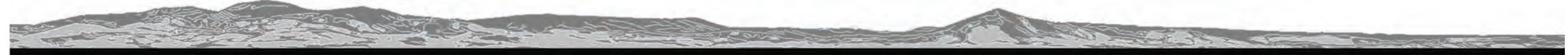


BIG BEND Sentinel



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Our 100th Year

Marfa, Texas • TWO DOLLARS



SAM KARAS

Big Bend Ranch State Park archaeologist Tim Gibbs leads the first public hike at the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area

First public hike at a new Chinati park

ON NEW YEAR'S Day, a small group of around two dozen folks were the first members of the public to explore the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area (SNA), the region's newest park. Comprising around 40,000 acres of unique sky-island ecosystems, the Chinati SNA is tentatively scheduled to open in 2032 to anyone craving wide open spaces and solitude in an infrequently-traveled part of Presidio County.

The hike was a soft launch of sorts—the park still lacks a paved access road and other infrastructure staff and guests will need for day-to-day operations. No marked trails have been established yet, so Texas Parks and Wildlife staff led hikers on an adventurous route combining old pack routes, jeep trails and good old fashioned cross-country bushwhacking. Along the way, the group explored a ciénaga, or desert wetland, learned how to identify a few archaeological features and climbed to an overlook with a breathtaking view of a grove of cottonwood trees.

The property is a piece of the larger Mesquite Ranch and was originally donated to the state of Texas in 1996 by Fariha al Jerrahi—known then by the name Philippa de Menil—and her husband, Heiner Friedrich.

The pair were the visionary duo behind the Dia Art Foundation, which launched the careers of major artists like Walter de Maria, Dan Flavin and Donald Judd. In 1979, they purchased the old Fort D.A. Russell in Marfa—the military campus that would later become home to the Chinati Foundation.

The Friedrichs had a falling out with Judd in the mid-1980s, but held on to their property in Presidio County. Rumors whirled that they were developing it into a religious retreat—the pair had recently converted to Sufism, a mystical and esoteric branch of Islam. They constructed a series of cabins in the furthest reaches of the ranch to be able to hike and enjoy the mountain landscapes. (Per the state's public use plan, those cabins will one day be open for back-country hikers to enjoy.)

The couple transferred ownership of the land to the Richard King Mellon Foundation in 1996, holding onto the rest of the Mesquite Ranch but carving out a section intended for the public to one day access. The foundation, in turn, donated that land to the Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD), alongside an endowment intended to cancel out the loss in the county tax rolls. Conflicts with neighboring landowners over public access to the tract delayed the park's opening, and for nearly three decades, funding

never seemed to line up with staff's momentum to get things done.

"First Day Hikes" are held in state parks across Texas to encourage folks to start the year off outside. Last week's hike in the Chinati SNA was the brainchild of the Friends of Big Bend Ranch State Park, a nonprofit that supports public lands in Far West Texas where state budgets fall short. Hoping to capitalize on mounting excitement around the park's opening, the group raffled off 12 spots and allowed each winner to bring a plus-one.

The day was facilitated by help from TPWD staff—including Arian Velázquez-Ornelas, Sara Elms, Gabriel Pastrano, Cody Edwards and Omar Udave—as well as a donation of shuttle services by Angell Expeditions and additional insights from local archeologist David Keller.

All in all, the event raised over \$14,000 for the Friends—serious cash for a group whose past projects have involved funding for archeological digs, trail maintenance and more. "We would like to express our most sincere gratitude to everyone who participated in the 2026 First Day Hike in the Chinati Mountains State Natural Area," said Board President Lauren Cecil. "We look forward to more exciting hikes in this very beautiful area of Texas!" —SAM KARAS

CANDELARIA RAIDS TARGET LONGTIME BORDER RESIDENTS

A town is fractured, families split as Army, border police and deputies arrive before dawn

By SAM KARAS
and ROB D'AMICO

Candelaria, Texas

In the early morning hours of August 19, 2025, six patrol cars pulled into the unincorporated town of Candelaria, Texas, about 50 miles northwest of Presidio on the U.S.-Mexico border. With lights blazing, they surrounded an RV by the church. A small posse of officers—representing the Border Patrol, the U.S. Army and the Presidio County Sheriff's Office—approached the trailer.

Presidio County Deputy Jaime Sanchez banged on the door. "Abre la puerta!" he shouted. "Open the door!"

Inside, Juana Alvarez Rodriguez, a housewife in her early 50s, was sound asleep. So was her 15-year-old son, who answered in his pajamas, his mother following close behind. Deputy Sanchez asked them if they were alright. Alvarez hadn't reported anything, but Sanchez had gotten a call from a Border Patrol agent about an armed man attempting to break in. "She said everything [was] OK, and I asked her if I could go inside to make sure," Sanchez later wrote in that night's report.

Alvarez was alarmed and upset by being woken up in the middle of the night—and in the middle of nowhere—by nine men, all of whom were armed, and complained to Sanchez that she had been "so comfortable" before their intrusion. An officer hefting an automatic rifle told Alvarez and her son to keep their hands in plain view while they checked the trailer for anyone concealed inside.

The sweep yielded no results, and Sanchez asked Alvarez if they had any weapons. She said they had two toy guns, and led the deputy to where they were—"they were two semi-automatic toy guns that looked very realistic, similar to a Glock," Sanchez wrote.

Meanwhile, the Border Patrol agents on scene asked Alvarez for her documents. Her son had an

American birth certificate, but she had only a Mexican voter's ID for herself, though she said she'd been living in the trailer for nine years. Agents informed her that she would have to be arrested. Alvarez told them that she had no other nearby family and wanted to take her son with her.

They declined her request. Per court records, Alvarez told her son not to cry as they hugged before she was taken away. "God is first," she reminded him.

Two countries, one community

The events of that night were unusual in Candelaria, a tiny town at the end of the line where FM 170 becomes a dirt track that rambles along the border toward Valentine. Only a few dozen people live there, over an hour's drive away from the nearest gas stations and grocery stores. Perhaps the biggest daily disruption is the arrival of the school bus. At 5 a.m. on weekday mornings, a bus arrives from Presidio to take the town's young scholars on a stomach-churning ride down the River Road over countless tiny hills in the highway through sections of arroyos.

For centuries, Candelaria's destiny has been intertwined with its twin, the village of San Antonio del Bravo in Chihuahua. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the brand-new U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) tightened up security along the border and closed many informal ports of entry that linked small towns like Candelaria, Lajitas and Boquillas with the wider world. A two-minute commute across a footbridge in Candelaria became a three-and-a-half-hour drive through the port of entry in Presidio.

By 2008, the Border Patrol had destroyed the bridge, but that didn't stop the back and forth traffic. Even as late as 2019, when the town's water wells failed, residents headed to San Antonio del Bravo to stay with relatives until repairs were made.

In 2025, President Trump's calls for "mass deportations" changed the tone of immigration enforcement around the country—even in the farthest

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INSIDE

37 puppies rescued

Brewster citizens found dozens of dogs suffering from neglect in Terlingua. Page 4.

Sentinel News Project



OJ mayor's bodyguards kidnapped, returned alive

Aldama, Chihuahua

Gang conflict in the state of Chihuahua put a damper on holiday festivities in the region after four police officers assigned to a security detail for Ojinaga Mayor Lucy Marrufo Acosta were kidnapped by an armed group last Monday. The officers were traveling in a convoy with the mayor to Aldama, where she planned to attend a security briefing with regional law enforcement agencies.

The victims were identified as Juan Carlos Vázquez Rivera, José Luis Cortez Ortiz, Miguel Ángel Núñez Chávez and Commander Ramiro Orozco Pineda.

The police officers were traveling together in a separate car from Marrufo when they were ambushed on the road just a few kilometers past the military

checkpoint outside Ojinaga.

They were forced out of their vehicle—described by police as a late-model Chevrolet pickup—and shoved into another, where they were held for more than 12 hours without contact with friends, family or authorities. (Marrufo was unharmed and was able to continue on to the meeting and back home to Ojinaga safely.)

The next morning, the State Attorney General's Office located the four officers alive in Aldama. Attorney General César Jáuregui Moreno said that he would be collecting statements from the kidnapped men and conducting an official investigation. The office has not yet released any more information on the incident while that investigation is still



An armored vehicle in the Candelaria area after the raids.

ROB D'AMICO





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Redadas en Candelaria contra residentes de larga data

Un pueblo se fractura, las familias se dividen cuando el ejército, la policía fronteriza y los alguaciles llegan antes del amanecer

Por SAM KARAS y ROB D'AMICO

Candelaria, Texas

En la madrugada del 19 de agosto de 2025, seis patrullas llegaron al pueblo no incorporado de Candelaria, Texas, a unas 50 millas al noroeste de Presidio, en la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México. Con las luces encendidas, rodearon una casa rodante junto a la iglesia. Un pequeño grupo de agentes, pertenecientes a la Patrulla Fronteriza, el Ejército de los Estados Unidos y el Departamento del Sheriff del Condado de Presidio, se acercaron al remolque.

El ayudante del sheriff del condado de Presidio, Jaime Sánchez, golpeó la puerta. "¡Abre la puerta!", gritó.

Dentro, Juana Álvarez Rodríguez, ama de casa de unos 50 años, dormía profundamente. También su hijo de 15 años, quien abrió la puerta en pijama, con su madre siguiéndole de cerca. El ayudante Sánchez les preguntó si estaban bien. Álvarez no había reportado nada, pero Sánchez había recibido una llamada de un agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza sobre un hombre armado que intentaba entrar. "Ella dijo que todo estaba bien, y le pregunté si podía entrar para asegurarme", escribió Sánchez más tarde en el informe de esa noche.

