THE BIG BEND Sentinel

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BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES
by order of Presidio County

MISD names new high school principal

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — The Marfa Independent School District Board of Trustees recently named counselor Luane Porter as the new principal of Marfa High School.

Porter will be stepping in to fill the role of principal as Allison Scott retires at the end of the school year.

"I am proud to be named the junior-senior high school principal for next school year at Marfa ISD. In Marfa, we are blessed with an amazing staff and outstanding students," said Porter.

Porter previously served as Fort Davis ISD's high school principal for five years before making the move to Marfa ISD to serve as the district's singular counselor for the past two years.

"My goal is to support Marfa in providing a quality educational experience and work to reach new heights," said Porter. "I want the very best for our students."

Superintendent Oscar Aguero said given her background and time already spent at MISD, it was a natural fit.

"She knows our kids. She knows what direction we're looking at going," said Aguero. "We support each other, so it's just making the team that much stronger. I think it's going to be an easy transition."

Next, the challenge will be to find a replacement for the counselor position which Porter will be vacating, said Aguero.

"The difficult part now is going to be finding a counselor that can replace her. She's done a lot of great things for our students," said Aguero.

Porter has agreed to mentor whomever the new councilor/ student services coordinator is, he said.

"I am confident that we will find someone who best serves the needs of our students as well as our staff," said Porter.

Retiring Principal Allison Scott said given Porter's existing familiarity with the district's students, staff and parents, she too expects a smooth transition. Scott, who worked with Porter for seven years at Fort Davis ISD in addition to the past two years in Marfa, said she is confident Porter will step up to the role and do well in the position.

"The last two years, she has been my right-hand person. With her knowledge and experience, our campus is in excellent hands," said Scott.



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Tina Rivera, Marfa resident, participating in a six-week adobe apprenticeship program at the Chinati Foundation. Rivera was at work forming fresh adobe bricks with fellow apprentices at a job site near the museum's Young House. READ MORE ON PAGE 6.

Mando's building bought by Austin chef and restaurateur

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — The building that once housed Mando's — the beloved local Tex-Mex restaurant on the west side of town that closed its doors to disheartened, loyal customers in December 2019 — has sold to Austin restaurateur Shawn Cirkiel, chef and owner of Parkside Projects restaurant and hospitality group.

Cirkiel has yet to announce the style of cuisine that will be served in the new establishment, and said that while he knows he could never replace the original Mando's, he hopes his venture provides the welcoming, community-oriented feel that made the local standby so beloved.

"Our goal with Mando's is to continue on as a gathering place for Marfa and for all Marfans and to have a sense of place," he said. "We're not trying to do anything major [in terms of] style or brand or anything like that."

At this point, there is no clear timeline for opening, but Cirkiel said he is currently in the process of evaluating the building to develop an action plan for necessary updates and fixes, and hopes to start work on the structure sometime this year.

Mando's was run for nearly 20 years by Liz and Mark Rodriguez, and before that by Liz's parents and family relatives. The earliest iteration of the restaurant dates back to 1960 when

Armando "Mando" Uranga opened Mando's Drive Inn, a Tex-Mex and burger joint. In 1963, Uranga built and began operating his business out of today's existing cinder block structure.

Cirkiel grew up in Austin and his wife, Bria, grew up in Iraan in Pecos County. He said she competed in sports in Marfa growing up and ate at Mando's while in town. The Cirkiels own a number of properties in town and have been visiting for many years, he said, but finally decided to take the plunge into opening a Marfa restaurant in order to spend more time here.

"Like many of us from Austin, all over the world, and all over Texas, we have been going out [to Marfa] for many years and just started to slowly fall in love more and more," said Cirkiel.

The new Marfa restaurant won't be Cirkiel's first rodeo. He is deeply-rooted in the Austin restaurant industry, owning and operating a number of establishments around the city. Parkside, his flagship restaurant named for the Bronx housing project in which his father grew up, is a gastropub located on 6th Street specializing in farm to table ingredients and

(Continued on page 2)

Wildfire in northern Jeff Davis County subsides on 3rd day of response efforts

By MARY CANTRELL
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JEFF DAVIS COUNTY — A wildfire broke out in northern Jeff Davis County on Monday, triggering a multi-agency response effort complete with firefighters, air tankers and helicopters. As of midday Wednesday, the crew successfully put out the active fire, according to Jim Fowler, public information officer for the Fort Davis Volunteer Fire Department.

Ground crews were still working Wednesday afternoon to fully eradicate the fire, focusing on putting out hot spots — yuccas, agaves and plants with thick vegetation which were still smoldering, said Fowler. As of press time, the fire encompassed 650 acres and was 50 percent contained.

Containment is measured by the percentage of the fire's perimeter that no longer poses a threat of expansion, said Fowler. The fire's perimeter was established by dropping retardant from air tankers onto the ground to create boundary lines. For an area to be classified as "contained," the fire must be completely extinguished within 50 feet of the boundary lines of the fire. There was no change in acreage of the fire from Tuesday afternoon to Wednesday morning, according to Fowler.

The area saw an increase in humidity Tuesday night and was experiencing 25 percent humidity during the day on Wednesday, said Fowler, which helped subdue the flames. The area was still seeing 40 mph winds coming from the west, he said, but the progress was promising. Severe drought conditions in West Texas, including Jeff Davis County, lead to an increased likelihood of fires.

What is being referred to as the "Nunn" fire was determined to have been caused by an ant nest built inside of a water well's electrical box that led to a short circuit, generating sparks that set off the grassfire, said Fowler. The fire is burning in a remote, rugged location 22 miles north of McDonald Observatory on the west side on Highway 118. The primary property affected by the fire is High Lonesome Ranch, and

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Marfa ISD school board votes to partner with bond consultants, renews administrator contracts, solicits auditorium renovation donations

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — Marfa Independent School District's board of trustees met twice this month to discuss everything from reorganizing the structure of the board to partnering with an architecture firm to assess whether a bond supporting the district's many infrastructure projects is feasible.

The board met March 21 and March 28. The Big Bend Sentinel was not present at the March 21 meeting but spoke with Superintendent Oscar Aguero after the fact and obtained a draft of the meeting minutes. All board members were present on March 21 and board members Ernie Villarreal, Yolanda Jurado, Lori Flores and Ruben Martinez were present on March 28.

Aguero received permission from the board on March 28 to enter into contract negotiations with Claycomb Associates, Architects, who will assist the district as it explores the option of putting a bond on the ballot in an upcoming election. Aguero said the beginning stages will likely involve forming a committee made up of teachers, parents and other Marfa residents to discover the needs and wants of the larger community.

"So, what the bond will be for right now we don't know. [Claycomb will] help us go through the process to find out what we need and what the community believes we need," said Aguero.

The district would have to settle on a specified amount for the bond, then put it to voters for approval, as bonds are repaid with interest using taxpayer dollars.

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Sul Ross issues 2-hour shelter-in-place following suspicious person reports

By ALLEGRA HOBBS
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ALPINE — On Monday afternoon, Sul Ross State University briefly issued a shelter-in-place order after receiving multiple reports of a suspicious person on campus, with university President Pete Gallego stating authorities were investigating a possible shooter on the Alpine campus. Ultimately, no danger was found, and the campus was declared safe in a matter of about two hours.

According to university Chief of Staff Michael Pacheco, campus police received multiple calls in quick succession, around 2:40 p.m., reporting "a suspicious person with a suspicious object," prompting the university to issue the shelter-in-place order.

Shortly after 3 p.m., the university issued the lockdown order for its Alpine campus via the school's text-based alert system, telling those on campus to "seek the nearest room and lock yourself inside." Community members took to social media that afternoon searching for answers, with some parents of Sul Ross students expressing concern for their children who were sheltering on campus.

Though it was not immediately clear to recipients what had triggered the order, Gallego posted on Twitter shortly before 4 p.m. that he had called for the shelter-in-place so university police and local law enforcement could investigate "a report of a possible shooter," noting that a sweep of the campus thus far had revealed nothing alarming.

Shortly after 4 p.m., the Alpine Police Department, which had been called in to assist university police along with the Brewster County Sheriff's Office, declared via Facebook that university police had verified "no active shooter" on campus, though law enforcement was still in the process of clearing all buildings before the lockdown could be lifted.

The lockdown was lifted shortly after 5 p.m., when students and staff received the "all clear" message by text. Gallego took to Twitter again to share the news.

"We follow the 'see something, say something' rule & we value the safety of every student, staff member & faculty member," reads the tweet. "Ours is a strong #LoboFamily - & we protect it. All clear!"

The "suspicious person" who prompted the calls was not found, said Pacheco, and no object was recovered.

The university got help from local law enforcement to make the process more efficient — several officers from the Alpine Police Department and several deputies from the Brewster County Sheriff's Office provided assistance. "We'd like to thank them for their response and helping us with the call," said Pacheco.

The Brewster County Sheriff's Office on Monday said it had first received a call regarding a person with an object sticking out of their bag around 1:45 p.m., but that it

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The West Texan Media Group, LLC

Mando's building

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oysters.

Parkside opened in 2008, and since then Cirkiel has opened two Neapolitan pizzerias, Italian restaurant Olive & June, Tex-Mex eatery Vamonos, as well as two airport restaurants in the form of a juice bar and second Parkside location. The restaurant and hospitality group also runs an event center on central Congress Avenue.

Cirkiel, who studied at the Culinary Institute of America, first got his start working at his parent's vegetarian restaurant as a teenager.

"I started in the kitchen as a dishwasher when I was 14, and I've been in the business ever since then," said Cirkiel.

He said the search for a restaurant space in Marfa ended when he ultimately closed on the old Mando's building this fall. The rich history of the site appealed to Cirkiel, who hopes to emulate the sense of community the old restaurant held.

"Mando's in particular, the history and what it meant to the community, is similar to how we think of restaurants as gathering places, and parts of the community. And that's what Mando's was, and that's what all of our spaces are in Austin," said Cirkiel.

Cirkiel said he plans to hire locals to work in the restaurant, and expects to offer event space at the new venture, providing a spot for community gatherings such as school and athletics banquets.

Previous Mando's owners Mark and Liz Rodriguez will be cooking up signature Mando's burgers, complete with housemade green chile sauce, at an Easter egg hunt on the courthouse lawn hosted by the Marfa Chamber of Commerce on April 17.

