flour from one bowl, puts it into another, mixes in shortening, adds cold water with a few drops of vinegar (“I don’t really measure; I do it by feel”), and begins kneading her empanada dough. Still strangers, we hang back in shyness, but soon everyone has a rolling pin, wads of dough, and dollops of filling. (The other women’s turn out great. Mine look like half-moons that a cat stepped on.) In the kitchen, the guys choose knives for chopping pico de gallo and calabacitas ingredients. Throughout, Norma drops tidbits about the Moorish-Spanish origins of apples, beef, and wheat flour. She talks about Ohkay Owingeh’s traditional garbanzo-bean stew and why prune empanadas became popular. “Those were fruits that grew wild on our ditch banks, so we used them.”

She and Hutch run a few cattle at Santa Clara and plant squash, corn, and chile that often show up on their classroom plates. Each

## ART IN NEW MEXICO | ARTESIA



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spring, Norma gathers chimaja, a parsley relative that grows wild in northern New Mexico, and dries it for a hyper-local seasoning.

After an hour of prep, cooking time blazes past. A parade of dishes slide into and out of the horno. We marvel at how Hutch continually feeds the fire and how Norma tests it for the final, more delicate task of baking. Hutch sweeps the coals out to ease the heat, and Norma rips a page from a newspaper, setting it inside the oven for five seconds. It comes out mocha brown. “A little too hot,” she says. Hutch swishes the interior with a damp mop. She tries again. And again. Finally, a page emerges the color of just-baked bread, indicating a 400° oven ready to toast up empanadas.

Once those are completed, we sit for our a feast, starting with Hutch’s Tewa-language prayer. He asks for a blessing on all and wishes that we have safe travels and good lives. Then something magical happens. The simple ingredients of the pico de gallo rise into a flavor far greater than their parts. The lamb chops blend smoke and springtime. Empanada crusts crumble against sweet fillings. As our conversation mutes into blissful chewing, Norma takes the lead. She tells us that famous people have come to her classes—novelist Isabel Allende, senator Tom Udall, and others who insisted she sign confidentiality agreements. Recently, a new web show, *Scraps*, produced by Katie Couric, taped an episode here. Students have hailed from Africa, Australia, Thailand, and Spain. The Naranjos share their knowledge widely, but for both of them, the purpose sits squarely at home.

“Traditions bring family and community together,” she says. “We have survived with what our ancestors taught us. We keep the heirloom seeds for our corn and chile. We don’t want to lose that. It’s not just the sustainability of these *things*; it’s the sustainability of memories—how we grew up and how we pass it on to our children and their children.”

On this day, she passes on the few empanadas that outlasted our appetites, along with the memories we cooked up together. ■

Managing editor **Kate Nelson** considers her crowning kitchen achievement the fact that she hasn’t set it on fire. Yet.



Pico de gallo complements horno bread.

## HANDS-ON ADVICE

Three New Mexico chefs who offer do-it-yourself cooking classes share some of their students’ favorite recipes.

### NORMA NARANJO, THE FEASTING PLACE

312 NM 68, Española; (505) 753-6767; [thefeastingplace.com](http://thefeastingplace.com)

Norma and Hutch Naranjo offer classes by appointment and can tailor them to individual interests. This stew is one of the ways Norma manages the harvest’s bounty, by adding potatoes and broth to the ingredients of calabacitas for a main dish.

## NORMA’S GREEN CHILE STEW

Serves 6–8

- 2 scallop (or patty-pan) squashes, sliced
- 2 yellow squashes, sliced
- 2 zucchini, sliced
- 2 cups whole kernel corn (or 3 fresh ears of corn)
- 1 chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 5–6 cups broth (or water)
- Green chile, roasted and chopped, to taste

1. Sauté squash and corn in olive oil over medium heat until soft. Add onion and garlic to cook, along with the green chile.
2. Cook potatoes in a pot of simmering water until medium soft. (The potatoes will continue to cook when you add them to the rest of the vegetables.)
3. Mix all ingredients in the pot, add salt to taste, and bring to a simmer for 30 minutes.
4. Add green chile and serve.

## NORMA’S PICO DE GALLO

- 6 fresh tomatoes
- 1 medium red onion
- 1 bunch cilantro
- ½ cup chopped green chile
- 1 small avocado

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1. Cut tomatoes into small cubes. Chop onion, cilantro, and avocado.
2. Mix chopped green chile to the other ingredients. Add salt to taste and drizzle with a good olive oil.
3. Serve with chips or crostini made with horno bread (available at pueblo farm stands), sliced and toasted.

**MARGARET CAMPOS,  
COMIDA DE CAMPOS**

1101 NM 68, Embudo; (505) 852-0017;  
algonativo@cybermesa.com

From her farm in the verdant Río Grande Valley between Santa Fe and Taos, Margaret Campos offers June–October classes to preregistered groups. (Families often pick this as a reunion activity.) Each session begins with foraging in the fields. A spacious outdoor kitchen combines cooking with a view of towering cottonwoods and sandstone cliffs. “I learned at my grandma’s side,” Campos says, “watching, waiting for the first taste, waking to a warm tortilla. Her cooking was love on a spoon.” Freshly plucked vegetables star in her classes, with horno cooking a strong second. These vegetarian quesadillas can be a dinner appetizer or a lunch entrée. “It’s a take on a standard my grandmother made with quelites—wild spinach or lamb’s quarters. Later in her life, as we started adding more greens in the garden, she experimented with mustard greens, arugula, or my favorite, beet greens. I like the combination of the vegetables and provolone with a side of salsa, but any cheese works, and it’s wonderful with green chile, as well.”

