

BURN BAN IN EFFECT, NO GROUND FIRES

by order of Presidio County

Meet the candidates at Saturday's forum in Presidio

PRESIDIO — Want to hear directly from candidates on their priorities for the county? Make plans to attend the Presidio County Candidates Forum, sponsored by *The Big Bend Sentinel*, on Saturday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Presidio Senior Citizens Center, 1400 O'Reilly in Presidio.

Trey Gerfers, Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District manager, will moderate the forum. All candidates are running in the March 5 Democratic primary for county races. Since no local Republican candidates are on the ballot for that primary, it's likely that winners of the Democratic primary will be elected in the November General Election. Candidates must achieve at least 50% of the vote in the primary to avoid a runoff with any second-place finishers.

"Presidio County is entering a new era with tremendous opportunities for funding and infrastructure," Gerfers said. "It is vital that we have the best possible public officials at the county level at this time. The candidates forum will provide voters with the information they need to make these important choices."

Invited candidates include: Robert Bentley Acosta (Constable Precinct 2), Tiburcio "Butch" Acosta (Commissioner Precinct 3), Nancy Valdez Arevalo (Tax Assessor-Collector), Ruben Armendariz, Jr. (Commissioner Precinct 1), Jose Luis Cabezuola (Commissioner Precinct 3), Adan "Pug" Covos Jr. (Constable Precinct 2), Danny Dominguez (Sheriff), Deirdre E. Hisler (Commissioner Precinct 1), Estevan "Steve" Marquez (Constable Precinct 1), Francisco "Franky" Ortiz (Commissioner Precinct 3), Blair Park (County Attorney), Rod Ponton (County Attorney), Ramon Rodriguez (Democratic Chair), Irma Carrasco Sanchez (Commissioner Precinct 3), Samuel Sanchez Spencer (Commissioner Precinct 1), Norma Valenzuela (Tax Assessor-Collector). Constable candidates will not participate in questions and answers.

Early voting begins on Tuesday, February 20, and ends on Friday, March 1, for the Tuesday, March 5 primaries. State and national candidates will also be on the ballot for both parties. Voters may cast their ballots in only one party's primary. Sample ballots are available on the Elections page of the county website at co.presidio.tx.us. Voter registration ended February 5, but registered voters should be prepared to have an acceptable form of identification when headed to the polls. You can find a list of acceptable identification at www.votexas.org.

See article on page 3 of this issue of *The Sentinel* for responses from county attorney and tax assessor-collector candidates to our questionnaire and check back next week for county commissioner and constable candidate responses.

Be sure to check *The Sentinel* Facebook page at www.facebook.com/TheBigBendSentinel for updates and news on the candidate forum.

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Village Farms Marfa greenhouse Facility Manager Abby Lange shows seventh-graders Adeline Marquez, Heidi Montes and Ulises Estrada a box containing European bumble bees, which the company uses to pollinate its tomato crops. READ MORE ON PAGE 5.

Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Mexico's suit against American gun manufacturers revived in appeals court

By SAM KARAS
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BOSTON — The Mexican government's lawsuit against a handful of American gun manufacturers was revived late last month in the First Circuit Court of Appeals after being dismissed by a lower court judge in 2022. The suit — which alleges that bad business practices by these companies have exacerbated cartel violence — is the first of its kind filed by a foreign country.

"For decades the Government and its citizens have been victimized by a deadly flood of military-style and other particularly lethal guns that flows from the US across the border," reads the suit's original complaint. "This flood is not a natural phenomenon or an inevitable

consequence of the gun business or of US gun laws."

Mexico suffers the third-highest rate of gun-related deaths in the world, despite having extremely strict laws prohibiting firearms: the country is home to a single gun store that grants fewer than 50 permits a year, primarily to government officials, journalists and other individuals particularly at risk for being targeted by the cartels.

The suit claims that 70-90% of illegal firearms recovered at Mexican crime scenes were made in the U.S., the majority made by defendants Smith & Wesson, Beretta, Century Arms, Colt, Glock and Ruger. An estimated 500,000 guns are trafficked from the United States into Mexico every year. "A gun manufactured in the US is more likely to be used to murder a Mexican

citizen than an American citizen," the complaint says, citing statistics from 2019.

In September of 2022, a district court judge in Massachusetts struck down the lawsuit on the grounds that it violated the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA), a law that protects gun manufacturers from liability for harm caused by their products.

Prior to the bill's passage, gun manufacturers were sued fairly regularly by cities like New York, Boston and San Francisco, which had limited or outlawed gun sales but still struggled to combat significant rates of gun-related homicides with firearms trafficked in from out of town.

The First Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston picked the case back up in part by the argument that the gun industry's conduct allegedly violates

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Attorney Monty Kimball and Assistant DA Bill Parham face off in Republican primary

By SAM KARAS
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394th JUDICIAL DISTRICT — Attorney Monty Kimball will face off at the polls in the Republican primary next month against Assistant District Attorney Bill Parham for the position of 394th District judge, which oversees felonies and civil lawsuits in Presidio, Brewster, Jeff Davis, Hudspeth and Culberson counties — a massive 20,000-acre chunk of Texas.

Current District Judge Roy Ferguson announced in December that he would not seek re-election after serving on the bench for 12 years, hoping instead to lean into his statewide work on technology and family law as well as his

life-long project of increasing access to justice. "Overseeing justice in Far West Texas has been the greatest honor of my career," he tweeted. "Next stop? Wait and see!"

With the only two candidates in the race for 394th District judge running in the Republican primary, the March 5 election will name the new office holder for a four-year term barring a runoff.

Bill Parham, assistant 83rd District DA, has an extensive resume in Far West Texas prosecuting several high-profile local cases: representing the state of Texas in a case alleging sexual assault by Terlingua hotelier Jeff Leach (dismissed), a case that accused Alpine Police Department Officer Hector Holguin of a crime against a

child (dismissed) and a case against Keith Allen McWilliams in the murder of Trey Sands in Terlingua (convicted).

Parham received his law degree from South Texas College of Law in 1989.

Though Kimball, an Alpine native, has been officially retired since 2019, he has continued to pick up cases here and there for a combined total of 32 years in private practice.

His journey to the bar followed an unusual — but distinctly West Texas — path: after graduating from Sul Ross, Kimball worked the family ranch until the age of 36, when he went to law school and began working as an attorney in El Paso.

Kimball returned to Alpine after five years

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Terlingua man sentenced to 87 months for possession of child pornography

By SAM KARAS
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TERLINGUA — Last Tuesday, a Terlingua man was sentenced to 87 months in prison for possession of child pornography. Harold Lee McMullen, 74, was discovered to have over 400 images depicting the sexual abuse of children after the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) flagged his IP address for exchanging sexually explicit content over BitTorrent.

McMullen was arrested on August 5, 2023, after he was flagged for potential illegal activity. Homeland Security Investigations [HSI] Special Agent Adam Patterson executed the search warrant on McMullen's home and found "multiple electronic data storage devices" that were pre-scanned on site using remote computer forensics technology.

Patterson eventually found a thumb drive containing over 40 sexually explicit images of "female children 5 years old to 10 years old," which was enough to remove McMullen from the home. "There were many, many more child pornography photos but [I] stopped at 40 for the sake of probable cause for arrest," he wrote in his criminal complaint to U.S. Magistrate Judge David Fannin.

In September of 2023, McMullen pled guilty to charges of possession of child pornography. (His attorney, Sandy Wilson, did not respond to a request for comment.)

"The sexual abuse of children is horrific and individuals like Mr. McMullen who further traffic such despicable material continue the harmful exploitation of these innocent children," U.S. Attorney Jaime Esparza wrote in a press release. "Along with our partners, we

will continue to hold offenders accountable for their actions."

The investigation was a part of Project Safe Childhood, an initiative to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse led by the Department of Justice. In a report to Congress in 2023, the Department of Justice painted a bleak picture of the proliferation of child pornography online. Over the past 15 years, the number of identified victims has increased ninefold; the annual number of defendants has tripled. "Today there are more victims and more offenders than ever before, and a seemingly endless stream of [child sexual abuse material] circulating online," the report reads.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children operates a "Cyber Tipline" that can be used to report incidents of abuse. To make a report, visit: <https://report.cybertip.org/>.

Cities of Marfa and Alpine receive asset management grants for water infrastructure

By MARY CANTRELL
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TRI-COUNTY — The cities of Marfa and Alpine are among 20 cities from across the state recently selected by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to participate in a grant program designed to help rural municipalities better understand and manage their water and wastewater infrastructure.

"This is a big win for our little communities out here," Alpine City Manager Megan Antrim said. "Both Marfa and Alpine, we're isolated, we're in the middle of nowhere, so to both get the same type of grant is just awesome."

The Asset Management Program for Small Systems (AMPSS) subsidizes the cost of engineers and asset management software to assist rural municipalities in determining the lifespan of existing water infrastructure, which in turn allows them to plan for the future regarding necessary upgrades and budgets.

According to a TWDB spokesperson, 114 systems applied for this round of funding, including 75 drinking water systems and 39 wastewater systems. Criteria taken into consideration include system size, annual household income within the service area, whether the system serves only rural areas, compliance with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulations, previous applications for AMPSS participation and customer growth.

City of Marfa
The City of Marfa will receive assistance in both drinking water and wastewater categories, a total of \$200,000 worth of services the TWDB will foot the bill for, City Manager Mandy Roane said.

Marfa applied to the AMPSS program previously and was not selected. Roane said the awareness that much larger towns than Marfa received supposed "rural" funding spurred her, Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District Manager Trey Gerfers and the county to write a letter to the TWDB encouraging them to reassess their definitions of rural.

A TWDB spokesperson said the entities' letter was taken into consideration and led to definition changes in the Texas Water Code that were adopted this past legislative session.

Roane said participation in the AMPSS program will allow the city to develop a comprehensive water infrastructure management plan that will ideally give them a heads up on failing equipment, as opposed to the current situation which sees the Public Works department putting out fires as they arise.

"There's just a lot of water and wastewater infrastructure work that needs to be done," Roane said. "This will give us a roadmap and help us prioritize what needs to be done, what we need to save, how much money is this going to cost us and projections like that."

Engineers hired by the TWDB will assess water storage tanks including the iconic silver tank — which was suffering from leaks recently that have since been fixed — the white and purple tank located on the north side of town and the new groundwater storage tank that was recently erected at the water plant. They will also look at the city's existing water wells, fire hydrants, buildings Public Works employees

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American gun manufacturers

(Continued from page 1)

the “predicate exception” of the PLCAA, which exempts manufacturers from protection if they cause harm by knowingly engaging in illegal conduct.

The suit alleges that the industry adheres to “willfully blind, standardless distribution practices” that put military-grade weapons into the hands of cartels — with serious profit to gain.

“We’ve created a monster”

Guns are bought and sold in a three-tiered process: they’re built by manufacturers and sold to distributors who in turn sell them to individual dealers. In the U.S., dealers tend to cluster in border states and on average make double the annual sales of dealers elsewhere. With just over 6,000 federally registered dealers in Texas, the state is home to nearly six times the number of gun stores than McDonald’s franchises.

The suit alleges that manufacturers are using a “head-in-the-sand approach” and aren’t doing everything they can — or are legally bound to do — to prevent their guns from ending up in the hands of problematic downstream buyers.

