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**Spring/Summer
Edition 2022**



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Community Events • Spring/Summer 2022

Drive-In Movie Night Edgewood

It's bad enough when two gunslingers fall in love with the same gal, but when they fall in love with the same horse, look out! That's just part of the story in the 1943 Western tale of Billy the Kid *The Outlaw* starring Jane Russell, showing one night only Saturday, June 11 at Wildlife West Nature Park (87 N. Frontage Rd., Edgewood) as part of a drive-in fundraiser for New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch. There will be food trucks, adoptable horses and games as well at this 20th-anniversary celebration fundraiser. Tickets start at \$25 per vehicle and gates open at 7:15pm. For more information and tickets to this all-ages event, see wnrcr.org/drivein-movie.

Estancia Valley Ranch Rodeo Moriarty

Bucking broncos et al. will be on hand at this year's Estancia Valley Ranch Rodeo (41 Heritage Ln., Moriarty) on Friday, July 22 and Saturday, July 23 with gates opening at 5pm and the rodeo kicking off at 6:30pm. In addition to catching some prime local rodeo action both nights, be sure to stick around Friday for the Brandon Saiz Band, come early for the pre-rodeo show Saturday with the High Desert Playboys at 5pm and stay after the clowns have put away the barrels for the Teague Brothers to wrap up the weekend. Tickets are \$10 on Friday and \$15 on Saturday, with kids under 16 getting in free. For more information and tickets to this all-ages event, see eastmountainrodeo.com.

Sunflower Festival Mountainair

Turning towards the sun and wrapping up the summer is Mountainair's 2022 Sunflower Festival (105 W Broadway, Mountainair) on Saturday, August 27 from 10am to 4pm. In addition to the arts, crafts and food vendors, there will be several bands and a sunflower hat contest. Guaranteed summertime sunflower-related fun for the whole family in Downtown Mountainair. For more information on this free, all-ages event, see manzanomountainartcouncil.org.

On the Cover



Horse trainer Colton Smyth with Poppy at the Walkin N Circles Ranch.

Photo by Clarke Condé.

CORRECTION: On page 26 of our Fall/Winter 2021 issue, we incorrectly identified a photo of a white-necked raven, a species native to east Africa, as a Chihuahuan raven, which is native to New Mexico.

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Letter from the Editor

Clarke Condé

Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of *East Mountain Living*. Spring, especially this one on the heels of a pandemic, is a great time for renewal and here at *East Mountain Living* we are doing a bit of renewing ourselves. I hope you like what we have done.

First off, there is a new editor at *East Mountain Living*. That's me, I'm Clarke Condé. I've worked in publishing for over 30 years, including holding the post as the last Photographer in addition to Arts and Literature Editor at the now-defunct *Weekly Alibi* in Albuquerque. I am thrilled to get to dive into the stories of the East Mountains with both camera and pen in hand.

Fortunately, retiring editor Rena Distasio left me a magazine in stellar shape with a good crew of knowledgeable, local writers capable of telling the stories important to the people of the East Mountains. Regular readers will see *East Mountain Living* continue to mirror the ever-evolving East Mountains communities as we have always strived to do. My thanks go out to Rena. I hope I can do as well as you always did with *East Mountain Living*.

In this issue I am particularly proud to feature the continued work of our local bird expert, Tom Smylie, and his article about falcons. I was able to spend a chilly morning out with Tom photographing his incredible bird, Jean-Luc, as it flew by my camera at speed. It was a thrill to see such a magnificent creature in action and then have him perch on my hand. I can remember several times when I was just trying to do my job as a photographer when I was given the bird, but this time I actually appreciated it.

I was also able to spend some time at the Walkin N Circles Ranch learning about the great work they do rescuing and rehabilitat-

ing horses right here in Stanley, NM. Not only did I get to meet some of the volunteers and hear what they do, but I got to spend a clear blue morning photographing plenty of horses like the one you'll find on this issue's cover. Each horse has its own personality and getting to know them, however briefly, was a treat. I hope to be able to spend more mornings like that actually out in the mountains (rather than behind a computer screen) shooting more photographs for the pages of *East Mountain Living* in future issues.