The Big Bend Sentinel caught up with Mark to discuss how life has been for the couple since they decided to forgo Mando's in 2019. Catering requests have been numerous, he said.

"Lots of people have called us, it's been unreal — for private events, weddings and quinceañeras," said Mark. "From big to small, they've been calling us. Of course, we don't do that. Once we were out of the business, we were out of business."

But the couple has come out of retirement on a couple of special occasions. In addition to the forthcoming Marfa Chamber Easter event, the Rodriguezes have served burgers at a fundraiser for St. Mary's Catholic Church, where they sold over 500 patties, said Mark.

Mark is currently working at the Marfa Nutrition Center and Liz is helping out with various things here and there, he said. As to whether or not the couple finally took their long-awaited honeymoon — which was delayed by the duo being thrust into running Mando's shortly after their wedding — the celebratory trip has yet to come to fruition.

"We haven't gotten there yet," Mark laughed. "We still look forward to that but right now everything keeps us pretty anchored down here."

Mark has yet to meet Cirkiel, but said he anticipates the new eatery will be a departure from the restaurant he ran for nearly two decades.

"I guess it's something different for Marfa, period. Another choice for everybody," said Mark. "It's not gonna be like Mando's anymore, that's for sure."

But while there is no true replacement for the legendary Mando's, that chapter has come to a close, said Mark, and he wishes the new restaurant the best.

"Hats off to them," he said. "We had our run and it was great. Now it's somebody else's turn to take over and hopefully do great things with it."

Marfa ISD school board

(Continued from page 1)

There is no guarantee that a bond will come to fruition, said Aguero, but if it did, Claycomb Associates would likely be hired to perform the work, whether that means renovations of current buildings or the construction of entirely new facilities. The district will not pay Claycomb to perform the preliminary bond assistance, said Aguero.

The district's aging buildings have been a topic of great concern at the past few board meetings. Aguero said a bond might be a more cost effective way to address the laundry list of issues across campus facilities, including HVAC replacements, roof repairs, security upgrades and more. He said they are considering the bond for either the November 2022 election or May 2023 election, but the longer they wait the higher the cost of construction due to the price of materials rising.

Aguero said he would also like to work with Claycomb soon to knock down a couple of walls at the elementary school in order to make classrooms bigger and received permission from the board to begin that negotiation process.

The project to renovate the J.E. Gregg Auditorium over the summer is also moving along, with the school district soliciting public donations for new chairs, carpet, a fresh paint job and more. The Marfa Education Foundation donated just over $8,700, and the district will consider local contractors to perform the work, said Aguero. The board voted to approve the purchase of new air purifiers and filters for all classrooms, the gyms, field house, cafeteria and offices for a total of around $66,0000. As for the new track, Aguero told The Big Bend Sentinel that construction is on schedule and slated to be completed by May 26, the day before the high school graduation ceremony.

At the March 21 meeting, the board also saw a shakeup in its leadership structure, as it recently welcomed two new members. Teresa Nuñez, who previously served as the board secretary, is now serving as board president, Yolanda Jurado as vice president and Rene Gonzales as secretary. Christa Marquez, who only became vice president of the board this past October, will continue to serve on the board but without an officer role.

The board renewed Elementary Principal Amy White's contract for the 2023-2024 school year, and approved a probationary contract for newly-appointed High School Principal Luane Porter for 2022-2023. The board also voted unanimously to extend Superintendent Aguero's contract until the 2025 school year as well as increase the superintendent's salary by two percent — an increase of about $12,000 to a new salary of $116,000 — and included a $10,000 housing allowance in the contract.

Sul Ross

(Continued from page 1)

was deemed likely a baseball bat.

Betteanne Purcell, a junior at the university studying agriculture education, was in the lecture hall of the campus' Animal Science Center when she got the lockdown alert — the lecture hall was not locked, so she and two other students were ushered into the office of Dr. Bonnie Warnock, dean of agriculture & natural resource sciences, who was quickly moving through the building to ensure students were locked in rooms.

At first, no one knew why the lockdown order had been issued, said Purcell — the first thing she heard was that the suspicious object in question was a rifle, but but she was quickly told by another student that authorities were looking for someone with a baseball bat in their bag, which alleviated her fears.

"Some of us were nervous as rumors started to fly, but overall, being with each other was reassuring because we knew we would be safe," said Purcell, who added that the university had been supportive in the aftermath.

"The college did offer counseling [on Tuesday] to those who may have needed it, so that was very good to hear as well!" she said.

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Photo courtesy of Fort Davis Volunteer Fire Department

The Nunn fire broke out on Monday across rugged, remote terrain in northern Jeff Davis County. The cause of the fire was electrical. The fire grew to encompass 650 acres and was 50% contained at press time.



Photo courtesy of Fort Davis Volunteer Fire Department

Map of Nunn Fire.

Wildfire

(Continued from page 1)

it had potentially spread to neighboring Rancho Del Cielo, but the exact boundaries of the fire have yet to be determined, said Fowler.

Texas A&M's Forest Service was working Wednesday to eradicate the remaining hot spots. A wind advisory was in effect in the area until 7 p.m. Wednesday night and a red flag warning, or fire danger warning, was in effect until 9 p.m., according to the Texas A&M Forest Service. A break in strong winds is finally expected to arrive Thursday morning, according to the service.

Along with the Fort Davis Volunteer Fire Department, the Cherry Creek Fire Department and the Davis Mountain Resort Volunteer Fire Department helped fight the flames. Fowler said while it took them a while to get to the scene on Monday afternoon due to its remote location, they went to work immediately to contain the fire, which encompassed around 60 acres when they first arrived.

"Get on the fire quickly, with a lot of people and resources if you can, and work it aggressively, always with safety in mind. But really work to get that fire out," said Fowler of their early strategy.

"We don't want it to become a big fire like we've had in the past that takes resources away from the rest of the state," said Fowler.

The Texas A&M Forest Service was called out Monday to assist local firefighters. Fowler said there were around 10 crew members who camped out overnight at the site on Monday and Tuesday.

"It is hard to get enough people. Typically we will work a fire as an initial attack, but if it looks like it's going to be a large fire or we're not going to be able to get it out we will call the Texas A&M Forest Service," said Fowler.

Air tankers dropping fire retardant operated in the area on Monday and Tuesday, forming retardant lines to stop the fire's advance. The retardant makes it more difficult for grass to burn and by containing the spread it allows crews on the ground to better focus their efforts, said Fowler. On Tuesday, tankers were swapped out for a helicopter due to high winds. The helicopter was able to perform more targeted drops on the active fire, said Fowler.

Winds were originally blowing from the southwest, causing smoke and the fire to be driven northeast, he said — although due to the grass not being very dense, the smoke wasn't heavy.

Both High Lonesome Ranch and neighboring Rancho Del Cielo are working cattle ranches that may be negatively impacted by less available grazing land for cattle, said Fowler, though no structures were in immediate danger during the emergency event. Rancho Del Cielo's headquarters were in the path of the fire, but it would have had to travel miles, jumping mountainous terrain, to reach the structure, he said, and given the current status of the fire that was extremely unlikely to occur.

For up to date information on the fire, visit https://www.facebook.com/FortDavisFireDepartment/ and https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/article/68001

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Valentine math teacher of 19 years arrested on child pornography charges

VALENTINE — A high school math teacher who had been with Valentine ISD for 19 years, and who previously taught in Marfa, is facing federal charges for possessing, sending and receiving child pornography.

Albert Ackley, 59, openly admitted to accessing and sharing child pornography when he was approached by a special agent with the Texas Department of Public Safety executing a search warrant at his Valentine home on March 15, according to a criminal complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas. He was detained and brought to the Jeff Davis County Sheriff's Office, where he waived his Miranda rights to continue confessing to Texas DPS.

Ackley was taken to Hudspeth County Jail, according to DPS. Court records show that he was formally arrested and charged on March 21, and is currently being detained without bond. His preliminary hearing is set for March 31 in Pecos. The search of Ackley's home was carried out with the assistance of Homeland Security Investigations, the Jeff Davis County Sheriff's Office, and the Texas Highway Patrol.

Authorities also searched the Valentine school on March 15, said Valentine ISD Superintendent and Principal Debbie Engle. She spoke to an investigator again the following week, she said, and was told no victims associated with the school had been identified and that nothing had been found on any school devices. The school obtained Ackley's resignation on March 17.

Engle said any potential harm done to students has been looked into, and no such harm has been uncovered — the school brought in a counselor to speak with students and staff last week, and those interviews did not raise concerns.

"I have ex-students that have called, and they don't believe it," said Engle. "There has been nobody that has come forward with so much as a whisper."

The ordeal has been a profound shock for the school, said Engle. "I truly believed they would not find anything when they filed the search warrant," she said. "We were all blown away. The staff has had a really hard time. Nobody saw it. Nobody suspected it."

Now, the school is looking to the future and trying to move on after the disturbing revelation. "We're dealing with it, we're doing the best we can, and we're trying our best to move forward," said Engle. "And we're sticking together, so I think we'll be okay."

Ackley had taught at Marfa ISD before coming to Valentine nearly two decades ago — a February 11, 1999, issue of *The Big Bend Sentine*l identified him as a high school science, math and computer teacher who was set to become the district's technology coordinator.

According to the criminal complaint, which is based on the sworn affidavit of Texas DPS Special Agent Adam Patterson, the agency received a cybercrime tip in late February from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that the smartphone application KIK Messenger had flagged possible child pornography being uploaded via their server — the videos uploaded included depictions of female children between the ages of 9 and 12. The messaging service handed over the files and the uploader's IP address to Patterson, who linked that IP address to Ackley.

Patterson later learned that Homeland Security Investigations had already opened an investigation into Ackley in 2019 for uploading child pornography via the messenging service, the complaint says.

When Patterson arrived at Ackley's property in Valentine, he told him someone at the property was using the internet to look at child pornography, and asked if he knew who was doing so — Ackley admitted that it was him, and that he had used KIK to exchange child pornography.

Texas DPS searched the property and found a memory card for smartphones that contained three videos depicting child pornography. One video depicted a female child approximately three or four years old, and the other two depicted female children approximately 11 to 12 years old. More electronic devices and memory cards were taken from the home and are being investigated.