Álvarez estaba alarmada y molesta por haber sido despertada en medio de la noche, y en medio de la nada, por nueve hombres, todos armados, y se quejó a Sánchez de que había estado "tan cómoda" antes de su intrusión. Un agente que portaba un rifle automático les dijo a Álvarez y a su hijo que mantuvieran las manos a la vista mientras revisaban el remolque en busca de alguien escondido dentro.

La búsqueda no arrojó resultados, y Sánchez le preguntó a Álvarez si tenían armas. Ella dijo que tenían dos pistolas de juguete y llevó al ayudante a donde estaban: "eran dos pistolas de juguete semiautomáticas que parecían muy realistas, similares a una Glock", escribió Sánchez.

Mientras tanto, los agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza presentes le pidieron a Álvarez sus documentos. Su hijo tenía un certificado de nacimiento estadounidense, pero ella solo tenía una identificación de votante mexicana, aunque dijo que había estado viviendo en el remolque durante nueve años. Los agentes le informaron que tendría que ser arrestada. Álvarez les dijo que no tenía más familia cerca y que quería llevarse a su hijo con ella.

Ellos rechazaron su petición. Según los registros judiciales, Álvarez le dijo a su hijo que no llorara mientras se abrazaban antes de que se la llevaran. "Dios es lo primero", le recordó. Los registros judiciales muestran que el hijo se encuentra ahora en Midland, pero no revelaron con quién vive.

Dos países, una comunidad

Los acontecimientos de esa noche fueron inusuales en Candelaria, un pequeño pueblo al final de la carretera donde la FM 170 se convierte en un camino de tierra que serpentea a lo largo de la frontera hacia Valentine. Solo unas pocas docenas de personas viven allí, a más de una hora en coche de las gasolineras y tiendas de comestibles más cercanas.

Quizás la mayor alteración diaria sea la llegada del autobús escolar. A las 5 de la mañana, de lunes a viernes, llega un autobús desde Presidio para llevar a los jóvenes estudiantes del pueblo en un viaje que revuelve el estómago por la carretera del río, a través de innumerables pequeñas colinas y tramos de arroyos.

Durante siglos, el destino de Candelaria ha estado entrelazado con el de su pueblo gemelo, San Antonio del Bravo, en Chihuahua. Tras los atentados terroristas del 11 de septiembre, el recién creado Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de Estados Unidos (DHS por sus siglas en inglés) reforzó la seguridad a lo largo de la frontera y cerró muchos puntos de entrada informales que conectaban pequeñas localidades como Candelaria, Lajitas y Boquillas con el resto del mundo. Un trayecto de dos minutos a través de una pasarela peatonal en Candelaria se convirtió en un viaje de tres horas y media en coche a través del puesto fronterizo de Presidio.

Para 2008, la Patrulla Fronteriza había destruido el puente, pero eso no detuvo el tránsito de personas. Incluso en 2019, cuando los pozos de agua del pueblo fallaron, los residentes se dirigieron a San Antonio del Bravo para quedarse con sus familiares hasta que se realizaran las reparaciones.

En 2025, los llamamientos del presidente Trump a las "depuraciones masivas" cambiaron el tono de la aplicación de la ley de inmigración en todo el país, incluso en los confines del condado de Presidio. Un destacamento del Ejército llegó en primavera, y con él el espectáculo de soldados en vehículos blindados patrullando la carretera junto al río.

Un "Blue Devil" detenido

El 16 de noviembre, Rena Peña Santieseban, madre de dos hijos que ha vivido y trabajado en Estados Unidos durante unos 40 años e incluso se graduó de la escuela secundaria de Presidio, cruzó el río por lo que podría ser la última vez. Ese día, Peña hizo lo que solía hacer, regresando cuidadosamente a su casa en Candelaria desde San Antonio del Bravo a través de una serie de cables de acero que sirven como puente improvisado. Una patrulla del Ejército estadounidense en una ladera sobre el pueblo lo vio y llamó a agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza, quienes lo interrogaron y luego lo detuvieron bajo la acusación de entrada ilegal a Estados Unidos. Fue llevado a un centro de detención.

Lo que sucedió después no se puede confirmar en los registros de los tribunales federales, que proporcionan poca información, excepto que Peña no tenía antecedentes penales y solo un incidente previo documentado con la Patrulla Fronteriza: en 2009, el DHS le concedió una "salida voluntaria" a través de un puesto fronterizo en El Paso. (Una "salida voluntaria" permite a las personas indocumentadas salir del país sin una orden de deportación, una opción que a menudo eligen para evitar que les resulte más difícil obtener documentación para ingresar a Estados Unidos en el futuro).

El Big Bend Sentinel contactó a numerosas personas cercanas a Peña, incluyendo a quienes lo emplearon, pero nadie quiso hacer comentarios públicos. Uno de ellos solo dijo que los residentes de Candelaria están asustados de ser blanco de las autoridades de inmigración. Al ser contactado por teléfono, un familiar, que no quiso dar detalles del arresto de Peña, dijo que no sabía dónde estaba detenido ni qué le deparaba el futuro. Los intentos de encontrarlo utilizaron



ROB D'AMICO

Cables de acero forman un puente improvisado sobre el Río Grande en el camino a San Antonio del Bravo.

zando la base de datos en línea de detenidos del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE por sus siglas en inglés) no arrojaron resultados para Peña, ni tampoco una llamada a un número de teléfono del ICE.

Los registros de la corte federal muestran que el cargo penal se resolvió el 18 de noviembre, con una pena de "tiempo cumplido". Dado que es ciudadano mexicano sin documentos para residir legalmente en el país, no fue liberado y, en cambio, fue llevado a un centro de detención desconocido.

Desaparecido pero no olvidado

Tanto Álvarez como Peña fueron acusados de una violación de la Sección 1325(a)(1) del Código de los Estados Unidos, que tipifica como delito menor federal ingresar a Estados Unidos por cualquier lugar que no sea un puerto de entrada designado. El Distrito Oeste de Texas tramita cientos de este tipo de casos cada año, y el proceso suele ser rápido y la documentación mínima. Es raro que un caso de entrada ilegal llegue a juicio, pero la rápida actuación del abogado de Álvarez, el defensor público federal Christopher Carlin, llevó el caso en una dirección poco común.

Carlin expuso sus frustraciones con el caso del gobierno en una energética moción para suprimir pruebas, argumentando que se violaron los derechos constitucionales de Álvarez, que se aplican a todas las personas en territorio estadounidense, sean ciudadanos o no, a través de lo que alegó fue "un registro e incautación sin orden judicial y sin consentimiento, de manual".

Para empezar, Carlin no estaba completamente convencido por el pretexto del gobierno para el registro del remolque de Álvarez. Los registros de la Oficina del Sheriff del Condado de Presidio muestran que el agente Sánchez recibió una llamada a través del servicio de despacho alrededor de las 10:20 p.m. solicitando reforzos de la Patrulla Fronteriza por un posible allanamiento. Sánchez y el agente de la Patrulla Fronteriza intercambiaron varias llamadas, y a medianoche Sánchez informó a la central que se dirigía a Candelaria, donde un trío de militares le informó que el sospechoso "era posiblemente afroamericano y portaba una pistola".

Los registros internos de la Patrulla Fronteriza indicaban que los agentes Edgar Barraza y Marcos Rodríguez estaban ayudando a la Oficina del Sheriff del Condado de Presidio a realizar una "verificación de bienestar" después de que se viera a una "persona armada sospechosa" entrando en la caravana. "La presencia de una persona armada en una pequeña comunidad rural no incorporada del oeste de Texas como Candelaria no solo es sospechosa, sino que es algo común", escribió Carlin.

El sheriff del condado de Presidio, Danny Dominguez, declaró el lunes que las acciones de su ayudante y las de los agentes

de la Patrulla Fronteriza estaban justificadas, ya que los agentes deben extremar las precauciones siempre que se reporta la presencia de un arma. La lejanía y la historia del pueblo no influyen en su labor policial. "Si recibimos una llamada sobre un hombre con un arma, actuaremos de la misma manera, ya sea en Candelaria o aquí en Marfa", afirmó.

Al final, un niño se quedó sin madre y una mujer en una celda de la cárcel, enfrentándose a un futuro incierto. "La falta de preocupación de los agentes al dejar a un adolescente solo en su casa, sin ningún familiar adulto, en la remota Candelaria, Texas, a 80 kilómetros de los servicios más cercanos... demuestra la poca importancia que le dieron al bienestar de la familia", escribió Carlin.

Álvarez estaba a punto de ir a juicio a finales de agosto, poco más de una semana después de su arresto, pero el juez Ronald C. Griffin concedió una moción de desestimación con solo unas horas de antelación. Luego, prácticamente desapareció en el laberinto de las bases de datos de inmigración federales.

Un pueblo silencioso

El Big Bend Sentinel viajó a Candelaria el sábado para ver si alguien en el pueblo quería hablar sobre cómo se sentían con respecto a las recientes detenciones o proporcionar más detalles sobre los arrestos. Las calles estaban vacías, pero un hombre que se encontraba cerca de su casa dijo que no sabía nada.