Finally, I got a chance to spend some time at a place known to the people of the East Mountains for over a century, the Mine Shaft Tavern. Not my first visit by a long shot, but I wanted to share with the visitors that pick up *East Mountain Living* a few things about this historic part of Madrid, as well as remind locals that the Mine Shaft is back at it with the same pre-pandemic music, food and drinks that locals have grown to expect. If you haven't stopped by in a while, do yourself a favor and make a trip over. It's a comfortable return to normalcy that won't disappoint.

Finally, let me invite everyone in the East Mountains to contact me with their events and story ideas. I know there is a lot going on this spring and summer, but I am already thinking about our next issue coming out this fall. What is happening around the holidays that I should not miss this year? It might seem like a long way off now, but it will be here sooner than you think. I can be reached by email at eastmountainlivingmagazine@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Have a great summer!

Clarke Condé
Editor-in-chief

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If you have an idea for a story or would like to write for us, please contact Clarke Condé at eastmountainlivingmagazine@gmail.com.

The information provided in *East Mountain Living* is intended to inform the reader about activities and events in the East Mountain communities. While every effort is made to verify the facts published, NDP does not hold itself, any advertiser, or any contributor responsible for any error or any possible consequences thereof.

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Jeanne Drennan

Jeanne has lived in the East Mountains with her family since 2004. She is an occupational therapist, women's health counselor, freelance writer, and author of the book, *Live Well. Be Well, 14 Healing Habits to Extraordinary Wellness*. She loves blogging about health and wellness and making organic herbal remedies whenever she can.

Mike Smith

Mike is the author of *Towns of the Sandia Mountains*, and of the forthcoming *June: Reading a City*, available soon from Sweat Drenched Press (UK).

Tom Smylie

Tom and his wife, Cherie, have lived in Edgewood since his retirement in 1994 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Assistant Regional Director. A graduate of the University of New Mexico, he has worked in wildlife education and research for most of his life. As an avid falconer, he conducts educational programs with live raptors at various organizations, including Wildlife West in Edgewood, and continues his 50-year affiliation with the Peregrine Fund in Boise, Idaho.

Faerl Marie Torres

Faerl has an MFA in Creative Writing and a passion for white t-shirts, turquoise jewelry, and enjoying the outdoors near her home in the mountains east of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her fiction has appeared in reviews, journals, and anthologies and has won numerous awards. Torres works as a freelance writer and stay-at-home mom.

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Howard Elam

A Villain of the Past

BY MICHAEL FARRELL SMITH

While researching and writing my nonfiction photo-history book *Towns of the Sandia Mountains* in 2005, I became aware of some interesting and much-evidenced Civil War history that had happened in the Sandia Mountains, around Tijeras and San Antonio. In San Antonio, near where today sits a Chevron station, there is a round stand of silver poplars, tall trembling gray-barked trees growing exactly where, in the 1860s and after, there was a pond frequented by animals, locals and travelers. Among the travelers were Confederate soldiers, on their way to an embarrassing burned-supply-wagon defeat at Glorieta, and on their way from a brutal battle at Valverde, and who had stopped in San Antonio for some days

of rest, as a casual occupying force, one soldier killing himself in San Antonio to escape the pain of his injuries; another, A.B. Peticolas, making a sketch of that village, including its church (which would later burn down), acequias, houses and distinctive mountains.

The soldiers in this camp were fighting for the Confederacy, on the side of slavery, but were probably a more piteous sight than a hateful one, many unable to buy uniforms, and dressed in rags. And with such history come later transformations: there are whole books, for instance, not about Billy the Kid, but about his subsequent evolving representations in culture. Sometimes the most interest-

The thought of this heedless, nihilist character once intrigued me, as if he was the protagonist in a story like *Catch Me If You Can*, but the more I learned about Howard Elam, the less I liked him. For instance, two people who knew him insisted to me that people had thought Elam's wife was mentally disabled, but her behaviors that had made people think that were actually the symptoms of Elam's serious abuse. Also, the guy was a textbook grave robber. He just straight-up looted countless Native American graves.

ing thing about something is how it continues to exist even after it doesn't. For instance, this Civil War campsite, where gray-uniformed young and old men once sat by a pond and a fire, has been mentioned in several ghost stories over the years, including one repeated at least twice in local print media.