Instead, the plaintiffs argue that the industry is propped up by “straw sales, multiple sales and repeat sales” — in other words, bulk sales to people who are clearly buying weapons on behalf of people who legally can’t purchase them.

The suit acknowledges that tracing guns from the factory floor to the scene of a crime can be difficult, but that gun manufacturers could easily implement practices to trace “crime guns” back to the point of sale. One suggestion of many: to circumvent destroyed serial numbers, manufacturers could inscribe an additional hidden serial number inside the gun for use by law enforcement.

Another issue cited in the complaint is the marketing

of military-grade weapons to a civilian market over the past 20 years, after a ban on “semi-automatic assault weapons” was lifted in 2004.

The suit singles out a .50 caliber sniper rifle manufactured by defendant Barrett Firearms Manufacturing, Inc. that has become a “weapon of choice” for Mexican cartels — the 82A1 can shoot down helicopters and penetrate lightly armored vehicles. Barrett’s advertising is not subtle: “We’ve created a monster,” boasts a magazine ad cited by the plaintiffs.

Jonathan Lowy of Global Action on Gun Violence — a nonprofit that aims to inspire change in the gun industry through litigation — is part of a team representing Mexico in court.

He stressed that the call for enhanced regulation wasn’t intended to punish law-abiding dealers. “The overwhelming majority of gun dealers do not sell a single crime gun,” he said. “A small percentage of dealers sell virtually all the crime guns — the good gun dealers don’t like that any more than the government of Mexico.”

Counsel for the defense anticipated the plaintiff’s arguments, describing the suit as a “new coat of paint” on previous unsuccessful industry lawsuits. “At bottom, this case implicates a clash of national values,” they wrote in a motion to dismiss in district court. “By seeking to bankrupt US gun makers, this gambit not only threatens America’s constitutional freedoms, but also the careful balance of firearms regulations set by Congress and state legislatures.”

Ultimately, they argued that Mexico’s gun violence problem was rooted in the fact that the government was “unable to control cartel violence within its borders,” and not through predatory conduct by manufacturers.

“Less fear, more freedom”

Brewster County Sheriff Ronny Dodson felt he

understood both sides of the issue — the top cop in Texas’s largest county also owns a small gun shop in Alpine, one of just three brick-and-mortar dealers in the region.

Though Dodson sells much of his stock to locals, he still has to follow protocol by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). The first step is having a potential buyer fill out a form that logs information about the product they’d like to purchase and a series of yes or no questions about the applicant’s criminal record, drug use and medical history.

The self-reported data is then bolstered by a formal background check. If the applicant clears the background check, they can walk out of the store with the firearm. Once the gun is off the books, Dodson’s responsibility technically ends there, regardless of what happens to the gun down the line. “I don’t think they should be able to come back and sue me when I did exactly what my license and license instructors told me to do,” he said.

Dodson said that some of his customers do buy multiple guns from him, but that they’re typically “cowboy guns” — single-action rifles and revolvers snapped up by collectors. He said that he had self-reported a customer who was purchasing large numbers of firearms and reselling them to the ATF, who carried out a sting operation that revealed that customer’s role in a trafficking scheme.

In another incident, the agency approached him: a customer of Dodson’s who had only ever bought small pistols from him turned out to have been buying cartel-favored guns in bulk in El Paso.

From a law enforcement perspective, Dodson said it’s difficult to trace “southbound” weapons. His department has caught gun smugglers headed south on camera — but if those same smugglers don’t return to Brewster County, there’s little action he can take. “We deal with northbound traffic, for the most part,” he explained. “If

a guy goes down to the border and disappears out of my sight, well, you’ve got to catch him doing that.”

On the international stage, Lowy hoped that the suit would help solve numerous “northbound traffic” problems: as the cartels wrest control from Mexican law enforcement, smuggling of humans and drugs poses increased risk to Americans and Mexicans alike. “The conduct of the U.S. gun industry is having horrific effects on both sides,” he said.

Lowy is representing Mexico in court alongside renowned Austin-based antitrust lawyer Steve Shadowen. (Per reporting by Reuters, Shadowen’s firm slashed their rates in half in support of the case when it was originally presented to a federal court in 2021 and received “numerous inquiries and offers of help” from other firms.)

Though various media outlets reported a potential settlement in the billions, the exact scale of damages has yet to be determined.

Mexico will also seek injunctive relief in the form of major industry-wide change — a cause that other countries have supported. In March 2023, the governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, the Bahamas, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago filed an amicus curiae brief in support of Mexico, hoping to address their own gun violence problems. “Mexico stated publicly that the injunctive relief is extraordinarily important,” Lowy explained. “That’s having the court require the industry to behave responsibly, in a way that does not arm the cartels.”

The plaintiffs also seek something intangible. “Life in Mexico would be a far different place,” their complaint reads. “Existence for the Mexican people would be far different if life could be led without dangers and threats from the armed cartels — less fear, more freedom to gather together and enjoy life.”

District judge candidates

(Continued from page 1)

and has focused his career almost entirely on Far West Texas since then. He boasts over 100 jury trials in front of two dozen judges and estimates he has mediated over 500 cases. He has argued before the Supreme Court of Texas and has advocated for both sides of criminal and civil cases.

He feels that his extensive resume makes him a good candidate for the job. “I’ve got a lot of experience in that I’ve seen the good and the bad,” he said.

Though he said he doesn’t want to make any sweeping changes to the court, he would like to encourage a shift to hosting more proceedings exclusively in person. “I’ve talked to a lot of the county judges, the sheriffs, the constables, the people of various counties — they feel that they want to have a little more hands-on,” he said.

The “hands-on” approach would track a little

differently from the current court. After being pushed into handling virtually all court proceedings over Zoom during the pandemic, Ferguson then felt strongly that giving participants the option to attend proceedings online helped make the court more accessible.

Kimball wants to strike a balance by encouraging parties to participate in person. “I think Zoom is good in the right situation, but I think there are certain instances where in-person hearings are more appropriate,” he explained.

Apart from running his campaign, Kimball volunteers for a wide variety of organizations, including local Little League baseball, the Sul Ross Exes and the Big Bend Ranch rodeo. He feels that “retirement” is a relative term. “I’ve still got a lot of gas left in the tank,” he said.

Parham did not return multiple requests for an interview.

Water infrastructure

(Continued from page 1)

occupy, pipes and water treatment systems.

Roane said the engineer’s assessments will help illuminate just how old all of the town’s water infrastructure is. In the case of Fort D.A. Russell — whose sewer issues are set to be addressed with another recently awarded TWDB grant — infrastructure dates back to World War II.

Replacing older equipment when it fails is another challenge the city faces, Roane said. The city’s water meters, for example, are outdated and hard to replace, prompting the city to switch over to new, more accurate, automatic readers this year, Roane said.

“They’re breaking and we can’t even find replacements,” Roane said. “We try and order them, but they’re not being made as much anymore, which is why we’re trying to go to the automated meter system.”

There is a possibility that the engineer’s recommendations will include greener or more economic alternatives for future water infrastructure upgrades, Roane said. In the meantime, the city is working to update meters and bring online a third water well which will help serve as a backup to the city’s two existing wells. “Our wells are workhorses, which is why it will be good to have another one online hopefully by the end of the year,” Roane said.

“We want to make sure that we have plenty of power and the ability to get water to all the customers who need it,” she added.

City of Alpine

The City of Alpine applied for both the drinking and wastewater grant and was selected to receive \$100,000

worth of services from the TWDB for wastewater infrastructure planning. City Manager Megan Antrim said administrators are excited to receive the assistance as fixing the failing wastewater treatment plant — which has caused perpetual sewer backups — is one of the city’s top priorities.

“The City of Alpine has what I call ‘band-aid’ the wastewater treatment plant and sewer system for multiple years,” Antrim said. “We need to truly invest in the operations of the wastewater treatment plant so that we can get back to where it needs to be.”

A feasibility study accepted by Alpine City Council in 2022 by engineering firm JACOB[MARTIN] estimated the plant — which was partially remodeled in the 1990s but is suffering due to a failure to replace parts — required \$6 million worth of repairs, Antrim said. That study laid out phases of repairs, which the city is making its way through as its budget allows, she said.


So far, they have replaced two aerators at the plant, one of its key components, and are seeking additional funding. “Funding is always a big thing. It’s not the employees. It’s not necessarily the administration or the council. It’s having the money to invest into those huge projects,” Antrim said.

She said working with TWDB-hired engineers to develop a holistic wastewater management plan in addition to the plant feasibility study will help the city determine immediate needs and stay on track in other areas like staffing and budgeting in the future. “It’s a lot of coordinating,” Antrim said. “But to have step one, this is your plan, this is where you need to start, I think is really important for the city.”

CORRECTIONS: A January 31 story, “Republican infighting in county race spurs challenge to candidate’s place on the ballot,” incorrectly named the plaintiff in a settled lawsuit over the ownership of Urquhart Avenue. The plaintiff was Fort Davis ISD, not its superintendent, Graydon Hicks.

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US Senate candidate Roland Gutierrez and local county attorney candidate Rod Ponton host campaign event at Marfa Burrito

By MARY CANTRELL
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MARFA — State Sen. Roland Gutierrez (D-San Antonio), a U.S. Senate candidate challenging incumbent Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Houston), and local Presidio county attorney candidate Rod Ponton held a campaign meet and greet Monday morning at Marfa Burrito.

The restaurant — warm and homey, with colorful tablecloths and graffiti-cluttered walls — offered an informal setting for the approximate 20 attendees to rub shoulders with the candidates over breakfast burritos and coffee. Gutierrez visited the Big Bend — first Alpine, then Marfa — on his multi-day West Texas tour that started in Amarillo and ended in El Paso.

His event co-host, Ponton, has served as Presidio county attorney for 10 years and is going up against local attorney Blair Park in the March 5 Democratic Primary. In an interview with *The Big Bend Sentinel*, Ponton said he was going door to door campaigning and was eager to continue to serve the people of Presidio County.

He argued his legal experience and connections in the state Capitol set him apart. “I have a lot of experience in government law, representing cities and districts, counties,” Ponton said. “I have a lot of friends in Austin, like Roland Gutierrez and others.”

Ponton introduced those gathered to his “good friend”

of 12 years Gutierrez, a Texas Senator that represents part of Brewster County running in the Democratic Primary for a chance to face off against Cruz in the November General Election. “I don’t know about you, but I’m ready to get rid of Ted Cruz,” Gutierrez said at the start of his stump speech, eliciting applause from the crowd. Gutierrez, 53, wore his salt and pepper hair in a clean swoop and spoke with a familiar Texas drawl.

Gutierrez, who also represents Uvalde, centered the May 2022 Robb Elementary massacre that claimed the lives of 19 students and two teachers in his campaign messaging. Following the mass shooting, Gutierrez sued the Texas Department of Public Safety for its refusal to release records related to the event. While the suit was unsuccessful, Gutierrez eventually gained access to the body camera footage and more evidence from the shooting, he said.

He criticized Gov. Greg Abbott’s reaction to the deadly shooting, law enforcement’s failure to enter the building for 77 minutes, and argued more needs to be done to prevent gun violence in the wake of such a gruesome attack on innocent children. “I’m running for the United States Senate because we need an assault weapon ban with exceptions, because no child should die this way,” Gutierrez said. “We need extreme risk protective orders. We need universal background checks. And we need an age limit.”

