

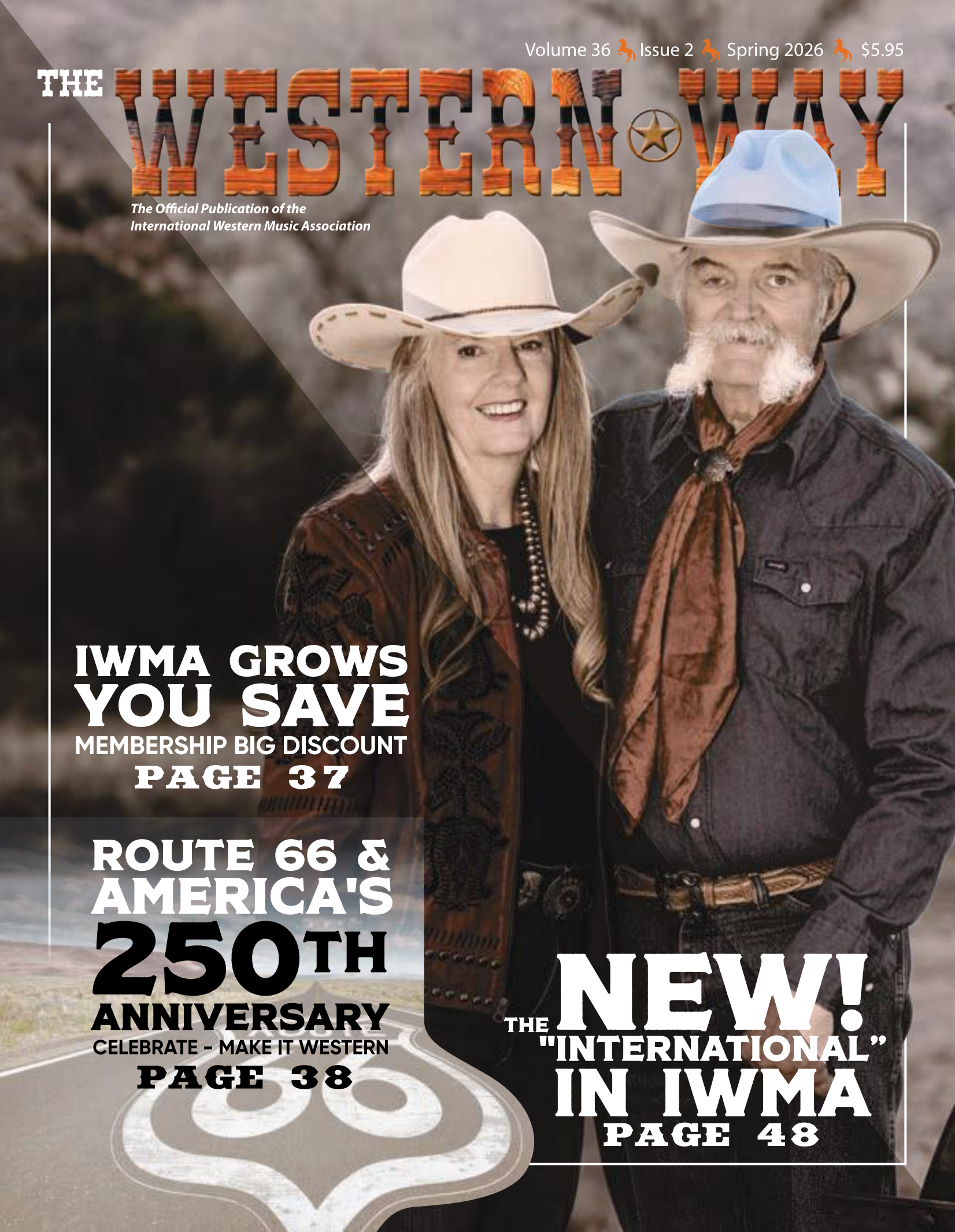
THE WESTERN WAY

The Official Publication of the
International Western Music Association

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PAGE 37

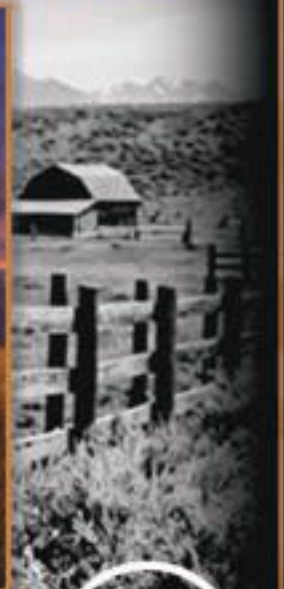
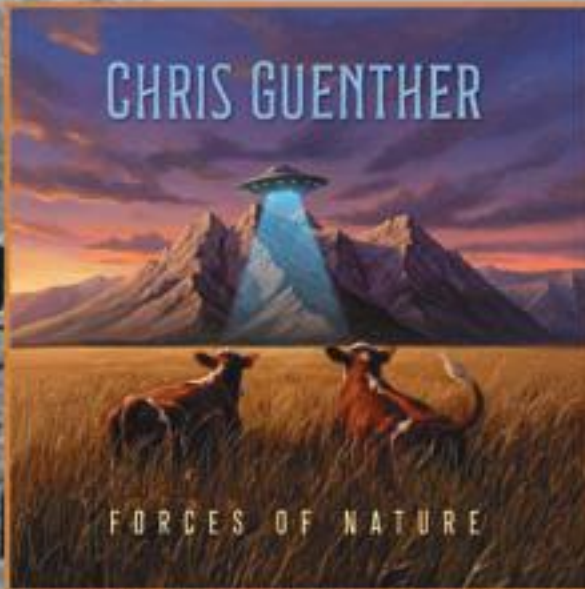
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Marvin O'Dell
IWMA President

Theresa and I bought a new car a few weeks ago – not a new experience for us, as we have purchased several cars over the years we've been married, but nevertheless an unsettling one as usual. There is no fun in purchasing a new vehicle. By the time you go through the process – dealing with high-pressure sales

people, the “other guy” who comes out and lowers the price for you a bare smidgen (that could have been, you would think, lowered by the first guy), signing all the papers you need to sign, fighting off purchasing long-term warranty deals while they shrug their shoulders as a way of letting you know how stupid you are, dealing with the fact that the car costs you a few thousand dollars more than you were considering due to taxes, licensing, doc fees, coffee for the employees fees, etc. – you wonder why you didn't just spend the same amount on your old car and restore it. However, out of this comes a word to the wise: if you don't have to buy a new car, DON'T!

I'm warning you. Especially if you are over the age of 50, be aware – be very aware. Because you are about to purchase something that will cause you to pull your hair out before you drive it off the lot.

First, a sales associate must take you through an hour-long tutorial now before you can drive the car anywhere. Not that you will remember even half of what the tutor shows you, but apparently, judging by the seriousness with which the tutor rapidly fires off this line of instruction, it's the law. This must be done because you are buying a vehicle that has all kinds of things on it that you will never use even if you could find it!

And there are some surprises. Ever since I came home from Viet Nam and bought my first brand new car, a '69 GTO, I have had cars with a gear shift between the two bucket seats in front. Not this time. The gear shift is now where the windshield wiper control used to be. If it rains, I have to be careful not to slam the car into park while driving down the highway, thinking I am turning on the wipers. The windshield will still get cleaned, however, as long as I am making a turn, because the wipers come on every time I use the turn signal.

I have driven for years with my right hand resting on that gear shifter on the floor. Now every time I take off, I reach for that gear shifter that's not there. I look like I'm waving

at some individual who is sleeping between our seats – or that I'm having a spasm or a stroke.

One of the things that I really like on this car is a warning that pops up on the computer screen telling the driver that it's dangerous to take your eyes off the road. You have to dangerously take your eyes off the road to see what just popped up and to turn it off so you can see what you need to see on the screen!

And, of course, I don't need to mention that there is no CD player in the car. You would think with all the stuff that is in the car that you don't need, they could find a place for a CD player so that we, who have bought CDs for years, would have a place to play them. I told the sales lady from whom we bought the car, “That's like selling vinyl LPs for years, and then having someone come into your home and taking your record player away from you.”

I've been a DJ now for almost 30 years. I have used the same equipment all those years. There's been no need to change it until recently. There are over 12,000 CDs in our house that have been bought or have come to me through the years for airplay. I have reviewed every single one of them for airplay over the years – while driving somewhere in my car.

I know what you're going to say here. “Just upload them on a thumb drive.” Do you know how many hours, of the limited hours I have left in this world, that would take? And I am not going to spend from my small social security check the amount of money it would take to purchase all new equipment just so I can continue broadcasting, not to mention the frustrating and mind-boggling hours I would have to spend learning how to use it. I'm not exactly a genius when it comes to technology.

You're thinking I'm being stubborn, and you are exactly right. At my age, I'm trying not to hasten my death by having to deal with things I don't understand and can't afford. This automobile purchase has probably shaved another five years off my life already while trying to learn how enough stuff works so I can even drive it.

I have concluded that what this world needs is an advisor who can look at new technology and say, “You know, that's a brilliant accomplishment – but it's not a good idea to foist that one on the people. It will frustrate them, it's unnecessary, it will put people out of work, it will make it difficult for seniors to navigate through their final years. Let's don't do that one.” I will be the first to apply for that job.

MARVIN O'DELL
President IWMA

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IN IWMA - Carol Markstrom



Floyd and Valerie Beard are Colorado ranchers and cowboy poets. Their love for the land and the western way of life is evident in the poetry they write and perform. Their poetry presents the struggles, the humor, and the awesome beauty of the creation around them while their deep underlying faith demands they acknowledge the hand of the Creator of it all.

Cover photo courtesy Jennifer Denison.

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Theresa O'Dell
Editor

February, often called the “month of love,” has come to a close. What follows is a reprint of an article I wrote in the spring of 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic — a time when many of us felt especially isolated. Its message remains meaningful today, as it reflects heartfelt gratitude for the volunteers whose generosity of time and talent keep the IWMA viable as a strong, functioning organization and brings this magazine to life four times each year.

**“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”**
— Helen Keller

As I began working on this issue of the magazine a few weeks ago, I was reminded how everything always gets done, even when life throws a curve and our best laid plans fall apart. I am no different from each of you — my life can get pretty unpredictable at times! But I thought to myself, “I’m so glad I don’t have to do this alone. I don’t have to write all the articles, take all the pictures, do all the layout work, solicit all the advertisers, send out invoicing, and create all the pieces to complete this 52-page publication each quarter.” Yes, I do have to create the content map for each issue. I do have to plan and coordinate and prod a few and remind others. I do have to stay on top of stuff! I do have to meet all the deadlines. But for the most part, I rely on the hard work of a plethora of people who write articles, chart playlists, report on chapter events, interview folks, review CDs and books, submit story ideas, solicit advertising and contribute hours to providing content for each issue of The Western Way. These terrific folks are called “volunteers!”

**“Act as if what you do makes
a difference. It does.”** — William James

The work of volunteers extends beyond the pages of The Western Way. You find them at each convention. You find them busy at work at many regional chapter events — setting up stages, selling artists’ CDs, working a table at a concert or festival telling folks about the IWMA and encouraging membership; or, you see them hosting house concerts, so performers have a place to play their music and recite their poetry! Many are DJs who give their time so there is an avenue on the airways to keep alive western music and poetry. Many are festival and venue organizers who devote hours throughout the year to provide a place where western music and poetry can be performed. These aren’t paid employees; these are volunteers!

**“Volunteers don’t get paid, not because they’re
worthless, but because they’re priceless.”**
— Sherry Anderson

But, since it is closest to my heart, I want to pause and say a sincere “thank you” to all those volunteers who contribute so much to The Western Way each quarter. You know who you are; I know who you are. I could not pull together this publication without you. I am privileged to work alongside of you as together we further the mission of the International Western Music Association, ... an organization that encourages and supports the preservation, performance and composition of historic traditional and contemporary music and poetry of The West.

Theresa

**“Volunteers do not
necessarily
have the TIME;
they just have the
HEART.”**
— Elizabeth Andrew



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THE WESTERN WAY

The Official Quarterly Publication of the IWMA
Deadline for next issue: June 1, 2026

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Modern Litho, Jefferson City, MO

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Marsha Short
Executive Director

People join associations for a variety of reasons, often seeking to connect with others who share similar interests, goals, or professional backgrounds. Associations provide opportunities for networking, professional development, access to industry information, and a sense of community.

That opening paragraph was written by AI. Not much soul to it but it does give an overview of why people join associations. Associations are like families without stress, bringing people together who enjoy the same thing. Associations make people feel like they are part of something bigger, part of a movement toward preserving something...in our case, Western Music & Cowboy Poetry.

To survive, an association needs active members...a lot of active members. Membership turns into dollars and dollars turn into more services for members. We need to advertise in more publications. We have a few trade out ads in some "niche" publications, but we need to be able to advertise in more major publications. We need to increase the circulation of The Western Way to get it into more outlets and to attract larger corporate clients.

This year, we're starting a "membership roundup." For every member you refer to IWMA, you'll get 25% off your national dues. If you refer two members, you'll receive the same discount for two years. New members can join online, fill out a membership application, or call the IWMA office. It's easy and will help spread the word about Western Music & Cowboy Poetry.

By the way, if you call the IWMA office and we don't answer, please leave a message so we can add you to our contact list. We receive 10-15 spam calls a day (we now qualify for a \$70,000 loan for just \$400 a month). And yes, we have been added to the "do not call" list several times.

Make today your peaceful day!

Marsha



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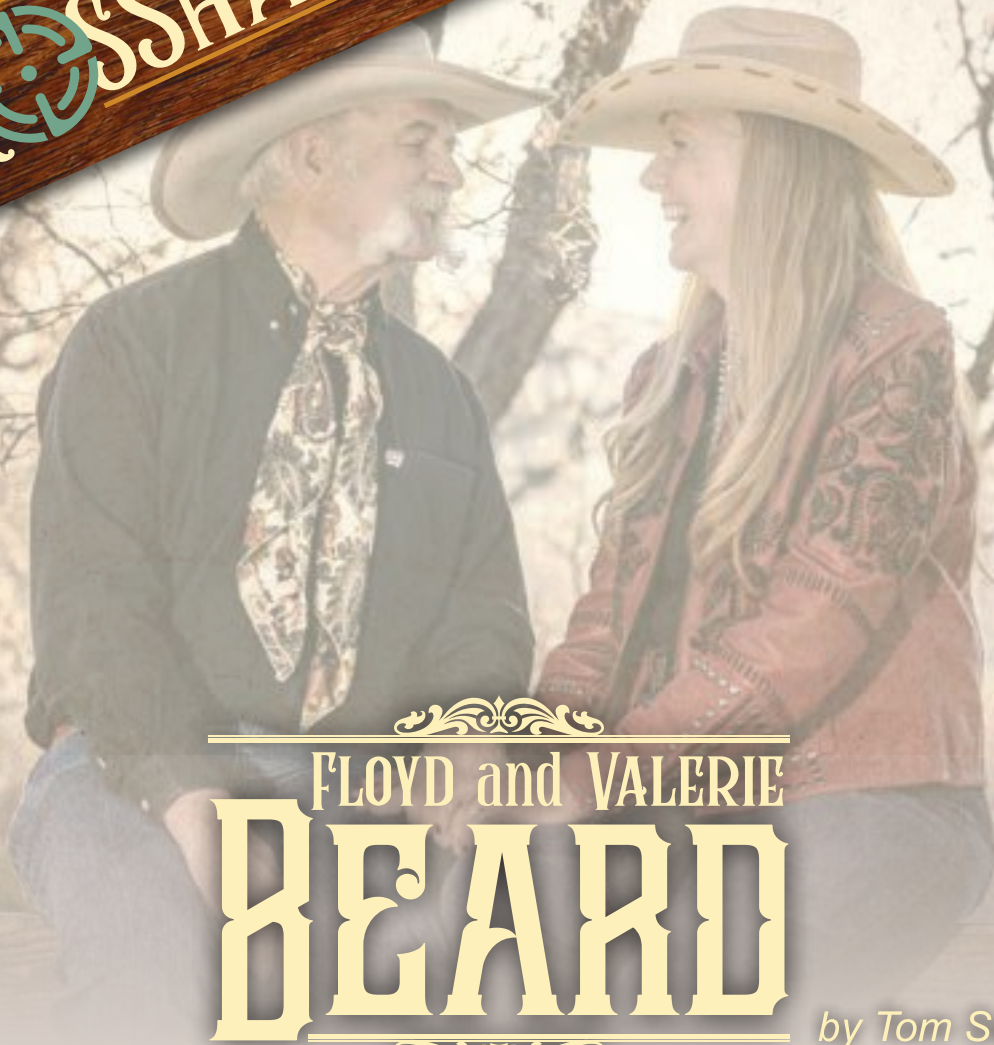
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FLOYD and VALERIE
BEARD

by Tom Swearingen

Among the most popular, awarded, and appreciated cowboy poets writing and performing today, husband and wife Floyd and Valerie Beard will be no strangers to most readers of this magazine. (Oh yes, and besides their poetry, they are also just flat-out good people.)