Un camino de tierra y hierba en mal estado, al borde del pueblo, conduce al antiguo cruce tradicional del río. De camino al cruce, un anciano con barba tupida y sombrero de vaquero de paja caminaba hacia Candelaria. Dijo que vivía en San Antonio del Bravo y que no reconoció los nombres de Peña ni de Álvarez.

Ese sábado, un vehículo blindado del Ejército de Estados Unidos estaba estacionado en la cima de una colina sobre Candelaria, donde pozos y un tanque de agua abastecen al pueblo. Un hombre camuflado estaba de pie junto al vehículo, observando con binoculares a este reportero, que estaba estacionado en una carretera abajo y que también lo observaba a través de la lente de su cámara. Un viaje por un camino hasta la cima de la colina permitió ver más de cerca la patrulla, que estaba estacionada justo enfrente de las tumbas de la difunta maestra Johnnie Chambers y su esposo Boyd, quien alguna vez fue comisionado del condado de Presidio.

Un soldado en el asiento del pasajero no respondió al saludo. Otro soldado, en el lado del conductor, simplemente permaneció mirando fijamente el horizonte sobre la extensión de tierra a ambos lados del río, observando hacia San Antonio del Bravo y las montañas más allá.

Todo estaba tranquilo, pero no cabía duda de que los tiempos habían cambiado.

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PRESIDIO INTERNATIONAL

Última actualización sobre los proyectos del agua

Nuestra agua importa

APRINCIPIOS de 2022, el Condado de Presidio fue preseleccionado para solicitar financiación del EDAP para proyectos elegibles. El EDAP proporciona financiación para la prestación de servicios de agua y aguas residuales por primera vez y para abordar infracciones ambientales de larga data relacionadas con la infraestructura existente. El condado recibió aproximadamente \$3.3 millones en subvenciones y \$1.3 millones en préstamos para diseñar nuevos sistemas de agua para las colonias de Las Pampas y Shafter. El paquete del EDAP también incluyó fondos para diseñar y construir un nuevo sistema de alcantarillado para la zona de Fort D.A. Russell en Marfa, así como para diseñar y construir un nuevo sistema de agua y aguas residuales para el barrio de East Heights de Marfa, ubicado entre la autopista 90 y las vías del tren, justo al este de Alamito Creek.

Se podría asumir intuitivamente, basándose en el funcionamiento de las economías, que la financiación para zonas económicamente desfavorecidas está destinada a abordar las necesidades de toda una zona económicamente desfavorecida. Sin embargo, en realidad, los fondos del EDAP sólo pueden utilizarse para prestar servicio a las viviendas habitadas existentes dentro de dicha zona. Cualquier estructu-

ra comercial, pública o no residencial no es elegible para recibir el servicio con fondos del EDAP. Si no ha construido una estructura en su propiedad porque no ha tenido acceso al agua, su propiedad no es elegible. Si nadie vive en su estructura porque no tiene agua, su estructura no es elegible. Este requisito fue particularmente exasperante en los proyectos de East Heights y Las Pampas, donde los propietarios han establecido muy pocas viviendas debido a la falta de agua. Sin embargo, los ingenieros y yo pudimos identificar suficientes residencias en cada zona para mantener la elegibilidad de los proyectos.

El proceso EDAP para el diseño de sistemas de agua y aguas residuales consta de cuatro fases: Categoría A, que consiste en una evaluación de elegibilidad para determinar la elegibilidad económica y de residencia; Categoría B, que evalúa las instalaciones existentes y documenta cualquier problema; Categoría C, que identifica, desarrolla y analiza alternativas para finalmente desarrollar la solución preferida; y Categoría D, en la que se finaliza el plan de implementación del proyecto. Además de los criterios que debe cumplir un diseño para completar estas categorías, cada uno de estos proyectos presenta desafíos únicos.

El proyecto Fort D.A. Russell, por ejemplo, proporcionará una nueva línea de alcantarillado a las casas de Officers Row, así como a los edificios dentro y adyacentes del antiguo fuerte. Dado que la cimentación se encuentra en la cota más baja dentro

del área del proyecto, será necesaria una estación de bombeo para recolectar y transportar los residuos de esta parte del sistema a un pozo de registro existente en la calle Madrid. Otra posible complicación radica en la ubicación de la propia estación de bombeo, justo al sur de los históricos Cobertizos de Artillería, que albergan las 100 obras sin título de Donald Judd en aluminio fundido. Sin embargo, gracias a la fluida colaboración entre el condado y la Fundación Chinati, se pudo seleccionar un sitio que no interfiera con las estructuras existentes ni deteriorie el paisaje.

El diseño de Las Pampas comprende una línea de agua que discurrirá por el lado este de la Carretera 90 desde la toma de agua de la Junta de los Ríos hasta un tanque de almacenamiento que se construirá a unos 9.6 km al norte. La línea también incluirá dos estaciones de bombeo para impulsar el agua cuesta arriba hasta el tanque de almacenamiento, que luego abastecerá a las viviendas circundantes por gravedad. Si bien la línea se ubicará en la servidumbre de paso de la carretera, las estaciones de bombeo y el tanque de almacenamiento requerirán la adquisición de terrenos privados a lo largo de la ruta. El acercamiento a estos propietarios ha sido extremadamente lento debido a la dificultad de determinar definitivamente quién es el propietario del terreno. Afortunadamente, mi propia investigación me permitió identificar al propietario del sitio del tanque de almacenamiento, y el topógrafo John

Kennedy, con sede en Presidio, ha estado trabajando para localizar a los propietarios de las dos estaciones de bombeo.

El proyecto más complejo de EDAP ha sido el diseño de un nuevo sistema de abastecimiento de agua para Shafter. La hidrogeología de la ciudad es notoriamente compleja, y la topografía de la zona plantea enormes desafíos para la viabilidad de un sistema de alimentación por gravedad. Tras varios intentos fallidos, finalmente se identificó un terreno adecuado con un propietario dispuesto a colaborar. El diseño actual contempla la perforación de un pozo de producción a una profundidad de al menos 1.000 pies en el acuífero Mina Grande, un acuífero de agua dulce no clasificado que se encuentra debajo de la ciudad. Se construirá una torre de agua en las cercanías, en el mismo terreno que el propietario ha accedido a donar.

En este momento, todos los proyectos, excepto el de Shafter, han completado la Categoría C y están próximos a finalizar sus evaluaciones ambientales. El proyecto de Shafter ha completado la Categoría B y su evaluación ambiental se encuentra en las primeras etapas. Una vez que los diseños de Las Pampas y Shafter hayan completado la Categoría D, el condado podrá solicitar financiación para la construcción. Los proyectos de Marfa pasarán a la fase de licitación y construcción una vez que completen la Categoría D, posiblemente a principios del próximo verano.—TREY GERFERS

Acosta libre bajo fianza

Tiburcio "Butch" Acosta, residente de Presidio, fue puesto en libertad con una fianza de 3,000 dólares, el 12 de diciembre, tras pasar un mes detenido por tres cargos de tráfico de armas, con acusaciones de haber ayudado a contrabandear armas y municiones al cártel La Línea en Ojinaga, México, según consta en los registros del tribunal federal.

Los fiscales federales intentaron impedir la liberación de Acosta bajo fianza, argumentando que existía riesgo de fuga, pero el juez de distrito estadounidense David Counts denegó su solicitud el 10 de diciembre. También enfrenta cargos en la supuesta operación de contrabando y permanece detenido Adalberto Jaquez Hinojosa, residente de Presidio, quien se encuentra recluido sin derecho a fianza. Ambos se han declarado inocentes y el juicio está programado para el 16 de marzo en Pecos.



Lucy Marrufo Acosta

Secuestran a guarda de alcaldesa

Liberada después de que la caravana fuera secuestrada por narcos.

Aldama, Chihuahua

Los conflictos entre bandas criminales en el estado de Chihuahua empañaron las festividades navideñas en la región después de que cuatro policías asignados al equipo de seguridad de la alcaldesa de Ojinaga, fueran secuestrados por un grupo armado el lunes pasado.

Los agentes viajaban en un convoy con la alcaldesa hacia Aldama, donde ella tenía previsto asistir a una reunión informativa sobre seguridad con las agencias policiales regionales.

Las víctimas fueron identificadas como Juan Carlos Vázquez Rivera, José Luis Cortez Ortiz,

Miguel Ángel Núñez Chávez y el comandante Ramiro Orozco Pineda. Los policías viajaban juntos en un vehículo separado del Marrufo cuando fueron emboscados en la carretera, a pocos kilómetros del puesto de control militar a las afueras de Ojinaga.

Fueron obligados a bajar de su vehículo, descrito por la policía como una camioneta Chevrolet de modelo reciente, y subidos a otro, donde permanecieron retenidos durante más de 12 horas sin contacto con amigos, familiares ni autoridades. (Marrufo resultó ilesa y pudo continuar su viaje a la reunión y regresar a Ojinaga sana y salva).

A la mañana siguiente, la Fiscalía General del Estado localizó a los cuatro agentes con vida en Aldama. El fiscal general, César Jáuregui Moreno, declaró que tomaría declaración a los hombres secuestrados y que se llevaría a cabo una investigación oficial. La

fiscalía no ha proporcionado más información sobre el incidente, ya que la investigación aún está en curso.

En respuesta, el estado de Chihuahua canceló los permisos para varias celebraciones de Año Nuevo en un intento por garantizar la seguridad de la población.

Los medios locales no reportaron nuevos enfrentamientos entre grupos armados durante el intenso tráfico en el cruce fronterizo de Presidio justo después de las fiestas.