He argued the country was not only “broken” on gun issues, but also on healthcare, and said he would work to expand access to Medicare.

Gutierrez also touched on reproductive rights, citing a statistic that infant mortality rates have increased 11% since Texas’ more restrictive abortion laws went into effect. He argued senators need to support necessary filibuster changes to codify Roe v. Wade and restore reproductive freedom. “We must break the filibuster in the Legislature in the United States Senate so that we can finally bring some justice to women across this country,” Gutierrez said. “Because ladies, they want you in shackles, I promise you.”

Gutierrez criticized Republicans’ border rhetoric, Gov. Abbott-backed Rio Grande buoy placements — which resulted in migrant deaths — and voiced support for immigration reform, including a guest worker program. “I am tired of blaming some poor immigrant looking for a dream for every healthcare and education problem and infrastructure problem, dammit, we should know better,” he said.

Gutierrez referred to himself as “unapologetically progressive” and emphasized the need to move on from Republican leadership he argued is failing the state. In an interview with *The Big Bend Sentinel*, he said he took issue with the “other guy running,” U.S. Rep. Colin Allred (D-Dallas), who refers to himself as a moderate

Democrat. “I call it Republican light,” Gutierrez said. “We’re in an existential crisis where these Trumpers really truly want to divide this country,” he added. “No amount of Republican hand holding or moving towards the middle is going to get us to where we need to be here.”

Allred is leading Gutierrez 40% to 12% in the Democratic Primary, according to a February 2024 University of Houston poll. He encouraged attendees to get friends, families and neighbors that are apathetic towards the government to the polls.

“We’ve got to show people what this campaign is about,” he said. “It’s about pain, it’s about the pain of those families in Uvalde that lost their children. The vast majority of them aren’t even partisan things, aren’t Democrat and Republican issues. They’re just human issues.”

The small crowd thanked the politician for his visit as he lingered to chat and shake a few more hands before hitting the road.

The Sentinel is hosting a forum featuring Presidio County candidates running in the March 5 Primary Election this Saturday, February 10 at the Presidio Senior Center, 1400 E. O’Reilly Street, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The public is invited to attend. Questions for candidates can be emailed ahead of time to editor@bigbendsentinel.com.

County candidates weigh in on their priorities and experience

Early voting begins on Tuesday, February 20, and ends Friday, March 1, for the March 5 Primary Election. All candidates are in races for the Democratic Party. No Republicans filed as candidates, which means the winners of the primaries will be unopposed to win the General Election in November.

Up for vote are seats for *sheriff, county attorney, county tax assessor-collector, county commissioners (precincts 1 and 3) and county constables (precincts 1 and 2)*. This issue will include candidates for county attorney and county tax assessor-collector. Next week, we’ll include responses from county commissioner and constable candidates.

Candidates were all sent the same questions, but some submitted answers in different formats. Answers were lightly edited for brevity and clarity.

COUNTY ATTORNEY CANDIDATES

BLAIR PARK

Can you tell us a little bit about your background and what makes you qualified?

My roots in Presidio County go back to the 1800s on both my dad’s and my mom’s sides. On my mom’s side, we traced our lineage back as far as my great-great-great-grandparents, Carlos and Diega Ramos Herrera of Casa Piedra. And on my dad’s side, my great-great-great-grandparents, George and Elizabeth (Lizzie) Crosson, were some of the first Anglo ranchers who settled here in the 1870s. I’m proud to be from a line of strong and independent West Texas women.

I lived in Marfa up until middle school, when we moved to San Angelo. I graduated from Texas Tech University in 2013 with a bachelor’s in business administration with a major in energy commerce and a concentration in petroleum land management. Then I went to Texas Tech School of Law, where I represented the law school in the top advocacy competitions. Due to my awards and success in legal brief writing, I was one of three law students to be nominated for the National Order of Scribes. I graduated cum laude with my Doctor of Jurisprudence in 2016.

After law school, I accepted a position with a prestigious Fort Worth law firm: Harris, Finley & Bogle, P.C. There, I practiced commercial litigation (predominantly oil and gas) and appellate briefing. In my first five years of practice, I represented ExxonMobil, XTO, Continental Resources, Lonestar Operating, Union Pacific Railroad, Blackstone Resources, Home Depot, Simon Property Group, City of Burleson, Mansfield ISD, and as Plaintiff’s Liaison Counsel in the Chesapeake Multidistrict Litigation (MDL) organized by the Texas Supreme Court.

While my time in DFW was vital to my experience and growth, I was itching to be back in West Texas. So, in 2021, I moved back — splitting my time between Marfa and San Angelo, where I worked for a real estate law firm. After I married my wonderful husband in 2023 in Big Bend Ranch, I opened my private practice in Marfa to practice real estate, oil and gas, estate planning, business transactions, and banking.

What would your primary goals be if you were elected?

I have had numerous criminal defense attorneys and law enforcement officers reach out to me about the status of their cases and how the docket is not running as efficiently or as quickly as it should. (One mentioned that he has a client with a charge from seven years ago!) My first order of business would be to get the oldest charges and cases on the docket, to begin getting it up to date.

The county attorney’s other major job is to provide unbiased and sound legal advice to the county commissioners, for anything from negotiating and drafting county contracts to real estate issues with county roads and county property to assistance on applications for bonds. Bonds, particularly, are vital for Presidio County. Our county budget is not enough to

sustain expenses, especially with recent inflation. The county needs to ensure that it applies for every bond possible, and properly, to have a chance for state and federal financial assistance.

My last job as county attorney is not necessarily in the job description: to advise and promote Presidio County with integrity, morals, intelligence, and with the capacity and desire to be an excellent attorney. These characteristics I intend to bring to the job with vigor.

What issues are you passionate about that you are looking forward to contributing to?

Healthcare. Access to adequate healthcare is the biggest and most vital obstacle to living in Far West Texas — especially women’s healthcare and cancer care. I know people who have lived here for decades, who have had to move away from the only home they’ve known, to be closer to healthcare.

A good friend tried numerous times to get a referral from her local primary care physician (PCP) to address a lump in her breast. After 10 months, she went to another PCP, who finally submitted the referral required by her insurance. After this time passed, she was diagnosed with advanced-stage breast cancer and had to temporarily move to El Paso for treatment. After the hardest year of her life, she is currently in remission.

I know women who had to travel to Midland-Odessa, San Antonio or Fort Stockton to give birth. A good friend of mine was turned away from the local ER while she was in labor and told to drive to Midland. Instead, her husband rushed her to the Fort Stockton hospital, where she had an emergency Cesarean section. But yet, in 1958, my mom was born in Marfa in Dr. Stover’s clinic. This cannot be acceptable, to have less access to women’s healthcare in 2024 than in 1958.

I’ve had three close family members experience terrifying emergency situations in Marfa — all three were taken by ambulance to Alpine to be put on a helicopter to Midland-Odessa or San Angelo. Thankfully, two survived. However, they received astronomical bills from the air ambulance. That is the unfortunate choice many locals are left with in these horrible situations: risk of death or risk of bankruptcy.

These people are already facing the most stressful, scary, and precarious situations of their lives — and they’re having to experience that in a strange city, away from the comfort of their own homes and the support of their family and community. We have to demand better.

• • •

ROD PONTON

Why are you running for Presidio county attorney?

I am a lifelong resident of the Big Bend. My father was a physician in Alpine for 40 years. I have had a lengthy and successful career as an attorney, and I enjoy using my 42 years of experience helping Presidio County — the poorest county in Texas. I don’t need the job, but I want to help improve healthcare, develop jobs, improve trade, lower taxes, and help improve the communities of Marfa and Presidio.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background and what makes you qualified?

I have been an attorney for 42 years. I graduated from the University of Texas, then from Texas Tech Law School in 1982. I practiced federal and state criminal defense law in El Paso from 1983 to 1997. In 1988 I was named “Criminal Defense Lawyer of the Year” by the State Bar of Texas. I worked for Enron Corp. (Houston) from 1997 to 1999 and returned to the Big Bend to resume my private law practice in 2000. I have been city attorney for the cities of Alpine, Presidio, Pecos and Balmorhea. I was elected 83rd District attorney from 2013 to 2016. I have been Presidio County Attorney for ten years. I was honored by the Texas Legislature as a Texas Distinguished Attorney in April 2023. I enjoy serving my communities by giving back to them and sharing my decades of experience to help solve problems.

What are your primary goals?

With the election of Presidio County Judge Jose Portillo, the Presidio County criminal dockets are now being kept current. We have monthly criminal dockets. I have obtained \$170,000 this year in new state grants for the county attorney’s office. I have hired an additional legal assistant and a crime victim coordinator. The work of the office is being kept up to date. My goals are to work with the county judge to reduce taxes on working people in the county and develop more affordable housing for regular workers. I want to develop more jobs in Marfa and help develop more trade in Mexico to increase Presidio employment.

What issues are you passionate about that you are looking forward to contributing to?

I am passionate about trying to help the working people of the county keep their homes, reduce their property taxes, have more affordable housing, and increase the ability of folks to stay in Presidio County. This will increase the schools’ population and help our communities. I worked for five years to bring a state-of-the-art health clinic to Presidio, bringing the hospital and hospital district together, to open the new BBRMC/BBRHD clinic — open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and for walk-ins, staffed by a physician. I will keep working to expand days and specialty care, then work to develop a new state-of-the-art medical building in Presidio.

TAX ASSESSOR-COLLECTOR CANDIDATES

NANCY AREVALO

Why are you running for tax assessor-collector?

I’m stepping up to serve as tax assessor-collector because I believe in unwavering leadership and genuine public service. My commitment to conservative values drives me to always prioritize what’s right and honorable. I’m determined to inject professionalism and accountability into this role, ensuring it operates efficiently and effectively for our community. With a focus on positive change and a track record of getting things done, I’m the strong choice for this position.

Can you tell us a little bit about your background and what makes you qualified?

With over 30 years running my own tax business in Presidio, coupled with a Bachelor of Business Administration from Sul Ross State University, my credentials speak for themselves. I’ve also served as the director of finance for the City of Presidio as well as holding roles on the city council and as president of the Presidio Municipal Development District. This experience equips me with the financial acumen and leadership skills needed to bring real improvement to the tax assessor position.

What would your primary goals be if you were elected?

My primary goals revolve around transparency, efficiency and top-notch customer service. I aim to foster open communication with county departments and the public, ensuring everyone is informed and engaged. By prioritizing professionalism and implementing modern, user-friendly services like online tax payment options, I’ll elevate the standard of service in the tax assessor’s office. Continuous education and training will be key to staying ahead and delivering the best possible experience for the people of Presidio County.

What issues are you passionate about contributing to?

I’m passionate about transparency and professionalism in government, especially in the tax assessor-collector role. Representing Presidio County with integrity and excellence is my priority, and I’m eager to bring positive change to this vital position.

• • •

NORMA VALENZUELA

I am currently working as a deputy clerk and would like to continue working at the office as your new tax assessor-collector. My roots are here in Presidio

County. I was born and raised in Marfa, and I have two wonderful sons and daughters-in-law as well as four grandchildren.