Floyd, born and raised in northeast New Mexico, and Valerie, daughter of northeast Colorado farmers, currently run a Corriente cross cow-calf operation in the canyons south of Kim, Colorado.

Floyd grew up just a few miles from both sets of livestock-raising grandparents and appreciates how they influenced him not only in raising cattle and livestock but in the mechanical skills his grandfather on his mom's side taught him. "He never had any training, but he could overhaul any engine. He'd tell me... just lay it all out in the order it comes apart and then you'll know how to put it back

together if you need to," Floyd recalls. Continuing, "He also taught me the basics like blacksmithing, forge work, and anvil work. I still do it but it's a lot harder with one hand." More on Floyd's "one hand" later.

That grandfather also had a little family band playing at country dances around the area, so singing and instruments were a staple of his early years. Floyd credits that with inspiring his artistic side.

Moving to western Colorado in high school in the '70s, a creative writing class got him started on what would eventually be a big part of his life. "I took my interest in cattle and cowboying to the mountains, and that transferred right into numerous poems. Back then I didn't know there was a thing called cowboy poetry. I was just a cowboy who wrote poetry," says Floyd. "All my life I have loved to make words rhyme. I remember when I was four or five years old and we'd be in the car I would make up rhymes just to share them, and Mom



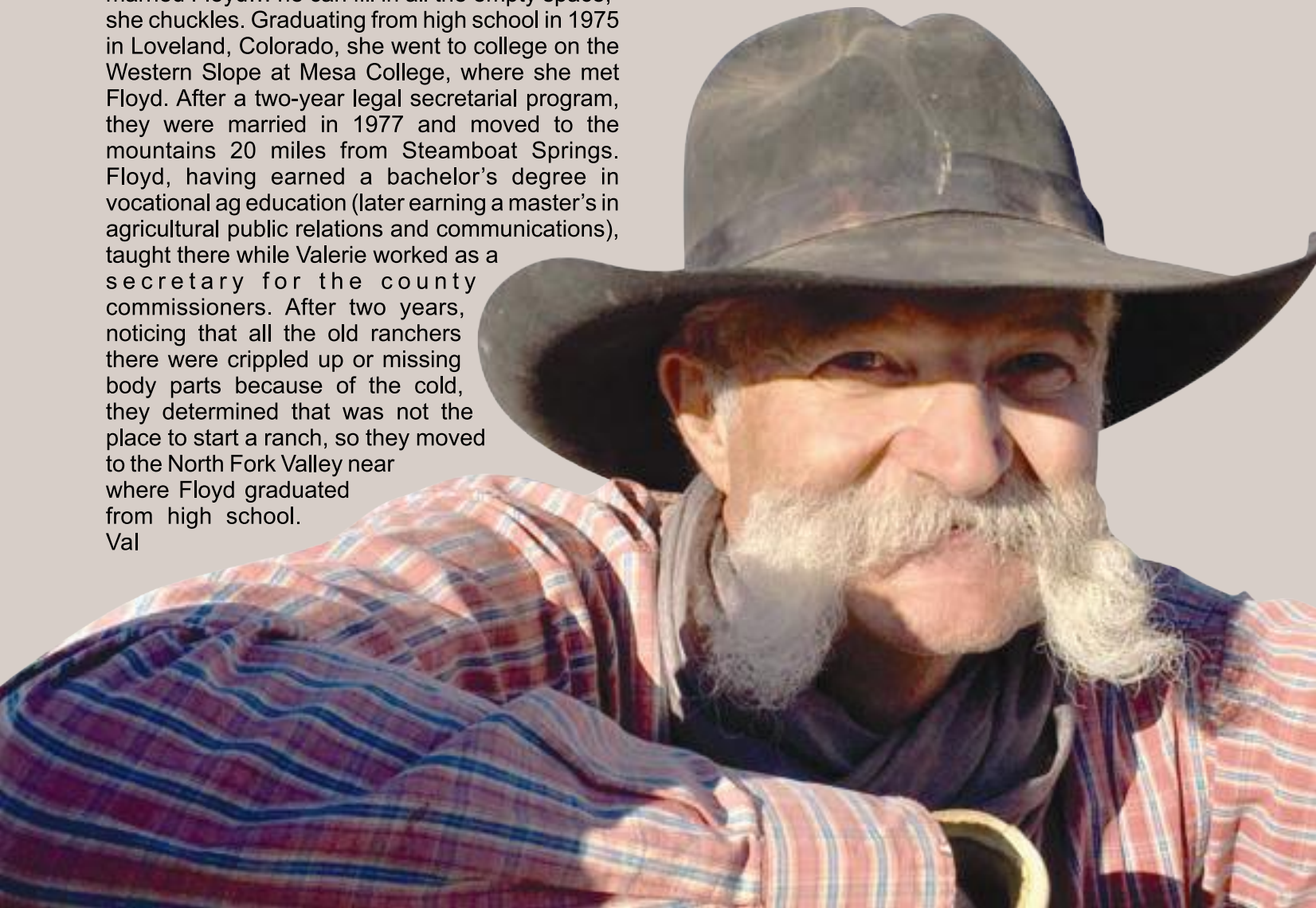
and Dad would like to hear them.” The second youngest of five brothers, those car-trip performances with seven people in a six-passenger car foretold of the packed-house audiences Floyd would come to enjoy later as headliner at poetry gatherings and events throughout the West.

As for Valerie’s story, “My part will be quicker because I’m a less-is-more girl. Maybe that’s why I married Floyd... he can fill in all the empty space,” she chuckles. Graduating from high school in 1975 in Loveland, Colorado, she went to college on the Western Slope at Mesa College, where she met Floyd. After a two-year legal secretarial program, they were married in 1977 and moved to the mountains 20 miles from Steamboat Springs. Floyd, having earned a bachelor’s degree in vocational ag education (later earning a master’s in agricultural public relations and communications), taught there while Valerie worked as a secretary for the county commissioners. After two years, noticing that all the old ranchers there were crippled up or missing body parts because of the cold, they determined that was not the place to start a ranch, so they moved to the North Fork Valley near where Floyd graduated from high school.
Val

erie worked as a secretary for a coal mine until she stopped to have their kids, and Floyd worked at a ranch taking care of cattle, eventually going back into education. After the kids got old enough, Valerie went back to college, commuting for a couple of years to get a teaching degree, and then a teaching job.

After a few years, they moved to southeast Colorado, in the meantime having both of their children, Laneha and Justin. Later, they moved to Springfield, Colorado, where Floyd was superintendent and Valerie was a teacher. The whole time, they also had cows. Now, Justin and his wife Tamra, with twins Ashlynn and Braelynn and younger sister Cashen, live about two and a half hours away, where they raise cattle. Laneha and her husband Casey and son Audy live about an hour away in the other direction. “So we drive A LOT,” emphasizes Valerie.

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Valerie's path to poetry came later than Floyd's. "In my teaching years, writing was the most challenging thing to teach first graders but also the most rewarding thing to do," she recalls. "Then I retired and followed Floyd around when doing his poetry. I tagged along to a workshop at the IWMA convention in 2013 or so. They talked about meter, stressed and unstressed syllables, rhyme schemes, and so forth, and I thought, 'That might

be fun. I should try to do that.'" Having heard about internal rhyme and how challenging that could be, she decided to incorporate that into her first poem. The next year's convention included a new poetry contest, which she entered with that poem and won. So there was no going back. Over the next several years, writing occasionally when a topic or inspiration came to mind, she was soon close to having enough poems for a CD. With a recording session scheduled, she forced herself

to sit down and write two more poems to fill out the album. One of those, "Where Ponies Fairly Prance," was and continues to be one of her favorites and most popular with audiences. The album *No Better Life* was a CD of the Year finalist that year and winner the next, in 2023. Along the way, she was named Female Poet of the Year in 2022 and 2023. Floyd was also recognized by the IWMA in 2023 as Male Poet of the Year, as he had been in 2021, 2017, and 2016.



Floyd writes several poems a week. "Some are good for performing, some are probably good for a book, and some are best not to see the light of day," Floyd assesses. "I didn't even know about cowboy poetry until a cowboy friend named Nyle Henderson made an appearance on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* in the '80s when Johnny featured notable cowboy poets. Nyle heard some of my poems and said I needed to be doing this. So, I started writing more



retired teacher group led to an invitation to share with a church group, which led to people giving him other ideas for places to perform. One of the first was a county fair, where Floyd found himself in front of a total audience of two women. “I gave those two ladies 45 minutes of poetry. Turns out they were on the organizing committee for the Colorado Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Arvada.” They were so impressed that he was hired for the next year’s gathering. Next thing you know, he was invited to other gatherings, and it expanded from there. About this time, he also started going to IWMA conventions in the early 2000s. The more he performed, the more he’d get asked, “Will you come and do a poetry reading for us?” He’d tell them, “No. I don’t do ‘readings,’ but I’ll come and perform it for you. I’ll do it from memory and put the emphasis on it so you can build a picture in your mind of what I’m saying.” They’d generally say, “OK... that sounds good.” And of course, it did sound good and does sound good to those fortunate enough to be in Floyd’s audiences.

... continued on pg.12

poems about what I was doing. I didn’t know anything about rhyme or meter at that time. I still today just tend to write and listen to it in my mind, and sometimes the meter is a little loose and sometimes it’s pretty tight. That just kind of comes naturally.”

Performing for Floyd came later, although he was comfortable in front of audiences, having won a “Voice of Democracy” speech contest in high school and being a state and national award-winning Young Farmers Association speaker. So what got Floyd started performing? Sharing some poems with a



Writing poetry must wait when the herd is hungry.





... continued from pg. 11

Floyd (left) with poet friends Duane Nelson, Tom Swearingen, Dale Page and Terry Nash

Like Valerie, as mentioned earlier, Floyd's recordings have been well received. His 2016 Short Grass Country received significant airplay, as did Horse Tails and Cow Trails, which was named 2021 Cowboy Poetry CD of the Year. Valerie has plans to record again. But first, "I have to write some more. I have a zillion starts... little ideas I want to pursue."

Floyd reports he's almost ready to lay down tracks on his next project. Floyd also writes a monthly column, "The Short Grass Philosopher," for Fence Post Magazine and numerous newspapers and periodicals. Recently, he's also connected with Kevin Tuckfield (IWMA DJ of the Year) and his radio show Cowboy Radio Ride and is doing a weekly segment called "Cut Out from the Herd," featuring a poet one

week and a musician the next. Floyd is also working on a couple of books — one poetry collection and one nonfiction book with his daughter-in-law. His and Valerie's poetry was also featured, along with that of Dale Page, Terry Nash, and Dennis Russell, in the book *Four Aces and a Queen*, which received a Western Wordsmiths Special Achievement Award in 2021. Floyd has also been successful with songwriting co-writes. "IWMA came up with the idea of a Team Penning contest pairing a musician and a poet writing about an assigned theme. I shared a poem start with my friend Doug Figgs, and he added his magic to a song we called 'El Caballo del Fuego.' That ended up with a Wrangler Award. We've come up with three or four I think are really good. And I enjoy a little singing. Valerie tells me not to because I don't think she likes my singing," he admits. "It would probably be more kind to say she 'advises' me not to."

Beyond writing and performing, Valerie and Floyd enjoy additional artistic pursuits. Valerie is a quilter. "But I mostly enjoy buying fabric," she laughs. Long enjoying sculpting, the aneurysm and resulting stroke Floyd suffered on the drive to perform at the 2018 Cochise Cowboy Poetry & Music Gathering make that too difficult now without the use of his left hand. But always the artist, he's gotten into pencil and charcoal drawing and has started painting.

Of course, the stroke has also affected his poetry. "It



Book signing of *Four Aces and a Queen* (Seated from left: Floyd, Dale Page, Dennis Russell, Terry Nash; Standing Valerie).

comes into play in ways people don't even think about. I used to take the mic in hand and be quite animated all over the stage. Now, I pretty much have to leave it in the stand so my one hand is available if I need it," he explains. Continuing, he says, "Going to poetry events brings its own stress, wondering how they're going to get me on stage, if they have steps, is there a handrail on those steps? And if so, what side is the handrail on? There are lots of things that most people don't even think about. My diction has required a lot of work because the left side of my tongue is paralyzed. So I have to work very hard at not slurring. And I must time my speaking not for when I can get a breath but for when I can swallow, because otherwise spittle may go down the wrong tube and the rest of the performance will be me coughing and sputtering. It's hard, but I have a passion for continuing to do poetry."

What are their poetic influences and favorites? Both mention Robert Service and Henry Herbert Knibbs, as well as Bruce Kiskaddon and Banjo Paterson. Those two were so impactful that they named their cats Bruce Kiskatten and Banjo Katerson. Other Valerie favorites are Elizabeth Ebert, Yvonne

Hollenbeck, and Doris Daley. Floyd adds S. Omar Barker and Buck Ramsey and finds Dale Page especially helpful in regard to meter. "But I never let meter get in the way of a good story. If it's exactly on meter, so be it. The important thing is that the rhythm is pleasant to the ear."

Performances on the horizon include the Arizona, Genoa, Durango, and Western Slope gatherings, which will no doubt thrill audiences and create more good memories for Floyd and Valerie. With that, Floyd recalls two highlight memories. One, which he considers his greatest honor, was being invited to perform for an annual reunion of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. The other was a performance that included a leotard-wearing yoga instructor in the audience. "For every poem she would strike a different yoga pose and hold it through the poem. In one pose she was sitting there with her leg up by her ear. That's a memory."



Tom Swearingen is an Oregon cowboy poet often inspired by his own experiences and observations from the saddle. 2025, 2022, and 2019 IWMA Male Poet of the Year, Tom brings his stories to life with rhythm and rhyme and a style that makes him a popular performer. Tom's book Reflection was named 2020 IWMA Cowboy Poetry Book of the Year. For more on Tom visit oregoncowboypoet.com.