Desde la detención de Sergio Menchaca Pizarro, exlíder de La Línea, una organización criminal activa en la zona entre Aldama, Ojinaga y Manuel Benavides, en 2023, la ciudad fronteriza, generalmente tranquila, ha experimentado brotes de violencia, concentrados principalmente en unas pocas semanas sangrientas en septiembre de 2024.

Menchaca fue sentenciado a

cadena perpetua en marzo de 2025. En diciembre, "El 04", jefe de La Línea que se había convertido en líder de un grupo disidente llamado Los Cabrera, fue arrestado en Aldama. Fue extraditado a Estados Unidos, donde enfrentará cargos por su participación en el crimen organizado.

El alcalde de Presidio, John Ferguson, expresó sus mejores deseos para sus colegas al otro lado del río. "Presidio y Ojinaga están inexorablemente unidos y generalmente comparten tanto los buenos como los malos momentos", escribió en un comunicado en Facebook.

"En este momento, mi esperanza es que nosotros, la gente de La Junta de los Ríos, sigamos pensando y actuando como una sola comunidad, como lo hemos hecho tan admirablemente desde tiempos inmemoriales".

—SAM KARAS

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37 puppies rescued in Terlingua

One man arrested
in a neglect case

By KATE BUBACZ

Terlingua

Over the weekend, concerned citizens in South Brewster County rescued 37 puppies from extreme neglect at a private residence on Terlingua Ranch. Their owner, Rique Rivera, has been arrested.

Elena Harris, a local resident, reached out to Tamara Drilling from the High Sierra Bar and Grill about 10 puppies in need of help on Friday night. Drilling is a well-known dog advocate. By Saturday morning, 37 puppies arrived in town on the back of a flatbed truck. They were carried in a garden trough by Cali Rader and two of his sons, and accompanied by Harris. Rader had been granted permission by Rivera to visit the property with Harris and check on the dogs. Rivera had left his home several days prior, following a child welfare visit by officials that determined the home was not fit for children to live in.

What Rader found was bad

"There was no dog food in the place, and the water was dirty," he said, describing how puppies spilled out of a trailer that contained at least nine other adult dogs, many of whom were walking on countertops and appliances to avoid the feces-covered floor. One of the mothers was found dead inside the home, underneath a mattress. Several of the puppies were severely underweight. Rader contacted the sheriff's office and took all of the puppies and the two surviving mothers to Terlingua.

"I'm overwhelmed, but my husband has a huge heart, my kids have huge hearts," Amy Rader, Cali's wife, said as she cradled three tiny puppies in her overalls while adjusting a blanket for the others. Their family, along with Drilling and other local residents, hastily built a makeshift dog run to accommodate the puppies on Saturday night. It is believed that there are at least three litters involved, ranging from 7 weeks to perhaps 3 months old.

On Monday, Brewster County Sheriff Ronny Dodson executed a search warrant for the property and arrested Rique Rivera on charges of child endangerment based on the condition of the property and the amount of animal waste present. His children are currently out of state with their mother.

"It's the worst I've ever seen—I don't know how a grown person can live like this," Dodson said. The nine remaining adult dogs were also rescued on Monday and taken to Terlingua. Rivera is being held in Brewster County Jail, with more charges expected in coming days. In 2023, Rivera and his wife, Ashley Cromarty, were warned by the sheriff's department to contain their dogs after allegations that they killed a woman's pet Schnauzer and had rushed at a woman at a nearby short-term rental—forcing her to flee inside her car until the dogs left. At that time, the sheriff's office determined that there was not enough cause to intervene without positive proof that it was Rivera's dogs to blame.

Locals and rescue organizations acknowledged that this type of neglect situation found at Rivera's, while extreme, is not unheard of. Population growth in Brewster County and more tourism to the tri-county area has been accompanied by more dogs. With limited resources for animals, many people find it difficult to get proper care for their pets.

Rivera and Comarty were known to Mary Ann Vega, the executive director of Alpine Humane Society. She had reached out to the couple on multiple prior occasions to offer assistance for spay and neuter services and vaccines. She says that they never accepted the help.

The Humane Society, along with One Tail at a Time and other rescue organizations, facilitate mobile clinics, financial



Puppies pile into a dog bed at the Terlingua Ranch home before they were removed by animal welfare workers.

support for spay and neuters, and transfers north to other agencies that can host abandoned pets. At least two vans full of animals in need leave the area every month. The sheriff's office encourages citizens to report mistreatment to dispatch for investigation.

Even then, official intervention can be limited. Brewster County is the largest county in Texas and yet does not have a facility to host

dogs and other animals in need that are found outside the Alpine city limits, which has a shelter. Alpine has a town ordinance that limits five dogs per residence, while unincorporated areas like Terlingua do not have such rules.

"The real young puppies are the most critical," Vega said. "My concern with this really young litter is that if you don't keep their core temperature up, they won't

be able to digest food. If they have been starved, you have to give tiny meals to start." The Humane Society is sending an emergency care package with puppy food, formula, meds and dog beds that will be delivered to Drilling early this week.

The smallest six puppies were taken by volunteer Kaci Koffman to a vet in Menard, who confirmed they were suffering from malnutrition but showed no other signs of illness. The rescued puppies will be evaluated, de-wormed, spayed, neutered and vaccinated by One Tail at a Time and the Alpine Humane Society. They are currently being cared for by the Rader family, Drilling, and Koffman.

"We really need people to foster the puppies in pairs," Drilling said. Sandy Smith, a One Tail at a Time West Texas board member, will be coordinating volunteers to foster. Anyone interested is encouraged to fill out an application on the organization's website. A GoFundMe will be set up by Drilling to support the Terlingua rescued puppies. A fundraiser to support the Alpine Humane Society's next pet clinic will be held in February in Terlingua at Venga.

"There's no reason that all of us together can't build something to help out dogs like that," said Rader. "It's disappointing, and it's sad." As of Monday afternoon, two puppies had died.

A town slips to silence

Continued from page 1
reaches of Presidio County. An Army deployment arrived in the spring, and with it the spectacle of soldiers in armored vehicles patrolling the River Road.

A Blue Devil in detention

On November 16, Rena Peña Santieseban—a father of two who has lived and worked in the United States for some 40 years and even graduated from Presidio High School—crossed the river for what may be the last time. That day, Peña did as he'd often done, carefully making his way back home to Candelaria from San Antonio del Bravo over a series of steel cables that serve as a makeshift bridge. A U.S. Army patrol on a hillside above town spotted him and called in Border Patrol agents who questioned him and then apprehended him on a charge of illegal entry into the United States. He was whisked away to detention.

What happened next can't be confirmed in federal court records, which provide little information, except that Peña had no criminal history and only one documented prior run-in with the Border Patrol—in 2009, he was granted a "voluntary departure" by DHS through a port in El Paso. (A "voluntary departure" allows undocumented individuals to leave the country without a deportation order, which folks often opt to avoid because it can make obtaining documentation to enter the United States more difficult in the future.)

Big Bend Sentinel contacted numerous people who are close to Peña, including those who employed him to do work, but no one wanted to comment publicly. One would only say that the residents of Candelaria are terrified that they will be targeted for immigration enforcement. When reached by phone, a family member, who did not want to give details of Peña's arrest, said they did not know where he was being detained or what the future held for him. Attempts to find him using the Immigration and Customs Enforcement online database of detainees showed no records for Peña, nor did a call to an ICE phone number.

Federal court records show that the criminal charge was disposed of on November 18, with a penalty of "time served." Since he is a Mexican citizen with no documents to reside here legally, he was not released and was instead taken to an un-

known detention location.

Both Alvarez and Peña were charged with a violation of Section 1325(a)(1) of the U.S. Code, which makes it a federal misdemeanor crime to enter the United States anywhere except a designated port of entry. The Western District of Texas deliberates hundreds of these types of cases every year, and the process is typically quick and the paper trail is minimal. It's rare for an illegal entry case to go to trial—but quick thinking by Alvarez's lawyer, Federal Public Defender Christopher Carlin, pushed the case in a direction few of its kind go.

Carlin outlined his frustrations with the government's case in a fiery motion to suppress evidence that argued that Alvarez's Constitutional rights—which apply to everyone on U.S. soil, citizen or not—were violated through what he alleged was a "textbook warrantless non-consensual search and seizure."

To start, Carlin wasn't fully convinced by the government's pretext for the search of Alvarez's trailer. Records from the sheriff's office show that Deputy Sanchez received a call through dispatch around 10:20 p.m. for backup from Border Patrol on a possible break-in. Sanchez and the Border Patrol agent played phone tag for a while, and Sanchez relayed back to dispatch at midnight that he was headed to Candelaria, where he learned from a trio of Army personnel that the suspect "was a possible African American with a pistol."

The Border Patrol's own internal recordkeeping recalled that Agents Edgar Barraza and Marcos Rodriguez were assisting the Presidio County Sheriff's Office in conducting a "welfare check" after a "suspicious armed person" was spotted entering the trailer. "The presence of a gun-toting individual in a tiny unincorporated West Texas ranching community such as Candelaria is not only non-suspicious, it is trivial," Carlin wrote.

Presidio County Sheriff Danny Dominguez said Monday his deputy's actions and those of the Border Patrol agents were justified, since officers have to be extra careful any time a gun is reported. The remoteness and history of the town don't factor into their policymaking. "If somebody gets a call about a man going with a gun, we're going to handle it the same

way if it was Candelaria or here in Marfa," he said.