I have 19 years of experience as a deputy clerk. Through my experiences, I have learned the many tasks that this office requires, and continue learning due to changing laws. The tax assessor has many responsibilities, such as tax calculations and contracts for other entities. As an employee, I know how to collect funds and make sure that our daily reports match with our daily deposits. Our office mails out tax statements annually. This occurs usually in the first week of October for Presidio County because of the discount that certain entities offer. In order for your tax office to send out the property tax statements on time, we have to close both offices to regular business activities. Here in Presidio and in Marfa, it takes all five employees to fold and stuff each individual tax statement and insert statements into envelopes. This process means that we work an approximate 12-hour shift for four consecutive days in order to get you your tax statements in a timely manner.

Please keep in mind that we are talking about over 18,000 accounts and even more depending upon real estate sales or splitting out properties. First, we start off by printing the tax statements, followed by stuffing envelopes and finally running the envelopes through our postage machine. That alone takes a full day, which occurs on the fifth day while our office is also open to the public — as well as answering phone calls and emails. Once all statements are prepared, we take boxes to the post office. Then we start the new tax year. By the end of October, we are collecting funds from customers who are coming in to pay their property taxes.

This collection of property taxes is for the county and other taxing entities that we contract with. My knowledge of processing ad valorem taxes includes collecting daily funds and depositing them to the bank and balancing daily reports. The end of the month requires the completion of a monthly report which shows how much tax was collected and must match our daily report totals. The report also breaks down each entity and will reflect the amount of funds an entity will receive.

From this monthly report, we are able to distribute funds to each entity as well as a clear report. During this process, I and my co-workers have other duties and responsibilities such as: vehicle and titling registration from an individual to a person or to car dealers, issue permits, special license plates, apportion and/or combination plates, disabled plates or placards, processing credit card transactions for vehicles, and balancing collection for the day. We handle voter registrar and collection of TABC licenses; all these duties are in service to the county.

The tax assessor-collector is responsible for overseeing deputy clerks to ensure that reports are balanced and other tasks are performed. The tax assessor-collector must successfully complete continuing education hourly requirements each year as well. I have worked in the tax assessor-collector office for almost 20 years, and this has prepared me to run for the office of your tax assessor-collector for Presidio County. I am qualified for the position and can fulfill the duties immediately when I am elected!

My primary goal is to continue serving the public. My commitment is to be here for the public and my doors will always be open. Our current tax assessor-collector’s goal is to initiate the ability to use credit card services for payment of property taxes. This is something customers have been asking us for. Though we have not been able to offer this service just yet, I will continue to work toward making credit card services available.

I am asking for the people of Presidio County to go out and vote and vote for me as your next tax assessor-collector. Thank you.

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Opinion

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for reporting on the vigil in Marfa that honored all of the dead and injured in the current war in Gaza. I share the heartbreak expressed by the group. Some of the speakers made statements about nationhood, U.S. foreign policy, and the Jewish community. There was no mention of Hamas or the hostages in the article.

I write this letter with concern about antisemitic backlash to my comments because of the well-documented rise in hate speech, including Islamophobia, since October 7.

President Biden, referring to the attack by Hamas on Israel said, "There is no rationalizing it, no excusing it." He made a distinction between Hamas and the Palestinian people.

Hamas is responsible for the well-planned, sophisticated attack that included mutilation, rape and kidnapping of civilians of all ages. Hamas has built an underground fortress hiding behind non-combatants and civilian infrastructure that is now being used to imprison over 100 civilian hostages. Doesn't Hamas bear some responsibility for the loss of life in Gaza?

Israel's nationhood cannot be taken for granted as is suggested in the article. Hamas is part of a network of Iranian-sponsored groups all intent on the destruction of Israel.

One of the speakers objected to American financial support for Israel. American foreign policy is based on supporting democratic governments against ideologies that are corrupt, authoritarian, and limit human rights like Hamas. And 31 Americans were killed.

It is awful that the family of the visitor from Los Angeles questions his Jewishness because he has empathy for Palestinians. Readers should not be led to believe that this is common. There is a robust debate in the U.S. and Israel about the conduct of the war as expected in a democracy with freedom of speech.

There are numerous credible online resources like the Anti Defamation League (www.adl.org) for readers to learn more about antisemitism here and abroad. Texas is also blessed with three Holocaust Museums in Houston, Dallas and El Paso founded by survivors who found a new home in Texas. The El Paso Museum is fully bilingual.

Charles Levenback
Fort Davis

We want to hear from YOU!

- Letters to the editor 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

Produced water

By **TREY GERFERS**
tgerfers@pcuwcd.org

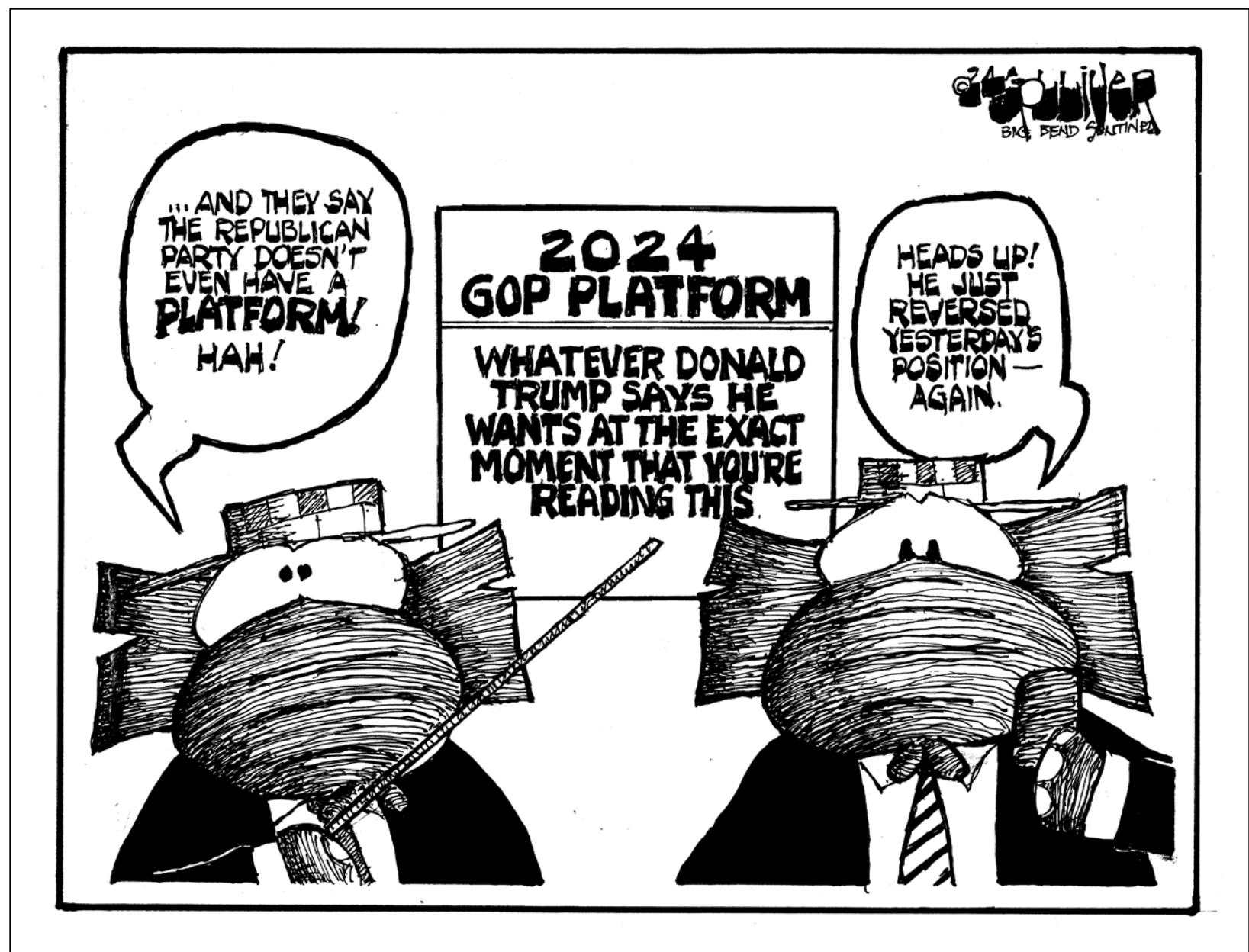
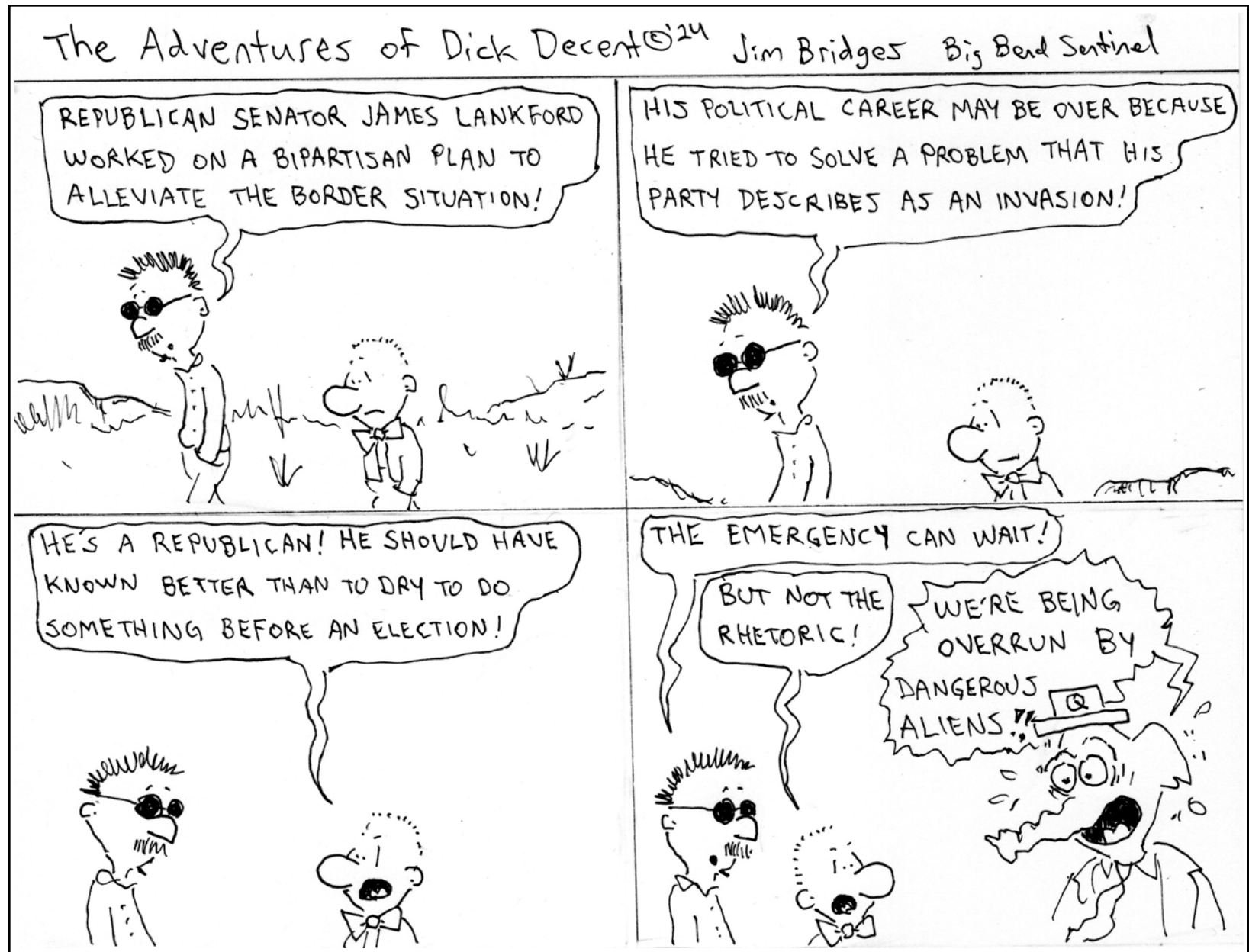
Defined by law as "fluid oil and gas waste," produced water is "produced" in conjunction with oil, gas, and "flowback" when operators pressure-inject massive amounts of water laced with chemicals and sand deep into the ground to crack open or "fracture" shale and release hydrocarbons. According to the Groundwater Protection Council (GWPC), "Produced water may contain salts (total dissolved solids), organic and inorganic compounds, naturally-occurring radioactive material, chemical additives, and transformational byproducts, among others." The GWPC estimates that the greater Permian Basin of western Texas and southern New Mexico generated about 846,829 acre-feet of produced water in 2023. The vast majority of this produced water is disposed of by reinjecting it into deep formations via "saltwater disposal" wells.