It seems two friends from Moriarty were driving home from a bar late one night in the 1970s, back when North 14 was much narrower, when they allegedly saw an entire outfit of Confederate soldiers camping right there, with their horses, eating by campfire light. The two reportedly freaked out but drove on and claimed to only later find out about the area's history.

Judge Gives Elam 21-Year Sentence For Bilking Men

By Susanne Burks

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Arvil Howard Elam II was sentenced Friday to 21 years in prison for his December conviction of fraud for bilking five men out of money and valuables for fake treasure hunts and artifacts.

However, state District Judge Pat Murdoch, said he "will consider a sizable reduction" in the sentence in three weeks if Elam makes an effort to pay restitution to his victims and catalogs historical sites in New Mexico that he has changed.

Retired state historian Myra Ellen Jenkins testified Friday that Elam "diminished" New Mexico's historical sites by adding fake artifacts and removing real artifacts from them.

Elam, 49, of Albuquerque, faced standard sentences totaling 31½ years for his Dec. 19 conviction of nine counts of fraud and one count of attempted tax evasion. Murdoch arrived at the 21 years by running some of the sentences consecutively and some concurrently.

Defense attorney James Toulouse said he plans to appeal the conviction and sentence. The judge imposed a \$30,000 appeal bond and said Elam must go to prison if it is not posted within three weeks.

Meanwhile, Elam faces repeat offender charges that could add mandatory years to his sentence.

Prosecutors alleged during a two-week trial that Elam defrauded the five men in 1980-86 by taking them on expeditions that turned up fake treasures. He then charged them for subsequent expeditions, as well as for some of the bogus treasures found.

Witnesses testified that Elam met most of his victims through church activities. One witness testified that the men lost a total of more than \$82,500 in cash and valuables.

Assistant Attorney General Alex Valdez, claiming "punishment is clearly called for," asked Friday that Elam be sentenced to at least nine years in prison.

Valdez also said Elam might flee and asked that he be immediately sent to prison.

However, Toulouse presented witnesses, including Elam's wife and father and two ministers, who testified Elam is not a flight risk.

Murdoch, before imposing the sentence, said a review of his trial notes and a pre-sentence report showed Elam had damaged his church, his family and the state.



Arvil H. Elam II

This 1987 clipping from the Albuquerque Journal provides some details of Howard Elam's crimes, along with his mugshot.

Then they really freaked out.

Collectors scouring the area over the decades searching for bullets and Civil War miscellany have found quite a few items. At least one conman, Howard Elam, was known to "salt" San Antonio-area sites — including along that long hill between Tijeras and the old Cedar Crest Resort, between North 14 mile markers 0 and



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Silver poplars now stand just off the North 14 where Confederate soldiers once stood. Elam "salted" sites like this with fabricated artifacts. Photo by Clarke Condé.

2, near where there's a fortified modern utility shed on the road's east side, with artifacts bought in Virginia or Alabama. Bullets, buttons and even a cannon.

I remember first hearing about Elam from a local man from an old area family who was upset that because of this one dishonest actor, active here for just six years, he could never be sure which parts of his family's collection were historical Sandia Mountain artifacts, and which were from some Southern store's Civil-War-debris bargain bin, or even fake. I heard about Elam again from the late author Don E. Alberts, who wrote *Rebels on the Rio Grande: The Civil War Journal of A.B. Peticolas* and who Elam once tried to con. Alberts also told me that, at one point, Elam was a used-car salesman.

The thought of this heedless, nihilist character once intrigued me, as if he was the protagonist in a story like *Catch Me If You Can*, but the more I learned about Howard Elam, the less I liked him. For instance, two people who knew him insisted to me that people had thought Elam's

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Continued from previous page

wife was mentally disabled, but her behaviors that had made people think that were actually the symptoms of Elam's serious abuse. Also, the guy was a textbook grave robber. He just straight-up looted countless Native American graves.

Born in 1937 to a poor white family in Oklahoma, Arvil Howard Elam II attended Albuquerque's Highland High School in the early 1950s, won second place in 1953 in a contest for his display of Native American arrowheads, and, in the 1960s, worked giving tours of tribally sacred Chaco Canyon, probably the last person who ever should.