CHAPTER UPDATES

ARIZONA CHAPTER

President: Dan McCorison
danmccorison@icloud.com



In March, the Arizona Chapter began experimenting with regional meetings. In the past, the cost and time it takes to travel across this

very large state has discouraged some folks from attending statewide get-togethers. Hopefully having more regional meetings will allow us to personally touch base with at least some of our fellow lovers and supporters of western music and poetry. We'll be discussing business, eating snacks and most importantly, sharing poetry and songs. Many thanks to the efforts and generosity of our members, Patty Wands and Marty Nelson, for their help in making this happen! The Northern AZ meeting was held on March 8 in Prescott in the Sharlot Hall educational building. We will send out notices to chapter members to encourage all Arizona performers and fans to make their way to a meeting taking place in their area. To know locations for future meetings and chapter-sponsored events, or to host a chapter gathering in your area, contact me at danmccorison@icloud.com.

BLACK HILLS & BEYOND CHAPTER

President: Brad Exton
ramblinrangers@yahoo.com

It's hard to believe that spring is just around the bend, but it's obvious by the way everyone's schedule is filling up. Paul Larson was a headliner at the Black Hills Stock Show/Rodeo Rapid City, representing IWMA and the BH&B Chapter, while playing some mighty fine music in his signature baritone voice. Paul's spring and summer schedule includes his 16th year performing for the chuckwagon dinner show at Palmer Gulch KOA. In addition, he performs throughout the state with poet Ken Cook, as "Cowboy Culture, South Dakota Style". Greg Hager, award winning singer/songwriter from North Dakota will be making his sixth trip to Japan to perform his compositions for very appreciative Japanese audiences. Greg is a great ambassador for the international part of IWMA. He has recorded his 11th CD of original

tunes which will be out this spring. Be sure and get your copy of it. "Outlaw" Bodhi and "Pinky the Bandit" Linde are busy filling their schedule with summer gigs and festivals in SD and beyond. Bodhi is currently researching colleges to attend and is narrowing down his choices. Pegie Douglas is also busy scheduling her hectic spring and summer season at various gatherings such as Valentine, NE, libraries and senior centers. Dean Bruce is looking forward to another year of reciting poetry at various cowboy gatherings in the BH&B Chapter area. It appears that Harland Allen is becoming a headliner in the historic town of Deadwood, SD. He will be performing regularly during the summer at Smokin' Jays Saloon and Lil's at The Midnight Star. You can also catch him at some of the chapter sponsored events throughout the year. Mike Linderman reports that the Hot Springs Arts Festival will again sponsor a Western Sunday on June 28th at Centennial Park. Stay tuned for information on it. The Ramblin' Rangers had a full schedule of performances while they were in New Mexico for the winter and continue to be busy as they head north. They will be performing at Valentine, and several other gatherings and festivals within the BH&B chapter area. They plan on recording a single in the next few months with release by fall. On a sad note, we lost one of our close friends and one of the original founders of the BH&B Chapter, Richard Cederburg. Richard was our first Treasurer and husband of poet, Sherl Cederburg. He will be greatly missed.

Continued on pg. 17



The Ramblin' Rangers and Doug Figgs perform at Tumbleweed Theatre, Columbus, NM



RIDE EASY, PARD!

Jack & Jordan

BY VIC ANDERSON

Jack occasionally worked at the Dogie ranch where I worked. A good hand, he spent much of his life working as a cook/chef in some of the nicer restaurants in Helena., Montana. Now and then he needed to get outside and help with haying or working livestock.

Gordon was a local ranch hand and sheepherder. A good hand, but had to go to town now and then. He had some of the strangest accidents happen to him, which were directly caused by his thirst for whiskey.

Both Jack and Gordon were "Goosey." They overreacted to loud noises, sudden movements and such. When they first began working at the ranch we sometimes startled them in some manner, on purpose, just to see what would happen, but after realizing they couldn't help but overreact, we stopped.

Gordon was back at work when Jack came out to help for a week or so. As the newest hand, Jack was at the far end of the table that seated a dozen or so. At his back was the outside wall with large windows. Lilac bushes lined the outside wall.

Gordon was a little late as he started around the end of the table to his chair that was placed right next to Jack. Jack had just been handed the platter of steaks. Gordon reached down to pick something up, a fork or spoon, I think.

As he straightened up, it startled Jack. Jack's hands flew up; the platter of steaks went out through the windows and landed in the lilac bushes.

Every new hand had to hear that story from then on. Goosing was forever forbidden.

RIDE EASY PARD.....Vic

VIC ANDERSON of Estes Park, CO, is a Singer/Songwriter, 3-time IWMA champion yodeler, virtuoso melodic whistler, poet, author, columnist and voice over narrator. As Vice-president of the Western Wordsmiths Chapter of the IWMA, Vic has long been an advocate for writing short stories as another way of presenting tales of the West.

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Rick Huff	Albuquerque, NM	Paula Erlene Williamson	Branson, MO
Voleta Hummel	Sierra Vista, AZ	Norman Winter	Mills, WY
Elana James	Austin, TX	Joyce Woodson	San Juan Capistrano, CA

CHAPTER UPDATES

...Continued from pg. 14

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

President: Scott Tonelson
scott.tonelson@gmail.com

California chapter members have had some fun shows recently as well as some coming up. In January we did a show for the Empty Saddle Club in Rolling Hills Estates. Our newest member, Feter Martin Homer joined ScottT, Earnie Neagle, Sharone Rosen w/Marc Hochberg and Greg Khougaz along with the Empty Saddle Club members for a fun evening of Western and Country songs and Cowboy poetry. February 28, Earnie Neagle and ScottT shared the stage with Jerry Hall, Ed Hughes and Randy Fowler (Trick Shot) as well as local artists for Our heroes' Dreams benefit concert in Porterville Memorial Auditorium (Our Heroes' Dreams serves current and former members of United States Armed Forces, First Responders, Peace Officers, Contractors, and Gold Star Families) March 27, ScottT and Earnie Neagle joined Fiddlin' Pete Watercott, at the Lone Pine FFA benefit auction and BBQ held at the Lone Pine Movie Museum. July 6, we have a post-4th of July show in Orange County.



The Timberline Cowboys

COLORADO CHAPTER

President: Geary Parsons
gearyparsons@outlook.com

Because our chapter members are spread across the United States, we will continue hosting our quarterly meetings via Zoom. I am now beginning my third—and final—year as Colorado Chapter President. I encourage anyone interested in serving our chapter to start considering a leadership role. The Colorado Cowboy Gathering was held January 30–31 in Golden, celebrating its 35th year. This year's invited performers were all from Colorado. The IWMA Colorado Chapter was proudly represented by Vic Anderson, Jon

Chandler, Ray Delgado, Steve Jones, Susie Knight, Dennis Russell, George Russell, Bruce Johnson, Ernie Martinez, Lindy Simmons, and JJ Steele. Many of the performers also took part in the schools' program prior to the gathering, sharing insights on Western history as well as the craft of writing poetry and music. Patty Clayton was named Grand Champion at the inaugural Western Talent Competition, held during the 120th Annual National Western Stock Show in Denver and hosted by the Colorado Cowboy Gathering in January. The competition featured poets, musicians, and storytellers from across the region. Peggy Malone traveled by train from Grand Junction to Elko, Nevada, to attend the premiere of Kristyn Harris's film *Ranch Musical*. While there, she performed three songs at an open mic event. Peggy stayed just one night before Terry Nash drove her home. Our newest IWMA Colorado Chapter member, Meghan Clarisse, released her album *Shadows of a Ghost Town* on September 26, 2025. The project blends country and Americana influences to explore themes of place, memory, and mortality across the landscapes of the American West. The album has been praised for its poetic songwriting and soulful instrumentation. The Timberline Cowboys are currently working on their fifth album, *Spirits on the High Desert*. They are also hosting Cowboy Tuesdays at the Diamond Belle Saloon in the Strater Hotel in Durango, Colorado, with performances scheduled to continue through September 2026. The duo recently released their single, "Whispers on the Wind." Wishing you all a pleasant spring—I look forward to seeing you this summer.



Lindy Simmons educates young people about western poetry and music during the Colorado Cowboy Gathering

Continued on pg. 20

In MEMORIAM

BOBBY BURLERSON (1946-2026)



Bobby Burlerson, 79, has completed his earthly journey and, after a courageous battle with cancer, entered into eternal victory. On January 21, 2026, Bobby peacefully transitioned from his earthly body into his heavenly one at home, surrounded by those who loved him most. He now stands whole and restored before his Savior, Jesus Christ, having taken his first triumphant steps into Paradise. Bobby, a Bit and Spur maker and Chuckwagon Cook, was born on July 11, 1946, in Knox City, Texas, to Tinie Lewis Burlerson and Leona Whitsett Burlerson. He lived a life marked by steadfast faith, quiet strength, and unwavering integrity. He is survived by his loving wife, Teresa G. Burlerson; his devoted children, John Wayne Burlerson and wife Ashley; and Jennifer Michelle

Burlerson Crites and husband Bryan; his stepdaughter, Tami Deshotel; and his stepson, Mickey Glover. He also leaves behind his cherished grandchildren, Chance Crites, Madison Crites, Emily Crites, Cassie Deshotel, and Dorothy Guinn, as well as his brother, Joe Burlerson. Bobby was loved and held in high regard by friends that are too numerous to mention. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Teresa L. Burlerson; his parents; his sisters, Dorothy Arwine and Vicky Garcia; and his brother, Walter Burlerson. Bobby leaves behind a legacy of faith, love, and integrity—a life lived humbly yet powerfully for Christ. Though deeply missed, his family finds comfort in the promise of reunion and the assurance that this goodbye is not forever. We will meet you at the throne of Christ, Bobby.

MARY MARGARET RYLAND (1945-2026)



Mary Margaret Ryland was born May 3, 1945 in Las Vegas, NM. and passed away January 4, 2026, following a brief illness with complications. Mary found a life of people who loved her and lots of Western Music. Not “Country,” as she would quickly advise anyone who confused the two! After graduating from St. Pius High School and attending Mount Saint Mary College in California, Mary would variously work as a professional ‘Gal Friday,’ a chairside dental assistant, in the commercial scheduling department of KKJY-FM radio and Communications Director for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. She co-founded the Fair West Neighborhood Association in the 1970s. During much of her professional life she also promoted her beloved Western Music through her Sidekick Productions. Her stage shows featured such artists as Ian Tyson, Riders In The Sky, Bob Wills’ Texas

Playboys, Don Edwards, Sons of the San Joaquin, along with Country artists Doug Kershaw and Baillie & The Boys. She was particularly proud to have brought the Sons of the Pioneers to the old Hiland Theater for two shows. As emcee for many of these, she used her eventual life

partner Rick Huff, with whom she eventually co-produced the radio show *The Best Of The West Revue*, the album "Hi, Pardner" (recordings of Hi Busse & The Frontiersmen w/Roy Rogers, Eddie Dean, Doc & Festus and others) and the double CD "The Best of New Mexico Western – Big Surprises From Behind The Chile Curtain." Since the early 1990s she has supported the International Western Music Association both physically and financially. From the IWMA she received the Bill Wiley Award for outstanding efforts on behalf of Western Music, and she and Rick influenced getting Western Song of the Year Awards established with both the Western Writers of America Spur Awards and the NM Music Awards. Mary also was proud of her extensive collection of "Happy Trails" items, which she displayed a few times during the November conferences. She was also a strong supporter of animal rights. Mary was preceded in passing by her brother Harry Ryland, Jr. She is survived by her loving 'Service Dog' Rick Huff; nephew Patrick Ryland, wife Fanny Cost and children Lilah and Nolan Ryland of Rodez, France; cousins Charlotte Kosir and husband Dr. Chris Kosir of Santa Fe; and cousins Leo and Dennis Rodriguez of Colorado and wives Teresa and Camilla. Her wish for all: "Go in peace, not in pieces." In her memory, please contribute to the IWMA [505-563-0673 or email marsha@westernmusic.org] and Animal Humane.

RICHARD CEDERBURG (1952-2026)



Richard was born in Kimball, Nebraska on July 27, 1952, to Roger and Ella Mae (Anderson) Cederburg. There he raised three daughters. He kept busy with the girls' 4-H and school activities. He farmed for thirty plus years. In 2001 Richard married Sherl and moved to Northglenn, Colorado. Through that marriage he gained two more daughters. In Colorado Richard worked as a warehouse manager and as a welder/fabricator. He was a hard worker all his life. He and Sherl moved to Hot Springs, South Dakota in 2020, just as the pandemic was shutting the country down. (They came to visit friends here some years earlier and fell in love with the Black Hills. Richard always looked for ways to help others. He helped countless people move, helped build houses, welded for others, and stopped to help stranded motorists. Some of his hobbies were hunting and fishing, riding horses, and entertaining others. Richard loved music all his life and was a member of the International Western Music Association. He faithfully supported Sherl as she performed Cowboy Poetry around the country. Richard was always active in their local church. He led the Missions team for several years. This was something very special to his heart. He continued this until his health failed. He loved Jesus all his life, and we can take comfort in knowing that he is in Jesus' arms now. Richard is survived by his wife Sherl, daughters: Danessa (Travis) Terrill, Jennifer (Josh) Gillming, Cathy (Wes) Lee; Cindy (David) Schenck, Becky (Steve) McFarland, sisters: Karen (Robert) Chelle, Betty Kuhlman, Sharon (Nick) Brown; brothers: James (Donna) Cederburg, and Robert (April) Cederburg, and eight grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his parents, Roger and Ella Mae Cederburg. The family would like to thank everyone who has helped in these difficult last two years. A Celebration of Life was held on February 20, 2026, in Hot Springs, SD.

CHAPTER UPDATES

...Continued from pg. 17

COLUMBIA CHAPTER

President: Tom Swearingen
tomswearingen@gmail.com



Tom Swearingen entertains and informs at a library program.

Our chapter's 6th annual youth cowboy poetry contest is receiving entries. Good stuff! Open to 3-12 grade students in OR, WA, ID, and BC, the deadline is Sept. 1. Grade, middle, and high school winners will be awarded \$250, a Molly's Custom Silver trophy buckle, and a year's youth membership in the IWMA. For online entry and info visit iwmacolumbia.org. The chapter will again be hosting a member and community western music and cowboy poetry open mic in Prineville, OR in conjunction with the Crooked River Roundup Rodeo. The event will take place in the Crook County Historical Society's Bowman Museum and has gained additional support from the Crooked River Roundup Foundation. The Foundation and the Bowman are also enthusiastic



Crowd gathering for a Columbia Chapter event

about our annual Columbia Chapter Showcase fall concert. A full house last year, it will likely expand to also involve an additional venue. Meanwhile, members are performing here and there. Those reporting their activities for this update are Kathy Moss, who is set for a performance and western writing workshop at Crossroads Carnegie Art Center in Baker City, OR, and Tom Swearingen who has been invited to present several cowboy poetry programs at Oregon libraries in recognition of National Poetry Month.



Poet and author Kathy Moss

KANSAS CHAPTER

President: Martha Farrell
marthafarrell@gmail.com



Jim Mathis

The celebration of Kansas Day on January 29th is always big for our IWMA members. Did you know that "Home on the Range" is the State Song of Kansas. It was written in a little cabin in northwest Kansas that is a tourist attraction today, thanks in part to our member Orin Friesen. Kansas is the only state in the country to have cowboy song as our state song. Jeff



Orin Friesen at Home on the Range Cabin

Davidson and Annie Wilson do a lot of presentations in schools. Annie has enjoyed putting on her cowboy clothes this year and singing with kids about ranching and preserving the Tallgrass Prairie. Morey Sullivan and the Brazos Valley Boys are releasing a recording on the Heart of Texas Record label called "Instrumentals" (available at Brazosvalleyboys.com). They were delighted to play at the Oklahoma State Capitol in March for the annual BobWills Day in Oklahoma. Jim Mathis has just started a YouTube channel called "Jim Coffee House" (jimscoffeehouse.com). He's launching a new 15-20-minute show featuring various musical guests on the first Friday of each month. Cowboy poet Ron Wilson has been selected to be part of the Kansas Folklife Speaker's Bureau in support of America 250 and is the only one representing cowboy culture. This is funded by a grant from the Smithsonian.