In the end, a child was left without a mother, and a woman was left in a jail cell facing an uncertain future. "The agents' lack of concern with leaving a teenager in his home without any adult family member in remote Candelaria, Texas, 50 miles away from the nearest services ... demonstrates exactly how concerned these agents were with the family's welfare," Carlin wrote.

Alvarez was poised to go to trial at the end of August, just over a week after she was arrested, but Judge Ronald C. Griffin granted a motion to dismiss with just hours on the clock. Then she all but vanished in the labyrinth of federal immigration databases. Court records show that son is now in Midland.

A silent town

Big Bend Sentinel traveled to Candelaria on Saturday to see if anyone in town would talk about how they feel about the recent detentions or provide more details on the arrests. The streets were empty, but one man found near his home said he didn't know anything.

A rough dirt and grass road at the edge of town leads to the old traditional river crossing. On the way to the crossing, an elderly man with a rough beard and straw cowboy hat was hiking toward Candelaria. He said he lived in San Antonio del Bravo and didn't recognize the names of Peña or Alvarez. On that Saturday, an armored U.S. Army vehicle sat perched on the edge of a hillside above Candelaria where wells and a waterstack supply the town.

A camouflaged man stood outside the vehicle staring into some type of binoculars at this reporter parked on a road below who also was peering back through a camera lens. A trip up a road to the top of the hill gave a closer look at the patrol, which was parked directly across the road from the graves of the late teacher Johnnie Chambers and her husband Boyd, who once served as a Presidio County commissioner.

A soldier in the passenger seat did not acknowledge a wave. Another soldier on the driver's side merely remained fixed on looking out at the horizon over the span of land on either side of the river, peering toward San Antonio del Bravo and the mountains beyond.

Things were quiet, but there was no doubt that times had changed.

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CROSSWORD

Edited by David Steinberg January 8, 2026

ACROSS

1 Dance version of a song, say
6 Vessel for frying
9 Uses a spatula while frying
14 Nice smell
15 Historic period
16 Goosebump-inducing
17 Italian fashion capital
18 Modern believers in many gods
20 Scratching post user (Note the last 3 letters of this answer + ...)
22 "Ancient grain" that's actually a seed (... the first 6 letters of this answer)
23 Part of a lowercase J
25 "___ that special?"
26 Treat rudely via phone (Last 3 letters + ...)
31 Canadian \$2 coin (... first 4 letters)
35 Vera jelly
36 Make more lean
38 Sphere
39 Web destination
40 Laughs extra-hard
41 "Moby-Dick" antihero

DOWN

42 Peg in a golf bag
43 Great delight
44 Toy that rides the wind
45 Don't spoil it! (Last 4 letters + ...)
47 Having drunk enough (... first 2 letters)
50 Drug cop
52 ___ after another
53 From California to New York, say
57 Horn in a racking
62 Squad with a spel (Last 5 letters + ...)
64 Slowly undermine (... first 2 letters)
65 Now, in Spanish
66 Name hidden in "A Star Is Born"
67 What Type 2 hair has
68 Sophia Wilson's American soccer grp.
69 Rx item
70 Exhausted DOWN

ACROSS

8 Osaka of tennis
9 "Don't be scared!"
10 Smoothly, musically
11 Tehran's country
12 Unit at a pub
13 Get-together, for short
19 Rigatoni and rotini
21 One-up
24 Big old fusses
26 Too much speed
27 Totally unfamiliar
28 "Duly ___"
29 "Oh, wow!"
30 Under, poetically
32 Very well pitched
33 Beyond annoyed
34 Receded
37 Pinkberry dessert, for short

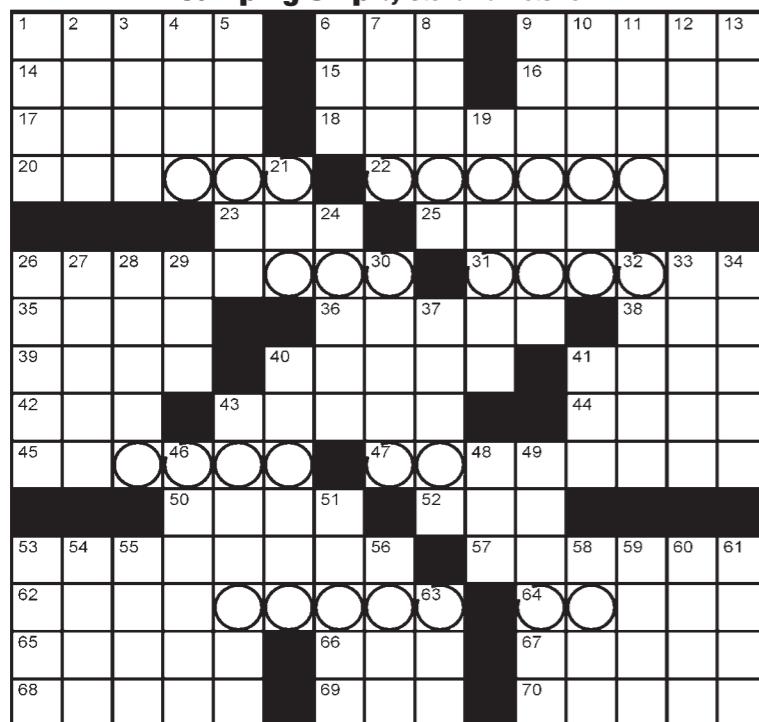
DOWN

40 Little kid before an alias
41 Letters
43 Chews on
46 Summer worker, perhaps
48 What makes you you
49 Gets more of a magazine
51 Irish coffee addition
53 Jacob's twin
54 Massage parlor sounds
55 Word before "down" or "dance"
56 Be bold
58 Snare, or a music genre
59 Zero, in tennis
60 Biblical paradise
61 Chillax
63 Not so hot, in slang

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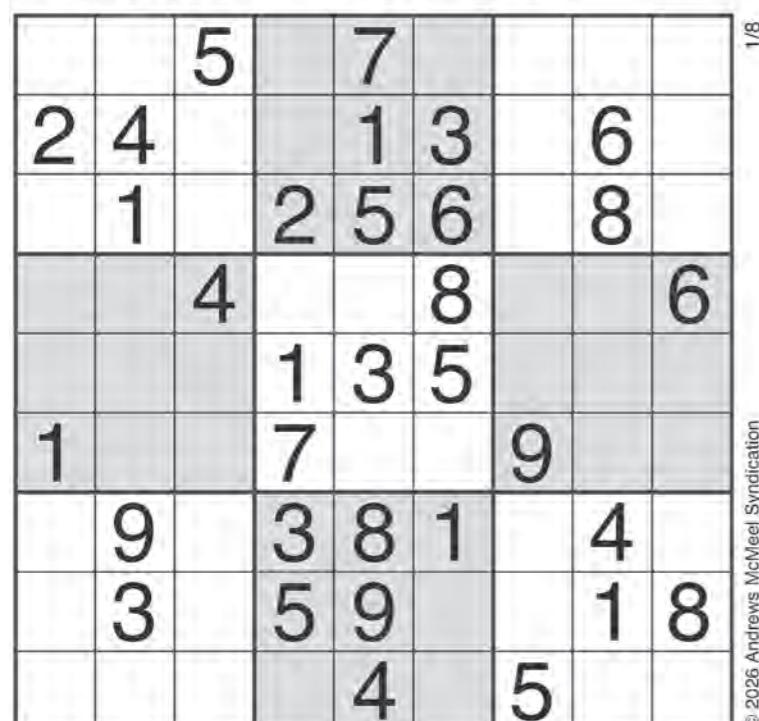


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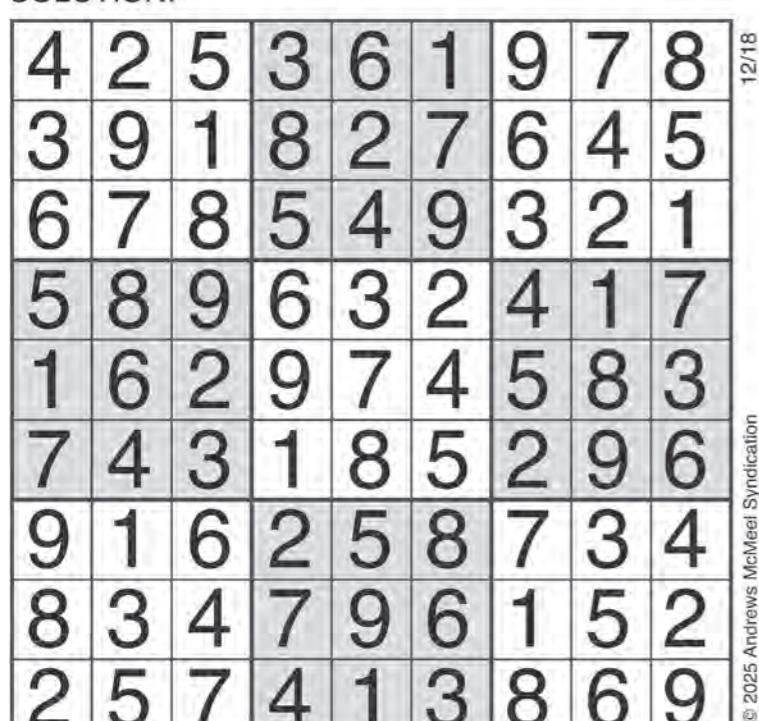
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10 am-11 am
Davis Mountains State Park
Fort Davis

Paint & Sip - Couples Edition

6 pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine

Friday January 9

Arch in the Park

9:30 am
Big Bend State Park
Terlingua

Live Music:
JT Stubbs & Jeremy

6:30 pm
Alcove Social, 211 E Holland Ave
Alpine

com. Please make sure to include your company name, company contact, phone number, and email address. All proposals are due on or before 01/05/2026 12:00 PM (CST).