While being questioned by DPS, Ackley said he had used KIK to send and receive child pornography more than 50 times, and that he had used it to have inappropriate exchanges with three underage girls, per the complaint. He also said he had sexual contact with two female children when he was around 20 years old — one was 8 years old and the other was 12 years old, he told DPS. He shared the names of the minors with DPS.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas, which is prosecuting the case, declined to comment, citing pending litigation. Jack Meredith, the federal public defender assigned to represent Ackley, did not immediately return a request for comment.

In a statement, Texas DPS said that "additional investigations" are necessary to identify other potential victims. The department is asking anyone with information on possible victims to contact the DPS Safety Victim Services office at 512-424-2211.

Hector Flores Jr. pleads not guilty to child endangerment charge

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

ALPINE — Hector Flores Jr., a Fort Stockton man charged with child endangerment in federal court after going missing with his daughter in Big Bend National Park, pleaded not guilty last week.

Flores and his daughter became the subjects of a multi-agency missing persons search after disappearing into Big Bend National Park at the end of January, their car found abandoned in a remote part of the park. They were found weeks later in Mexico, in a remote farming community in Coahuila across the river from the park, having walked there on foot. Flores' daughter told investigators that the pair had survived roughly two weeks without adequate food.

On March 10, a grand jury indicted Flores on one count of child endangerment. Flores' lawyer, Shane O'Neal, argued at the time that the government was "stretching" on the charge, telling The Big Bend Sentinel that his client had taken steps to try to ensure his child's safety during the journey. "This statute is really meant to penalize people who abandon their children or leave their children in a car, which can cause fairly predictable, serious injury — or for cases of neglect," he said. "There's no indication that Mr. Flores was anything but a loving father who undertook something that is risky, but also took adequate measures to mitigate that risk."

Speaking at Flores' preliminary hearing in February, FBI Special Agent Alice Downie said investigators had found that Flores' journey into the park seemed to have been planned in advance — he had checked out survivalist books from the library and told acquaintances he wanted to live off the grid.

Flores' case has been complicated by the fact that the charges are federal but "assimilate" a state statute, because the alleged child endangerment took place on federal land — Big Bend National Park. For that reason, Flores can be charged federally with what would otherwise be considered a state crime. In Texas, felony child endangerment is punishable by up to 180 days in jail and a fine of up to $10,000. O'Neal said he is looking into how the state and federal laws entwined in this case could potentially complicate the process.

Flores is still currently being held in Brewster County Jail and his daughter is in the care of extended family. The child was initially taken into the custody of Child Protective Services upon being found.

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JUDD

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Visit juddfoundation.org for more information and to book reservations.

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Opinions

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

There has been talk of closing access to the BBNP area where that terrible act of vandalism took place by some thoughtless, immature and disrespectful people.

To the authorities of the park, I beg them not to close it and here is why:

I had the privilege of going there with a group of four, and two of us had back and walking problems, but we could do this easy hike! The flatland was a blessing and although we saw the horrid vandalism, we were still thrilled by wondrous things. My friends could traverse this beautiful area with little or no help. This was a wondrous adventure and easy on our aging bodies!

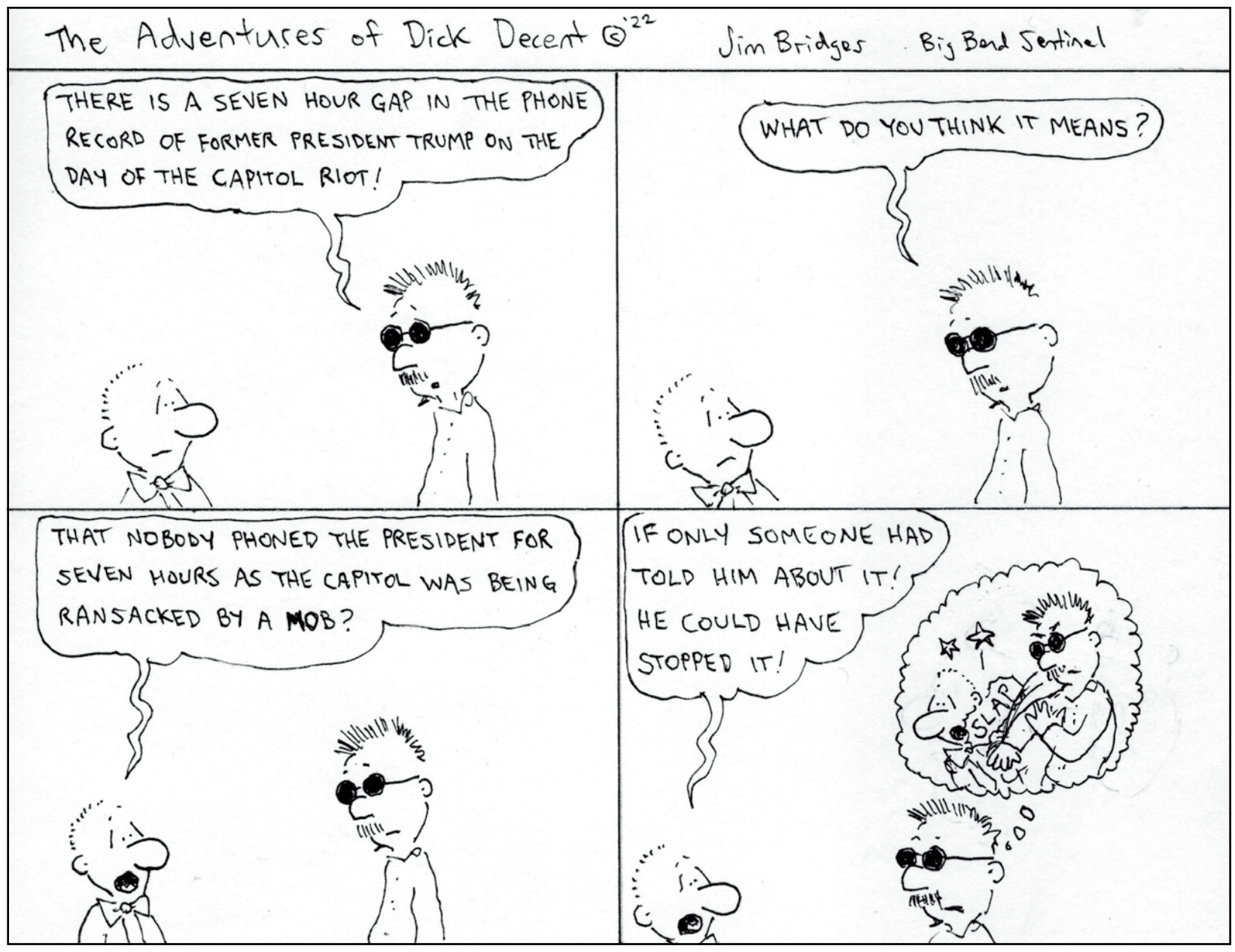
Please do not close that access. We had a joyous day !

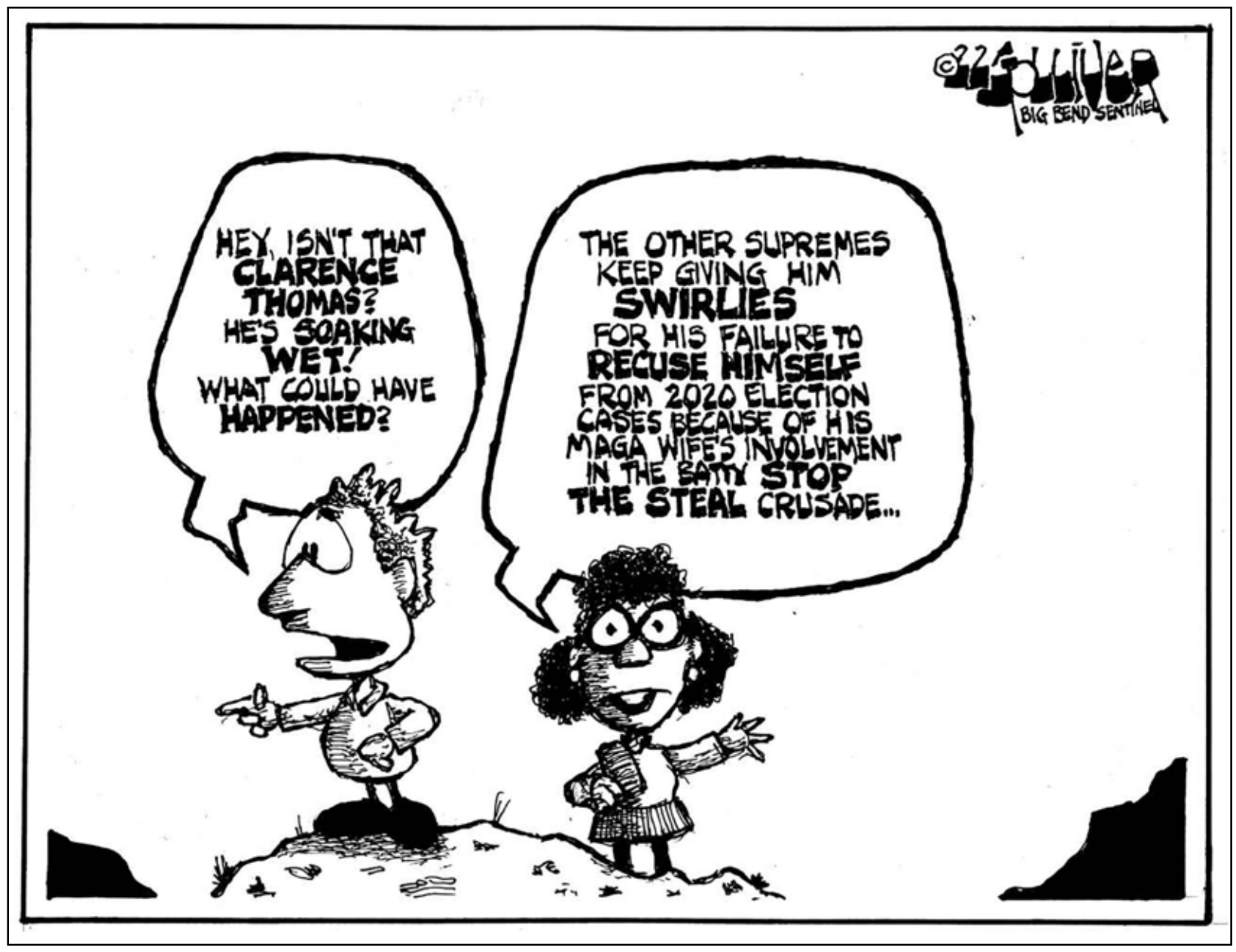
Marjie Erkkila
Fort Davis

We want to hear from YOU!