Annie Wilson -shares songs about ranching and the Tallgrass Prairie with kids at a local library

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER

President: Judi Anderson
judianderson@comcast.net



The Cowboy Way and friends perform at the farewell tour event.

On February 7, our chapter sponsored The Cowboy Way's Farewell Concert at the Best Western Rio Grande in Albuquerque. After more than 13 years, the Cowboy Way has decided to "retire" the group. It was also a Thank You concert. The hat was passed and the group graciously gave all donations to the New Mexico IWMA chapter. About 150 people were in attendance to say so long to this group. Although Jim Jones, Doug Figgs and Miriam Funk will still be out and about sharing their amazing talent with us, we will miss the Cowboy Way. The chapter is currently working with 66 Diner in Albuquerque to provide 2 days of western music this year to celebrate Route 66's 100th Anniversary. We will be using our talented IWMA-NM Musicians. At the January chapter meeting we selected the events for 2026. Besides our Holiday Concert and our monthly Song and Poetry Corral, Open Mic, we are working on a New Mexico Day of the Cowgirl event. Our Song & Poetry Corral/Open Mic continues to be very successful! We have acquired 3 new members through the open mic night! Our musicians continue to be very busy and appear at many venues, house concerts and western radio shows. Syd Masters performed at Mary Ryland's Celebration of Life on February 27. Mary was very instrumental in bringing western music to New Mexico and getting gigs for our members. She will be sorely missed by the Western Music Community.

OKLAHOMA CHAPTER

President: Leigh Ann Matthews
info@matthews-music.com

Scott and Leigh Ann Matthews performed for the 1st Annual Muskogee Farm Show & Expo Vendor Appreciation Gathering in March at Hatbox Event Park. Robert and Vicki Beene of 3B Ministries, Oktaha, OK now offer traditional cowboy church with music and poetry, horseback services for events, organizations, etc. More information is available on Facebook, 3B Ministries, by email at 3bministriesok@gmail.com or by calling 918-441-1063. Members of the Oklahoma chapter have been invited to perform during the Clem McSpadden Cowboy Trade Day and Ranch Horse Show in Claremore in May and would like to include as many members as possible. Contact Leigh Ann Matthews 918-869-8873 for information.

TENNESSEE CHAPTER

President: Aspen Black
aspen@aspenblackcowgirl.com

The Tennessee Chapter Board is looking for spaces in the Greater Nashville area where the chapter can gather for business meetings and song circles. They are also working on plans for a National Day of the Cowboy event in the southeast. Mark Lynn Young will be performing at an April 29th Tribute Concert for legendary Nashville Songwriter Hall of Fame member Jim McBride, who passed away on January 7. Mark has been asked to return for a second appearance at the "Grinders Switch Radio Hour" in Centerville, TN (the "birthplace" of Minnie Pearl) on May 9, and he's performing on May 19 at 3rd and Lindsey in Nashville at the HOT WRITERS for COOL CHARITIES songwriter fundraiser (an event organized by Kaysie P. Young's philanthropic company NoteWorthy Charities). The event will celebrate the "Year of the Horse" and raise money and awareness for two nonprofit organizations that help people and horses. Gone With The West had a very fun and successful touring season, making their debut at the Tennessee State Fair and still celebrating their Group of the Year Award from the IWMA conference. They've been in the studio, working on new recordings, and also found time for a band retreat in the mountains of Tennessee. While the ice was beginning to melt in Nashville, they found themselves snowbound by 20 inches of fresh powder! Phoebe White is excited to be invited to perform at the 2026 Road to the Horse World Championship of Colt Starting. The event takes place March 19-22 at Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington KY. Kerry Grombacher released a single, "Cowboy Heart," a tribute to his friend and mentor, legendary South Dakota cowboy Bob Lantis, who died in early 2025 at age 90. In late January and early February, Kerry was on a 26-day out-and-back tour, with 19 concerts in Arizona, Minnesota, and South Dakota. Micki Fuhrman was named 2024 Western/Country Female Vocalist at the Academy of Western Artists award show. Micki and Doug Green won 2024 Western Swing Song for "Swing on By."



*Micki Fuhrman shows awards received from AWA 2025
Photo courtesy Aspen Black.*

Continued on pg. 22

CHAPTER UPDATES

...Continued from pg. 21

TEXAS CHAPTER

President: Cary Wiseman
Wisemanranch71@gmail.com

2026 has had an amazing start, and we want to thank everyone who came out to the Piney Woods Cowboy Gathering in January! We had a really good turnout and are working on some more events for the year. We were really fortunate to have members from all over come out to the cowboy gathering to perform, including Kerry Grombacher, Kaylea Stafford, Ed Meyer, Devon Dawson, and many more. We sincerely thank each of y'all for supporting Texas chapter events, and can't wait to bring some more events to other parts of Texas! God Bless and Happy Trails!!



Kerry Grombacher performs at Piney Woods Cowboy Gathering.



Kaylea Stafford and Ed Meyer performing at Piney Woods Cowboy Gathering.



Devon Dawson performing at Piney Woods Cowboy Gathering.

WESTERN WORDSMITHS CHAPTER

President: Ron Wilson
Ron@ronscowboypoetry.com

Happy America 250! Western Wordsmiths officers have adopted a program of work which would seek to promote cowboy history and poetry as part of the nation's 250th birthday. Members have gotten off to good start. Terry Nash attended the Lonestar Gathering in Bastrop, Texas and Jeff Davidson performed at the Western Plains Arts Association in Quinter, Kansas. Mark Munzert has stayed busy performing at senior centers. Our theme continues to be "The Power of Words: Heritage, Creativity, Service." A 2026 goal was to identify a chapter youth liaison, and we are delighted that Lindy Simmons has agreed to serve in that capacity. Another chapter goal for 2026 is the development of a website for Western Wordsmiths. We are working with Martha Farrell, IWMA-Kansas President, who is developing the website. The goals of the website will be to introduce cowboy poetry and the Western Wordsmiths chapter to the public and to promote our performing members to those interested in booking entertainment. The proposed website will include topics such as awards, performers, audio and video examples, calendar of upcoming cowboy events, how to join, and more. The chapter plans to continue quarterly Zoom meetings with the members, and we invite you to join us. Let's celebrate cowboy history and America 250! 🐾

Penned by Lantern Light

*COWCAMP SERENADE
by Duane Nelson*

Drifting...

...with the moonbeams on the evening breeze descent,
Comes a wild and eerie chorus...the coyote pack's lament.
It rustles through the cheatgrass and it shifts amongst the sage,
And sails along the breezes like the turning of a page.

There's soprano, alto, tenor...thus the melody is laid,
A canine choir symphony, the cowcamp serenade.
A sonata of the desert, the voices ringing free.
As Nature's wild artists sing a midnight harmony.

A solo voice comes chiming in, the mourning of a dove;
Reflected by a hooting owl; she's soaring up above.
The coyote's cry lifts to the sky and dances off the moon.
Another answers from the ridge and more will echo soon.

Cattle shuffle in the herd, the rodear close to camp.
Bodies shifting slowly; you can hear a big hoof stamp.
A calf cries for his mama, she answers calling low.
He nudges up against her bag and milk begins to flow.

Remuda horses standing quiet, hipshot in the pen.
Nostrils flutter softly, waiting patient for the men
To rise up from their bedrolls, and bring them sweet green hay,
Morning chores at cowcamp, a prelude to the day.

Old knees and bones pop loudly, a drumroll in the dawn,
Young men up and moving, boots and spurs already on.
The rhythm of the morning starts a new song for the day.
A ballad of the riders who work cattle for their pay.

The morning sun brings warmth and light for daytime's second verse.
Then saddle up and long trot before heat becomes a curse.
Long day in the saddle gathering cattle off the lease,
Then back to camp, this stanza done, and muscles feel release.

Supper over, horse turned out, you set down once again.
Another day of roundup done, you're reminiscing, when,
Again you hear the coyote's lonesome call drift down the hill;
And you lay back in your bedroll, waiting for the night to still....

But, there's soprano, alto, tenor...the music will not fade.
A canine choir symphony, the cowcamp serenade.



Duane began writing and reciting Cowboy Poetry about the turn of the 21st Century and has opened for such performers as Dave Stamey, Juni Fisher, RJ Vandygriff, and Waddie Mitchell, among others. Finished in Second Place at the Kanab Cowboy Poetry Rodeo in the Reciter: Serious, Rising Star Division. Won the Rising Star Division at the 2014 Kamloops Cowboy Festival and was one of the top five finalists for Male Poet of the Year for IWMA in 2016 and 2017. In addition, Duane's CD "Cowboy Lonesome" was nominated for IWMA Cowboy Poetry CD of the Year 2016. Duane continues to recite at numerous Gatherings across the country.

**IWMA
CONVENTION
2026**

Join us in Albuquerque, NM
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Visit our Website for more information
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~ A MUSICAL NOTE AND ~
REVIEWS
 FROM O.J. SIKES



To submit your CD for review, send to: O.J. Sikes, 681 Ellington Road, Ridgewood, NJ 07450
 Required: Album cost, S&H cost, Address, Phone Number | Questions? You can email O.J. at ojsikes@gmail.com

FOLK SONGS & WESTERN MUSIC

The other day I was preparing my weekly radio show, when I received an unsolicited email. Don't you just love unsolicited emails? They always arrive when you have nothing else to do, right? No! They don't, but this one actually gave me an idea for a sub-theme for one of my weekly radio shows, so I pounced on it.

It came from an outfit called The American Facts. I know nothing about that source, but the information seemed credible enough, so I took a look at what it said. Whether the "Best of..." choices were legitimate or not, is basically irrelevant. Who decides their ratings, anyway? But they are real folk songs and are sufficiently well-known that I figured they may be of interest to listeners. That was the idea. I was not

going to write an academic piece for peer review. I wanted something that would be fun to listen to.

The songs listed in the e-mail have been recorded by numerous artists over the years, from **Bob Dylan** and **Harry Belafonte** to **Bill Monroe** and **Bing Crosby**. Cowboy/Western music figured prominently in the list. Time constraints meant that I had to make a short list, and these are the titles (and performances) I chose:

"John Henry" (**Tennessee Ernie Ford's** widely popular rendition), "Clementine" (**Gene Autry's** brief version), "Red River Valley" (beautifully done by **Foy Willing & the Riders of the Purple Sage**), "Shenandoah" (The **Reinsmen's** outstanding recording, featuring **Bob**

Wagoner), "I'm a Man of Constant Sorrow" (a song that is closely associated with **The Stanley Bros.**, but I chose the **Soggy Bottom Boys'** popular recording from the film, *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* The band is, in essence, **Alison Krauss's** band, without Alison, and they developed a superb, catchy arrangement of this old song for the movie), "Worried Man Blues" (by **Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs & The Foggy Mountain Boys**) and "Home on the Range" (beautifully performed by **Jimmy Dean & the Chuck Cassey Singers**).

If you are interested but missed the show, send me an email (ojsikes@gmail.com) and I'll send you a link to it.


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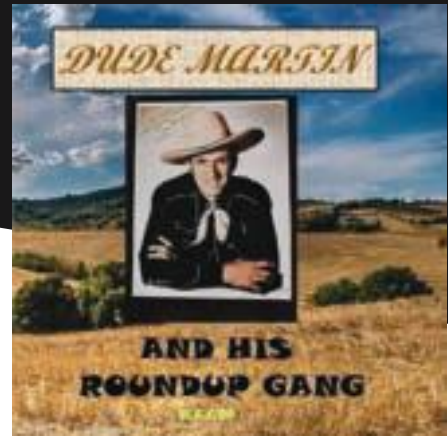


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AND HIS ROUNDUP GANG, VOL. 2

BACM CD D 753



A native of the San Joaquin Valley in California, Dude Martin started a Western swing organization that had an enthusiastic regional following that grew from the 1930s into the '50s and on to television when he moved south to the Los Angeles area! As an example of his popularity, he was made Honorary Mayor of Hollywood in 1956!

Tony Byworth's interesting liner notes, drawing in part from the work of Western music authority, Kevin Coffey, offer details about Martin's

work through the years, including his early influence on the careers of Guy Mitchell, Gogi Grant, Rusty Draper and Sue Thompson.

Before the war, Carolina Cotton and Hank Penny joined Martin's band and they continued their association into the war years. Carolina yodeled and played bass fiddle with Martin's band. She learned to play various instruments "as needed," so she was proficient on bass, steel guitar, etc. when the band(s) needed her help. But I didn't hear her sing (or yodel) on

this set of recordings.

This collection will be of special interest to fans of the different varieties of Western Swing music, from its heyday. The B.A.C.M. website is set up to allow interested shoppers to listen to a few introductory bars of each selection on every new CD they offer, to give prospective customers an idea of what the product sounds like. The online address is: country-music-archive.com



ON THE ROAD with IWMA

John and Joanne Lowell



Whether it is a multi-day festival or gathering, or an intimate house concert venue, western music and cowboy poets are sharing their craft and the message about the IWMA – the organization formed nearly 40 years ago to support the preservation of this Western culture. In February, John and Joanne Lowell did just that in Sun City, AZ, at an intimate house concert. Those in attendance loved the stories and (mostly original) music shared by the duo. Marvin and Theresa O'Dell were on hand to promote the IWMA and encourage fans to join and support the organization that supports troubadours like the Lowells.

John & Joanne Lowell House Concert



Submit CDs (preferred) to Rick Huff, PO Box 8442, Albuquerque, NM, 87198-8442 or DOWNLOADS to bestofthewest@swcp.com. Submitting a CD for review does not guarantee that it will be reviewed or that a review will be published. Finalized CD cover art must accompany the work and be unsigned.

ANDREW DEAN & THE FARM MACHINE
“Way Out West”



It really kind of is. ‘Way out,’ I mean. Lyrically in particular, this collection isn’t your commonplace vision. A full movie plot in a Western saga song (“Ghost of Tarrytown”), a religious yodel (would that be a Godel?) and tightly produced Western Swing songs as well. Just a few samples of the variety of presentation threshed up in this collection from Andrew Dean & The Farm Machine.

Picks include uptempo Western Swinger “Build A Bridge,” “High Plains Drifter” (a Bluesy Swing Western saga song), “Country Music” (self-explanatory) and the no-doubt-about-it Western Swinger “Swingtown.” Beyond those there are also nice Country ballads (“Empty,” “Never Told Me,” “Moonlight” and “Old Time Love” including a Hank Williams-style Swing yodel). The song “The Cowboy Rides” has its Cattle Call-yodeling protagonist hanging up his saddle (gasp!) but actually being happy about it! Say it ain’t so!!

You might try Andrew Dean & The Farm Machine’s “Way Out West” for a somewhat different ride along the trail. Fourteen tracks, recommended.

ANDY HEDGES (FEATURING DOM FLEMONS & RAMBLIN’ JACK ELLIOT)
“The Westerner”



Purely as a preservationist songster Andy H e d g e s understands that the wisest words from our past breathe again

when applied against current times. Badger Clark, Henry Herbert Knibbs and folk protest master Woody Guthrie left us some very wise words.

Hedges specializes in setting poetry to music. He is one of the most skilled at it you will ever find. Listening track to track puts you in a living past, and the acoustic richness of the arrangements helps immeasurably. Title track “The Westerner” captures the elusive meaning of being one. “The Maiden and Her Fiddle” is a sweet ghostly saga song. In “Cattle” the line “Texas grew from hide and horn” says it all. Same with “Eight Bucks and Change” in which the cowboy has earned “one penny for every bronc he has broken.” Inspiration drawn from legendary cowboy Tom Blasingame’s life and passing is here. Plus Ramblin’ Jack Elliot is here, for heaven’s sake!!