CITY OF MARFA REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) SYSTEM

The City of Marfa, Texas is seeking proposals for the procurement of a full Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System for its water services, including water meters, AMI communications equipment, AMI software and implementation services, and the turnkey installation of the metering and network infrastructure. The project will be accomplished through current funds.

Interested individual(s) or firms should submit written proposals to Mayor Manuel Baeza via regular USPS mail, delivery service, or hand delivery to City Hall during business hours (8:00 am - 4:00 pm CST). More specific project and submittal requirements are contained in the full RFP, which can be found on the City of Marfa website at cityofmarfa.com. Sealed proposals must be received at the following address no later than 4:00 pm CST on Thursday, January 22, 2026 and should be clearly marked as follows:

City of Marfa
Full AMI System for Water Services
Attn: Mayor Manuel Baeza
113 S. Highland Avenue
P.O. Box 787 (USPS address)
Marfa, TX 79843

Proposals were originally requested on this project in February of 2024, but no action was taken by City Council to select a vendor due to a lack of funds. This is a rebid of the same project. Proposals will be opened on January 23, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. CST at Marfa City Hall. City Council is scheduled to take action on the proposed bids at a public meeting on January 29, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Casner Room at Marfa City Hall (address above).

The City of Marfa reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive any informalities or irregularities in the process, and to award a contract that is in the best interests of the City. The City will not be responsible in the event that the U.S. Postal Service or any other carrier system fails to deliver the proposal to the City by the given deadline above, or for any other delays in delivery. The City of Marfa is an equal opportunity employer.

PUBLIC NOTICE
FOR REAPPOINTMENT
OF UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

Midland/Odessa, Texas

The current term of the office of U.S. Magistrate Judge Ronald C. Griffin is due to expire on August 12, 2026. The U.S. District Court is required by law to establish a panel of citizens to consider the reappointment of U.S. Magistrate Judge Griffin to a new eight-year term.

Comments are invited from members of the bar and the public as to whether U.S.

Magistrate Judge Griffin should be recommended by the panel for reappointment by the Court.

A full public notice is posted on our web site at: <https://www.txwd.uscourts.gov/> Comments must be received no later than January 23, 2026.

Presidio ISD announces budget surplus, pay raises

By KATE BUBACZ

Presidio

At a special meeting on December 16, the Presidio ISD School Board revealed a budget surplus of \$1.2 million from the past year. The next evening, the board enthusiastically approved a one-time \$1,500 pay stipend for full-time employees in the district making less than \$150 a day.

Working with this data, Rubner did a rough analysis of the daily wages for staff and individuals on campus. She found that a significant percentage of employees in the district are making less than \$150 a day. To address this, Rubner proposed a one-time pay stipend of \$1,500 for at-will employees making less than \$150 a day, which will be broken into two payments in January and May.

"I appreciate the effort and that you're taking action on our concerns," Jocelyn Lopez told the board through tears. "I've been [an aide] here for 4 years. I left for a year because I could not afford daycare, and that was an issue for me."

Rubner thanked Lopez for raising her concerns through both official and unofficial channels. The \$1,500 stipend was based on Rubner's understanding of what the district could afford, as it was not included in the annual budget. With 252 employees in the district, Rubner concluded it was more effective to base the stipend on daily wage instead of salary, position or hours worked. The board will examine pay structures over the summer during the normal budget process.

Friends of Davis Library host annual meeting

Want to know more about what's happening at your library? Everyone is welcome to the annual open meeting of the Friends of the Jeff Davis County Library on Wednesday, January 14, at 5 p.m. Learn about the accomplishments of the past year, meet and greet its officers and hear plans for this coming year. Copies of the Annual Report will be available, and your input will be important to guide growth.

For details, phone the library at 432-426-3802.

Acosta released on bond in gun case

Pecos

district Judge David Counts denied their motion on December 10.

Also facing charges in the alleged smuggling operation and still in detention is Presidio resident Adalberto Jaquez Hinojosa, who is being held without bond. Both men have pleaded not guilty, and a trial is scheduled for March 16 in Pecos. Acosta did not return a request for comment, and his attorney, U.S. Public Defender Chris Carlin, declined to comment. Hinojosa's attorney, David Guinn of Lubbock, also declined to comment.

Federal prosecutors tried to deny Acosta's release on bond saying he was a flight risk and danger to the community, but U.S. Dis-

Bodyguards kidnapped

Continued from page 1

while that investigation is still underway.

In response, the state of Chihuahua canceled permits for a number of New Year's celebrations in an attempt to keep people safe.

Local media reported no further conflict between armed groups during heavy traffic at the Presidio Port of Entry just after the holiday.

Since the arrest of Sergio Menchaca Pizarro—a former leader of La Línea, a criminal organization active in the area between Aldama, Ojinaga and Manuel Benavides—in 2023, the typically-quiet border city has seen bursts of violence, mostly concentrated over a few bloody weeks in September 2024.

Menchaca was sentenced to life in prison in March 2025. In December, "El O4," a former La Línea boss who had become leader of a splinter group called Los Cabrera, was arrested in Aldama.

He was extradited to the United States, where he will face charges for his involvement in organized crime.

Presidio Mayor John Ferguson wished the best for his close colleagues across the river.

"Presidio and Ojinaga are inexorably linked and generally share good and bad times," he wrote in a statement on Facebook. "Right now, my hope is that we, the people of La Junta de los Ríos, will continue thinking and acting as one community, as we have so ably done over time immemorial."

OBITUARIES

Always ready to help kids with livestock

Born on March 28, 1960, Alen Ray Watley of Van Horn, Texas, died on October 16, 2025, after a prolonged battle with diabetes and associated ailments. He was surrounded by his loving family.

As a long-time local resident, Alen worked at multiple businesses in Culberson County. Initially he and his Dad, Ray Watley, operated Watley Tire Service as well as Watley Liquid Feed. Alen delivered feed to multiple ranches in the area. Lastly, he worked at Love's Travel Store for 19 years.

Alen was a lifelong supporter of the Culberson County 4-H and was a fair and beloved Little Britches judge. He was always happy and willing to help anyone in need of assistance with their livestock projects.

Alen was preceded in death by his father, Ray Watley; uncles, Mike and Jeff Welch; and aunt, Ramona Welch Brock.

Alen is survived by his mother, Rebecca Ann Welch Watley; brothers, Stewart, and Mark Watley (wife Pam); nieces and nephews, Danielle, Jackson, Garrette (wife Shelby), and April. Also, second cousin Travis Welch (wife Jenny) and children, Melanie, Travis Jr., and Wyatt.



A memorial service for Alen was held at the Van Horn Community Center on Jones Street in Van Horn on Saturday, December 20, 2025. All came to share Alen stories.

Funeral services were in care of Heritage Funeral Home of Van Horn, Texas.

Maria Granado lived a life of learning and educating

Maria Granado, a beloved wife, daughter, mother, and cherished friend, departed this world on December 16, 2025, in Odessa, Texas, at the age of 94. She was born on November 11, 1931, in Rincon de Rosos, Aguas Calientes, Mexico. Maria's life was a tapestry woven with her love for family, dedication to education, and her diverse interests that brought joy to those around her.

Her career as a state employee at Sul Ross State University in Alpine exemplified her commitment to the community. Maria was not only dedicated to her work but also to nurturing the minds of the younger generations. She took immense pride in teaching her grandchildren and neighborhood children Spanish, sharing with them the beauty and richness of her language and culture. Her love for children was evident in her interactions, and her patient, caring spirit influenced many lives.

Education was a lifelong pursuit for Maria. She completed her high school equivalency before successfully completing over 100 semester credit hours of college at Sul Ross State University. This achievement, alongside her passion for singing in the university choir, reflected her belief in the transformative power of learning and artistic expression.

Above all, Maria was known for her friendly and caring personality. She loved visiting and engaging in heartfelt conversations, leaving a lasting impression on everyone she met. Her warmth and kindness extended to her pets, who were also a source of joy throughout her life, and she had a special affinity for tending to her flowers, creating a vibrant and welcoming home.

Maria leaves behind a loving family who will forever cherish her memory. She is survived by: her daughters, Leticia G. Reyes, married to David Reyes; and Laura Slight, married to David Slight; and Lilia G. Náñez, married to Ignacio; as well as her son, Manuel C. Granado, married to Lydia. Maria also leaves behind seven grandchildren. They are Phillip and Stephen Reyes, Xavier and Michael Náñez, and Jasmine, Jeremy and Jaclyn Granado. And great-grandchildren, Evelina Náñez, Luka Isaiah Granado, Alicia Quiroz and Daniel Granado.

She is preceded in death by her two sons, Hector Holguin (Eva), Jesus Holguin (Annabel); her first grandson, Augustine Holguin; her father, Ramon Molinar; mother, Carolina Molinar; sisters, Aubina, Simona, Fe, Josefina, Juanita, Carolina; her twin brother, Faustino; brothers, Ramon, Florencio, and Jonas; Camilla, Monique, Hector Jr., Jesus Jr., Javier, Daniel, Victoria, Rozalia, Adela, and Vicente; 21 great-grandchildren, three great-great grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

She is also survived by a vast number of friends who considered her like their mother and grandmother because of her selfless way of helping even when she had so little. She truly endeared them and stole their hearts.