- Letters should be sent to editor@bigbendsentinel.com, and must provide the writer's full name, city of residence and an email or phone number, so that we may follow up and verify information as needed.
- Your letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. While opinions of all kinds are welcome, when it comes to claims of fact, we strive to only publish what is verifiable.
- We have limited staff capacity to fact check unsubstantiated claims, so letters that include those may be held or remain unpublished if information is not easily verifiable.
- We may reach out to ask questions and verify the identity of the sender. We do not run letters anonymously unless the sender is privately identified and has a reasonable claim to anonymity.
- We reserve the right to hold or refrain from publishing a letter for any reason and we thank you for always sharing your letters with us.

- ***The Big Bend Sentinel Editorial Staff***





OUR WATER MATTERS

A groundwater mystery continued…

by Trey Gerfers
tgerfers@pcuwcd.org

Faithful readers of "Our Water Matters" will recall that County Attorney Rod Ponton has been seeking to defund the groundwater district here in Presidio County. At a budget workshop last July, Mr. Ponton announced — with no warning or other sign of good faith — that he had found two attorney general opinions affirming that it was illegal for the county to fund the groundwater district. Mr. Ponton also has never divulged the source of these legal opinions, merely stating that "someone" from the county gave them to him.

Fortunately for all of us, the groundwater district has a very sharp attorney, Mike Gershon, who parsed the details of these AG decisions and relayed his findings in a letter to the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. Mr. Gershon's analysis found that one of these decisions, involving Kinney County, no longer applies because the Legislature changed the law back in 2015. Meanwhile, the other legal decision deals with Mills County and an entity known as Fox Crossing Water District, which no longer exists. The term "water district" may seem like the same thing as a groundwater district. But my own sleuthing has revealed that Fox Crossing functioned more like a utility and provided water and wastewater hookups in Mills County. In a nutshell, the county attorney's assertions are based on one very old legal decision that is now moot and another, even older one that doesn't involve a groundwater district. So how do we resolve the crisis precipitated by Mr. Ponton?

In his letter, Mr. Gershon points the way forward in a 2019 case involving Starr County. The groundwater district there had failed to fulfill its obligations to the neighboring groundwater districts, including the payment of its fair share to consultants for completing several studies and reports required by state law. These groundwater districts went to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and filed a petition: Starr County must either reform its groundwater district or disband it. In an unprecedented effort, the Starr County Commissioners Court, Starr County attorney, and Starr County Groundwater Conservation District in collaboration with the governor's office, the local state senator and local state representative hammered out a plan with the TCEQ. The county would continue funding of the groundwater district until the district could hold a taxing election. Fully aware of the pitfalls of asking the voters for a new tax, the commissioners wisely agreed to a "tax swap" in which the county would decrease its tax revenues to make up for the increase in new taxes levied by the groundwater district. The hope was that voters would be willing to agree to a new tax if their net property taxes did not go up. The ink was barely dry on the agreement when the coronavirus hit in early 2020 and the taxing election was delayed until 2022. As Starr County emerges from the ravages of the past two years, the groundwater district has again decided to postpone its taxing election until further notice.

When I presented these facts to the commissioners court last week, all of the commissioners present agreed on the importance of getting this right. Commissioner Bentley stated that "our water is too important to rush this." Commissioner Aranda affirmed that "now is not the time" for a taxing election. And Commissioner Knight said that he would be amenable to a tax swap. Mr. Ponton suggested that the groundwater district come up with a plan that the commissioners court could approve and warned that "eventually the district will have to become taxing."

Although Mr. Ponton has a valid point, his sudden, urgent need to save the county a tiny fraction of its overall revenues ($52,000 to the groundwater district out of a $7 million annual budget) doesn't seem rational. His poorly researched legal arguments are also cause for concern. Perhaps Mr. Ponton is simply too distracted with his work for the other six or seven public entities he represents to focus appropriately on the needs of Presidio County. It should be clear to anyone that a taxing election in the current economic climate would likely fail, effectively eliminating the local control of our groundwater.

Trey Gerfers is a San Antonio native and serves as board chairman of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. He earns his living as a translator of technical documents from German to English for the German and Swiss pharmaceutical and medical-science industries. Trey has lived in Marfa since 2013.

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Community

Adobe apprenticeship introduces local women to earthen architecture

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Adobe apprentices, all women from the tri-county area, participating in a hands-on, six-week program hosted by the Chinati Foundation, MUDLAB and Joey Benton. From left, Caroline Crawley, Elizabeth Davis, Zeke Raney, Joey Benton, Shelby Rogers, Elizabeth Torres, Fatima Anaza, Luis Madrid, Tina Rivera, Jaquelín Zazueta and Elizabeth Farrell.

MARFA — Last Thursday, rows of neatly laid out, fresh adobe bricks dried in the West Texas sun as their creators — participants of the Chinati Foundation's new adobe apprenticeship for tri-county women — mixed together soil, sand, sotol fiber and water in wheelbarrows and washed brick molds, working in sync to start the process over again.

The cohort, made up of women from Marfa, Alpine and Fort Davis, was starting off their fourth day in a six-week program. The previous day, the group made a total of 146 adobe bricks using traditional processes. In addition to gaining hands-on construction experience, apprentices are also attending talks hosted by adobe experts and taking field trips to area sites, like the Ruidosa Church.

Tina Rivera, a workshop participant who lives in Marfa, said she was drawn to apply to the course because of its all-women focus, having been energized by her past participation in Lumber Club Marfa, a woodworking club for girls. She said she was interested in learning how to build her own home out of sustainable materials and how to preserve Marfa's history.

"The cultural erasure — I don't want to see that happening," said Rivera.

Another apprentice, Jackie Zazueta, a ceramicist who also lives in Marfa, said the opportunity to get outside and work with her hands was appealing after mostly working from home during the pandemic. She, too, was drawn to adobe's rich history, and said she wants to go on to incorporate the skills she is learning even after the workshop ends.

"I don't want to just do this for six weeks and stop thinking about it," she said. "I want to continue talking about it, working with adobe and with future restoration stuff — and then also incorporate it into my own art practice at home."

The steady flow of the worksite, an open area near Chinati Foundation's Young House, was aided by the apprenticeship's leaders: adobe practitioners Joey Benton, of custom design and fabrication studio SILLA, and Elizabeth Farrell and Zeke Raney, both of local architecture firm MUDLAB.

Raney said in this early phase of the program they are focusing on giving participants a feel for what it is like to work with the materials and are taking the time to dispel some of the myths about adobe. While the instructors have plans to introduce a mixer later on, they first opted to go fully manual to facilitate an intimate build site.

"You just wash everything off with water, there are no chemicals, no machines. This is all by hand. There are a lot of different ways you can bring machinery into it. But we decided first let's start it quiet, let's converse, let's take it easy," said Raney.

Farrell said the science of adobe can be simple or infinitely complex, depending on the level of detail involved, but the six-week course focuses on developing the practical skill set needed to build basic adobe structures.

"It's not like when you take a woodshop class then you realize you don't have a woodshop. Everybody can have a shovel, a wheelbarrow, sand and dirt. I think it is something that once you've taken this workshop, you could go off and feel confident doing yourself," said Farrell.

She said it was exciting to hear the participants already brainstorming ways to use their newfound knowledge of the material in their artistic practices and more.

"People are already thinking about, 'How am I going to apply this to my life and what I do?'" said Farrell.

Jenny Moore, director of the Chinati Foundation, said the adobe apprenticeship's genesis came out of a desire to turn a straightforward restoration project into a training program that would involve the community. The apprentices will help with repairs to the distinct Judd adobe wall at the John Chamberlin building — the museum recently announced an April 30 reopening of the newly-restored structure. Architectural preservation was outlined in Chinati's 2017 Master Plan as one of the museum's primary goals, said Moore.

The foundation wanted to offer the program to women, not only to bring more of them into a traditionally male-dominated field, said Moore, but because women were harder hit by unemployment during the pandemic. Apprentices they hired all share an interest in the sustainability of adobe structures and want to learn how to construct and maintain them, said Moore. Moore involved Benton and MUDLAB, who came up with the program's curriculum, to spearhead the course because of their knowledge of the area's adobes.

"They were really interested in spreading this knowledge and skill — not being proprietary about it, but really sharing it as widely as possible, because each one of these folks as apprentices then could develop their own crews and then tackle their own projects," said Moore. "There's a lot of opportunity out here for this field."

The program is being funded by a $1,250,000 grant Chinati received from #StartSmall, Square and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey's public fund for pandemic relief. Four apprentices are being paid an hourly wage to participate in the program, and a few others — including two representatives from the museum's conservation department — are volunteering their time. In addition to performing on-site repair work of Judd's adobe wall at the Chamberlin building, apprentices are also going to use the Young House as a case study for adobe home repair, building a test wall and covering it with earthen plaster.

Many apprentices remarked they were feeling more competent after just the first few days of the program and mentioned they hope the apprenticeship can become a regular occurrence rather than just a one-off.

Benton, who recently completed adobe restoration projects of the Alvino and Dorgan houses in Big Bend National Park as well as Balmorhea State Park's motor court and frequently partners with MUDLAB on similar undertakings, said the program is designed to give the women a little bit of everything as far as the field of adobe is concerned.

"At the end of six weeks they will have knowledge of materials, construction, restoration, preservation and structure. So we're trying to kind of get all of that into this one little six week moment," said Benton.

Guest instructors include well-known historic preservationists in the field of adobe and earthen architecture: David Keller of Sul Ross' Center for Big Bend Studies, Sonya Cooper of New Mexico State University and Pat Taylor.

More than a third of Marfa's buildings are adobe structures, said Benton, and by passing down these skills of how to build and repair adobe to the next generation, they will be able to be better stewards of the town's architectural heritage, which is already being lost to demolition of old adobe buildings.

"There's a real need for people [to be knowledgeable about adobe] in this community. We don't have the people to take the next generation — we don't have a place to hand this off to," said Benton.

Because the tradition of adobe was mostly passed down through oral history, he said, it is important to bring back the practice and instill the concept of adobe as a viable building material into the community. By teaching people how adobe works, they can hopefully perpetuate its existence, he said.