**NOT MY GRANDMA’S  
QUESADILLAS**

*Serves 6–12*

- 2 pounds mixed herbs and vegetables (e.g., carrots, onions, garlic, beet greens, broccoli or cauliflower, and cilantro)
- 1 tablespoon garlic paste (from 6–8 cloves)
- 1 teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- 3 tablespoons olive or canola oil

*Facing page, from top: Margaret Campos’s vegetarian quesadillas. Norma waits as the oven cools.*

- ½ cup water
  - 6 flour tortillas
  - ½ cup grated provolone, queso blanco, Monterey Jack, or cheddar cheese
1. Rinse vegetables. Chop onions, slice carrots, shred beet greens, and break up broccoli or cauliflower into approximately 1½-inch bits.
  2. Over medium heat, heat oil in skillet and sauté vegetables until slightly softened. Add garlic paste. When all oil is absorbed, add water and cover. Steam until vegetables are desired consistency. Add salt.
  3. Spread butter on one side of tortilla and place on heated griddle. Add vegetables and cheese. Fold over and brown slightly on both sides.

**JOHNNY VEE, LAS COSAS COOKING  
SCHOOL AND KITCHEN KRAFT**

181 Paseo de Peralta, Santa Fe;  
(505) 988-3394; lascosascooking.com;  
and 980 N. Telshor Blvd., Las Cruces;  
(575) 525-8466; kitchenkrafthome.com

Growing up in Rochester, New York, on a fairly bland diet left chef and cookbook author John Vollertsen (aka Johnny Vee) wondering what might taste better. From Sydney, Australia, and then to New Mexico, he found out. After establishing a chain of Southwestern-themed restaurants Down Under, he moved to Santa Fe and, in 1998, opened the Las Cosas Cooking School in DeVargas Center. More recently, he’s taken his show on the road to the Kitchen Kraft shop in Las Cruces. His courses feature hands-on cooking of all major cuisines, but 60 percent of his students come for the New Mexico fare. “It is such a delight to introduce both tourists and locals to our unique cookery and all the ingredients that flavor it—especially chiles, both fresh and dried. With every bite of carne adovada, green



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Johnny Vee's spicy ice cream delight.

chile stew, sopaipillas, and all the other scrumptious dishes we prepare, Rochester seems a million miles away.” Some of that chile makes its way into his ice cream recipe, a sweet finale to a home-cooked New Mexico feast.

BROWN SUGAR VANILLA ICE CREAM WITH RED CHILE CARAMEL SWIRL

Makes 1½ pints

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 6 egg yolks
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup red chile caramel sauce (see recipe; reserve the rest for another use)
- Toasted pine nuts

1. Place cream and half-and-half in a heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a simmer over low heat.
2. Stir ½ cup sugar and vanilla extract into cream. Whisk remaining sugar and yolks in a medium bowl until lemony yellow. Add ¼ cup of warm cream to yolks and whisk to combine. Add yolk mixture back into cream and return to heat. Cook the mixture, stirring constantly, until it coats the back of a spoon.
3. Remove from heat immediately and pour into a bowl. Cover and chill until very cold.
4. Freeze in ice cream maker according to manufacturer's instructions.
5. Once ice cream has reached appropriate texture, spread it onto a 9-by-13-by-2-inch baking dish, cover, and freeze. Pour cooled caramel sauce over ice cream. Using a large ice cream scoop, make long scoops into the ice cream, allowing the caramel to curl into the mixture. Place scoops in a freezer container. Freeze. Serve topped with toasted pine nuts.

RED CHILE CARAMEL SAUCE

Makes 1½ cups

- 1 cup sugar
  - ⅓ cup water
  - 1 cup heavy cream
  - 1 teaspoon salt
  - 2 tablespoons hot ground New Mexico red chile (or to taste)
1. Place sugar and water in a heavy saucepan and stir to moisten sugar. Bring to a boil, then cook until mixture reaches a deep golden brown color, about 10 minutes. Use a pastry brush dipped in cold water to keep the sides of the pan free of crystallized sugar.
  2. Remove from heat and carefully stir in cream. Use a long-handled wooden spoon, as mixture will bubble up.
  3. Return to medium heat and cook until caramel becomes smooth. Stir in salt. Allow to cool, stir in chile, cover, and refrigerate for up to two weeks.

restaurant guide

special advertising section



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MayhillNewMexico.com    \$\$  
3491 Highway 82, Mayhill  
575.687.2637

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ChurchStreetCafe.com    \$  
2111 Church St. NW, Albuquerque  
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Double Eagle

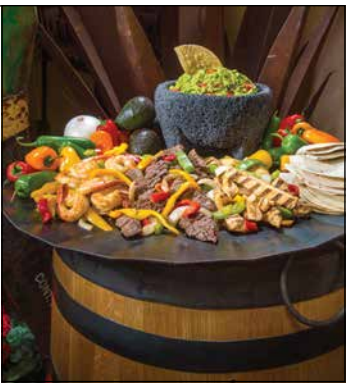
The Double Eagle is on the historic Gadsden Purchase Plaza in a haunted 165-year-old adobe building with a gold ceiling! New Mexican cuisine and aged steaks from the only dedicated beef-aging room in the state. World’s largest green chile cheeseburger, house-made green chile infused vodka Bloody Marys.



Double-Eagle-Mesilla.com    \$\$  
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