The staggering volumes of wastewater generated by oil and gas operations have led many to view produced water as a potential "new" source of water to help cover the enormous shortages projected to afflict the region in coming decades. Toward this end, the Texas Produced Water Consortium was established for "the purpose of bringing together information and resources to study the economics and technologies related to beneficial uses of produced water, including environmental and public health considerations." According to its 2022 report, the Texas Consortium estimates that the "average treated produced water volume available for beneficial use over the next 38 years" could be between 256,000 and 511,000 acre-feet per year. "Put in perspective," the report continues, "the 2022 State Water Plan for Water Planning Region F (covering most of the Permian) indicates an average annual need (potential shortage) of 80,751 ac-ft/year over the next 50 years."

The situation in New Mexico is similar. According to the New Mexico Produced Water Research Consortium, that state's "oil and gas industry generated approximately 60 billion gallons of produced water, over 160 million gallons per day, equal to New Mexico's total daily municipal water consumption." With so much of this water being produced every year throughout the region, the question becomes: Is there enough known about potentially toxic chemicals present in produced water, and do technologies exist that can treat produced water to an adequate quality for other beneficial uses?

Dan Mueller is an engineer with the Environmental Defense Fund who specializes in fresh water supply, water quality, and treatment and beneficial reuse of impacted waters. As a member of the New Mexico Produced Water Research Consortium since its inception in 2019 and the Texas Produced Water Consortium since it was formed in 2021, he has been working to fill the knowledge gaps around the potential beneficial use of produced water for industrial processes, irrigation, livestock watering, discharge to surface waters, and aquifer storage and recovery. "There are significant and critical unknowns around the chemical and toxicological characterization of produced water and the efficacy and reliability of robust treatment processes to properly treat produced water to a quality appropriate for reuse that is protective of human health and the environment," according to Mueller. "It is important that beneficial reuse of produced water or other options that include intentional release of what in essence is an industrial wastewater effluent does not inadvertently create more problems than it solves."

Treatment to an adequate quality for beneficial use is difficult because "produced water (particularly in the Permian Basin) has elevated total dissolved solids (TDS) many times greater than seawater, making the



desalination of produced water challenging." Mueller emphasized that "desalination technology for the most part was developed around treating brackish or saline waters (like seawater) and is much more expensive than other disposal options." Other management challenges involve "difficult-to-treat and potentially toxic constituents of produced water, including inorganics, organics, and radionuclides" also known as "constituents of concern," or CoCs, that are generated throughout the life of an oil and gas well. CoCs "vary both geographically and over time," according to Mueller, "adding to the challenges in the design and operation of robust treatment processes."

Mueller also pointed to the lack of "approved analytical methods ... for approximately ¾ of the constituents potentially present in produced water" and verification methods to confirm treatment efficacy, reliability, and costs over the long term as other blind spots that must be addressed to protect human health and the environment.

New Mexico is pursuing five strategies to address some of these issues, including 1) state-of-the-science chemical analysis and spectroscopy to identify and quantify all constituents in produced water; 2) collaborative state-of-the-science Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) testing; 3) human cell line testing to understand the human risks and toxicology involved in the discharge of treated produced water into the environment; 4) fate and transport modeling of treated produced water discharges for various uses; and 5) plant and soil bioaccumulation and toxicity testing in green houses at New Mexico State University. "This multi-pronged ... strategy provides overlapping analysis and evaluation of the human and environmental health impacts of produced water treatment and reuse, to improve public confidence in the safety of using treated produced water for various fit-for-purpose uses," according to the New Mexico Produced Water Research Consortium.

"Reliable and resilient water supply is critical to both society and the environment, and it is important to explore all possibilities and options to sustainably manage this precious resource," Mueller stated. "It is equally important to recognize that science takes time. If the consortium's efforts move forward without full transparency ... there will be even more scrutiny on conclusions drawn, particularly if issues arise after larger-scale produced water reuse that should have been identified by proper science-led efforts." Produced water involves a lot of opportunities, said Mueller. "But it is important we get this right."

Trey Gerfers is a San Antonio native and serves as general manager of the Presidio County Underground Water Conservation District. He has lived in Marfa since 2013.

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Community

Marfa students cultivate vertical farming skills with classroom lessons, Village Farms tour

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — Marfa Junior High students took in the striking sight of 20 acres of cascading tomato vines on a recent tour of Marfa's Village Farms greenhouse. Sun streamed in through the clear roof as seventh- and eighth-graders peered up at the vertical farm — a real-world operation larger in scale, yet similar in principle to the hydroponic farm students have been cultivating in their science classroom.

The "Flex Farm" in teacher Lora Loya's classroom is a part of a Big Bend Conservation Alliance initiative to introduce local students to hydroponic gardening. The stand-alone vertical farm gives students hands-on experience producing greens — they sprout seeds, adjust water chemistry, install a U.V. light and add soil nutrients. With the help of students, the farm can grow up to 25 pounds of greens every four weeks.

Loya said her students have enjoyed the process of working with the plants day in and day out, from constructing the farm itself and hooking up the water pump to harvesting and packaging the lettuce weeks later. She said the experience of growing their own food from seeds was rewarding, especially when they were able to share the produce with other MISD students.

"The student body was then able to have fresh salads for lunch prepared by the Marfa cafeteria staff," Loya said. "We received many compliments on the freshness of the lettuce. It was a great feeling for the students to be able to hear such positive feedback from their hard work."

Last week 12 seventh-grade students, along with Loya and Junior High English teacher Jaylia Foster, took a tour of an industrial vertical farm located in Marfa's backyard: Village Farms' tomato greenhouse. The visit was led by facility manager Abby Lange, who walked students through the ins and outs of how the grower produces 10 million pounds of tomatoes a year that are



Staff photo by Mary Cantrell

Marfa Junior High students Tayvian Valenzuela and Ulises Estrada wash their hands before entering the Village Farms tomato greenhouse. Seventh- and eighth-grade science classes visited the facility recently to learn about vertical farming.

shipped to locales as far away as Miami, New York and Vancouver.

Students learned about the importance of preventing contamination to the crops — they were given plastic booties to wear over their shoes and were required to wash their hands before and after visiting the

greenhouse. They also witnessed Village Farms employees diligently disinfecting equipment each time they moved on to a new row of plants.

"I do think it's crazy how clean you have to be to get in the greenhouse," seventh-grader Aidyn Gonzales said. "Every time they get done with something, [they]

have to clean everything that [they] use so nothing can get infected."

Lange explained how the drip irrigation system the company uses is designed to capture and reuse water and how they keep the tomato plants warm at night — pipes that act as tracts for hydraulic lift carts also transport hot water. Students asked if tomatoes were required to be a certain size, to which Lange said they were.

Some students said they were surprised that the company's policy is to throw out tomatoes that fall onto the greenhouse floor. Lange explained it was a quality control measure, to ensure no produce was contaminated and passed on to customers.

Seventh-grader Tayvian Valenzuela said he appreciated Lange's extensive knowledge of the greenhouse's growing cycle and being able to ask questions. "I learned about a bunch of new stuff that I could use in the future," he said.

Students and teachers joked about the temptation to reach out and pick a ripe, red tomato directly off the vine. Lange said in addition to the Texas sun, another secret to the tomato farm's success is European bumble bees — a docile variety the company introduces to the greenhouse every 14 weeks to ensure all of the flowers are pollinated, resulting in fully-formed, fruitful tomato clusters.

"I really liked [the tour] and it gave me a good perspective of the different ways to farm and grow," said seventh-grader Mikayla Bentley. "What surprised me the most is that they use bumblebees to pollinate."

Foster, who was visiting the greenhouse for the first time along with the students, said the detail paid to every step of the growing process as well as the sanitation and weighing and shipping was impressive and hopefully a lesson in hard work and diligence the students take back to the classroom. "It is these attributes that I hope the students took in as well as the real-life connections to what they are studying in science," Foster said.

Solo guitarist Jack Sanders to perform at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

MARFA — Solo guitarist Jack Sanders will perform at St. Paul's Episcopal Church on Thursday, February 13. The event is sponsored by the Piatigorsky Foundation whose commitment to artistic excellence and public outreach has fascinated many avid concert goers as well as curious first-timers.

Honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Guitar Society in 2013, Jack Sanders' performances have included the Sitka, Kapalua, Oregon Bach Festival, IM Festival of Costa Rica and Chamber Music Sedona. Additionally, he has performed with

the St. Petersburg, Colorado, and Angeles String Quartets. He has toured extensively for The Piatigorsky Foundation since 2005, this season's concerts will take him to Ohio, Kentucky, Texas and Idaho.

With violinist Clayton Haslop, Sanders performed in China as well as throughout the U.S. and recorded two albums for Centaur and Townhall Records. His solo recording, Just Preludes, was released by Townhall Records. Sanders has also recorded with violist James Dunham and Anthony Plog, trumpet on Crystal Records and recently with flutist Rachel Rudich on Bridge

Records.

Teaching at Pomona and CGU from 1980-2022, Sanders also builds guitars and historic instruments which have been commissioned by Yale, UCLA, USC, SF Conservatory, Cal State Univ. Dominguez Hills, Concordia University and professional guitarists worldwide. A graduate of Cal Arts, his primary teacher was Stuart Fox and he also studied with Oscar Ghiglia at the Banff Centre.

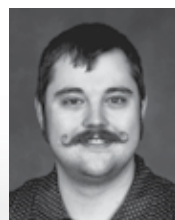
Evan Drachman established The Piatigorsky Foundation in 1990 in honor of his grandfather Gregor

Piatigorsky. Piatigorsky deeply believed in the healing and inspiration power of classical music. He once said, "Music makes life better. Music is a necessity. It is rich. It is imaginative. It is magnificent. And it is for everyone." The Piatigorsky Foundation is committed to carrying on Piatigorsky's mission by evoking cultural curiosity through educational and accessible live performances.