Elam began selling and buying historic books, married twice and had a long con going on in which he and his second wife Linda stole thousands of priceless irreplaceable historic documents from the University of New Mexico, at least once walking in disguised as a couple looking to research their ancestors and walking out with Linda looking nine-months-pregnant when she hadn't looked pregnant walking in, leaving all the papers remaining purposefully shuffled in confusing disarray, so no one could easily see anything miss-



The remains of Fort Craig, an important outpost during the American Civil War, stand in Socorro County, NM. The presence of historical sites like these lent credence to Elam's various cons.

ing. Whole collections vanished behind them. Original Spanish territorial proclamations from the 1700s. Rare Penitente artifacts, including crosses, drawings and alabado hymnals – valuable history, now damaged, stripped of context or completely destroyed and lost forever, thanks to Howard Elam.

Elam was eventually sent to prison but was released early because his wife was sick and the court thought that a hardship. Remorseless, he continued to make the news for a variety of disreputable doings including trading stolen papers for guns. Elam's notorious six-year-long con, which he called the New Mexico Museum Supply and Exploration Company, involved salting sites around central New Mexico and elsewhere with stolen or completely manufactured artifacts. Often he would recruit his victims from Hoffmantown

Baptist Church down in the Northeast Heights of Albuquerque. He would take them out as part of an elaborate set-up involving newly-discovered old maps, lore, legends and even star charts, where they would find a cache of treasure, rune-carved stones, Civil War memorabilia and so on, sometimes including seemingly gold, seemingly old, crosses which he had actually made using molds and a cheap gold-like alloy.

Elam kept this scam going long enough, along with many others, until five of his marks compared notes, and on February 26th, 1986, New Mexico state investigators raided his house, discovering a trapdoor in his bedroom that led to the remains of more-than 150 human beings right under his Northeast Heights home, as well as many stolen artifacts and documents. 🐾

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The Mine Shaft Tavern

The weathered wood exterior of Madrid's own Mine Shaft Tavern makes for a thematic entrance.

Madrid's oasis for a hot afternoon

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CLARKE CONDÉ

Much has been said about the Mine Shaft Tavern in Madrid over the years, but those that have been there before know this place is worth revisiting. Locals know the stories (having crafted many of them themselves) filled with miners and ghosts, bikers and dogs, floods and fires. If you ask nicely, someone will likely share one with you at the bar. The Mine Shaft is as much a place for locals as it is a destination for visitors. What it is not is a Santa Fe mockup of what a bar in New

Mexico should look like. The Mine Shaft Tavern is a real place.

The Mine Shaft is cool and dark. There is a well-earned patina of use that runs from the wooden floors to the bar top and back up onto the small indoor stage. On a hot day it is an oasis. On a cold day, Madrid's hearth. The pool room by the door is classic and comfortable, with only one table but an invitation to linger for one more game. Outside and up the ramp the narrow hallway leads from the tavern to the cantina and the large patio space that overlooks the street. The space hosts bands during the warmer months, with comfortable tables and a relaxed atmosphere. A perfect spot to while away an afternoon on a vague pretense of keeping an eye out for

friends that might be joining coming up the road.

As the story goes, the original bar was built in 1895 and burned down on Christmas Day in 1944. Rebuilt soon after and continuing to endure, the Mine Shaft can now add pandemic lockdowns to its list of challenges met as it stands ready for a spring filled with returning tourists and touring bands. Whether regulars or first-timers, visitors can always expect to find a cozy place to spend a cool afternoon. On the menu are good food, cold drinks and a bit of music.

To be clear, the Mine Shaft is a bar and they have bar food. Burgers made with local beef and assorted sandwiches are a mainstay, but they can rustle up a pretty decent salad or two as well, the



The Mad Chile Cheeseburger is not to be missed at the Mine Shaft Tavern.

one with Wagyu steak being of particular note. Maybe try the fried green chile as an appetizer if you are looking for adventure.

I went for the Mad Chile Burger which is offered in Angus, Wagyu, buffalo (the animal, not the spicy kind named after a city) and veggie varieties. Chile fans will not be disappointed with the flavor, while

The Mine Shaft can now add pandemic lockdowns to its list of challenges met as it stands ready for a spring filled with returning tourists and touring bands. Whether regulars or first-timers, visitors can always expect to find a cozy place to spend a cool afternoon.

those out-of-towners should fear not, but rather embrace our state's vegetable. If new to the thing this is a great place to start. The Mine Shaft's Mad Chile Burger is an exemplar of a proper New Mexico green chile cheeseburger.