"Really, all we're missing is knowledge. We have everything else; we've got the materials, we've got the buildings to take care of. We just need knowledge."

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Staff photo by Sam Karas

Costume contest winner Buddy of Tonganoxie, Kansas gazes lovingly at his owner, Julia Jellison.



Staff photo by Sam Karas

The crowd cheers as the first heat begins at the Terlingua Chihuahua Races.

'1, 2, 3, Chihuahua!': Terlingua celebrates 19th annual Chihuahua race

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

TERLINGUA — Just before the races started, there was a scramble at the finish line. Photographers elbowed each other for the perfect shot. Dog owners crouched in wait, dangling Slim Jims toward the track.

"One, two, three, Chihuahua!"

A squad of locals, including Romaldo Peña of Big Bend National Park and Michael Drinkard of the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend, coordinated the gate drop. The athletes emerged one by one out of their cardboard slots to the roar of the crowd.

It took a few beats for new participants to understand what was going on. More often than not, the gates would drop and they'd emerge confused, blinking, tails wagging, looking for their people. More than one owner got onto the track to urge their wayward pup toward the finish line.

Mike Kasper, also known as "Dr. Fun," has been the emcee of the event since it started in 2004. "There was only one year I didn't do it," Kasper said. "It was like 22 degrees outside. Too cold for me, but the dogs still raced in crazy little sweaters."

Kasper has primarily made his South County living as a musician, with a standing Friday night set at the High Sierra Bar & Grill. His music, a hodgepodge of rock stylings, is "huge in Switzerland."

He has known Drinkard, crisis service specialist at the Family Crisis Center, since he moved to Terlingua almost 40 years ago. Early in the 2000s, Drinkard floated the idea of a dog race. "I don't know if it'll work, but dude, let's do it," Kasper remembered saying.

This was before Terlingua was "discovered," as Kasper puts it, and there were lulls in between the regular pulses of tourists for holidays and spring break. A bike race scheduled for February got canceled, and it seemed like there'd be nothing to break the monotony.

"It's a time when there are no tourists, when everybody's kind of feeling down because it's the middle of winter and people drag their feet," Drinkard explained. "We were thinking there must be something we can do for morale."

The canceled bike race had been known as the Chihuahuan Desert Challenge. Drinkard and his coworkers racked their brains. What about some kind of "Chihuahua Challenge"?

"My friend and I had Chihuahuas, and our friends who were school teachers had a Chihuahua, and it seemed like the Chihuahuas didn't like each other," Drinkard recalled. "We thought we could settle it with a dog race."

Initially, everyone doubted the mechanics of Chihuahua racing. "At first we thought, 'This'll be really dumb,'" Drinkard said. "We thought it'd be like trying to race wild cats or something."

Still, a big crowd of locals turned out for the event. "Lo and behold, the little doggies ran down the track against each other, and the crowd went wild," Kasper remembered.

For the first few years the event was mostly attended by locals and grew to include entries from Marfa, Marathon and Alpine. As tourism in the Big Bend parks has exploded, the event has morphed to include more out-of-towners — the date has been set for the last weekend of spring break so tourist kids can take part. "COVID really blew a hole in everything, but the year prior was a gangbuster," Kasper said. "There were people from all over the country. New York, Dallas — they were from everywhere."

Julia Jellison of Tonganoxie, Kansas, made the trek mostly to see her children, Jared Jellison and LaNetta Barnes of Terlingua. She and her 14-year-old "chug," Buddy, ended up stealing the show at the costume contest. Buddy's costume was a boat-themed outfit repurposed from a case of Lone Star.

Jellison's son is a well-known river guide in the area and provided the inspiration for Buddy's outfit. "I said 'canoe,' and he ran with it," she said.

Sandra Aranda and her son, Dylan, brought their Chihuahuas, Chiquiti and Tiny, down the River Road from Presidio. The canine Arandas were dressed with a luau theme — Chiquiti was sporting a Hawaiian shirt, and Tiny strutted her stuff in a grass skirt and lei. The garments originally adorned liquor bottles but turned out to be perfectly sized for the dogs.

Aranda has been a proud longtime Chihuahua owner. "They're so lovable," she said. "And you can carry them everywhere."

In all the years that Kasper has been a part of the festivities, there have been few mishaps. True to Terlingua, the weather can be unpredictable, and the event's home turf — the unpaved parking lot of the Starlight Theatre — occasionally becomes a dust bowl when spring winds blow in.

One year, the gates opened, and two dogs emerged entwined. "I don't know how to phrase this exactly," Kasper said. "The dogs…well, the dogs were in heat."

Parents shielded their childrens' eyes as the pint-sized lovebirds were escorted off the race track. "Other than that, we've had a couple of scraps, but the dogs have never really had a bad fight."

Though Drinkard insists that the event has always been primarily to "boost morale," it's an opportunity for locals and businesses to come together to support the Family Crisis Center of the Big Bend. The Crisis Center has shelters in Presidio and Alpine, serving families and individuals who have been the victims of crimes. The Terlingua office serves as a satellite for those shelters, helping connect folks in need with services in an extremely remote part of the region.

"Somebody's already telling them what to do — we help them identify available options, and the choices are all theirs," Drinkard explains. "We help people recover from whatever things have happened to them and work towards self-sufficiency."

Each year, he tours local businesses with a stack of blank gift certificates that race attendees can bid on at a silent auction. The money goes to support a variety of outreach services that the center provides. "They help so many poor people with their [grocery] boxes," Kasper said. "A lot of families out here really depend on that." This year's races raised about $1500 for the center.

Ultimately, the Chihuahua races are a celebration of local dogs, fixtures of the community in tiny, far flung Terlingua. Dogs accompany their owners off-leash to the local watering holes and roam the desert in packs, looking for adventure. They're present at all community events, and have even been known to interrupt performances by the local burlesque troupe.

"In Terlingua, you will never find a bored dog stuck in a dark, dingy apartment all day that never gets to go out and see the sunlight or other dogs," Kasper said. "To a dog, Terlingua is freedom."

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Red Bull 'Rio Grande Gravel' bike race scheduled for May

By SAM KARAS
sam@bigbendsentinel.com

CIBOLO CREEK RANCH — On May 7, cyclists will descend on Cibolo Creek Ranch for Rio Grande Gravel, an event billed as "the hardest 100-mile gravel race on the planet." The event, hosted by Redbull, was designed by Payson McElveen and Colin Strickland, two rising stars in the up-and-coming sport.

Gravel racing combines multiple cycling disciplines for thrill seekers who want to combine the speed of road racing, the unpredictable terrain of mountain biking, and the physical endurance expected of triathletes. "My favorite aspect of gravel riding, as opposed to road riding, is the ability to go explore the countryside," Strickland explained in a promotional video for Red Bull.

The race had initially been scheduled for November, but due to "operational issues impacting the course," per a Red Bull spokesperson, the event was pushed into 2022. Registration is now open for gravel racers hoping to put their skills to the test. Participation will be capped at 500 cyclists, and on-site camping will be available for athletes competing in the race.

"Starting at a base elevation of 4,500 feet, the course features a series of 25-mile-long loops, allowing both novice and experienced cyclists the opportunity to choose from a 25, 50, or 75-mile course on which to race," reads the official Red Bull press release. "Those who complete the 75-mile course are eligible to receive $10,000 in cash prizes, which will be split equally among all podium finishers."

Those interested in registering for the event or learning more may visit www.redbull.com/riogrande .

'The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations' exhibition, featuring Marfa printer, on view at Albuquerque Museum

ALBUQUERQUE —The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations exhibition can now be viewed at the Albuquerque Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, as of February 19, 2022. The exhibition features Robert Arber, a printer and Marfa resident.

This exhibition focuses on the collaborative process of printmaking and celebrates several printers based (or formerly based) in New Mexico as well as the artists they have worked with. Often the printer receives less recognition than the artist for their role in making prints. The Printer's Proof centers around the perspectives of six featured printers: Marina Ancona, Robert Arber of Marfa, Steve Britko, Michael Costello, Bill Lagattuta and Jennifer Lynch. In addition, several works by Ron Adams, founder of Hand Graphics in Santa Fe will be on view.

Artists featured in the exhibition will include Donald Judd, Harmony Hammond, Nick Cave, Jim Dine, Susan Rothenberg, Hung Liu, Nicola Lopez, Liliana Porter, Luis Tapia and many more.

The Printer's Proof will examine a variety of printing techniques and will explore how the final print is often shaped by the nature of the collaborative process between artist and printer. Printmaking can be highly technical and requires years of experience to achieve a high sense of proficiency. While some artists who work with a printer are knowledgeable about printmaking, others have never created a print before. The printer's knowledge of the process, materials, and possibilities can be crucial to helping an artist achieve their vision, while sometimes the artist's visions can push the printer in new directions to explore new techniques and methods. This synergy between artist and printer is at the heart of the works included in the exhibition.

"Visiting each printer's studio provided a special opportunity to experience how printers and artists collaborate to create works that are incredibly wide-ranging in their approach to printmaking and in the themes they chose to explore," said Albuquerque Museum Head Curator Josie Lopez, Ph.D. "The number and diversity of artists that each printer worked with represent decades of creativity and reveal another facet of the storied art historical narrative of New Mexico and beyond."

The exhibition celebrates each printer's career and explores the creative, technical and visual ideas unique to printmaking. The Printer's Proof features over 120 artists with works spanning from the 1970s to the present. The prints included provide compelling evidence of the unique and expressive possibilities of printmaking. In addition, there will be a video component on view featuring interviews with each of the printers. The Printer's Proof is curated by Albuquerque Museum.

The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations will be on view at Albuquerque Museum from February 19 through May 15, 2022.