The one-hour performance is free to the public and attendees are invited to stay afterwards to meet the artist.

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ROD PONTON, CANDIDATE FOR COUNTY ATTORNEY
RAMON RODRIGUEZ, CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDIO CO DEMOCRATIC CHAIR
IRMA CARRASCO SANCHEZ, CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDIO CO COMMISSIONER PCT 3
SAMUEL SANCHEZ SPENCER, CANDIDATE FOR CO COMMISSIONER PCT 1
NORMA VALENZUELA, CANDIDATE FOR COUNTY TAX ASSESSOR-COLLECTOR

THE FORUM WILL BE MODERATED BY TREY GERFERS,
MANAGER OF THE PRESIDIO COUNTY UNDERGROUND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

EL FORO SERÁ MODERADO POR TREY GERFERS,
GERENTE DEL DISTRITO DE CONSERVACIÓN DE AGUA SUBTERRÁNEA DEL CONDADO DE PRESIDIO

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Temporary closures in National Park for herbicide applications

BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK — From February 8 to February 10, a team will be cutting down and applying herbicide to invasive salt cedars (Tamarix spp.) in the Hot Springs area. During this time, visitors may encounter a temporary closure along the river from Gravel Pit to Hot Springs Canyon.

Tamarisk, also known as salt cedar, is an aggressive non-native group of closely related trees. These plants crowd out native species, trap sediment, and consume large amounts of water. To remove tamarisk, a resource crew will be cutting tamarisk trees along the Rio Grande from Gravel Pit to Hot Springs Canyon. Stumps will be treated with the herbicide Triclopyr using hand sprayers. Large woody debris will be left in place to provide better growing conditions for native plants and habitat features for native animals.

Hand applications of herbicide have been proven to kill the invasive trees without affecting native plants or animals. Triclopyr is approved by the EPA

for use adjacent to aquatic ecosystems. This type of herbicide is a systemic herbicide that moves throughout plant tissue and mimics a hormone that is only found in plants. Treated plants experience uncontrolled growth and eventually die back.

With the removal of these invasive trees, the Rio Grande can better transport sediment downstream, opening up gravel bars and wider floodplains. This in turn benefits native plants, such as willows, and wildlife, such as freshwater mussels, fish, and beaver. Removing dense stands of salt cedar also opens up the banks of the river for recreational use.

This temporary closure and signage will be in place while herbicide is being applied, after which the area will reopen to entry.

This work is NOT expected to affect visitors to the historic Langford Hot Springs.

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Help a homeless dog have a great time on the trail! Join our pack at the Interpretive Center and give a rescue dog from Grand Companions of Fort Davis a fun morning on the trail. Maybe you'll find your new forever friend! More info at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/davis-mountains/hike-with-a-homeless-dog/2024-01-18>

Sat
Feb
10

Presidio County Candidates Forum

2:00pm - 5:00pm at the Presidio Senior Citizens Center, 1400 E O'Reilly Street in Presidio
Come hear from the Presidio County candidates running in the March 5 Primary Election.

Desert Mindfulness Walk

2:00pm - 3:30pm at Davis Mountains State Park in Fort Davis
Practice the 7 principles of mindfulness on this meditative walk on the primitive side of the park. Meet at the Front Office. For more info and to register visit <https://tpwd.texas.gov/calendar/davis-mountains/desert-mindfulness>

Sun
Feb
11

Superbowl Sunday at Jett's Grill

Bar opens at 3:00pm at Hotel Paisano in Marfa
Special finger foods menu and build your own party platters. Happy Hour beer prices all day!

Tue
Feb
13

Free Solo Guitar Concert

6:00pm at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Marfa
The Piatigorsky Foundation presents a free one hour intimate and enchanting solo guitar concert featuring the amazing artist, Jack Sanders. Through his musical performance and comprehensive commentaries, you will gain an unparalleled understanding of the classical music pieces and composers. You are invited to stay afterward to meet the artist.

Wed
Feb
14

Donut Extravaganza

All Day at the Marfa Public Library in Marfa
Stop by the Marfa Public Library for delicious donut, kolaches, and coffee as a Thank You for being part of our library!

Valentine's for Palestine Bakesale

10:00am - 4:00pm in front of the Marfa Post Office in Marfa
Drop off and purchase baked goods!
All proceeds go to a family fleeing Gaza.

Ongoing
Weekly
Events &
Classes

Tree Planting 101 presented by The Chinati Foundation & Project Homeleaf of Presidio

Next Saturday 2/17 from 9:30am - 1:00pm
Please join us for a morning of tree planting with our friends from Project Homeleaf on Chinati's grounds. Project Homeleaf will introduce their environmental work in Presidio and the Big Bend, demonstrate planting techniques, and highlight the impact of adding trees to our communities. All ages welcome - lunch provided! **Limited enrollment. To register, please contact education@chinati.org or call 432-729-4362, ext. 224**

12th Annual Valentine's in Valentine

Next Saturday 2/17 from 2:00pm - 10:00pm at the Old Mercantile in Valentine
A throwback celebration that combine live music, small-town vibes, and good old-fashioned surprises. Featuring this year's headliner Jimmie Vaughan! For more info and tickets, visit www.valentineinvalentinex.com

Big Sky Yoga

Monday: Sculpt at 5:00pm, Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Tuesday: Hatha at 9:00am
Wednesday: Sculpt at 9:00am; Vinyasa at 6:00pm
Thursday: Yin Yoga at 6:00pm
Friday: Breathwork at 9:00am; Vinyasa & Core at 12:00pm
Saturday: Vinyasa at 10:00am
New location: 105 E Oak #4 (in the ally behind the Wrong Store)

Step it Up (Step Aerobics)

Tuesday at 6:00pm, Thursday at 9:00am & Saturday at 9:00am @ Big Sky Yoga
All fitness levels welcome. New location: 105 E Oak #4 (in the ally behind the Wrong Store)

Free Zumba Classes

Monday & Wednesday at 6:30pm at Marfa Public Library

Free Meditation Classes

Tuesday & Thursday at 6:00pm at Marfa Public Library

Life Drawing with Model

Saturday from 9:45am - 12:00pm at Talent Studios in Alpine
Join this vibrant artist community, make new friends and hone your drawing skills. Reserve your easel by texting 206.619.4699

Storytime

Wednesday at 11:00am at Marfa Public Library

AA (online & sometimes in-person)

Saturday at 12:00pm at <https://tinyurl.com/y686nnw2> & sometimes in-person at Marfa Public Library

AA (in-person)

Monday & Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Alpine Farmers Market

Saturday at 9:00am on historic Murphy Street in Alpine

Note: Schedules are subject to change. Please call or visit business websites to confirm that event is happening.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

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Aerostat will continue despite accident

From May 3, 1990 (edited for length)

MARFA — Presidio County's congressman said Monday that the U.S. Customs Service aerostat radar surveillance balloon project should continue despite last Saturday's accidental destruction of the Marfa aerostat balloon.

Saturday afternoon, the Marfa aerostat balloon ripped into three pieces during high surface wind gusts, severely damaging the sophisticated state-of-the-art "look-down" radar package attached to the belly of the balloon. The accident was the third in the aerostat program.

"There has not been any change in the aerostat radar balloon project at all," U.S. Rep. Lamar

Smith, R-San Antonio, said Monday from Washington, D.C. "This is obviously a setback, but a short-term setback and not a long-term fiasco," he said.

During a shift change at the Marfa aerostat site between 3:30 and 4 p.m., "The balloon just came apart," Danny Morris, a General Electric Marfa aerostat systems service engineer, said Sunday.

The three balloon sections — its nose, hull and tail-fin section all landed within the site yard, a fenced-in area of 1,000 square feet located about 21 miles west of Marfa off U.S. 90. Morris said the balloon ripped during surface wind gusts of 57 mph. "Once it started ripping, it kept going," Morris said. However, GE officials don't know what caused the initial rip, if that is what occurred, he added.

Aerostats are a Customs program designed to detect low-flying drug-smuggling aircraft from Mexico. When operational, aerostats are tethered aloft at about 15,000 feet carrying the look-down radar which has a range of about 150 miles. Each aerostat site costs up to \$18 million with a \$1 million payroll for the crew of about 30 workers.

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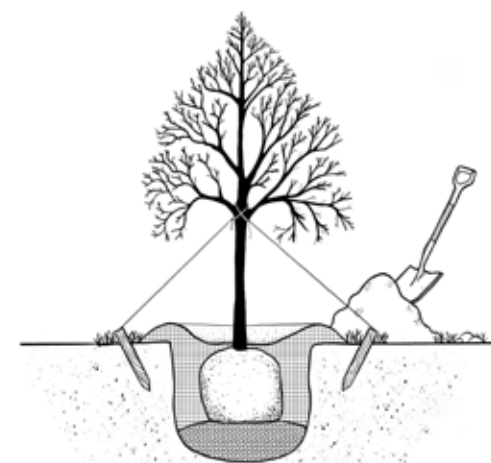


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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2024 9:30 AM - 1:30 PM

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TREE PLANTING 101 A FREE AND INFORMATIVE HANDS-ON WORKSHOP



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LIMITED ENROLLMENT, TO REGISTER, PLEASE CONTACT EDUCATION@CHINATI.ORG OR CALL 432 729 4362, EXT. 224



Chinati's educational and public programming is generously supported by the Prefetto Foster & Alisa Ford Brown Foundation, the Cowles Charitable Trust, the Carl & Florence E. King Foundation, the Warner Stearns Charitable Trust, Wazemall, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Union Pacific Foundation. Chinati is also grateful to our members and the people of Marfa and for their support for their generous support and in-kind contributions.

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DISPATCHES FROM MISD JOURNALISM CLASS

MHS sleep schedules

By MADDIE AND ITZEL

People typically require around 8-10 hours of sleep per night for optimal health and well-being. But, that's not really the case for some Marfa ISD students.

First, we asked Raven Martinez about her sleep schedule. The first question we asked her was, "How many hours do you get to sleep each night?"

She said, "Um, probably around six hours of sleep."

We asked why she gets so little sleep. She replied, "I just scroll through TikTok and SnapChat people."

We moved onto the next person. We asked Austin Milligan how many hours of sleep he gets at night. He replied, "I get four hours of sleep. I go to sleep at 2 a.m."

We then asked, "Why do you get so little sleep?" He said, "Well if I got nothing to do, I just go outside to listen to music, but it's getting colder so I gotta stop doing that."

Then we interviewed Itzel Urrutia who likes to sleep a lot in class. Instead of listening to the teachers she is usually dreaming she is at home in bed. Then, we asked why she sleeps in class. She said, "Because I don't sleep a lot at home."

"My TikTok screen time is crazy!" Itzel continued, "Like 30 hours a week, I fall asleep every night watching TikTok. At like, midnight."

To finish the interviews we spoke to Belen Soto Torres. We asked how many hours of sleep she gets: "Um, uh around six."

Then we asked, "What do you do on your phone that keeps you up?"

She said, "I watch shows on Netflix and just text whoever is up. I also make conversation with my sister Kimberly."

Vinnie, a senior, suffers from insomnia.