Continued on next page



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The Mine Shaft claims to have the longest stand-up bar in New Mexico. I'm not sure if anyone has gone around the state measuring bars to substantiate that claim, but it seems plenty long to me. At least, there were no complaints when I was last there.

They have cold beer (a dozen or so locals on tap, with domestics and imports in bottles) and fresh margaritas, some served, as expected, with green chile. Again, out-of-towners will soon catch on to the fact that New Mexicans put green chile pretty much anywhere they can, even cocktails. I went with what seemed most appropriate at the time, rye whiskey.

Let me also say, you can expect exceptional service from the bartenders at the Mine Shaft. I once turned up on Derby

LEFT: Rye Whiskey is a staple at the Mine Shaft Tavern, along with plenty of bar space to enjoy it.

BELOW: Pool is worth a shot at the Mine Shaft Tavern.





ABOVE: Choices at the Mine Shaft.

RIGHT: Popular East Mountain favorites The High Desert Playboys perform at the Mine Shaft Cantina's outdoor stage.



Day several years ago with a bag full of mint from my garden and had the barkeep render me a first-rate mint julep just in time to catch the race from a barstool. It's hard to go wrong with that.

It might seem at first glance that you are in for both kinds of music (Country and Western) at the Mine Shaft, but the live music lineup strays well beyond those confines. That said, whatever you find on

stage when you visit, you are not going to be accosted by big amps and grinding noise. There will be someone playing songs, not just some guy yelling on stage, every weekend.

When the place is band-free, you are more likely to hear Patsy Cline falling to pieces than the latest pop tune with a Nashville twist. They have done well to keep the music classic, relaxing and

leaning towards the kind of Country music you could probably sing along to. I've not tried to do so myself, but I have seen it done.

In short, the Mine Shaft delivers as it appears without putting on airs. It is nothing fancy, but with no simple comfort not provided. Expect to leave wishing you had stayed longer and find yourself in the future making plans to return. 🐿️



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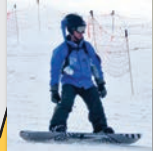
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542

55

41

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Shorty's Bar-Be-Cue, pictured in early spring, ready to get back to business in May.

Shorty's Returns


A Moriarty favorite is back with the broaster

STORY AND PHOTO BY CLARKE CONDÉ

Shorty's Bar Be Cue in Moriarty is back May 4 after a longer-than-expected closure, with a spruced-up dining room, new kitchen improvements and a few new additions to their popular menu. Owner Leanne Tapia says, "We look forward to seeing everybody. We've missed all of our customers, family and friends."

Serving good food to the East Mountain community is a family tradition with Tapia. Her father Mario diGesu ran Mario's in Cedar Crest for years. Customers will find their favorites like Shorty's Bar

Be Cue nachos have moved onto the lunch menu. In addition, Tapia points to Shorty's broasted chicken. "A lot of people don't know what that is," Tapia says. "It's fried under pressure so there is no fat."

Tapia and crew look forward to another great year with the same hours (Wednesday through Saturday, 11am to 7pm) as well as celebrating their 27th anniversary this September. For the latest updates on Shorty's Bar Be Cue, see their website at shortys66bbq.com or find them on Facebook. 



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Saving Horses in the East Mountains

The New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CLARKE CONDÉ

The New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch begins at the sharp bend in the road and continues on for about 30 acres of fairly flat land out in Stanley, New Mexico. On that land, 40 horses (give or take) at a time have found a temporary home to get their lives back under their feet. Some have come to the ranch having been abandoned. Some neglected. Some harmed, mentally or physically. It is awful if you think about it, but you don't really think about it when you are out at the Walkin N Circles Ranch. You just think about how the horses are doing now and where they are going to find their forever homes.

Lauri Michael is the board president and my guide for my visit to the ranch. As we wind through the stables and paddocks, she introduces me to each of the horses by name and gives me a bit of their back story. The organization is run primarily by volunteers with a few dedicated full-time staff, from the trainers all the way down to the folks that muck out the stables. One of the largest horse rescues in the state, Walkin N Circles Ranch is not a sanctuary, the ranch is a place for horses to get better after trauma and find a new, better home. Last year, 38 horses passing through the ranch did just that.