“The Westerner” album marks another milestone in the Hedges legacy. His releases are in a category of their own. Historic, important and very highly recommended. Twelve tracks total

BRENN HILL

“The West That Money Couldn’t Buy”



First, thanks to Bobbi Jean Bell for getting this album to me. I don’t know what it takes to get onto Brenn Hill’s

mailing list. I guess I still don’t rate.

Frankly it’s safe to name Hill as being among the all-time great creators and interpreters of Western Music. He has earned the right to be saddled up beside beside Bob Nolan, Marty Robbins and Ian Tyson. Hills’ ability to give classic themes original takes is unmatched. This release is yet another proof of it. Exceptional care and attention have been paid to arrangement and production. Among the gems are “Where I Am” (a thoughtful exploration of a cowboy’s chosen solitude), “The Horse Made The Cowboy” (whatever you think of his skills, he’ll tell you one truth), “Not So Simple Simple Life” (puts fresh life in Cowboy strife), “I Thank God It’s Me” (a cowboy’s final selfless gratitude) and “If I Was The Devil” (who it really is). Two reverential covers are Troy Seals & Eddie Setser’s “Seven Spanish Angels” and Ian Tyson’s “I Outgrew The Wagon.” Guesting on one track each are Trinity Seely and Kristyn Harris.

Brenn Hill’s newest is a must-have. Eighteen tracks, obviously very highly recommended.

CASEY & READER
(Four Songs)



So does a release of four songs together constitute an EP? Or is it just a release of four songs? Whatever.

Let's talk about Casey & Reader and four songs.

'Casey' is Montana's TJ Casey. 'Reader' is Canada's Jim Reader, and it's very nice to hear again from both of them. The two have collaborated for a good number of years on music and beneficial projects of mutual interest. On this collection Reader takes the lead vocal chores and Casey serves up harmony and, on at least two of the tracks, songwriting. Numbers 3 and 4 credit no writer in the Metadata. They begin with a show closer! Or at least a song that can lend itself to the task. "Adios My Compadres" is about the end of the Winter drive, brief and to the point. "Get Them Cattle 'Cross" is also a drivin' saga song pointing up dangers of the work. "Grubline" is a portrait of bumming for food and bed. "King Up In The Saddle" is the cowboy's 'elevated' view.

Any of the songs here are candidates to be covered by others, and should be Recommended.



JESSIE VEEDER

"Yellow Roses"



An RFD-TV profile of her let us know that, although she is tempted to take on certain topical issues and the social situation we find ourselves in, Jesse Veeder believes her job is to tell stories in song of the cowboy life she has known. Trust us. What she wants to say comes through loud and clear.

Veeder's expressively meaty voice fiercely delivers her artfully poetic, tough-minded lyrics to perfection. Add to this thoroughly brilliant arrangements and production and you have a release for the ages! This is a collection of twelve exceptional songs, but of particular note are "Baby Blue" (bluesy uptempo with dobro & banjo leads), "Get Back To Town" (a poke in the developer's eye), "If You Were A Cowboy" (here's why he ain't), "Red Barns & People Get Old" (AWA Video Of The Year), "I Used To Be" (love can mellow a storming heart), "The Legend Of Poker Jim" ("place a bet on the

cowboy but the dealer's always the land") and title track "Yellow Roses" (the North Dakota homesteading story comes full-circle).

This one's a wonder, and very highly recommended.



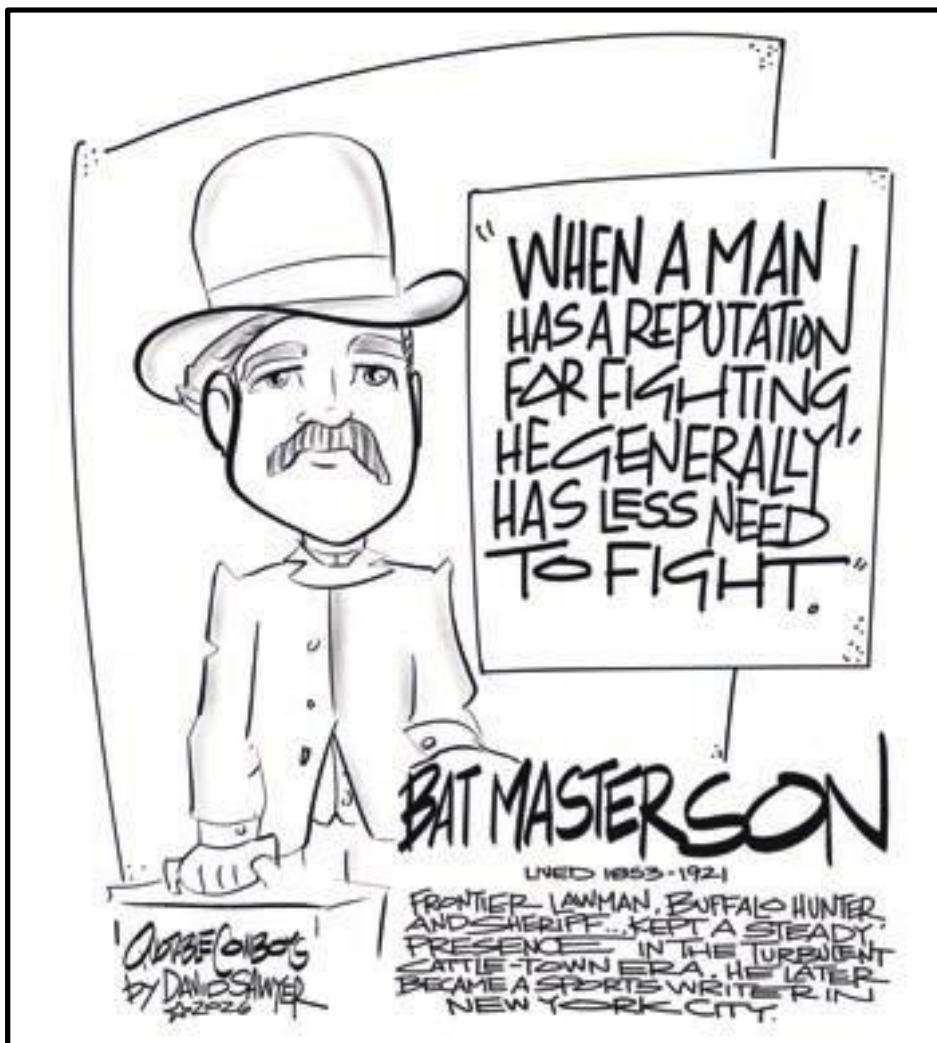
TEXAS MUSIC ASSOCIATION'S 'Best of Texas Picks' Volume 8



Perhaps they factored-in our goading about their previous release, but this time six of the t w e n t y - o n e 'Country' tracks chosen for inclusion can legitimately be called "Western." Last year's Volume 7 featured only one. So are more being released or are more being sought?

James Maltese's "Ride Easy" is an easy waltz, straight-up Western and advocating for the Cowboy culture and profession to continue. Then, loading you into the chute, Randy Burghardt's "Welcome To The Rodeo" comes with all the PBR firepower of a certain beloved Garth Brooks hit on that subject. Next Jessica Loobey's city-weary heroine is headed "Back To Her Roots." Rural roots, that is. Deservedly Dave Edwards made the cut with his previously profiled "Swing Me Back To Oklahoma." Anderson Rose points out some of the singular eccentricities of "That Crazy Place Called Texas" and Steve Anthony asserts "When A Cowboy Sings," he does so from the heart. We can attest to that.

About "Best of Texas Picks Volume 8" Texas should be proud. Anybody need to tell them that?!! Recommended. 🐎





Considering his role as “The Songteller,” Wyoming’s **Dave Munsick** has issued one that is squarely in his wheel-horse. The lyrics of **Changes**, some thirty years in the making, are deeply thoughtful. Here you find equal parts horse training and life coaching. You could say it offers strong filly-osophy....if you’re not afraid of getting punched, that is...

The wind was more than ‘wayward’ in Columbus, New Mexico when **Carol Markstrom** encountered basic haboub conditions just ahead of her gig in the bordertown. A shelter-in-place order didn’t stop her performing for a brave few. She then drew on Indian lore and wrote **Trickster Wind**, proving she’s not one to ‘blow’ a chance to create, either.

A fine co-write from singer **Sarah Pierce** and Andi Renfree may be seen as courageous, particularly now. In the acoustic gem **Rocky Mountain Steeples** she rides out to where there’s “no wooden cross, no wooden floors, no greeter waiting at the doors.” The only religion she needs is the holiness of Western land, sky, trees and cattle. Praise be!!!

From the British Isles comes more proof that Western Swing is international. **Kerry Fearon** brings us **Take It All Out On You**, a frisky Swinger made of Country whole cloth. The lyrics embody all the beloved angst of Western Swing. Steel & fiddle match wits with drum & lead guitar in a contemporary mix, but fans will recognize the genre.

In the swinging **Farther From The Truth** singer **Ariel Franz** extends the syllable “you – oo – oo – oo” in much the same way Leann Rimes famously lengthened “blue – oo – oo – oo.” It does evoke images of the Rimes classic. Franz doesn’t yodel it, though. Even if the vocal device is a repeat, the effect remains new – oo – oo – oo anyway.

Drum and guitar-propelled Honky Tonk Swing is King as **Kelly Hastey** says to us “**That’s What I Like About Texas.**” Items listed in his inventory include “dim lights, hardwood floors, a rockin’ band and swingin’ doors.” Of course nowhere else on Earth are those found! The Chamber of Commerce might add some outdoor elements as well.

“**When Right Is Wrong [But Wrong Feels So Right]!**” Where have we felt that one before?? **Kent Thompson** bids us to feel that one again as we watch two people married to others rekindling something they shouldn’t from their mutual past. Fiddle, steel and jazzy piano in tow, they proceed to roll out the other meaning of “swinger.”

Two songs freshly released from sand-voiced **Kevin Tuckfield** manage to cover each of our points of editorial focus. The strictly Western side is served with his nicely constructed take of **The Railroad Corral**. Then the Western dance crowd can join him in affirming there’s **A Thing About Swing**. Variety is also the musical spice of life!

Continued on Pg. 41



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by Sarah Pierce and Randy Palmer,
released on Pierce's CD
Blessed by the West

Finalist: ☒Mustanger☒
by Jim Jones and Mariam Funke,
released on Jones's CD
Storyteller: Tales from the West

Finalist: ☒The Saddle☒
by Dave Stamey,
released on Stamey's CD *Porch Music*

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THE ROCKIN' M WRANGLERS

"Sangre de Cristos" - 1998



Longtime Chuckwagon Super entertainers, Jim & Jeanne Martin are the core (the "M") of the Rockin' Ms! Various appearing across the years as a band,

a trio and a duo, they've never failed to bring the truest solid Western harmony experience to their appreciative audiences. After a number of years based in Cottonwood, Arizona they moved to the mountains of Ruidoso, NM.

Their fine album "Sangre de Cristos" captured a live performance in Canon City, Colorado during their time entertaining in that state and features Ron Berg on harmony vocals and guitar. A "key" element in the richness of the Rockin' M harmony lies in the fact that both Martins are most comfortable singing in a lower register. In much the same way Sons Of The San Joaquin benefited from the effect, there is an added, pleasing solidity to the sound.

The Rockin' M Wranglers albums should be brought out and played. "Sangre de Cristos" should be on the top of that stack! **SIDEBAR:** Considering the three classic Sons Of The Pioneers songs on the album, it is ironically appropriate for the "Terry" who received the autographed copy pictured to have been Terry Sevigny Scott, one-time private secretary to Sons' co-founder Tim Spencer!

THE LOBO RANGERS

"Stampede" - 1992

From a number of different standpoints (and in a number of different categories) The Lobo Rangers were notable as trailblazers. The nucleus of the group were the personnel from Knott's Berry Farm's famous Wagonmasters. Dave & Patti Bourne, Billy Beeman, Michael Fleming and Don Richardson produced a distinctive vocal blend and meaningful original material that frequently and unflinchingly made strong, even controversial statements. A prime example in this featured collection is Billy Beeman's "Redman." Michael Fleming's "This Ol' Cowboy Gets The Blues" would be covered later by his renowned group New West.

When The Lobo Rangers performed songs of others, they could often be counted on to have done their research, uncovering the less covered stuff from Bob Nolan ("Wandering" & "Welcome To The Spring") or McCalister & Bumgarden's "Driving The Bozeman Trail." Theirs was among the earliest takes of Jay Unger's lovely "Ashokan Farewell" showcasing Beeman's sensitive fiddle work. And another historical note: Dave Bourne was the creator/writer of the WMA newsletter that became The Western Way magazine.

Our file copy of "Stampede" is on cassette, but my understanding is that it was remastered on CD. If you find it, get it. You won't regret it!



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Attention DJs! Your contributions to *The Western Way* charts are welcomed.

Please send your playlist, including the song and the CD on which it appears, to meoteo@aol.com.

WESTERN

Attention Musicians and Poets! Various DJ friends have reported their playlists for the last quarter, thus helping us compile these charts reflecting which CDs are being played the most on their radio shows. You will find a listing of those reporting DJs in this issue.

TOP 30 COWBOY/WESTERN ALBUMS

1. Storm on the Mountain - Doug Figgs
2. Hombre - Dan Canyon
3. Just Keepin' it Ranchy - Ryan Fritz
4. Back Home in the West - The Arizona Wildflowers
5. Bring on the Pain - Kevin Tuckfield
6. Porch Music - Dave Stamey
7. Roads & Barbwire - Joel Alden White
8. Watercolor Skies - The Timberline Cowboys
9. A Cowboy by Choice - Mark Lynn Young
10. A Western Tale to Tell - Marvin O'Dell
11. The End of the Trail - Dave Volk
12. On the Trail With the Lonesome Pines - Hilary Gardner
13. They Ride - Ed Meyer
14. Twilight Blues - Poi Rogers
15. Western Heritage - Birdie Nichols
16. Yellow Roses - Jessie Veeder
17. Confessions of a Ghost Town - Kacey & Jenna Thunborg
18. Snow on the Wineglass - John Lowell
19. ...Just Me - Dale Burson
20. Dust of Los Angeles - Ron Christopher
21. Blessed by the West - Sarah Pierce
22. Ghost Smoke - Jon Chandler
23. Turn Us Loose and Let Us Swing - The Brazos Valley Boys
24. Light of the Moon - Lori Beth Brooke
25. The Texas Trio - The Texas Trio
26. A Little Western, A Little Swing - Carlos Washington
27. Singing to Cows - Chris Guenther
28. From the Saddle to Symphony Hall - Dave Alexander
29. The West That Money Couldn't Buy - Brenn Hill
30. Trackin' On - The Russellers

Due to the reduced number of albums being sent to western music radio anymore, this will be the final Top 30 Cowboy/Western chart in The Western Way. We will continue with "Most Played" listings next quarter. However, if your album appears at the top of one of the Most Played listings, you should not promote as being #1 on the "chart." These listings will not be credible charts; they will simply be lists signifying how often the songs or poems were played by reporting Djs.