"I go to bed around one in the morning. Because I can't turn my brain off. I don't have my phone with me, I put it to charge away from me, not in my bed. And I just like, stay in bed for two hours or so, not asleep. And then I just pass out."

"Last night I got two hours of sleep, usually though, like four or three," says sophomore Isaiah Ramos, who also says he is plagued by insomnia.

"I get into bed at like 11, and I'm on my phone for a few hours, and then I'm off my phone, just starting at the ceiling."

"I go to bed every night at one in the morning," says senior Samantha.

"On weekdays, typically, I do take an hour nap from 5-6 p.m. Then, I hang out with my friends from 9-10. I get home and I have to shower and do my nightly routine. So I officially get in bed at 11:30, 12 maybe.

And I think everyone needs a one-hour social media catch-up before bed. So that you go on all your social media apps until you run out of new content, and then it's time for bed. The last step of my before-sleep social media routine is my SIMs check. I look at the SnapMap to make sure all my friends are where they belong."

So, it's clear that many Marfa students aren't getting the recommended amount of sleep to maintain healthy minds and bodies. Still, many don't seem willing to give up their late nights, and early mornings are needed to get ready and get to school by 7:45 a.m.

Concert in Odessa attended by some at MHS

By FLAVIO

Recently on January 17, some high school students went to Odessa for a concert at the West Texas Jazz Festival. A large majority of high school students went because all sophomores, juniors and seniors in good standing were invited, but the freshman class stayed behind.

The trip to Odessa took Ms. Lara, Coach Pittman and Mrs. Donaldson as chaperones, and students whose grades were passing and were without excessive absences. The conditions to meet were simple, but there was another condition. Only sophomores, juniors and seniors could go. This left the freshmen wondering why they couldn't go!

Some freshmen speculated that since they had gone to the West Texas Jazz Festival during their junior high years, that they weren't invited this year. Or, maybe, there just wasn't enough space on the buses. Both are completely logical explanations, but no one was telling us the real answer, so we couldn't be too sure on why we were left out.

First up, I interviewed freshmen on their opinion about the trip and if they would have liked to go. And I asked about other things regarding last year's trip and what they liked about it.

Belen Soto is a freshman. I asked about the concert during junior high and if she enjoyed it. After that, I asked her if she would like to go on the trip to the concert again. "It was enjoyable, but I wouldn't go again."

I questioned Itzel Urrutia if she was upset that she wasn't going on the trip, or if she was glad she wasn't going. "Yes." I then asked her if she liked the empty hallways and the peace and quiet here. "No."

Last of the freshmen, I interviewed Zoey Salgado about the concert last year. I asked if she liked it last year and what she liked about it, and if not, what she didn't like about it. And I asked her if there was a better

alternative option. Zoey said she liked it and that we had front row seats and everyone really enjoyed it.

Next up are a junior and a senior: Austin Milligan and Samantha Martinez. They were scheduled to go on the trip, but Austin missed out and stayed behind at school.

I asked Austin about his opinion of the concert and if he'd wanted to go. "I think it's great that the students of Marfa High School got out. They're not many things in Marfa, and it's a great opportunity to go on a field trip!"

Finally, I interviewed a senior named Samantha Martinez. She went on the trip, and I asked her if she liked it or not.

"It was good!" she replied.

I asked her what her favorite part of the trip and or concert was.

"My favorite part about the trip to Odessa was when Emily sang "22" by Taylor Swift. Mary, Lore, Fern, Liani, Kily and I went crazy singing it."

I then asked her if the trip was a good way to take her mind off school and if she liked being away from the school?

"Yes, it did."

I then asked her if she would go again.

"I would love to go again and sing again."

So, in spite of the freshmen having a little bit of FOMO, the West Texas Jazz concert seems to have been a hit; it seemed like this year it went great for those who went to the concert.

Powerlifting

By JANAYAH AND MS. POWERS

Powerlifting is Marfa's newest sport: this is the third year students have been able to compete for the Shorthorn team. Powerlifting has three different lifts that students can compete in: deadlift, squat and bench press. Powerlifters wear all kinds of singlets and suits and try to lift impossibly large weights.

I began by interviewing senior Tony Saenz about powerlifting, and the first question I asked was whether or not the stuff they wear to the competition is uncomfortable and he said, "Sometimes, the wraps are mostly uncomfortable because it cuts off your blood circulation."

The next question I asked was what's your personal record on the bench press and he said, "One hundred and sixty pounds."

Then I asked, "Squat?"

And he responded, "I hate legs, my legs are weak, so 160 pounds."

I asked about dead lift and he said, "Two hundred and forty pounds."

I then interviewed junior Diego Jurado. The first question I asked was again about the outfits the powerlifters wear. He said, "We have to wear these suits, and some of them are comfortable, but some of them are really uncomfortable! Like bad, like leave you bruises bad."

I then asked, "How's powerlifting going this year for you?" and he said, "It's going pretty good, our next meet is on Saturday, and I hope I do good. I should do good."

I asked when the most recent powerlifting meet took place, and he let me know it was last Saturday. I asked how he did, and he said, "I did good. I got sixth place out of 13 people."

Finally, I then interviewed senior Jack Marquez about powerlifting. Last year, Jack went to state in powerlifting in Frisco. The first question I asked was, "How does it feel to be the best person in powerlifting?"

Jack said, "Pretty swag to be honest."

"How was y'all's most recent meet, how did you do?" I asked.

Jack replied, "I got first place by 35 pounds." I then asked how many times a week powerlifters train.

Jack replied, "Three to four times a week."

"What are the workouts like?"

"We do the main lifts, and then we do different supplemental workouts with our legs, like if it's squats we're focusing on, we do lots of leg exercises."

I asked, "Do you have any advice for powerlifting?"

Jack said, "Go hard or go home, man."

"What do you do after a powerlifting meet?"

Jack replied, "I sleep on the bus ride home, and then I'm kinda just chilling the next day which is usually Sunday, but then Monday is when we start training again."

"Will you continue powerlifting and working out in college?"

"Yes, I see continuing to work out as part of my future. Not necessarily as part of a team, but in the gym."

"Why did you choose this sport to concentrate on and excel in?"

"I'm good at it. My freshman year I was stronger than all the girls. And lifting was something I liked to do, and then Coach Kelly brought in powerlifting."

"Why wear such uncomfortable outfits?"

"The squat one specifically is tight because it helps you to get back up. The belts are for your back, to keep your spine straight."

I then asked my last question, "Do you ever get scared before a meet?"

Jack said, "Not really because I know where I'm at, I'll probably get scared more when I go to regionals and state and stuff like that."

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Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Donaldson

Left to right: Senior Loretta Rivera and junior Diego Jurado earned a gold medal for their science fair project "Observing Photon Electron Emissions" at a regional competition last weekend. Juniors Marisa Hernandez and Tenessa Hinojos earned a gold medal for their science fair project "Pond Life, Observing Particle Pollution and its Effects on Daphnia magna" at a regional competition last weekend. Sophomore Piper Donaldson earned a gold medal for her science fair project "Interactive Robotic Companion for Children with Disabilities: Ro-panion" at a regional competition last weekend.

Majority of Marfa High School science fair projects advance to state competitions

By MARY CANTRELL
mkcantrell@bigbendsentinel.com

MARFA — Marfa's homegrown science wizzes, Marfa ISD High School students, traveled to compete in regional science fair competitions this past weekend at University of Texas Permian Basin in Odessa.

Out of nine projects entered in the competition, seven will advance to the state competition taking place March 22 and 23 at Texas A&M University in College Station.

Since November, teacher Elizabeth Donaldson's science students have been hard at work on a variety of projects relating to photon electron emissions, fingerprint analysis, solar-powered water desalination, starlight intensity and more. "I'm super proud of the hard work these kiddos put into their project, and their hard work definitely paid off," Donaldson said.

She said the fact that the majority of the science fair teams are advancing to state is particularly impressive considering Marfa hopefuls typically compete against homeschooled students or those from charter and magnet schools who may benefit from greater economic resources and from parents who work in the medical profession who have "access to professional grade

equipment."

"Our students work with what we have and put together authentic projects that are within our scope of capabilities," Donaldson said. "As always I am humbled by the students' dedication and willingness to compete in our state-level competition."

Juniors Marisa Hernandez and Tenessa Hinojos earned a gold medal and will advance to the state competition for their project titled "Pond Life, Observing Particle Pollution and its Effects on Daphnia magna." The duo looked into the effects colloidal silver particles found in many everyday consumer products have on aquatic life and the environment.

"I had a very wonderful time with all of my friends and getting out of Marfa for a little," said Hernandez. "I'm so thankful to have this opportunity to be going to state!" Team member Hinojos said she was glad she was convinced to sign up to compete in the science fair.

Sophomore Piper Donaldson, daughter of Ms. Donaldson, won a gold medal for her project titled "Interactive Robotic Companion for Children with Disabilities: Ro-panion," that explored the idea of creating a robot companion that responds to touch and voice commands.

"It's great I finally got to participate in the science fair this year, and I got

a first-place medal which was really awesome," Piper said. "I can't wait to go to state and see how well I can do there next."

Even the two students that did not advance to state competitions were grateful for the experience, they said. Junior Francisco "Kiko" Rosas competed with his project titled "Plants and Their Environment: Translating Frequencies from Chlorophytum comosum Plantae into a Melody," earning a bronze medal.

Students and Donaldson traveled to Odessa to check in on Friday and killed time playing video games and bowling at entertainment center Cinergy before presenting their projects to the judges on Saturday. "Even though I didn't qualify for state, it was a really fun trip overall, besides being messed with when I tried sleeping," Rosas said.

Other students who competed include Andres Solis, Loretta Rivera, Diego Jurado, JoAngel Davila, Ayven Phippen, Darren Campos, Christopher Huerta, Messiah Licon, Isaiah Ramos, Amaya Gomez, Raven Martinez and Ava Flores.