She quickly became a cher-



most Holy Rosary, culminating with a Mass at noon. The interment took place at Holy Angels Cemetery, where she was laid to rest, surrounded by those who love her.

As we remember Maria's legacy, we celebrate her kindness, her devotion to her family, and her unwavering belief in the power of love and education. She left an indelible mark on all who knew her, and her spirit will continue to inspire generations to come.

The family would like to thank the staff at Courtyards Memory Care and Heart to Heart Hospice for the support and wonderful care they provided to our mother.

Services have been entrusted to Alpine Memorial Funeral Home in Alpine, and gifts and condolences may be left by visiting www.alpinememorialfuneral-home.com. Donations in Maria's memory may be made to the Alpine Humane Society or to the Fine Arts Department at Sul Ross State University.

West Texas will echo with the sound of a musician

Tony Lujan was born on September 21, 1950, in Alpine, Texas, and passed away on December 11, 2025, in Midland, Texas. A beloved father, grandfather, and legendary musician, Tony lived a life defined by music, humor, and deep West Texas roots.

At the age of 17, Tony bought his first guitar for \$15—money he earned cutting grass. That guitar ignited a lifelong passion for music that would make him a fixture in West Texas for decades. Known by many, he was the greatest lead guitar player in the region. Tony's sound was unmistakable, heartfelt, and deeply connected to the places and people he loved.

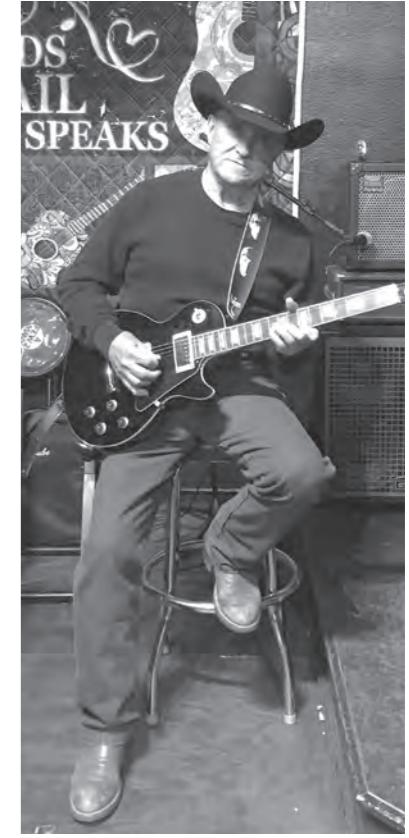
In the mid 1970s, Tony worked as a Licensed Vocational Nurse, caring for others at Big Bend Regional Medical Center. Later in life, he worked at a horse concession in Big Bend National Park, guiding tourists through the Chisos Mountains, where his love of horses and outdoors flourished.

Music, however, was Tony's true calling. Over the years, he played lead guitar with countless bands and musicians, crossing genres, borders, and generations.

He played in the choir at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church. His bands and collaborations included Rick Ruiz and A Few Too Many; Rio Gran with Flop Parsons; Terry Bullard and the Silver Bullet Band; Craig Carter and the Spur of the Moment Band; Mariachi de la Paz and Grupo de la Paz in Alpine; Mariachi Santa Cruz and Resonators with Presidio musicians; Los Aventureros of Alpine; Sabor Latino; Hypnotix; Breakdown; Backburner; Rebels Without Applause; Wrecks; Night Riders; Joe Jasper and His Horse Buddies; Butterfield Stagecoach and Chitlin Brothers with John Joe Cadena; Texas Twisters at Alamo Village in Brackettville; Glass Mountain Band with Charlie Bell & Robert Halpern; Tomas Vega y la Ultima Frontera; Wayne R. West and The Realistics; and many more.

Tony's music took him across the southwestern United States, down to Mexico and even Kingston, Jamaica. He recorded with Tommy DeVito of The Four Seasons in Las Vegas, who also served as a professional mentor. While in Jamaica, he had the unforgettable experience of meeting Ziggy Marley at his father's studio. Tony opened for Buck Owens at Alamo Village and crossed paths with Willie Nelson during the filming of Barbarosa at Big Bend National Park. He also performed a duet with author and musician Robert James Waller.

Tony influenced many aspiring artists growing up in Alpine and he was surrounded by lifelong friendships with musicians including Rick Ruiz, Michael Stevens, Charlie Bell, Martin Gra-



nado, Juan Brito, Craig Carter, Terry Bullard, Wayne West, Mole Molinar, Steve Terry, Donnie Ba-

son and countless others. Tony believed music was meant to be shared, enjoyed, and respected in all its forms. Though his final chord has been played, his music lives on—in every riff, every memory, and every place where someone stops to listen. West Texas will forever echo with his sound.

Tony is survived by his daughters, Jessica Lujan and Bella Lujan; and his grandsons, Gabriel Portillo, Jaxen Hill, and Austin Smith, who were the pride and joy of his life. He was preceded in death by his mother, Maria Lujan; his father, Ramon Lujan; and his brothers, Ramon Lujan and Frank Bustamante.

Services for Tony were held at Alpine Memorial Funeral Home Chapel on Friday, December 26, 2025, from noon to 5 p.m. The following day, Saturday, December 27, 2025, the Rosary took place at Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church beginning at 9:30 a.m. The funeral Mass followed at 10 a.m., also at Our Lady of Peace. Burial took place after the mass at Holy Angels Cemetery in Alpine, Texas.

Pallbearers for the service were Gabriel Portillo, Jaxen Hill, Austin Smith, Dusty Hill, Edward Lujan, Anthony Lujan and Michael Barela. Honorary pallbearers were Ramon "Kiki" Lujan, Gilbert Valenzuela, Tomas Valenzuela, Rick Ruiz, Hubert Castillo, Arturo Rivera and Gilbert Chavez.

Please submit obituaries by email to editor@bigbendsentinel.com. Or mail to the address on the opposite page. Copy received by Friday afternoon can be printed—for no charge—in the next issue.

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RON BAKER

Joe Ely, 1947-2025

VERY FEW musical collaborations have been as successful and long-lasting as the beloved Texas troubadour band The Flatlanders—Joe Ely, Jimmy Dale Gilmore, and Butch Hancock. Many Texans were saddened in December by the death of Joe Ely. “The world has lost one of its most beautiful voices,” said famous Texas singer-songwriter Patty Griffin.

Jimmy Dale Gilmore and Butch Hancock have deep connections to the Big Bend area, having lived and worked here for decades. The Flatlanders, all originally from the Texas Panhandle, are loved throughout the world, but never more than in Texas, where they played thousands of concerts.

Joe Ely had a long individual career with the Joe Ely Band, which opened for other great bands such as Linda Ronstadt, The Kinks, The Clash, Tom Petty, and The Rolling Stones.

In 2007 Joe was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the American Music Association.

One time, not so long ago, aimlessly strolling the River Walk in old San Antonio, there at the Arneson Amphitheater a free show starring Joe Ely and the legendary accordionist Joel Guzman was about to begin. Despite thousands of concerts over many decades, the music was so beautiful it stands out even today.

We have lost a beautiful voice.

—DON GARDNER

Gardner, a board member at Sentinel News Project, was a founder of the Pacifica radio station in Houston, KPFT

OUR WATER MATTERS

County's water projects move forward

BACK in the fall of 2021, Presidio County embarked on a journey to identify the many water and wastewater needs of communities throughout the county in order to then seek the necessary funding from the Texas Water Development Board to address them. The TWDB has a variety of different programs that provide infrastructure funding, such as the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT), the State Revolving Funds, and the Economically Distressed Areas Program (EDAP), among others.

In early 2022, Presidio County was preselected to apply for EDAP funding for eligible projects. EDAP provides funding for first-time water and wastewater service and to address longstanding environmental violations related to existing infrastructure. The county ultimately received about \$3.3 million in grant funding and \$1.3 million in the form of a loan to design new water systems for the colonias of Las Pampas and Shafter. The EDAP package also included funding to design and build a new sewer system for the Fort D.A. Russell area of Marfa and to design and build a new water and wastewater system for the East Heights neighborhood of Marfa located between highway 90 and the railroad tracks just east of Alamito Creek.

One would intuitively assume—based on how economies work—that funding for economically distressed areas is intended to address the needs of an entire economically distressed area. But, in fact, EDAP funds can only be used to provide service to existing, inhabited residences within such an area.

Any commercial, public, or other nonresidential structure is ineligible for service with EDAP funding. If you haven't built a structure on your property because you haven't had access to water, your property is ineligible. If no one lives in your structure because it has no water, your structure is ineligible. This requirement was particularly exasperating when applied to the East Heights and Las Pampas projects where owners have established very few residences due to the lack of water. The engineers and I, however, were able to identify enough residences in each area to maintain the eligibility of the projects.

The EDAP process for the design of water and wastewater systems involves four phases: Category A, which is an eligibility assessment to determine economic and residency eligibility; Category B, which assesses existing facilities and documents any problems; Category C, which identifies, develops, and analyzes alternatives in order to ultimately develop a preferred solution; and Category D, in which the project's implementation plan is finalized. In addition to the criteria that a design must meet to complete these categories, each one of

these projects involves unique challenges.