***A MISSING NUMBER IN THE LIST REPRESENTS A TIE FOR THAT SPOT.**

CLEARINGS

10 MOST PLAYED WESTERN SWING ALBUMS

1. Back Home in the West - The Arizona Wildflowers
2. Twilight Blues - Poi Rogers
3. A Place to Land - Kristyn Harris
4. The End of the Trail - Dave Volk
5. The Texas Trio - The Texas Trio
6. From the Saddle to Symphony Hall - Dave Alexander
7. A Little Western, A Little Swing - Carlos Washington
8. Turn Us Loose and Let Us Swing - The Brazos Valley Boys
9. Light of the Moon - Lori Beth Brooke
10. 12-6 Central - The Western Swing Authority

12 MOST PLAYED COWBOY POETRY ALBUMS

1. Wonder of the West - Sherl Cederburg
2. Thin Clear Air - Danny McCurry
3. Cowboyin' With God - Rik "Yonder" Goodell
Just Passin' Thru - JJ Steele
5. Dimestore Cowgirl - K.C. LaCourse
6. Pensive 'n' Playful - Mark Munzert
7. Fillin' Tanks - Susie Knight
8. Cow Camp Serenade - Duane Nelson
9. Horse Tales & Cow Trails - Floyd Beard
Between the Sun and the Moon - Teresa Burleson
Range Rhymes - Lindy Simmons
12. Wisdom in the Wind - Sherl Cederburg
The Girl in the Yellow Checked Dress - Duane Nelson
Wrangler of Rhymes, Vol. 3 - George Ray Russell
Rhyming the Range - Tom Swearingen

12 MOST PLAYED SONGS BY WESTERN MUSIC DJS

1. I'm an Old Cowhand - Gone With the West
2. A Western Road - Jon Chandler
3. Rocky Mountain Steeples - Sarah Pierce
4. So Many Cowboys - Patty Clayton'
5. Why He Rides - Kevin Tuckfield
Rattlesnake Waltz - Ashley Westcott
7. Just Keepin' it Ranchy - Ryan Fritz
8. Trickster Wind - Carol Markstrom
9. Generations Riding Through Veins - Aspen Black
As Cowboy as They Come - Aspen Black
11. Home on the Range - Dan Canyon
Cowgirl From Illinois - Doug Figgs
Pride of the Trail/Old Schultz - John Lowell



Book Nook Reviews & More

BY KAREN CAMPBELL



If you would like to have your western fiction, nonfiction or poetry book reviewed, send a copy to:
Karen Campbell, 1762 County Road 121, Gainsville, TX 76240. Submissions will not be returned.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & COWBOY WRITING

Artificial Intelligence is a hot topic right now, and it's highly controversial. As a tool, it has the potential to revolutionize access to information and dramatically reduce the time spent on mundane tasks. AI can draft basic emails, build agendas, proofread documents, summarize articles, and organize data in seconds. It can also improve accessibility for people who are hard of hearing, visually impaired, or learning a new language. In many ways, it lowers barriers and opens doors.

At the same time, AI raises serious concerns. The data centers required to power these systems consume enormous amounts of electricity and require vast quantities of fresh water for cooling. Many communities resist having data centers built nearby because of the strain on local power grids and water supplies. Environmental impact is not a minor side issue; it is central to the debate. AI is controversial not just because of what it can do, but because of what it costs to run.

Copyright law and training data are another major point of contention. Programs like Suno can generate complete songs from simple prompts, while ChatGPT can draft poems, stories, or even create content for self-publishing platforms. These systems are trained on enormous datasets that often include copyrighted material. As a result, numerous legal cases have emerged challenging how AI systems are trained and whether that training violates intellectual property rights. Some courts have ruled in favor of allowing AI training on copyrighted works, while others continue to wrestle with where to draw the line. The legal landscape is still evolving.

Personally, I land somewhere in the middle. I believe AI is valuable as a modification and efficiency tool, but not as an original author. Used carelessly, it can be problematic and even dangerous. Used thoughtfully, it can free up time and energy for deeper creative work. Like any powerful tool, its impact depends largely on how it's used.

I've experimented with tools like Suno, ChatGPT, Gemini, and Bard. When these systems generate something entirely from scratch based on a simple prompt, the results tend to feel 'average' and unoriginal. AI-generated poems are often neat, tidy quatrains with predictable rhyme schemes and standard meter. Song lyrics can feel similarly generic. The structure is usually correct, but the spark is missing.

However, when AI is given raw, imaginative material from a human writer, it can be surprisingly helpful. It can tighten language, smooth out meter, suggest better word choices, and identify awkward phrasing. If you can write lyrics but can't sing, you might be thrilled to hear a tool like Suno produce a polished song from your words. AI can also be an efficient brainstorming assistant by offering rhymes for "bridge," generating synonyms, or helping overcome a moment of writer's block. In those cases, human creativity remains at the center, and AI functions as an editor or assistant rather than a replacement.

As a teacher, I have additional concerns. The most effective AI users are those who could do the task themselves without it. They use AI to increase speed and efficiency, not to replace understanding. Because they know the material, they can spot AI's frequent errors, called "hallucinations," and correct them. It's similar to someone who understands how to solve a math problem by hand but uses a calculator to save time. The calculator enhances their efficiency, but it doesn't replace their knowledge.

I'm not here to tell anyone what to think about AI. It isn't the devil; at its core, it's a highly sophisticated pattern-recognition system working from a really advanced spreadsheet. But it also isn't a savior. It can't cut someone's hair, repair a fence, or feed a family. It makes mistakes. AI-generated images, for example, are notorious for producing people with too many fingers or other subtle distortions.

My best advice is simple: experiment with it. Learn what it can do well and where it falls short. Notice the phrases and structures it tends to repeat. Pay attention to the environmental impact. Identify tasks where it genuinely helps you, and others where you prefer doing the work yourself.

You may find that AI works best as an assistant as I use it, polishing your writing, organizing your thoughts, or answering quick factual questions. Or you may decide you'd rather compose entirely on your own. Either way, understanding what AI is and what it is not helps you navigate its growing role in our world with awareness rather than assumption.

Dick Warwick's Poet for Hire and Other Poems brings together 57 poems written between 1966 and 2024, with most composed from 1990 onward. The collection is not divided into formal sections but instead unfolds in an easy, reader-friendly manner. A brief introduction and clear table of contents allow readers to select poems by title and interest.

Warwick favors traditional rhyme schemes, most often couplets (AABB) and alternating rhyme (ABAB), supported by generally consistent meter. Subtle variations enhance the poems' suitability for oral performance. His use of half rhyme, robust multisyllabic rhyme, and playful syntax demonstrates both technical control and enjoyment of language. These poems are clearly meant to be read aloud.

Themes range widely—from environmental reflections to

DICK WARWICK'S POET FOR HIRE & OTHER POEMS

2025. Prime Media eLaunch LLC.

Paperback.

\$16.00.

134 pp.

Contact the author at

dwarwick@mindspring.com.

dinosaurs, from baling twine to Western memory. The tone shifts comfortably between nostalgic, humorous, and cautionary. Warwick handles punctuation deliberately, using pauses and rhythm to reinforce the spoken quality of his work.

Notable pieces include "Poet for Hire," "Beerfuddled," "Buckskin Bill," "Fossilosophy," "An Old Horse Barn in the Palouse," and "I'm Not So Sure the West Was Won." Across subjects, the poems are consistently well crafted and engaging.

While accessible to a broad audience, occasional advanced

vocabulary and mild scatological references make the collection better suited for preteens and older readers. Those who appreciate traditional rhyme, performance poetry, and Western themes will find much to enjoy in this lively volume.

KAREN GRACE BROWN CAMPBELL has been writing, reading, and performing primarily western and Christian poetry for over 25 years. She is also a wife and a mother of a wonderful little girl. She breeds horses and runs barrels as well as serving as an Associate Dean and English Professor at Grayson College and has taught at other colleges and universities. She has her PhD from Texas Tech and an MA from Baylor University in Literature, specifically medieval literature (cowboys and knights have a lot in common). You may contact Karen at CampbellK@grayson.edu.

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& **CENTENNIAL**
250TH ANNIVERSARY
of our Nation

This upcoming year is forecast to be a busy one for foreign and domestic travelers in the USA as the Route 66 Centennial and the 250th Anniversary of our nation's founding are occurring in 2026. Both occasions present great opportunities for your chapter to promote events and entertainment. Let's first take a look at the Route 66 Centennial. All through 2026 and beyond the Route 66 Centennial, 100 years of the Mother Road, will be celebrated across the US from Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California. This is a great opportunity to promote Western music and poetry at events that are being planned to take place in all 8 states traversed by Route 66. Here are several resources to discover what events are being planned and where they are taking place.

The first place to gather information is the website for the National Route 66 Centennial Commission. Visit: <https://www.route66-centennial.com/>. There you can learn about the history of Route 66 and can filter through each of these 8 states; Arizona, California, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Each state has departments of tourism, destination management organizations such as convention & visitor bureaus and chambers of commerce, as well as Route 66 associations. In order to reach the Route 66 states directly see those listed on the next page. Search "Route 66" on the respective websites. Many of them are posting information on event calendars.



FROM THE
TRAIL

Route 66 State Departments of Tourism

Arizona

Arizona Office of Tourism
<https://tourism.az.gov/>

California

Visit California
<https://visitcalifornia.com/>

Illinois

Illinois Office of Tourism
<https://dceo.illinois.gov/aboutdceo/tourism.html>

Kansas

Kansas Department of Commerce
<https://www.kansascommerce.gov/tourism/>

Missouri

Missouri Division of Tourism
<https://industry.visitmo.com/>

New Mexico

New Mexico Tourism Department
<https://www.nm.gov/departments-and-agencies/tourism-department/>

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Tourism Department
<https://www.travelok.com/contact-us>

Texas

Texas Economic Development and
Tourism Office
<https://gov.texas.gov/business>

There are many cities, towns, and villages in these states. Many have convention & visitor bureaus and/or chambers of commerce that host websites and are starting to list events to take place throughout 2026 and beyond. Their websites may be linked on the state tourism department websites listed above or they may be Google searched online.

July 4, 2026 will mark the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation. Here are some websites of note:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/america250/>

<https://america250.org/>

<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/civics/250th-business-playbook>

Contact your local chamber of commerce or visitor bureau to learn how your chapter and its performers can join events during this celebration. While tourism marketing highlights the Route 66 Centennial, efforts will no doubt use the nation's 250th Anniversary to promote domestic travel. Capitalize on these two momentous occasions to boost IWMA and local chapter events awareness and provide opportunities for performing members.



By David Nidel

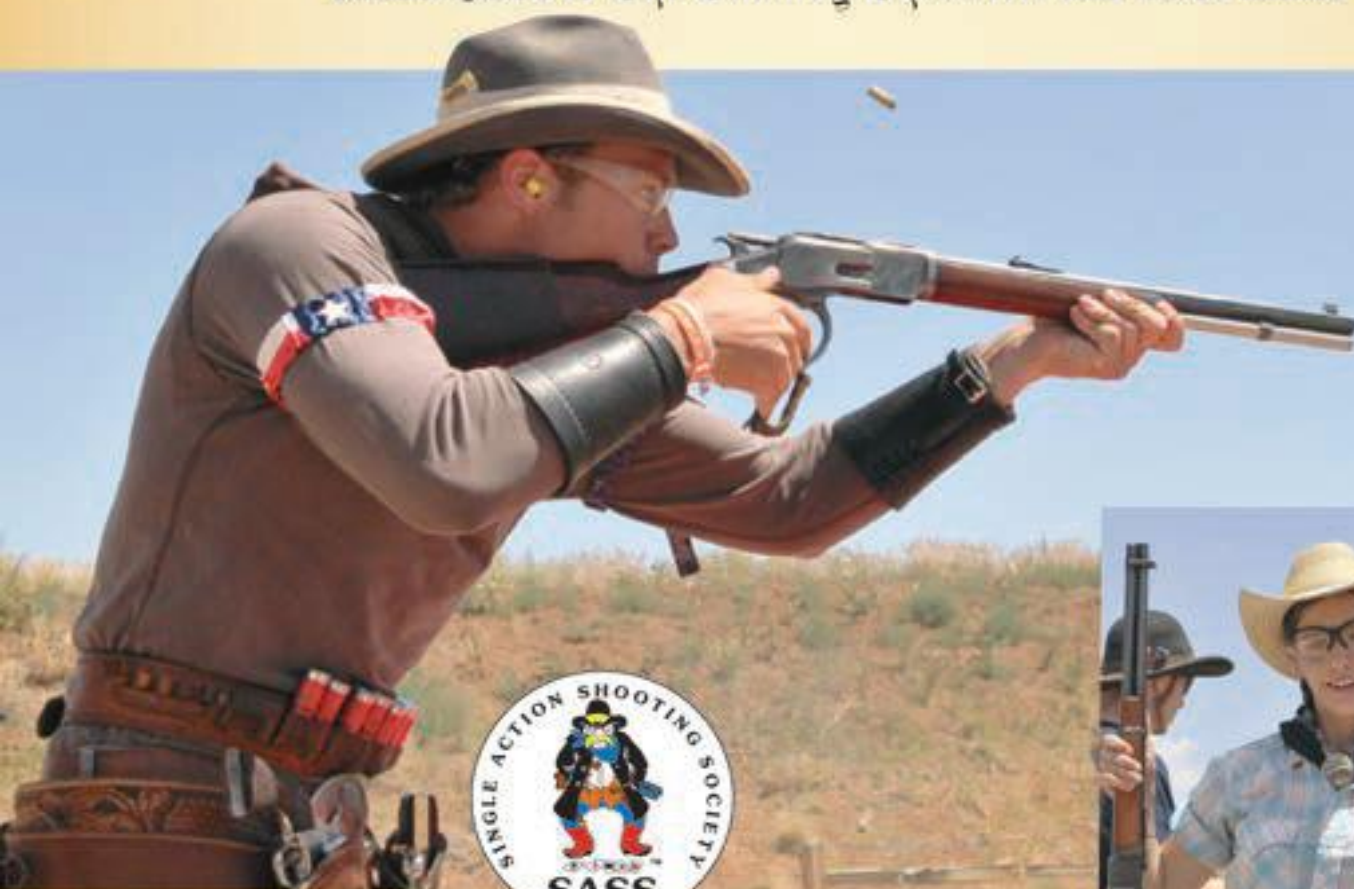
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SAMPLING THESE SINGLES

... continued from pg. 28

Maybe a slower-tempo Western Swing song is what a situation demands. Deserted lover **Lonnie Spiker** is hopeful as he tries to convince the obstinate **Mr. Jukebox** to keep playing his and his absent lady friend's 'song.' If she's here tonight, he says, maybe hearing it will do the trick. If she's here tonight? How big IS this place anyway???

We are talkin' 'loser' here. The guy figuratively walks in "with the tag still on his jeans." I've heard of getting dressed too fast, but normally that's a fly left open! **Peggy Haverly** wryly assesses his overall effect in **Them Boots Don't Make You Country**. "Them boots" don't make the song Western either, but "them" rhythm bits DO make it 'Swing.'

Occasionally a song comes in that also provides an education. **Akubra Bands** from the Aussie band **Brock County** is such a release. Maybe you knew (but I didn't) about the bands circling the crowns of stockmen's (cowboy's) dress hats. My education came from Googling "akubra," but I got one. I say the hat makes the song lean to the West.

Aspen Black is back! Of course she never left! **Generations Riding Through His Veins** is an idyllic, classically Western song celebrating long lineage stewardship of the land. His great-grandfather began it and the cowboy will be passing it along to his own inheritors. In this time of sad realities, for everyone's sake we hope it's still happening.

They say there's nothing new. Wanta bet?? Australian **Kane Vincent** proves that wrong with **Tokyo**. Wry lyrics on new musical sunrises in the Land Of The Rising Sun! "I can't rope and I can't ride," "herdin' cattle down Shibuya" (a busy Tokyo intersection) and "cowboy cosplay meet your maker." Yep! Japan loves to dress-up Cowboy, too!!