Universal Crossword

Edited by David Steinberg January 29, 2024

Sudoku & Crossword puzzles:

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Solution from last week's puzzle:

SOLUTION:

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

- ACROSS**
- 1 Stingray feature
 - 5 React to the alarm
 - 9 Necessity
 - 13 Unencumbered
 - 14 Type of theater at a science museum, perhaps
 - 15 Roping and riding competition
 - 16 Disaster relief org.
 - 17 Soccer star born Edson Arantes do Nascimento
 - 18 It may be obtuse
 - 19 Joint operations
 - 22 Imaginary line that Earth spins around
 - 23 Adjust the pitch of
 - 24 Mexican foods associated with Tuesday
 - 28 Richard's predecessor in the White House
 - 32 30.48 of them fit in a ft.
 - 35 Makes up ground
 - 37 Construction workplace
 - 38 Joint operations
 - 42 Rural real estate unit
 - 43 Startle
 - 44 Fooled
 - 45 Oppose
 - 48 Home of the Blue Light Special
- DOWN**
- 1 Texter's closest buddy
 - 2 Concert venue
 - 3 Big name in home sales
 - 4 Michael Jackson hit featuring Eddie Van Halen on guitar
 - 5 Completely erase
 - 6 Gold Card co.
 - 7 Leafy green
 - 8 Put forth, as effort
 - 9 Rubbish
 - 10 Outer limit
 - 11 Snaky swimmers
 - 12 Bambi's mother is one
- 15** Like the Pacific Northwest, for much of the year
- 20** "Killers of the Flower Moon" tribe
- 21** -de-sac
- 25** Lid
- 26** Olive and corn products
- 27** Chips or cookies, say
- 29** Kitchen timer sound
- 30** "A Man Called "
- 31** Settle in like a bird
- 32** Martial artist Jackie
- 33** Shiny mineral
- 34** Agile
- 36** Con game
- 39** Strike a chord
- 40** Time period
- 41** Concert souvenirs, informally
- 46** Nickname for Schwarzenegger
- 47** Vote of support
- 49** Imaginary line at about 23.5 degrees latitude
- 51** First U.S. president born after 1946
- 53** Musical drama
- 54** Former White House press secretary Jen
- 55** "Bye," in Bologna
- 56** Uninvited picnic guests
- 57** Age following
- 58** River sediment
- 59** "Smooth Operator" singer
- 60** 35mm camera type
- 63** IRS form ID

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

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

1/28 © 2024 Andrews McMeel Universal www.upuzzles.com

Three-Way Switch by Alan Levin

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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LUNCH	PIZZA, CARROTS, GREEN BEANS, FRUIT, DESSERT	SHORTHORNS SUCCESS DAY	BURGER CHOICE, CHIPS, OKRA, STRAWBERRIES	CHICKEN FAJITAS, RICE, BEANS, CARROTS, SALSA, FRUIT, SHERBET	CHICKEN ALFREDO, BREADSTICKS, GARDEN SALAD, GREEN BEANS, PEACHES, DESSERT

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MARFA SHORTHORNS SPORTS CALENDAR

FRI, FEB 9: HS Basketball vs Sierra Blanca in Marfa
 SAT, FEB 10: HS Girls/Boys Powerlifting in Kermit
 TUE, FEB 13: HS Basketball vs Dell City in Marfa

New graduate anthropology program at Sul Ross State University slated for fall semester

ALPINE — The Center for Big Bend Studies (CBBS) at Sul Ross State University announces the creation of a new Master of the Arts in anthropology program, starting this fall. After months of development, the launch of this groundbreaking graduate program represents a new direction for increasing student engagement and research at CBBS and the university.

"We are excited to offer this new opportunity to our students," said University Executive Vice President and Provost Dr. Bernie Cantens. "The creation of an anthropology graduate program complements the current focus on conservation and habitat management at Sul Ross, producing students who are better informed to meet the diverse challenges of implementing effective natural and cultural resource programs."

The MA program comprises a 36-credit, thesis-based degree plan, with 24 credits of anthropology core curriculum and 12 elective credits, six which must be in anthropology.

"We project admitting six students each fall semester to maintain small cohort sizes and low student-to-professor ratios," said CBBS Director Bryon Schroeder. "We want to provide the best possible graduate school experience for our students."

All required courses will be routinely offered on a one- or two-year rotation, with an expected two-year completion. Coursework will emphasize hands-on training to familiarize students with the application of different methods/technologies for the appropriate setting.

"We will utilize a major asset of our university: our

proximity to millions of acres of undeveloped land that stretches across the dynamic environments of the Big Bend containing world-class cultural resources," Schroeder said.

The establishment of the graduate program at Sul Ross, coinciding with the re-establishment of the anthropology minor, occurs at an optimal time to meet the growing demand for archaeologists. Student anthropological work will be conducted in collaboration with CBBS to produce world-class archaeological research.

"Our students will leave the program with the skills and expertise they need to be competitive and flexible in a diverse job market," Schroeder said.

Sul Ross offers one of the most affordable graduate degrees in Texas; CBBS is actively seeking funding to provide additional student support and graduate assistantships.

Accreditation is pending and expected from the Texas Board of Higher Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Interested students should contact the general anthropology email (anthropology@sulross.edu) or reach out to specific faculty members with questions regarding the MA program and graduate student research opportunities (bryon.schroeder@sulross.edu, charles.koenig@sulross.edu, devin.pettigrew@sulross.edu). General information about education opportunities is available at <https://cbbs.sulross.edu/education/>.

To learn more about the Center for Big Bend Studies, visit <https://cbbs.sulross.edu>

OBITUARIES



Evaro

Rosendo Marquez Evaro was born on September 30, 1932. He passed away, surrounded by his family on January 26, 2024. He was 91 years old. He was the son of Rosendo Acosta Carrasco and Pascuala Morales Marquez. His mother passed away when he was three months old, and he was raised

by his father's sister Victor and husband Pablo Evaro in Redford, Texas. He graduated from Presidio High School at 17 years of age. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War.

On December 19, 1959, he married Elida Garcia and the two began their lives together, eventually celebrating 64 years of marriage. He turned his full attention to his passion for farming, raising cotton, cantaloupes and onions. He was the third generation of the Evaro family devoted to the love of tilling the soil that was started in 1876. It was a proud moment when he was recognized by the Texas Department of Agriculture's Family Land Heritage Program for a century or more of continuous land ownership and operation in the early 1980s. The farm is still in operation today, after 147 years, and will continue

for years to come.

Rosendo is survived by his wife, Elida; sons, Jose Eduardo (Hilda) Evaro, Rosendo (Sonia) Evaro Jr.; daughters, Josefina (Esteban) Mesa, Rosario (Stan) Ferrell, Carolina (Guillermo) Perez; and his beloved grandchildren, Kimberly, Idaly, Saraly, Bonifacio, Aaron, Viviana, Joaquin, Samuel, Christopher, Clinton, Jorge and Joel; great-grandchildren, Olivia, Roel and Abril.

Funeral Services with military honors were held on Friday, February 2, 2024, at 10 a.m. at Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in Shafter, Texas. Graveside services followed at Desert Hills Cemetery in Presidio, Texas, with Father Victorino Loresca Jr. officiating from Marfa. Services were entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, Texas.

•••

Mills

In loving memory, we are saddened to announce the passing of **Homer Mills** of Alpine, Texas,

on February 5, 2024, in Houston, Texas. Please join us to honor and celebrate the life of Homer Mills at First Christian Church in Alpine, in the afternoon of Saturday, February

10, 2024, with burial to follow at Elm Grove Cemetery. An obituary will be published in next week's paper.

•••



Perez

The fifth of six siblings, **Ana Maria** is survived by her brother Jesse J. Martinez and wife Delma Martinez; her husband, Julio Sr.; her children, daughter Tracie with husband Isael Marquez and their children, Elizabeth Ann and Joseph Daniel; her son John with wife Colette and their children, Mary Elyse, John August, Caroline Grace and Catherine Sophia; and her son Julio Jr. She also has many nieces,

nephews and godchildren whom she all loved as her own.

Ana Maria is preceded in death by her parents, Secundino and Jesusita Martinez; and brothers Juan Martinez, David Martinez, Trinidad Najar and Lorena Rice.

Visitation was February 2, 2024, at Greenwood Funeral Home followed by a Rosary and funeral with interment at Greenwood Memorial Park.

•••



Rapp

Tom Rapp, father of Emily and Jonathan; self-named grandfather "TR Dad" to Miller, Ruby, Tommy, Mackie and Teddy; and husband of Patricia Hurley, the mother of his children and, later, Toshifumi Sakihara, died Tuesday, January 23, at 89.

His was a life always lived as he wished to live it — without timidity, with curiosity and with success in whatever he put his mind and passion to. In that pursuit of living fully he has been an inspiration to many, none more than us.

After a near-instant expulsion from Union College, he was drafted into the Army and sent to postwar Korea. Quickly figuring out how the system worked, he secured the job delivering mail in a heated jeep — making himself comfortable and revered at the desolate camp. He thrived, finagling many trips to Seoul, Tokyo and other exotic places — the beginning of a lifelong love of travel, and especially Asia.

Returning home he matriculated at Brown, and while his roommates took the cleaning chores, he

snapped up the cooking duties. His lifelong passion for cooking began by feeding college friends around the table — the simple, exquisite "dinner party food" he'd later define as his cooking style to the New York Times food editor four decades later.

His first career as an architect started after a stint at the Yale School of Architecture. Hired by his former dean, Charles Moore, the company bought a 19th century bit factory in Centerbrook, Connecticut. It was 1970 and we were both toddlers. Essex became our home for the next 18 years.

Dad's ingenuity, low-key drive and endless curiosity was perfectly matched with a job made possible by the Carter administration in 1972 — designing and building both a factory and hundreds of pre-fabricated low-income housing units in eastern Kentucky. Later, he met the charismatic New York art dealer Jim Brehm and created magnificent apartments in New York and an iconic house on Middle Cove in Essex.

In 1992 at age 58, his second career began. With Jonathan as his partner and Toshi as masterful pastry chef, he opened Etats-Unis, and later Bar @ Etats-Unis, on 81st street in New York — despite knowing absolutely nothing about the restaurant business. Dad's magnetic charm combined with their brilliant talent were irresistible — Etats-Unis was wildly successful and went on to earn one of the first Michelin stars in America.

Following several long trips to southeast Asia, he staved off the

boredom of running a successful restaurant in New York by opening two groundbreaking internet cafes in Saigon during the brief political thaw there. Apparently too groundbreaking; his visa was promptly revoked.

The last great chapter was with Toshi in distant, dusty Marfa, Texas, where they designed and built the beautiful swan song that was restaurant Cochineal. It seemed impossible to believe such a sophisticated, yet down-to-earth, restaurant could exist, let alone thrive, there. Cochineal was the apotheosis of all of our father's talents, his love of people and their love of him. It was perfect. His last years in Marfa were spent with his two elderly cats and his partner Paul Stark, who cared for him until the end.

We will miss dad not for all his accomplishments but for his love of life and us. We'll remember him as the dad who showed us how to care for and raise as pets both a baby squirrel we named Peter and a baby bird named Beebop. The dad who showed us the uninhabited harbors along the coast of Maine on our yearly sails from Pulpit Harbor to Essex. The dad who kneaded dough, made pottery or drew buildings with us at the kitchen table. The dad who read us *The Yearling* and other great books, encouraging us to "be well-read." We'll remember him most, though, as the dad who taught us how to dream, to live. Always patient, forgiving, there for us. Goodbye Dad, we love you, and we'll miss you!

•••



Smith Hearon

Gavin "Chance" Smith Hearon, 19 years old of Odessa, Texas, was called home to be with the Lord Saturday, January 6. He was residing in Alpine, Texas. Gavin "Chance" was born at

Medical Center Hospital in Odessa on September 24, 2004, to parents Andon Smith and Kelli Hearon. It was love at first sight. With his crystal blue eyes and jet black hair, he was forever imprinted on our hearts. He persevered and graduated October 2023 from Marathon High School. His family was so very proud.

Gavin was an angelic soul. He blessed this earth with his genuine heart and loving presence. He was a stranger to no one and made friends everywhere he went. He was an amazing son, brother, and grandson. He has left us all with long lasting and impressionable memories that will stay with us for a lifetime. Gone but never forgotten.

We would like to personally thank each and everyone of you for all the heartfelt prayers and support. May God bless you all abundantly.



"Think lightly of yourself and deeply of the world." - Gavin
"KK, yook at yer yist!" - Love your Gavin Chance

•••

Antonio Nunez's obituary that ran on February 1, 2024, misstated his place of birth. He was born in Marfa.



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