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5	8							6
	9		5	6	4			7
	6	1		8	7			5
9	3	6		5				
			6	7	3			
				9		3	6	8
6			9	2		7	8	
8			1	3	6		4	
3							2	1

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

5	3	1	2	8	9	6	7	4
6	7	8	5	4	1	3	9	2
4	2	9	7	3	6	5	8	1
3	9	2	4	6	7	8	1	5
1	8	6	3	9	5	2	4	7
7	5	4	1	2	8	9	3	6
8	4	5	6	1	3	7	2	9
9	1	7	8	5	2	4	6	3
2	6	3	9	7	4	1	5	8

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Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg March 21, 2022

ACROSS
1 Opposite of rural
6 "Sadly ..."
10 Accompanying
14 ___ Polo (messaging app)
15 South Asian expat, say
16 Dark purple berry
17 Decorate
18 Minute ___ orange juice
19 Related, as a story
20 Improve society (In this clue's answer, unscramble letters 4-7)
23 Rage
24 Got together
25 Above, to a poet
26 Studio Ghibli frame
27 Common skin condition
29 Ballpoint's point
32 Concrete result (... letters 4-9)
35 Oodles
37 Got ___ of (threw out)
38 Highest or lowest cards
39 It's associated with clues but not a grid (... letters 7-10)
44 Positive poem
45 Voluminous volume
46 ___ out a win
47 It's put on display
48 Public health org.
49 Letter after sigma
52 Mix of things on your mind, or this puzzle's scrambled words
58 "Hello!" on a ship
59 Snoozefest
60 Graceful bearing
61 Uranium containers
62 Openly declare
63 Start for "tube" or "circle"
64 "___ All That" (1999 film)
65 Sees the point of
66 "Blue Dancers" painter Edgar

DOWN
1 Miso taste
2 Speed-checking device
3 Out of cash
4 Unit derived from the Old English for "open field"
5 Z-listers, say
6 Let into the club
7 Eco-friendly Nissan model
8 "In your dreams!"
9 First half of a mixtape
10 Aquifer's contents
11 Madonna or Lady Gaga, for pop
12 Powdery mineral
13 Try to elude a seeker
21 Place to order a Reuben
22 Scuba diving spot
26 Reference in a footnote
27 Still in the game
28 Relinquish
29 ___ of the woods
30 Bruise soother
31 Suga's K-pop group
32 Exercise a democratic right
33 Filled to the ___
34 Passenger's payment
35 Hullabaloo
36 Guided
40 ___+Alt+Del
41 Conference holder?
42 "Who wants dessert?" response
43 Dating site named after a love god
47 Bottomless pit
48 Munches
49 Doodad
50 On the ocean
51 App reviewers, often
52 Jelly containers
53 "This can't be good"
54 Easy ___ (effortless game setting)
55 Peace symbol
56 Moderate gait
57 Vanished

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

B	A	D	G	E	■	I	D	E	A	■	S	N	I	P
E	L	E	N	A	■	A	N	E	W	■	T	O	N	E
E	C	L	A	T	■	M	A	L	L	S	O	R	T	S
■	H	I	T	S	O	N	■	■	■	I	N	U	I	T
R	E	V	■	■	P	O	R	■	S	A	Y	S	M	E
A	M	E	N	A	T	W	O	R	K	■	■	H	E	R
G	Y	R	O	S	■	■	B	A	Y	A	T	■	■	■
■	■	Y	E	A	S	T	O	F	E	D	E	N	■	■
■	■	S	P	L	I	T	■	■	A	L	O	E	S	■
S	H	H	■	■	O	L	I	V	E	B	L	O	G	S
C	O	O	T	I	E	■	C	I	S	■	■	D	O	N
H	A	T	E	R	■	■	■	S	C	R	O	L	L	■
E	X	T	R	A	M	A	Y	O	■	I	V	I	E	S
M	E	I	R	■	U	B	E	R	■	T	E	N	S	E
E	S	P	Y	■	G	E	T	S	■	A	N	G	S	T

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☺ MARFA SCHOOL LUNCH MENU ☺

MAR/APR	Thu, Mar 31	Fri, Apr 1	Mon, Apr 4	Tue, Apr 5	Wed, Apr 6
BREAKFAST	SAUSAGE BISCUIT	MUFFIN, YOGURT	BREAKFAST STRUDEL, CHEESE CUBES	PANCAKE WRAP, CHEESE STICK	FRENCH TOAST, YOGURT
LUNCH Menu courtesy of PORTER'S SINCE 1945 Celebrating 70+ years of serving our customers. 432-729-4375 www.myporters.net	BONELESS CHICKEN WINGS, CHIPS, CELERY STICKS, BABY CARROTS, MIXED FRUIT, SHERBET	CHICKEN PARESAN, ROLL, SAVORY GREEN BEANS, CORN, PEACHES	HAMBURGER/ CHEESEBURGER, BAKED FRIES, TINY TOMATO CUP, SALAD, PEARS	QUESADILLA, SALSA, BEANS, SLICED CUCUMBERS, ROSY APPLESAUCE	CHEESE PIZZA, BABY CARROTS, SAVORY GREEN BEANS, APPLE SLICES, COOKIE

CELEBRATION LIQUOR MARFA
Mon - Thu 11:30 am - 9 pm
Fri - Sat 10 am - 9 pm
432-837-7479 • Marfa
Mon - Sat 10 am - 9 pm
432-729-4682 • Alpine

RAUL LARA
CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
Cell# 432-249-1189
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com
Post Office Box 787
432-729-4315 / fax 432-729-3158

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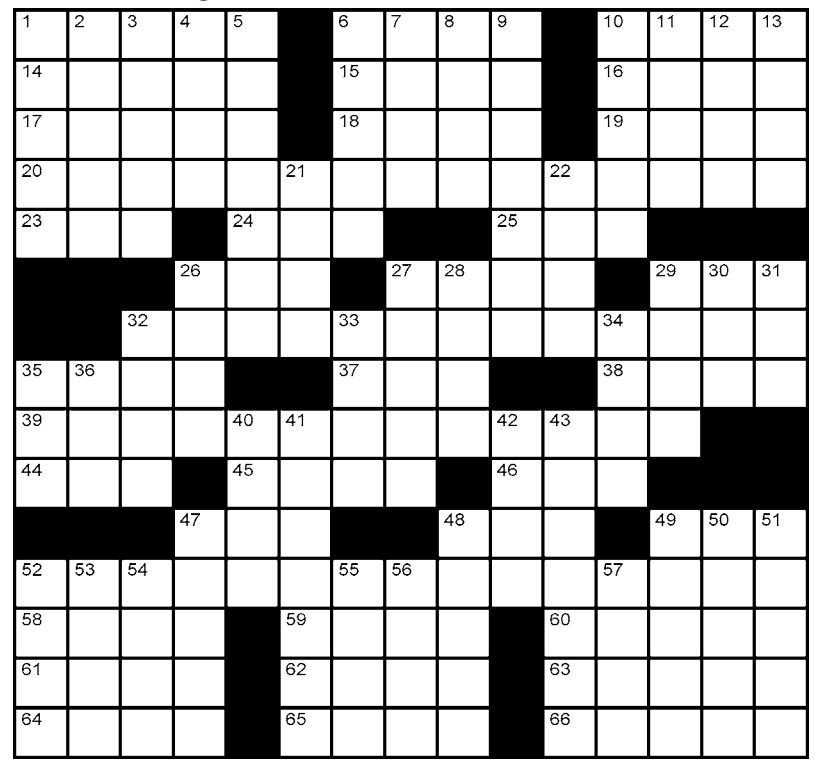
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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

THU, APR 1: Softball vs McCamey at Coffield, 5:30 pm
SAT, APR 2: JH Track District Meet at Van Horn
MON, APR 4: Boys & Girls District Golf Tournament at Marfa Municipal
MON, APR 4: JH Softball, Intra-Squad Innings in Marfa, 5:00 pm

3/21 **Strange Notions** *by Enrique Henestroza Anguiano*



OBITUARIES



Arana

It is with great sadness that we must report that **Willie Arana** of Willie Arana Pest Control died in his work truck suddenly on Saturday, March 26, in his favorite town of Presidio.

Willie was most known for always brandishing a big friendly smile to everyone. His laugh gave a positive outlook to any situation. His quirky sense of humor and humble, relaxed personality were addictive.

Born to Ramon Arana Moreno and Hermelinda Nevarez in 1945, he attended Jefferson High School but graduated from Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso in 1968. He attended San Jose State University in California on a full cross-country/basketball scholarship.

Before the 35 years pest control services in the Presidio-Marfa-Fort Davis region, he was employed as a basketball referee, Farmer Dairy ice cream man, soda delivery person with 7-Up, and a Circle K clerk; he worked in a sawmill, in landscaping, in construction and in quality inspections of grocery bags in California.

In his spare time, Willie loved road trips and traveling to the beach with his family. He was involved with many community service organizations in West Texas including the Bowie High School Alumni Association in El Paso.

He is survived by his wife Nina Zamora; his ex-wife Manuela Lara; his stepfamily, Adrian Zamora and Alette Jackson; his sons and daughters — William Arana Jr., Lily Chavez Arana, Rocio and Arlene Arana; and 12 grandchildren including his newest, 2-year-old granddaughter Emma Nadía Arana Torres.

Sympathy letters can be mailed to his El Paso home office at 2400 San Jose Ave, El Paso, TX 79930 or emailed to: willarana@hotmail.com. The office phone number is 915-566-2815.

The memorial service will be held at Iglesia San Ignacio, 408 Park Street, El Paso, Texas. A public viewing will take place Friday, April 8, from 3 to 7 p.m., with the Rosary following from 7 to 8 p.m.

A funeral Mass will be held on Saturday, April 9, at 10:30 a.m., with a reception to follow afterwards.

Presidio, Marfa, Alpine, Balmorhea and Fort Davis were very familiar to us. Your community welcomed us with that warm Texas hospitality. It was like a home away from home, working in your many towns' homes and businesses. We are sincerely grateful for your loyalty to my father's business. He loved working for y'all.

• • •



Frias

Frances DeAnda Frias, 79, of Marfa, Texas, went to be with the Lord on March 23, 2022, in El Paso, Texas.

Viewing will be held at the Alpine Memorial Funeral Home Memorial Chapel on April 2, 2022, from 2 to 5 p.m. Cremation burial will be scheduled for the immediate family at a later date.

Frances was born in Marfa to Conrado "Sarge" and Maria DeAnda on May 27, 1942. She attended school in Marfa. She married Pedro Baeza Frias on May 13, 2008, in Marfa. She worked for the sheriff's office, Presidio County Tax Collector's office, and U.S. Border Patrol in Marfa. She also worked at MHMR in Alpine, Texas. She enjoyed having prayer meetings at home and at church. She loved to help people. She also enjoyed visiting her comadres. She was loved by many and will be deeply missed.