"Horses never forget trauma," explains Executive Director Larry Smyth. The horses that come to the ranch are as-

Continued on next page



ABOVE: Poppy heads to her forever home with her adoptive horseperson Beverly.

RIGHT: The sign marks the entrance to the Walkin N Circles Ranch in Stanley, New Mexico, where as many as 40 horses at a time find a temporary home.



Pinto in action at the Walkin N Circles Ranch, as horse trainer Colton Smyth looks on.



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Continued from previous page

essed for their individual needs and then begin the process of training to get them to the point where they can be adopted out successfully. But the training is not simply for the horses. Horse people come from all kinds of different backgrounds which is why the volunteer training is so critical as well. The entire mission of the organization is to help these horses regain their trust around people and that requires that all of the volunteers treat the horses the same way. The horses need to know what to expect from the people handling them. "Consistency is key," says horse trainer Colton Smyth. That goes for horse and handler.

As I imagined, keeping so many horses in food, medicine, shoes and shelter

ABOVE: New Mexico Horse Rescue at Walkin N Circles Ranch Board President Lauri Michael stands with a horse named Whiskey.

FACING PAGE, RIGHT: Colton Smyth helps Poppy the horse into a trailer to head to her new home.



Fresh new shoes make the horse.

is not cheap. The feed bill alone crests \$250 a day for the herd. The majority of funding for the New Mexico Horse Rescue comes from individual donors, with 40 percent coming from their thrift store in Edgewood.

The entire mission of the organization is to help these horses regain their trust around people and that requires that all of the volunteers treat the horses the same way.

Beverly Knowles raised horses in Missouri before moving to Torreon, New Mexico. She had been keeping an eye on the New Mexico Horse Rescue website for a new horse to adopt. When she saw Poppy she said, "I think I can ride her." The two-year-old mare was born on the ranch and had been raised by the trainers and volunteers her whole life. This would be the start of her new life with three other horses in Torreon and the ultimate

Continued on next page

RIGHT: Horse trainer Colton Smyth with Pinto at the Walkin N Circles Ranch.



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Continued from previous page

result that New Mexico Horse Rescue hopes for every horse they rescue.

The adoption process differs a bit from the dog pound. The ranch makes sure the horse is healthy and ready for adoption, but also makes sure that the person adopting the horse has the capacity to care for their new horse. Facility inspections are standard procedure prior to adoption. Everyone involved wants to make sure that each adopted horse has found a happy, healthy forever home.

On the day I visited the ranch, Knowles was there to bring Poppy home. She was beaming. As Poppy made her way into the trailer, Knowles and I talked about where Poppy was going and her prospects for a happy, healthy life. Knowles had no reservations about her choice and was confident that Poppy would fit into life on her ranch in Torreon just fine. "I knew she had been raised here," she said. 🐾

BELOW: Horses on the Walkin N Circles Ranch enjoying the view of the East Mountains.

FACING PAGE: Pinto gets her first set of shoes at the Walkin N Circles Ranch.





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Real Estate Prices Climb

A seller's market for East Mountain homes

BY FAERL MARIE TORRES

Unless you've been living in one of the Sandia caves for the last two years, you have likely noticed how frenetic the housing market has been since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. You may have heard news reports about rock-bottom mortgage rates starting to climb, read articles describing buyers lined up around the block to attend open houses and get their bids in and heard of dozens of offers submitted within hours of homes going active on the market. Or perhaps you've seen firsthand while walking through your own neighborhood: "For Sale" signs being replaced by "Sold" signs within a week of listing. Altogether it's a vividly painted picture of a real estate market gone wild, with homes selling for record prices in re-

Area	Median Sale Price		Price Increase
	March 2019	February 2022	
Cedar Crest	\$289,900	\$372,500	\$82,600
Sandia Park	\$417,450	\$472,500	\$55,050
Edgewood	\$270,000	\$359,499	\$89,499
Tijeras	\$355,000	\$389,900	\$34,900

**Based on 'Median Home List Price' data gathered from Realtor.com.*

cord time. Our little green corner of the state is no exception.