No stranger to the Swing charts or playlists of Western Swing-friendly broadcasters, **Mackynsie McKedy** swings in again with **Someone In Oklahoma**. In truth she's that "someone" and she's missing a guy. This medium-tempo dancemaker should once again place her among the favorites on the airwaves. Pull out the hankies and cornstarch.

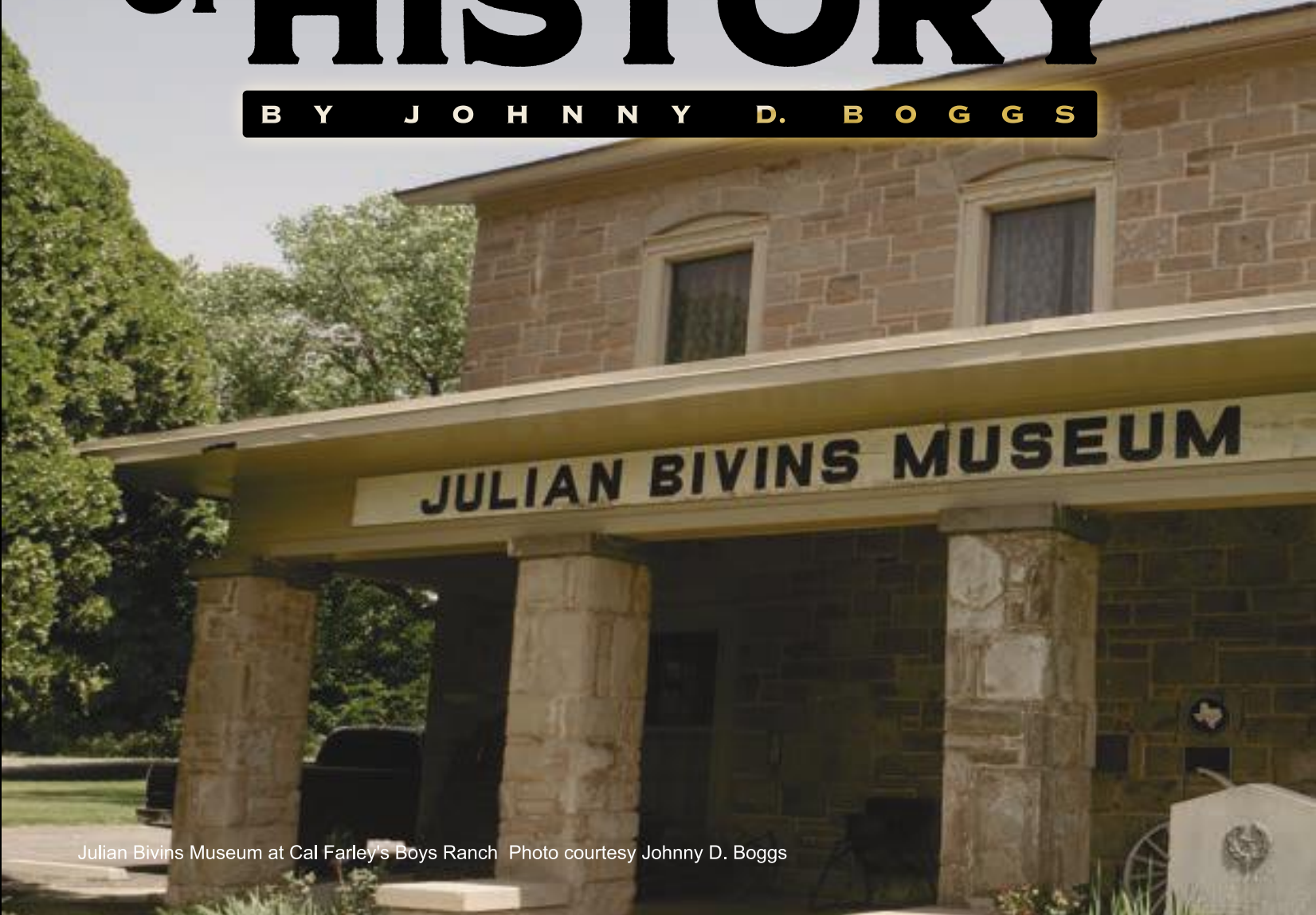
If ever a Honky Tonk Swing song could be called "cute," **Honky Tonk Honey** from **Doc Martin** (not that 'Doc Martin,' we presume) is it. His 'sweetie' was surely created by the honey bees, he swoons. The steel and fiddle work is sweet, too. But with lyrics like "Winnie The Pooh loved his honey" you might even feel this one in your teeth!

From Aussie balladeer **Ray Jones** we get the deceptively 'simple' acoustic protest song **Simple Times**....three scenarios into which truckloads of stupidity can be loaded. Jones mourns abuses of power, bad policy on ranch land and the imposition of "the ties that bind (and) wine" onto Indian people "who were doing fine." Strong meds in easy doses.



A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

BY JOHNNY D. BOGGS



Julian Bivins Museum at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch Photo courtesy Johnny D. Boggs

TASCOSA, TEXAS FROM LAWLESS COWTOWN TO BOYS RANCH

There's a familiar formula to most cattle town histories.

A. Citizens gung-ho for cattle business. B. Citizens sick of violence that comes with cattle business. C. Citizens end cattle business and try to wipe that stain off their hometown history. D. Western movies and TV series revive interest, so up pop museums and annual celebrations.

Tascosa – in the Texas Panhandle roughly 40 miles northwest of Amarillo – took another route.

The town got its start around 1876. The first peace officers didn't show up until 1881. Its population likely never topped much more than 300. Yet as historian Frederick Nolan wrote in *Tascosa: Its Life and Gaudy Times* (Texas Tech University Press, 2007), "at that apogee a quarter of a million dollars' worth of business was done annually along its single dusty street, and if it did not have its man for breakfast daily, it saw in its brief few decades of existence as a gory procession of violence and sudden death as many a town twice its size and infinitely better known."



Clyde D. Doney statue, It's Where You're Going That Counts, at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch Photo courtesy Johnny D. Boggs

“This was lawless,” Mike Pacino, Tascosa’s resident historian, tells me as we head to Tascosa’s Boot Hill cemetery. “The way I try to explain it, especially to people from the East, is: Upper Tascosa is where the good, the decent prostitutes hung out. Lower Tascosa – the other name for that is Hogtown – is where the indecent gamblers and prostitutes hung out.”

Billy the Kid sold stolen livestock here. A gunfight on March 21, 1886, left four men dead and two others wounded, and likely prompted the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad into choosing a less violent town for a depot, which led to the demise of the “cowboy capital of the Panhandle.”

By 1892, a writer for The Chattanooga (Tennessee) Sunday Times called Tascosa “a forlorn, straggling bunch of adobe houses, squatted dully in the sand beneath the sluggish Canadian River, and numbering but seventy-five souls.”

But in the late 1930s, Cal Farley, a semipro baseball player and wrestler from Missouri, and Panhandle ranchers joined forces to found Cal Farley’s Boys Ranch. Farley wanted to do something for young children, many from broken homes, not attending to school. Rancher Julian Bivins donated 118.62 acres, which included what remained of Tascosa, for the project. It got a ringing endorsement from Edward J. Flanagan of Nebraska’s Boys’ Town fame, who visited Amarillo on March 23, 1939, and said, “You will have a much better start than we had. The boys ranch should be a success from the start.”

By late July, The Amarillo Globe reported: “The 12 boys are living, working and playing at one of the nation’s most unusual experiments in the salvaging of underprivileged boys.”

Ten years later, it housed 110 boys, and in 1989, Boys Ranch was home to 400 boys, and saw alumnus Bill Sarpalius sworn in as a U.S. congressman representing Amarillo. “Only in this country can a person who has nothing become something,” he said.

Today, the ranch – now more than 11,000 acres – supports children of all genders. They have to be at least 5 years old and not yet 17 at the time they are admitted. Cal Farley’s Boys Ranch has housed children from all 50 states, plus several other countries. Funded by private and charitable contributions, the ranch does not charge tuition, housing or other professional services and programs.

Continued on pg. 44



Inside the Equity Bar in Tascosa Photo courtesy Library of Congress



Boot Hill Cemetery at Old Tascosa Photo courtesy Johnny D. Boggs



Julian Bivins Museum at Cal Farley's Boys Ranch Photo courtesy Johnny D. Boggs

“Our program is individualized and unique to each family,” Amanda Rogers, the director of marketing and communication, tells me. “So there is no one-size-fit-all in the kids out here. We have kids who come to us for a variety of reasons, some socio-economic, some family turmoil or past trauma, but every kid is treated as they should be, as an individual, and what they need.”

What’s the worst day?

“Sometimes, they’re not ready for it,” says Leon Hollis, a former house parent and now vice president of operations, “no matter how hard you try. Those are the tough days. Sometimes it ends up turning around, or at least OK. It’s heartbreak in the beginning, and it can take a lot of time to get that update. And sometimes, you never do.”

And the best?

“I think it’s relationship building between a resident and a mentor, between a resident and a house parent, a resident and a schoolteacher,” longtime ranch employee Aimee Reeves says. “Any relationship they build with another adult, I think that’s a huge accomplishment that takes trust. There are constant morale boosts around here. Walking down the hall where a kid’s running up to tell you that they made the team. Those are my favorite.”

Cal Farley, who died in 1967, would be proud.

“Even now, though we try to dispel this, people think we’re for bad kids,” Rogers says. “And that’s the way it was, a refuge for kids who needed a refuge. But that’s really not the model for us anymore. We have some great kids who have been through some rough times. This is a chance for them to restart their story and to figure out what they want for their lives. ... I haven’t seen a bad kid out here. They’re all great kids.”



Graves of founder Cal Farley and wife, Mimi, at the Boys Ranch. Background Julian Bivins Museum named after the rancher who donated property to Farley. Photo J.D. Boggs



Boot Hill Cemetery at Old Tascosa Photo courtesy Johnny D. Boggs



JOHNNY D. BOGGS, a native of South Carolina and former newspaper journalist, is a Western novelist/historian, film scholar, photographer and sometimes lyricist who lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has won a record ten Spur Awards from Western Writers of America for his fiction and writes for several magazines. His website is www.JohnnyDBoggs.com.



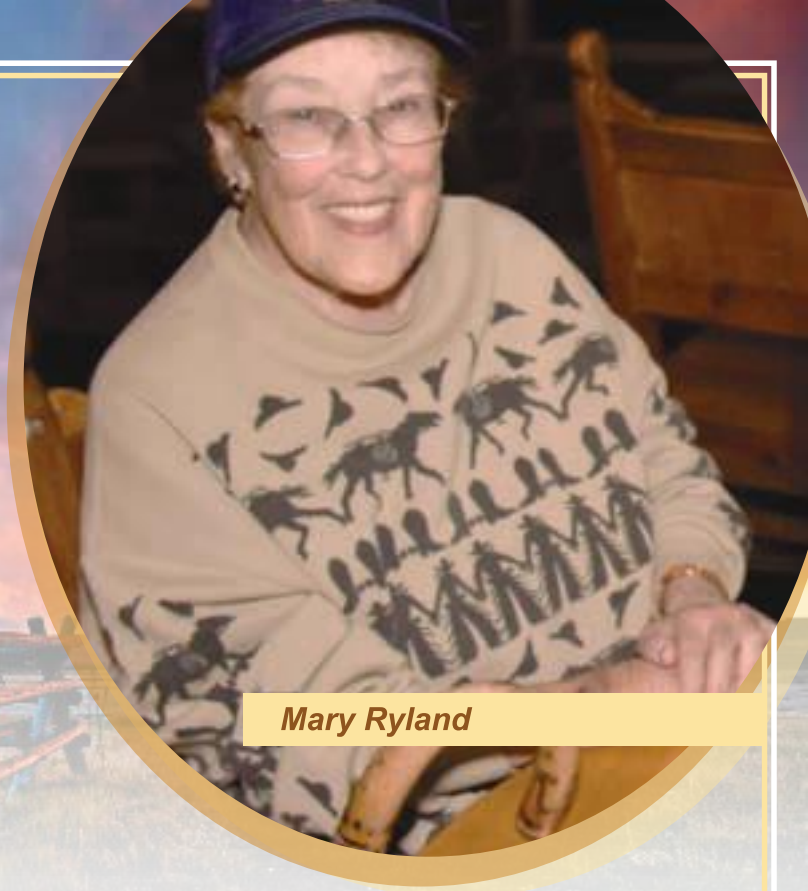
THE WESTERN WORLD TOUR

by Rick Huff

Normally we would begin with the latest Western Sightings in media and elsewhere. But, as you'll read here, my attention has been diverted elsewhere. A few may see my subject this time as being self-serving. More may recognize it as therapy. If I'm being honest, it's likely a mix of both.

Early in the morning of January 4th, 2026, my world collapsed. My sweet soulmate, life partner and Western Music 'sidekick' Mary Ryland passed away after experiencing a week of sheer hell in the hospital. Although they tried to manage conflicting issues, along with a raging pneumonia-like infection Mary began suffering minor strokes from an accelerated heart rate that eventually seemed to leave her unable to swallow or speak. During her confinement to the bed, she unfairly suffered all of the pain and indignity such times can bring. Her pleas of "help me, help me" are haunting me. As I work to find some sort of footing, I have to try to believe the only way she could be helped was to be taken from me. I hope I will find some way to really accept that as fact. I did remember to bring her music to her. I played deejay for what would be her final two days and she seemed to rally. She got to hear and sing along with her favorites from Ian Tyson, Ranger Doug, Rockin' W Wranglers, Sons of the Rio Grande and others.

Although I had begun my journey in Western Music when future IWMA Hall of Fame artist Hi Busse wandered into my commercial recording studio in 1983, Mary was the propeller....blowing me further up those happy trails. She knew my late wife Ana Chavira through the (then) WMA dating from the 1994 convention in Tucson. When Ana passed away in 1998, Mary and I initially began working on projects together. We created and got "The Best Of The West Revue" radio show on the air. I emceed her Sidekick Productions stage shows. She became my bridge out of despair back then. This time I haven't found one standing by, but I need to acknowledge the amazing protective support I've received since the start from Marsha Short along with the national IWMA board and




Mary Ryland

many wonderful New Mexico Chapter folks including Judi Anderson, Betty Jo Maes de Carter, Joe & Linda Brown and David Nidel.

Mary's "In Memoriam" obituary appears elsewhere in this issue. There you can get an idea of what she accomplished. It's a list that would have amazed her had it ever been fully called to her attention. As is often the case following a loss, the one left behind quickly immersed himself in details of properly honoring her. She received the Catholic service she would want, performed by friend/priest Richard Olona, at the church connected to the elementary school she attended. We placed a lengthy memory table displaying her loves including cobalt blue glass, fall colors, her nature photography, pine cones and copies of the custom cards and "Happy Trails" bumper stickers she created for people to take and continue to use. Her favorite Western Music graced the cathedral-like hall as songs played before and after. Several times at the hospital and church people unfamiliar with the Western genre asked what this "wonderful music" was.

Mary's only mention of a final resting place was a comment made years ago to be interred in the Rodriguez family plot at Rosario Cemetery in Santa Fe. I haven't come to grips with it being 65 miles away from me. As you read this, a Celebration of Life event featuring Syd Masters & The Swing Riders will have occurred in late February at EXPO NM, site of her beloved New Mexico State Fair, where we worked seasonally for years.

At the close of the funeral ceremony, the founder of the New Mexico Music Awards came up to hug me and express his sorrow. But Jose Ponce offered something else that made me cry hard enough to shrink his suit coat shoulder. I'm watering-up nearly as badly writing about it now. They've decided to name their Western Song of the Year Award for Mary. She would never have thought it possible. 