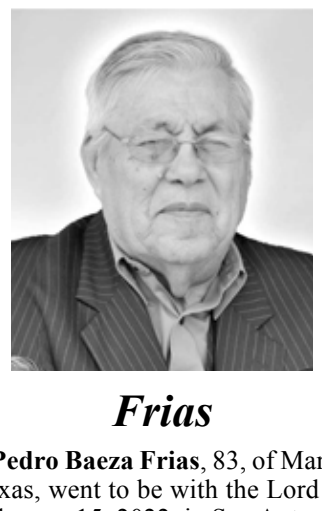
Frances is preceded in death by her husband, Pedro Frias; parents, Conrado "Sarge" and Maria DeAnda; and brother, Orlando Contreras.

Frances is survived by her daughters, Ida Martinez (Fred) of Artesia, New Mexico; Rita Sanchez (Johnny) of Marfa; Ina Razo of Alpine; sister Maria DeAnda of El Paso, Texas; niece, Bella Farley of El Paso; several nieces and nephews; stepdaughter Carol Sue Gonzales (Victor); stepsons Pete Frias Jr. (Terry), Robert Frias (Veronica), and Mike Frias all of El Paso; grandchildren Adriana Sanchez of McKinney, Texas, Daniel Martinez of San Antonio, Victor Gonzalez Jr., Anna Monique Gonzalez, Elaine Frias, Samuel Frias, Adam Frias, Robert John Frias, Amanda Frias, Nick Frias, Mike Christopher Frias; and 13 great-grandchildren and one on the way.

Online condolences may be left at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.

• • •



Frias

Pedro Baeza Frias, 83, of Marfa, Texas, went to be with the Lord on February 15, 2022, in San Antonio, Texas.

Viewing was held at Alpine Memorial Funeral Home Memorial Chapel on February 19, 2022. Cremation burial will be scheduled for the immediate family at a later date.

Pedro was born in Marfa to Mike and Felomena Frias on June 28, 1939. He attended school in Marfa. He married Frances DeAnda on May 13, 2008, in Marfa. He worked for Cashway as a manager for over 30 years and BMC West as a contract salesman. He was a big fan of the Dallas Cowboys and enjoyed walking and having breakfast with friends.

Pedro is preceded in death by his parents, Mike and Felomena Frias, and Isabel Frias.

Pedro is survived by his daughter, Carol Sue Gonzales (Victor); sons Pete Frias Jr. (Terry), Robert Frias (Veronica) and Mike Frias all of El Paso, Texas; brother, Mike Scott (Yolanda) of El Paso; stepdaughters Ida Martinez (Fred) of Artesia, New Mexico, Rita Sanchez (Johnny) of Marfa, Ina Razo of Alpine, Texas; grandchildren, Victor Gonzalez Jr., Anna Monique Gonzalez, Elaine Frias, Samuel Frias, Adam Frias, Robert John Frias, Amanda Frias, Nick Frias, Mike Christopher Frias, Adriana Sanchez, Daniel Martinez; and 13 great-grandchildren and one on the way.

Online condolences may be left at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.



Sanchez

Oscar Caballero "Porroy" Sanchez was born on a rainy night, October 30, 1953, in Marfa, Texas, to Tomas and Pauline Sanchez. Oscar joined the Lord in Heaven on March 22, 2022, after 68 and a half wonderful years full of life. Nicknamed "Waterboy" because of the rain, his nickname quickly became "Porroy" due to his young siblings not being able to pronounce it.

A viewing will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. immediately followed by a Rosary and vigil service at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in McCamey, Texas, on Tuesday, March 29.

Funeral Mass will be Wednesday, March 30, 10 a.m., at St Mary's Catholic Church in Marfa, with burial to follow at El Merced Cemetery.

From a young age, Oscar quickly learned the value of hard work. Growing up with 11 siblings, there was always plenty to be done. He was selfless and gave all of himself to everyone he cared for. Not only was he hardworking, but he also kept busy enjoying baseball and basketball. Oscar met the love of his life, Alicia Baeza, at Marfa High School, and they were inseparable from the start. He graduated from Marfa High in 1973 and started working several different jobs, including being a jeweler at Baker's Jewelers where he made several beautiful pieces for his sweetheart. After asking for her hand several times, Alicia finally said yes and they were married March 21, 1976, in Marfa at St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Oscar began his successful career in the electrical field as a lineman with Rio Grande Electric. They were blessed with their first son, Oscar Jr. "Okie" in 1978, and Oscar began working with American Electric Power (West Texas Utilities), that same year. In 1980, Oscar and Alicia took a leap of faith and moved to McCamey, Texas, leaving their parents and siblings behind to begin a new life there. They welcomed their second son, Tomas, in 1981. Oscar became a line foreman with AEP where he remained working for over 40 years. They moved out into the country and built their dream home on some land in 1987. Shortly after, they welcomed their last child, a daughter, Sonya.

Oscar and Alicia lived on their little ranch until they moved to Oklahoma in 2020. Oscar would always be a Shorthorn at heart, but he fully embraced the community of McCamey and became a Badger for life. Oscar's life revolved around his kids and his community. He was a 4-H leader, Cub Scout leader, dedicated school board member and president, T-ball coach, Little League baseball coach, softball coach, and many other positions while raising his family. Oscar started the McCamey T-ball league and helped bring volleyball, baseball and softball as added sports for the Badgers. He also served on the advisory board at Security Bank. He was a member of the Lion's Club, Knights of Columbus, and honorary sole "man" member of MOP, McCamey Operation Pride. Oscar enjoyed playing golf with his family and friends at McCamey Country Club and looked forward to that 1 p.m. tee time with the old-timers every weekday once he retired.

Oscar was a dedicated member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in McCamey and served on the Parish Council, was a Eucharistic minister, lector, and an acolyte assisting the priest during Mass as well as performing wake services and vigils. He was a good and faithful servant and gave his all to God first, family second, friends third, and himself last. He will be greatly missed, but his family rejoices that he is now in Heaven with our dear Lord Jesus.

Oscar was preceded in death by his father, Tomas; mother Pauline; sister Maria Elena; brother Willie; and sister Patsy.

He is survived by his loving wife, Alicia Sanchez of Guthrie, Oklahoma; son Oscar Sanchez Jr. and wife Kara of Allen, Texas; son Tomas Sanchez and wife Victoria of McCamey; daughter Sonya Styer and husband Cody of Guthrie. He was a hero to his 10 grandchildren: McKenna Sanchez, Adoniah Lee, Matthew Sanchez, Havana Lee, Marcus Sanchez, Colton Sanchez, Kensley Sanchez, Kaelynn Sanchez, Kodi Anne Styer and Jayleigh Styer. He was adored by brothers Johnny Sanchez, Raul Sanchez and Lando Sanchez, and sisters Linda Gutierrez, Nora Flores, Delia Sanchez, Delma Hartnett and Angie Sanchez. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews, cousins and great friends.

Floral arrangements are appreciated and will be accepted at either church.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.

Online condolences may be left at: www.alpinememorialfuneralhome.com

Alpine Memorial FUNERAL HOME
CREMATIONS - PRENEED PLANS

Obituaries presented in partnership with Alpine Memorial Funeral Home
209 West Sul Ross Ave | Alpine, TX 79830
alpinememorialfuneralhome.com | 432-837-2222

A variety of homestead exemptions could lower your property taxes!

A homestead exemption lowers the school district property taxes on your home by lowering its value. If your home is valued at $100,000 and you receive a $40,000 homestead exemption, your home will be taxed as if it were worth $60,000.

Who qualifies for an exemption?

Anyone who owns a home on Jan. 1 and uses it as a primary residence on that date is entitled to a $40,000 homestead exemption to lower school taxes.* It doesn't matter if your home is a house, condominium or mobile home. Counties, cities and special taxing districts may also offer homestead exemptions.

Are other exemptions available?

If you're disabled—or if you're 65 years old or older—you are entitled to an additional $10,000 school tax exemption on your home. And if you qualify for the age 65 or older or disabled exemption, you're also entitled to a permanent, locked-in "ceiling" on the school property taxes on your home. The county, city or junior college may adopt a tax ceiling for age 65 or older or disabled homeowners. The age 65 or older homeowners school tax ceiling transfers to the surviving spouse if he/she; is age 55 or older at the time of death, lives in and owns the home. Age 65 or older home-owners (or their surviving spouses age 55 or older) also may transfer the percentage of school tax paid, based on their former home's school tax ceiling, to a new home.

If you are a disabled veteran, surviving spouse or surviving child of a disabled veteran, you are entitled to an exemption of a portion of the appraised value of your residence homestead. This includes homesteads donated to disabled veterans by charitable organizations at no cost or not more than 50 percent of the good faith estimate of the homestead's market value to the disabled veterans and their surviving spouses.

If you're a disabled veteran awarded 100 percent disability compensation due to a service-connected disability and a rating of 100 percent disabled or a determination of individual unemployability from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, you are entitled to an exemption from taxation of the total appraised value of your residence homestead. Surviving spouses of veterans who qualified for this exemption or who would have qualified for this exemption if it had been effective at the time of the veteran's death are also eligible with certain restrictions.

If you are the surviving spouse of a U.S. armed services member killed or fatally injured in the line of duty or an eligible surviving spouse of a first responder killed in the line of duty, you are entitled to an exemption from taxation of the total appraised value of your residence homestead.

Do I have to apply each year?

No. If you had a homestead exemption on your home last year, you won't need to reapply unless your chief appraiser requires it. However, if you haven't received an exemption on your present home—or if you've moved to a new home—you'll need to file an application for exemption. If you are age 65 this year, you may file for the age 65 or older exemption up to one year after the date you became age 65. And if you became disabled, you may file for the disabled person's exemption.

When and where should I file?

File applications by April 30 at your local appraisal district office. If you need more time, contact us at:

Presidio County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 879 / 107 E. Texas Street
Marfa, Texas 79843
Marfa Office 432-729-3431
Presidio Office 432-229-3963
info@presidiocad.org

** This amount is subject to an election in May 2022 regarding a constitutional amendment proposed in Senate Joint Resolution 2.*

A public service announcement courtesy of your local appraisal district.

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la fundación the CHINATI foundation

The Chinati Foundation is a contemporary art museum created by the artist Donald Judd.

Open to the public
Thursday – Saturday

Guided Tours of the work of Donald Judd
Outdoor Self-guided Walking Tours

Reservations are required and space is limited.
Tickets are timed.