This may all seem like another symptom of the pandemic, right up there with stockpiling toilet paper, but if you're in the market to buy, then it's hitting home, and your savings account, even harder. According to Redfin, hot properties in Tijeras are often pending after barely a week on the market and Edgewood is worse. Average homes in the 87015 zip code are under contract in fewer than three weeks. In Cedar Crest, the average sale price is

up 24.3 percent compared to a year ago. Sandia Park is up 48.9 percent year-over-year for an average sale price of \$516,000. Basically, if you want to live on our side of the mountain, you're going to fork over some extra green. A lot of extra green compared to a few years ago.

Kat Jacob of Realty One of New Mexico, a seasoned East Mountain broker, said, "In 2019, you could get a really nice home for \$275,000, but that same home now would be \$500,000. In New Mexico, 'luxury' is \$500,000 and above, [but now]

these homes are moving as quickly as entry-level.” According to Jacob, the normal average number of MLS listings (homes active on the market) this time of year for the Albuquerque metro area, including Rio Rancho and the East Mountains, is 3,000 to 5,000. Right now there are 640. Total. In other words, demand is outpacing supply at astronomical levels.

Jacob says a lot of people are moving from the west — the west coast of the U.S. and the west side of the Sandias. Of her last several East Mountain home sales, two were from Arizona, a few were from Oregon and California and the rest were from Albuquerque.

Fortunately for people in historically expensive coastal and urban markets, our prices still seem modest, especially with all the inherent upgrades to living here — no traffic, few natural disasters, less population density and lower overall costs of living. Unfortunately for many locals looking to buy a new home in the area, the market has hit altitude — 10,678 feet out of reach.

I can empathize. Prior to the pandemic, my family planned for years to buy or build a new home in 2020. Then Covid happened and the housing market went nuts, followed in lockstep by a surge in new construction costs and material shortages. We gave up for a solid 18 months, watching homes sell before we even had a chance to click on the link from our Zillow email notifications. In between bouts of despair, we scoffed at the outrageous prices as manufactured homes halfway to Chilili sold for the same price this year, as stick-built homes minutes from I-40 sold for a few years ago. When we began looking, \$250,000 bought you a nice starter home less than 20 minutes from Albuquerque. Now, all that gets you is a fixer-upper in serious need of professional help...or a bulldozer. And that's if you can even find something. “Before the pandemic, \$250,000 to \$275,000 was a reasonable budget for entry into the market. Now it's closer to \$400,000,” Jacob says.

When I first began research for this article in early March, there were 31 homes for sale between the crest and Moriarty to

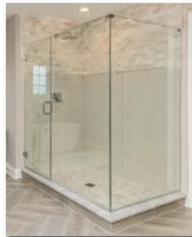
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in. “But it’s cooling off,” she says. Mortgage rates are moving up and things are less desperate now that Covid is slowing down and normalizing.

It’s too early for detailed statistics to be compiled post-pandemic, but New Mexico hasn’t seen the same population exodus or influx as some states. That’s good news for the housing market — we’re not among the worst places for realty supply and demand — but the East Mountain area is unique. We’re greener, often a place a few degrees cooler, and much less populous than Albuquerque, and there is room here to expand, which makes us the obvious retreat for anyone looking for city convenience matched by country comforts.

“Before the pandemic, \$250,000 to \$275,000 was a reasonable budget for entry into the market. Now it’s closer to \$400,000.”

Kat Jacob



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the east, and Golden to Manzano Springs in the south. Peaking at \$3.5 million, a dozen of the available listings are over half a million dollars, or “luxury properties”. Only ten are under \$300,00, and all \$150,000 gets you is an “as-is” geodesic “structure” in Edgewood with an unfinished, 1,400 square foot interior built in the mid-90s.

Despite the shady quality of properties and listings, buyers are going to irrational lengths to secure a home. Jacob says she has seen people waive inspections, offer well-above asking price and pay the seller’s fees and closing costs, all of which further drives the seller’s market we’re

Albuquerque residents looking for more space, security and serenity have few options if they want to be close enough to easily commute into the city. “There was a ton of movement from the city during the peak of Covid in 2020,” Jacob says, and while that initial rush has cooled down, there’s still a backlog of buyers who missed out and are still looking. Several realtors I spoke to in the last few months indicated the realty crush will ebb this year but won’t stop. When multiple offers are submitted on every home, all but one of the buyers are still out there looking, which means it’s going to take at least a couple of years for the listings to catch up to demand. 🐼





Shop Your Local Farmers' Market

It's that time of year again, when growers throughout the East Mountains harvest their bounty and share it with people eager to shop local and eat healthy. When you buy direct, you know exactly where your food is coming from and how it was produced. Here are a few of the local options for this growing season so come on out — buy local and buy fresh!