The Fort D.A. Russell project, for example, will provide a new sewer line to the houses on Officers Row as well as the buildings inside and adjacent to the old fort. Because the foundation itself sits at the lowest elevation within the project area, a lift station will be necessary to collect and convey the waste from this portion of the system to an existing manhole on Madrid Street. Another potential complication involves the location of the lift station itself just south of the historic Artillery Sheds that house Donald Judd's 100 untitled works in mill aluminum. But thanks to smooth collaboration between the county and the Chinati Foundation, a site was able to be selected that will not interfere with existing structures or detract from the landscape.

The design for Las Pampas encompasses a water line that will run along the east side of Highway 90 from the Junta de los Rios standpipe to a water storage tank to be constructed about 6 miles to the north. The line will also include two pump stations to push the water uphill to the storage tank that will then supply the surrounding residences by gravity. While the line itself will be located in the highway right-of-way, the pump stations and storage tank will require acquisition of private land along the route. Approaching those landowners has been agonizingly slow because of the difficulty in definitively determining who owns the land. Fortunately, my own detective work enabled me to identify the owner of the storage tank site, and Presidio-based surveyor John Kennedy has been working to locate the owners of the two pump stations.

The most complicated of the EDAP projects has been the design of a new water system for Shafter. The town's hydrogeology is notoriously complex, and the topography of the area poses huge challenges to the workability of a gravity-fed system. After many false starts, a suitable parcel with a willing owner was finally identified. The current design envisions a production well to be drilled to a depth of at least 1,000 feet into the Mina Grande Aquifer, an unclassified freshwater aquifer beneath the town. A water tower will be constructed nearby on the same parcel which the owner has agreed to donate.

At this point, all projects, except for Shafter, have completed Category C and are nearing completion of their environmental assessments. The Shafter project has completed Category B, and its environmental assessment is in the early stages. Once the Las Pampas and Shafter designs have completed Category D, the county can pursue construction funding. The Marfa projects will proceed to bidding and construction after they complete Category D, possibly as early as next summer.

—TREY GERFERS



Las Pampas residents Jose Acosta and Luis Felipe Lujan fill up water tanks that are delivered to the Colonia.

ART

Sentinel



Marfa Studio Arts founder Malinda Beeman's "Desert Grasses."

Mustn't the show go on?

By R. PARKS

Shoshannah White and Andrea Caretto join forces on Ghost Keepers

GHOST KEEPERS, a two-person show at Rule Gallery opened on December 13 and is scheduled to continue until February 7. Caretto is a sculptor whose works on display are vertical pillars, three molded from plaster and three from concrete.

White is a photographer who primarily works through the medium of photograms, and is displaying an ongoing body of work which, thrillingly, involves cooperation with scientists and their cutting-edge research facilities to study what stratifications of ice can tell us about our world (such as the National Ice Corp Foundation in Lakewood Colorado, where White works with the materials directly). Immediately, the connection is clear. We are ushered into a realm of the imagination, where the immensity of deep time is activated through the motif of geological stratification. However, to access the largesse of the respective works themselves, the dutiful viewer may be obliged to ponder the differences, see this connection as a point of departure rather than one of arrival.

Photograms are a form of direct photography; the French Surrealist Man Ray was a principal innovator in the early 20th century. It involves placing the object directly on the emulsive surface and capturing the impression left. Photography without a camera: a kind of magic. White has upped the ante from the age of Man Ray. Her photograms document exact sections of ice core specimens *in situ* within the facilities where they are scientifically studied. The delicate striations on her photograms expertly take advantage of the affordances of the device.

Here the sensuality of art and reality of science exist in a kind of awesomely intimidating inextricability. An explicit exemplar, which could be recommended as a starting point, is *Ice Core Sample, South Pole Ice Core with Volcanic Ash: Depths 1317.01 - 1318.03, 2023*. The title itself is evidence that White is a hard-core literalist. It is a title anchored by facts. Five photograms are assembled vertically, and each captures a section of the ice core at 1:1 scale. But is White only a hard-core literalist? I think not! The work appears to my eye as a partnership between the principles of hard-core literalism and the spirit of hard-core romanticism. Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich extended his oeuvre of the romantic landscape to a series of iceberg landscapes, much loved by artists. Hard not to imagine there is a winking nod to that here. In works like *Big Trail Lake Water #4* and *Big Trail Lake Water #5*, White shifts the photogram object to lake water at sites where permafrost is being studied at a facility in Fairbanks, Alaska. Here, White's literalism is playfully obscure, as the photogram is not only a record of the lake water as artifact, but a kind of romantic intervention into the object of study; the artist disturbs the surface of the water so that bubbles appear.

Caretto's sculptures are also informed by geological stratification. I was fortunate enough to ask her about the land's influence on her. She lives in Colorado, and often drives by a distinct land form known colloquially as "The Hogback." In order to access the largesse of Caretto's work, I recommend a mindset shift. Here the motif of geological stratification is primarily a point of departure. When I spoke to her, the artist admitted that the tragic dimension of Alzheimer's runs through her family line and informed the gravitas of this body of work. As I studied them, I started to imagine the works as a kind of anti-memory palace. (The concept of memory palace as a device was popularized as a methodology to strengthen and spatialize memories one might not be able to retain otherwise.)

Don't be deceived by the delicate pastel palette shared across all her sculptures. All is not safe here; mementos, found objects, cherished belongings are



Bordenave sets up his display of tomato paintings.

all revealed at risk to the crushing weight of time. Within her sculpture *Perfection*, an image of a family game, itself titled "Perfection," peaks through one layer deposit, while mangled bits of Barbie doll parts poke out a couple layers above. I kept thinking about Christopher Nolan's 2010 blockbuster *Inception*, where memories can be both recovered and planted! Caretto's pillars as structural motifs appear to function as a counter-theme to the relentless chaos of memory: strength.

MSA hosts celebratory group show

In May 2025, MSA celebrated its 25th anniversary. The project is the brainchild of painter and printmaker Malinda Beeman. The non-profit MSA gallery space on San Antonio Street has been linked to its fundraising program to provide art education to Marfa Elementary School. Thirty percent of proceeds from gallery sales support the funding of Sites Studio, its art education program. The remaining 70% of sales go directly to artists.

MSA Teacher's Group Show is installed on the west wall: Chelsea Quinlan, Marcela Rodriguez, Suzanne McLeod, and Katy Baldock. On the opposing wall is a painting by Melinda Beeman herself titled *Dawn Grasses*. Hard not to see the care Beeman takes to model light falling on desert grasses as linked to the overall care she has taken to sustain this important educational program. Quinlan employs the automotive material "Bondo"—used for automotive repair—to build up complexly congealing impasto surfaces. To study her paintings is to become enmeshed in its otherworldly details, their crevices and fractal micro-macro crystallizations.

Four paintings are on view. Of the two flanking works, one is circular, and the other is irregularly so. Rodriguez's works employ panel structures from comics as a formal device. The dividing panel enframements become sites of action and morphological transformation. Thousand Panel Spider depicts two panels, with a symmetrical bisecting division. Once the line passes from the first panel to the second, a complex radial pattern emerges, invoking a sense of explosion, or a transportive hole, while remaining ambiguous.

McLeod offers up a study of the local water tower as a kind of abstract sign of Marfa in three works, cementing their meme-like quality, which state directly in each: Marfa. Baldock's ceramic samples are scaled at domino size. To me, the culminating effect is one of Bauhaus-esque study artifacts. Maybe for a larger speculative design taxonomic project? Three sets of four artifacts are roughly the same size. The background the forms are adhered to is exacting in its coloration and surface quality, as are the wooden frames.

Curtis Bordenave depends on sunny days

The ongoing project of Curtis Bordenave III depends on sunny days. Given those necessary conditions, he sets up a table of small paintings across from the Hotel St. George. For this tabletop project, he exclusively presents paintings of tomatoes. Legendary conceptual artist David Hammons famously sold rows of snowballs on a city sidewalk. Bordenave brings an adjacently peculiar enigmatic X factor to his own set-up. He recently exhibited a serial grid of variably drawn travelers, each holding an iconic walking stick with the bundle behind the back associated with the term "hobo," a term Bordenave himself declines to use. His exhibition *Bright Tomorrows Out Of Dark Yesterdays*, works of charcoal on paper, at Mesa Pictures closed mid-November.

Club Nowhere: Artist flea markets, curated rooms

ADDITIONALLY, Alex Kamelhair and Colin Waters are artists utilizing the table as a means of display, through Club Nowhere's artist flea market programming. Waters is a ceramicist, recently working with ceramic ware. One of such ceramic forms that may catch your eye is derived formally in part from standard plastic crates but hybridized with a pattern design of round holes he just happened to notice on a chair seat at the laundromat in Alpine in 2021.

Kamelhair is an artist metalsmith, whose works at Club Nowhere are all forged. Material ranges from steel, to some copper iron and stainless steel. Their surface qualities invoke a terrestrial sense of the power and density of the various metals, at the scale of the hand, and their functional uses within that scale.

Gallery director Chris Ramming has been iterating this project in several different incarnations. From 2018 to 2023, Casita Bar on San Antonio Street was the site of its creative incubation. After Casita Bar closed in 2023, the exhibit became transient again, migrating to a friend's space in El Paso. Finally, it reached an apotheosis at the current address at 401 South Highland Street when it donned a new moniker, House of Christmas for the holiday. During an era when many people don't know how they feel about Christmas, and seem to lose the muscle memory required to animate any holiday at all, Ramming went full tilt-boogie with his carefully curated rooms. One room was dedicated to holiday films, another room to a carousel of nostalgia-infused photographic slides. The pervasive feeling was guttural, you reside in the realm of someone else's real memories.