Experience the connection between art, architecture, and the land unique to Chinati. The hour-long guided tour covers Judd's art and architecture, including the Artillery Sheds. The walking tour path follows along Judd's 15 untitled works in concrete, covers 1.6 miles, takes approximately 1½ hours to complete, and is best enjoyed wearing sturdy shoes.

Chinati follows COVID-19 precautions.
Masks and social distancing are required.

Visit chinati.org for more information and to book reservations.

Classifieds & public notices

JOBS

PREVENTATIVE CARE HEALTH SERVICES JOB OPPORTUNITIES

·QUALITY COORDINATOR POSITION·

ALPINE CLINIS LOCATION
FULL OR PART TIME
Position will oversee the quality improvement program for the organization.
Prior clinical experience in health care setting is preferred: RN, LVN, or other professional health care employment.

ALSO LOOKING FOR A DENTIST, MEDICAL DOCTOR, FNP, AND DENTAL HYGIENIST

Applications may be picked up at 1605 N. FT. Davis Hwy Alpine, TX 79830 or call (432) 837-4555.

Please call first before arrival.

Family Health Service of Alpine • 1605 N. FT. Davis Hwy

ALPINE WINE IS HIRING!

Alpine Wine is an exciting new wine bar and restaurant now open in downtown Alpine.
We offer wine tastings and wine by the glass and bottle, charcuterie and cheese boards, and more.

LOOKING FOR ASSISTANT MANAGER & COOKS
BARTENDERS, SERVERS & DISHWASHERS
18 or older, will train. Full and part time.

Alpine Wine

- Wine knowledge isn't as necessary as a willingness to learn, a great attitude, and a friendly disposition.
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- Excellent pay for all positions.

To schedule an interview of for more information call (432) 837-4028 or send us your information through our website at alpinewine.com/jobs.

• 116 N 5th St, Alpine, TX 79830 •

HELP WANTED

Construction help wanted for projects in the Tri-County area.
Please call Jimmy Counts at 325-340-0175

CULBERSON COUNTY-ALLAMOORE ISD/ VAN HORN SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

CCAISD will be accepting applications for various teaching opportunities. Those positions and others that become available can be found on our district website under employment. All positions will remain open until filled.

- **Elementary Teaching Position** (various grade levels, 5 positions)
- **Math Teacher** (9th-12th, Algebra 2, Trigonometry, Geometry, Calculus, Etc.)
- **Science Teacher** (9th – 12th, Chemistry AP/IB, Physics AP/IB, Etc.)
- **Band Director** (6th – 12th grade)
- **Nurse** (Pre-K – 12th grade)

Any questions regarding the positions available at CCAISD/VHS can be sent via an email to Charles Gonzalez, VHS Principal at cgonzalez@ccaisd.net, or call 432-283-2245 (main office)

- Go to www.ccaisd.net
- Click on District for the pull-down menu, under District Information click employment
- Click on Employment Opportunities (middle of the screen)
- You will need to register on Region 18 Consortium, to apply for the various job openings

JOB OPPORTUNITY

THE CITY OF PRESIDIO IS ACCEPTING APPLICATION FOR THE POSITION DRIVER-COOK WITH THE SENIOR CENTER DEPARTMENT.

THIS IS A PART-TIME POSITION.

THIS POSITION WORKS UNDER THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF THE SENIOR CENTER DIRECTOR. A DRIVER-COOK PERFORMS VARIOUS WORK ASSIGNMENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT.

CANDIDATES MUST HAVE THE FOLLOWING MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- MUST BE LEGALLY AUTHORIZED TO WORK IN THE UNITED STATES
- MUST BE AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE
- VALID DRIVER LICENSE WITH A PROVEN CLEAN DRIVING RECORD
- MUST HAVE A CLEAN BACKGROUND CHECK

APPLICATION AND COMPLETE JOB DESCRIPTION AVAILABLE AT CITY HALL. A CITY OF PRESIDIO EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION IS REQUIRED TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THE POSITION.

PLEASE SUBMIT APPLICATIONS TO CITY SECRETARY BRENDA ACUÑA, 507 W OREILLY ST, PRESIDIO, TEXAS.

MAILING ADDRESS:
CITY SECRETARY
PO BOX 1899
PRESIDIO, TX 79845

EMAIL APPLICATION: bornelas@presidiotx.us

THIS POSITION IS OPEN UNTIL FILLED

• JOB OPENING •

BREWSTER COUNTY TOURISM COUNCIL AND VISIT BIG BEND

PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSISTANT JOB DESCRIPTION

The Brewster County Tourism Council/Visit Big Bend is currently accepting applications for a full-time Public Relations Assistant. This position will require 40 hours per week in the BCTC office and will include extensive travel throughout the year including weekends and holidays.

Duties for the position include: attending trade shows representing Visit Big Bend and distributing information on the Big Bend region, overseeing Visit Big Bend's various social media channels, researching new avenues of online marketing, assisting visiting journalists to the area and researching potential journalists for tours as well as providing reports to the Board of Directors of Visit Big Bend along with other duties as assigned.

Applicants must be presentable, enthusiastic, have good communication skills, be a team player, have flexibility in work schedules, be able to travel extensively, have a dependable vehicle, lift at least 50 pounds, be able to lead hikes/tours through Big Bend and be well versed in all components of Microsoft Office with most reports requiring manipulation of Excel spreadsheets. A tourism industry background of some kind is required as well as a good knowledge of all areas and attractions in Brewster County.

Salary is negotiable depending on experience and includes a full County benefit package including paid vacation, sick leave, retirement and health insurance.

Email a resume with 3 references to: JOBS@VISITBIGBEND.COM.

This position will remain open until filled.

Visit Big Bend is an Equal Opportunity Employer

THE SENTINEL IS LOOKING FOR A BARISTA TO JOIN OUR CREW!

WE ARE SEEKING INDIVIDUALS WITH A GREAT ATTITUDE AND CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS.

CANDIDATES WILL CROSSTRAIN BETWEEN COFFEE AND COCKTAILS.

EXPERIENCE IS A PLUS, HAPPY TO TRAIN THE RIGHT CANDIDATE.

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and

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No credit cards. No early birds.

GOVERNMENT CONTACTS

PRESIDIO COUNTY
Judge Cinderela Guevara:
(432) 729-4452

CITY OF MARFA
Manny Baeza, City of Marfa Mayor
mayor@cityofmarfa.com
(432) 295-0048
Irma Salgado, Mayor Pro Tem
councilmembersalgado@cityofmarfa.com
Buck Johnston
councilmemberjohnston@cityofmarfa.com
Raúl Lara
councilmemberlara@cityofmarfa.com
Eddie Pallarez
councilmemberpallarez@cityofmarfa.com
Yoseff Ben-Yehuda
councilmemberbenyehuda@cityofmarfa.com

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson:
City Hall: (432) 229-3517
Email: jferguson@presidiotx.us

BREWSTER COUNTY
Judge Eleazar Cano:
(432) 837-6200 x 124

Alpine Mayor Andy Ramos:
City Hall: (432) 837-3301
Email: mayor.ramos@ci.alpine.tx.us

JEFF DAVIS COUNTY
Judge Curtis Evans: *(432) 426-3968*

FEDERAL:
U.S. Sen. John Cornyn:
(202) 224-2934 (D.C. office)

U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz:
(202) 224-5922 (D.C. office)

PUBLIC NOTICES

The Marfa Parks and Recreation Board meets every third Thursday of the month at 6:00pm in the Casner Room at City Hall. The public is invited to attend.

PUBLIC NOTICE
AUCTION AND SALE OF ESTRAY

Pursuant to the authority granted under the Texas Agriculture Code, Section 142.013: and having complied with the notification procedures required in Section 142.009 of this Article, the Sheriff, Presidio County, Marfa, Texas, shall conduct an auction and sale of two estray horses at 10:00 A. M., Saturday, April 2, 2022, at the following location: Presidio County pens at Vizcaino Park in Marfa, TX 79843.

Estray to be sold:

(1) Type of animal: Horse; Breed: Grade; Color: Cremello; Approx. Age: 3 years; Size/Weight: 14.5 to 15 hands, approx. 900-1200 pounds; Markings: N/A; Brand: ELP (unidentified); Other identifying features: Stallion with black halter.

(2) Type of animal: Horse; Breed: Grade; Color: Red Rome; Approx. Age: 18 years; Size/Weight: 14 hands, approx. 900-1200 pounds; Markings: N/A, Brand: N/A; Other identifying features: Gelding with red halter.

Danny Dominguez, Sheriff
Presidio County Sheriff's Office
P.O. Drawer V, Marfa, Texas
(432) 729-4308

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Marfa City Council will hold a Public Hearing on March 31, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at Marfa City Hall to take public comments on a petition by Conception Campos to close, vacate, abandon, and sell approximately 270 square feet of East Lincoln Street, lying adjacent and to the north of the West One-Half (W/2) of Lot 3 and a portion of Lot 4, Block 41, Original Town of Marfa, Presidio County, Texas.

A small portion of Ms. Campos's house and the entirety of her front porch are encroaching onto East Lincoln, a platted city street. The public purposes of closing and selling this portion of East Lincoln Street would be to solve the encroachment issue, to receive fair market value for the encroachment (with funds to be placed in the city's street improvements account) and to ensure a proper replat of the affected property/properties with all encroachments removed. There are no city utilities on or near the encroachment(s). Because of the width of the street, the flow of traffic on East Lincoln is not affected by the encroachment(s).

The public is invited to attend and provide comments on the proposed closure. After the Public Hearing, the Marfa City Council may vote to close the applicable portion(s) of East Lincoln Street by Ordinance and to approve the conveyance to Ms. Campos for fair market value by Deed Without Warranty.

The Public Hearing will be held at 6:00 p.m. on March 31, 2022 in the Casner Room at Marfa City Hall, located at 113 South Highland Avenue, Marfa, Texas.

Meeting agendas may be found at cityofmarfa.com.

• AUCTION NOTICE •

Marfa Parks Board is auctioning a 2006 Chevrolet 2500 HD regular cab pickup truck, white, with crossover toolbox and trailer hitch.

Minimum bid is $9,000.
Truck currently has 106,000 miles. VIN: 1GCHC24U66E230995.

Details and pictures available by texting Board President Trey Gerfers at 432.295.0891.

Interested parties must email highest bid with contact phone number to trey@stereoluz.net (with "Pickup bid" in the subject line).

Deadline: Thursday, April 7th at 5PM.

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