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

by *Marvin O'Dell*

...The newly crowned 2026 Colorado State Old-Time Fiddle Junior Champion is Ranelle Dietrich of **The Arizona Wildflowers**. Ranelle is currently a full-time College student now, having completed her High School requirements a semester early. Sawyer Dietrich, of the same Wildflowers won 1st place in the Junior-Junior (10-13) Division and Isley Dietrich finished 2nd to her big brother.

...**Patty Clayton** was awarded a beautiful Grand Champion silver belt buckle at the first Western Talent Competition held at the 120th Annual National Western Stock Show in Denver, CO hosted by the Colorado Cowboy Gathering in January. The competition included cowboy poets, musicians, and storytellers from around the region.

...**Aspen Black** has released a new single, "Generations Riding Through His Veins". Her second single of 2026, which she debuted live at the 2025 IWMA Opry, "The E-town Road", is recorded and awaiting a spring release.

...In the words of **R.J. Vandygriff**, "If you want to get the attention of ER doctors, walk in on a broken leg". R.J. is recovering well. If anyone needs a horse for their mother-in-law or ex-wife, R.J. says he has one for sale.

...It's been over 20 years since cowboy poet **Carol Huechan** first came to the U.S. for the National Cowboy Gathering in Elko; she continued to perform at many events throughout the U.S. and Canada in ensuing years until Covid changed things so dramatically. It was therefore with much pleasure that she was able to return this year to the Cochise Cowboy and Poetry gathering in Sierra Vista, AZ. Although a smaller gathering than in the past, she writes that it was, nevertheless, wonderful.

...Oregon cowboy poet **Tom Swearingen** and wife **Carla** celebrated their 48th anniversary recently with a three-week European tour. Tom was also featured on Portland Voices of the Community, a monthly TV series featuring profiles and performances of artists and musicians. Oregon Arts Watch Magazine also published an article on him recently.

...**E. Joe Brown** was a participating western author in the Tombstone Western Book Festival and the Tucson Book Festival in March. He will share more information in the future on additional 2026 events where he will be singing or speaking.

...**Gary Prescott** is currently enrolled in a three-year Ministry Development Certification Program with the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches. Gary and Jean welcomed great grandchild number seven, Arlen James Kent Beck, to the family on February 20. Grandchild number eight is due in August. Also, **Jean Prescott** will be judging the Second Annual Youth National Anthem Contest for the WRCA in Amarillo, TX in April after which she and Gary are headed to Valentine, NE April 23-26, for Old West Days.

...**Kristyn Harris** was awarded the 2026 "Keeping the Tradition Alive" Award by the Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Bastrop, TX in February. This award is presented to one who "exemplifies the culture, history, and traditions of the American West through music, poetry, and prose." Also, A Ranch Musical, a film starring Kristyn and directed by Natalie Aramendia, featuring Kristyn's music, held its first ever screening in Elko, NV in January during the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. The screening went so well they could not fit in everyone who attended the theater; they had to add additional last-minute screening. The film will now be sent to film festivals with the eventual hopes of securing a distribution deal.

...On March 17, **Tom Farrell** (bass drum) and **David Nidel** (snare drum) had 12 performances at several Albuquerque, NM venues with Mac~Tire of Skye Pipes & Drums in honor of St. Patrick's Day.

...**Carol Markstrom's** latest song release, "Trickster Wind", recently ranked #5 on the Top 40 Singles Chart compiled by Joyce Ramgatie from the Netherlands. Additionally, Carol ranked #5 out of the top 200 Country Artists on the Ramgatie Chart.

...It's a great start to 2026 according to **Merel Bregante**. He is currently involved in finishing up a wonderful project for **John and Joanne Lowell**. **Randy Palmer** is also at work recording his next full album. Merel is also working with **Sarah Pierce** on a new EP and just starting a new **Aspen Black** album.

...**Rex Rideout** was Associate Music Producer for the New Mexico PBS documentary Law for a Lawless Land: New Mexico's Federal Judiciary. Rex and his pard **Mark Lee Gardner** also provided studio-recorded and previously recorded music for the documentary that premiered in September and can be seen on the PBS website.

...J. Michael Mullins and Geary Parsons (**The Timberline Cowboys**) are back in the studio, working on their fifth album entitled Spirits of the High Desert, containing their new single "Whispers on the Wind." If all goes well, it will be released in April. Springtime will find them playing at various venues and gatherings as well as performing at numerous fundraisers in the Four Corners area.

...The fifth annual Waxahachie (TX) Cowboy Gathering will be hosted by **David and Pat Smith**, Saturday, April 18, with several well-known poets and musicians. For more information, go to info@waxahachiecvb.com.

...Cowboy poet **Lindy Simmons** is happy to announce that her new house on the Mancos Valley ranch is finished and son Andrew and family are moved in. They held a cowboy-style housewarming in March with the **Timberline Cowboys** providing entertainment. Lindy will be off to the Nebraska Cowboy Poetry Gathering taking place April 24-25. Also, she will share the stage with **JJ Steele** at the Green Mountain Falls Festival in Colorado in July.

...For most of February and March, **John and Joanne Lowell** were touring Southern Arizona and Texas, playing at the Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Bastrop (TX) and several listening venues. They have a 10-day music-filled trip to Ireland planned in late April and a full summer of music around Montana. In early August, John will travel to England to marry off his youngest daughter; the pair are also co-producing the Livingston Songwriter Festival in October. (<https://livingstonsongwriterfestival.org/>)

...**Marvin & Theresa O'Dell** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in February. They were married in a small church in Webb City, MO on February 12, 1966.

So Many Cowboys!
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WESTERN MUSIC

THE INTERNATIONAL IN IWMA

by Carol
Markstrom

The column highlights the international scope of IWMA through its membership and international performances and recognitions of members. IWMA welcomes new international members joining in the past few months, including **John Smyths** (performing artist) from Germany, **Larry Cann** (performing artist) from Australia, and **Mark Eckel** (DJ and owner of OZ Country Music Radio) from Australia.

IWMA artists are bringing their Western music and poetry to

audiences worldwide.

Greg Hager will be making his 6th concert tour in Japan in April for a month of performances. Recently, **John Smyths** and **Carol Markstrom** performed at the Red Carpet Award Show in Europe held in the Netherlands, and Carol Markstrom also performed at the Country Messe in Erfurt Germany—the largest country music festival in Europe. **Kristyn Harris** performed and entertained



Award-Winning DJ Mark Eckel, Oz Country Music Radio in Australia

with her yodeling for an audience by the ocean in Barbados. She also performed at the Caroline Cowboy Gathering and elsewhere in Alberta, Canada. IWMA's UK promoter and member, **Clint Bradley** and his Western band, have an extensive tour schedule across the UK and throughout Europe including Scandinavia. **KC LaCourse** was one of over 40 artists performing across 14 different venues at the Mildura Wentworth Country Music Festival in Australia. **Birdie Nichols** recently performed at the Tamworth Country Music Festival in Australia where she won the CCMA National Talent Search.

Much thanks and appreciation to **Gaby and Peter Agrikola**, owners and organizers of the Red Carpet Award Show in Europe, where several IWMA members recently received music and poetry awards. **Patty Clayton's** single, Wolf Moon, won Best Native American Style by a Female, and **Carol Markstrom** received Album of the Year-Native Style for Seekers. **John Smyths** won Spirit of the West Cover Song for Loving you Makes Me a Better Man. **Carlos Washington** won awards for Country Swing Artist and Band of the Year. **KC LaCourse** received the award for Female Cowboy Poet. **Birdie Nichols** received the Spirit of the West Award for No Cattle Kind of Cowboy.

Congratulations to **DJ Mark Eckel** who was recently inducted into the Australian Country Music Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Additionally, he received

the Australian People's Choice Award as the most popular DJ in 2025.

DJs worldwide are playing the music and poetry of IWMA members, and several members are charting internationally on the Joyce Ramgatie Top-200 Country Music Chart and Top-40 Single Chart compiled in the Netherlands. In recent months, Star Central in Australia has recognized songs of IWMA members, including **Carlos Washington** who had two #1 hits including



KC LaCourse Western Poet, Merri Winter Singer, and Daniel Linklater Mayor of Wentworth Shire Council at Wentworth Mildura Country Music Festival, Australia

I'm Coming Home on the Inspirational Chart and Party on Piedra Lumbre on the Country Chart. On the Alternate Chart, **Carol Markstrom's** Trickster Wind reached #4, and **Ron Christopher's**, Forever 1956, reached #7. **Patty Clayton's**, So Many Cowboys!, ranked at #5 on the Country Chart. **Birdie Nichols** had songs reach #1 including Golden Fields of the Sun on the Alternate Chart and, on the Country Chart, Into the West and No Cattle Kind of Cowboy (ranking high on other charts too). In addition to their songs charting, IWMA members, **Patty Clayton, Carlos Washington, KC LaCourse, and Carol Markstrom** have been interviewed by Mark Eckel on Oz Country Music Radio in Australia.

Here is a very promising news item: IWMA has been invited to participate as the Western Music and Cowboy Poetry Cultural Partner for International Cowboys & Cowgirls Day Festival in Kenya being held Saturday, July 25, 2026, in Ngong Racecourse, Nairobi, Kenya. Although funding is not provided, perhaps some IWMA members might be interested in international travel and delivering cowboy poetry and music performances. Contact Kabir Sagoo, US Advisor, International Cowboys & Cowgirls Festival Kenya, kabir@kabirsagoo.com.



Carol Markstrom with Gaby and Peter Agrikola, Organizers and Owners of the Red Carpet Award Show in Europe



"American folk music washes gently against Americana" is how multi-award-winning singer-songwriter Carol Markstrom's style of Western music is described by Country Music People Magazine. Audiences from across the U.S. to Alaska and also in Europe have been entertained by Carol's clear, emotion-filled vocals and songs that transport across places, times, and people, including Indigenous cultures. Her songs have been included in films and are played by DJs worldwide. Carol serves as a Director on the IWMA Board.

WESTERN EVENTS CALENDAR

FOR DETAILS GO TO
IWESTERNMUSIC.ORG/EVENTS

- Apr 18-19** **Santa Clarita
Cowboy Festival**
Santa Clarita, CA

- Apr 18** **Waxahachie
Cowboy Gathering**
Waxahachie, TX

- Apr 24-25** **Juab Cowboy Poetry &
Music Gathering**
Nephi, UT

- Jul 25** **National Day
of the Cowboy**

- Aug 6-8** **Arizona Cowboy
Poets Gathering**
Prescott, AZ

- Aug 6-9** **Montana Cowboy
Poetry Gathering &
Western Music
Rendezvous**
Lewistown, MT

- Aug 8** **World Yodel Day**

- Sep 30-Oct 4** **Durango
Cowboy Gathering**
Durango, CO

- Nov 6-7** **Western Slope
Cowboy Gathering**
Grand Junction, CO

- Nov 11-15** **IWMA 2026 Convention**
Albuquerque, NM

**YOUTH
WESTERN
MUSIC & POETRY
CAMPS**

CAMP 1
Burson Ranch near Channing, TX • June 14-19, 2026

CAMP 2
Weatherford College - Weatherford, TX • July 12-16, 2026

Contact
Judy James - judyjames908@gmail.com - 817.929.1953
Jean Prescott - jeanprescotttx49@gmail.com - 325.665.6413

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GET ROPED INTO WESTERN MUSIC & COWBOY POETRY

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PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Professional Members receive *The Western Way*, have a listing on the IWMA website, and have one vote.

- Individual Professional Membership.....\$100
- Individual Youth Membership.....\$15
(thru high school graduation)
- Individual Youth Membership.....\$25
(high school graduation thru 21)
- Patron Membership.....\$125
Includes sponsorship of the Patron Stage at Convention
- Business/Gathering Membership.....\$200
- Individual Life Membership.....\$1,500

SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP

Supporting Members (fans and others) receive *The Western Way* and have one vote.

- Individual Supporting Membership.....\$70
- Individual Youth Membership.....\$15
(thru high school graduation)
- Individual Youth Membership.....\$25
(high school graduation thru 21)
- Family Membership *(one vote per family)*.....\$85
- Patron Membership.....\$125
Includes sponsorship of the Patron Stage at Convention
- Individual Life Membership.....\$1,500

CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP

In addition to your National Membership, you may also want to support local chapters by adding individual Chapter Memberships.

- Arizona
- California
- Columbia
- New Mexico
- Tennessee
- Utah
- Youth
- Black Hills & Beyond
- Colorado
- Kansas
- Oklahoma
- Texas
- Western Wordsmiths

- Chapter Individual Membership (each chapter).....\$15
- Chapter Family Membership (each chapter).....\$25

It's OK to include my information in the IWMA Membership Directory *(printed annually and distributed during the IWMA Annual Meeting).*

- Address Yes No
- Phone Number Yes No
- Email Yes No

Tell us a little about yourself (check all that apply):

- Singer Instrumentalist Songwriter Poet
- Storyteller Author Manager/Booking Agent
- Publisher Producer DJ/Radio Station
- Fan Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ ZIP/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Total Due \$ _____

- Check enclosed (payable to IWMA)
- Charge my credit card
(American Express, MasterCard, Visa, Discover)

Card # _____

Expiration Date _____

Return application to:

**IWMA
P. O. Box 648
Coppell, TX 75019**

Who can we thank for referring you to IWMA?

For more details or questions

Email: marsha@westernmusic.org

Phone: 505-563-0673

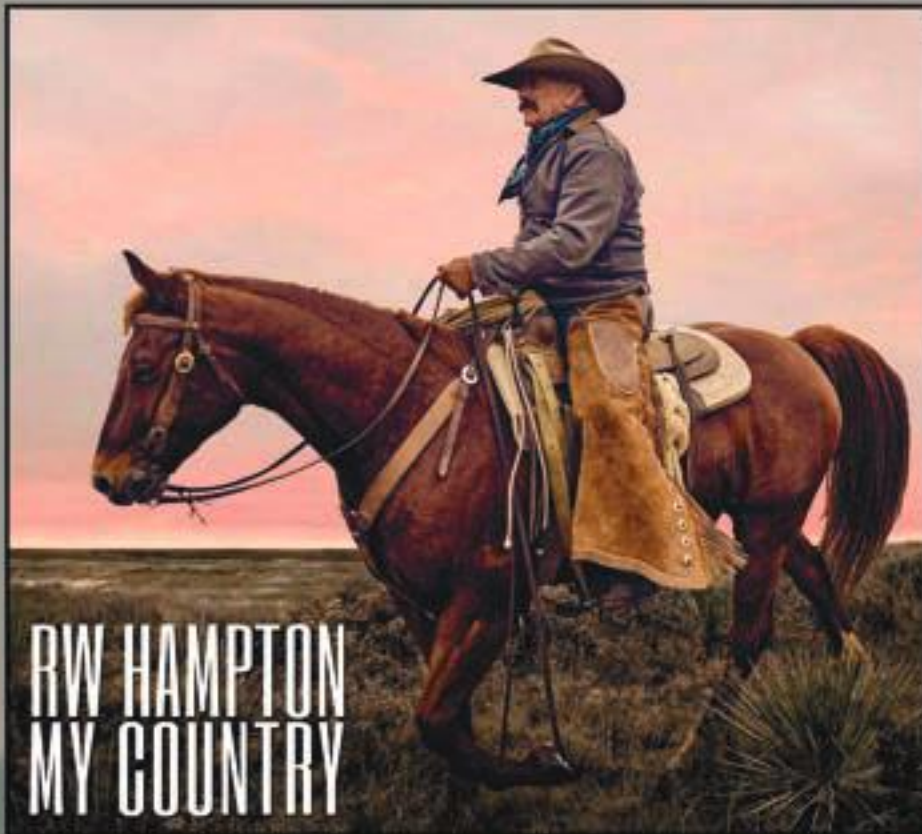
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