Cedar Crest Farmers' Market

Location: North side of Triangle Grocery, 12183 NM 14 in Cedar Crest

Season: May 16 – October 16

Schedule: Wednesdays, 3pm–6pm

Contact: John Rose, desertcrops@gmail.com

Features East Mountain-produced organic and pesticide-free fruits and vegetables, baked goods and potted plants. Farm-fresh meats include chicken, lamb, turkey, rabbit, beef and heritage pork. Eggs will include chicken, duck, turkey and quail. The market accepts EBT/SNAP and offers Double Up Food Bucks. For more information, see cedarcrestmarket.com.

Cerrillos Farmers' Market

Location: Cerrillos Station on First Street in Cerrillos

Season: End of April–October

Schedule: Thursdays, 4pm–7pm

Contact: Barbara Briggs at 505-474-9326

Enjoy produce and other foodstuffs from a variety of area growers, along with live music.

Schwebach Farm in Moriarty

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Contact: info@schwebachfarm.com

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sweet yellow onions, carrots, beets, and heirloom tomatoes. Sweet corn is available for purchase starting around August 1, with other produce available through October. Winter vegetables go on sale starting in September.

Times and locations are subject to change, so call or check with each market's website for the most up-to-date info.

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Fascination with Falcons

Our Skies Would be Empty without Them

BY TOM SMYLIE

PHOTOS BY CLARKE CONDÉ

Life is a series of events... some planned, some not and many unexpected...they carry us in directions we would never expect. Mine occurred during a football game I was playing for the University of New Mexico against the highly-rated Air Force Academy. When going to the locker room during halftime, an Academy cadet carrying their mascot falcon onto the football field passed me. He released the bird and proceeded to have it dive at a lure; I was hooked. I certainly

had no way of knowing then how my passion for falcons would ultimately shape my life and my profession into the flying and conservation of raptors and birds.

Falcons are worldwide; the only continent they are not found in is Antarctica. There are 54 species with five species of falcons in New Mexico: the Kestrel, Merlin, Prairie, Peregrine and the Aplomado falcon.

Falcons are a part of the family of birds called raptors, a Latin term meaning to grab or seize other animals. They're noted for their powerful eyesight (a Peregrine falcon can see a thrown tennis

ball at two miles). They also have hooked beaks, powerful feet and sharp talons. The females are one-third larger than the males. To protect their eyes, they have three eyelids...two like ours, moving up and down, but a third, called a nictating membrane, is translucent and moves from back to front to protect and moisten their eyes while maintaining their vision.

Falcons differ from other raptors not only by their slender shape, long pointed wings, dark eyes and a notch on their upper beak that allows them to break a struggling prey's neck. They have dark feathers around and under their eyes reducing glare, much like football players.

"Man has emerged from the shadows of antiquity with a peregrine falcon on his wrist." This quote by the famous ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson exempli-

FACING PAGE: Hooded, Jean-Luc the falcon waits patiently on Tom Smylie's hand.

fies the four-thousand-year bond between humans and this magnificent falcon. The Peregrine Falcon, or duck hawk, is a crow-sized falcon with a blue and black back, white barred breast and a black helmeted head. Immature first-year birds are black and brownish with streaked breasts.

The Peregrine is a widely dispersed falcon found worldwide, but uncommon everywhere. In the United States, we have three species of peregrines of the 21 found worldwide...only one, the mostly non-migratory anatum or continental peregrine nests in our state.

These masters of the sky can be found throughout the state from mountains to deserts, even in cities where they prey on concentrations of birds such as pigeons and starlings. Peregrines nest on high cliffs in the mountains of New Mexico where they'll lay three to four eggs in a bowl-shaped scrape in the dirt.

Their diet consists almost entirely of birds, thereby accounting for being the fastest animal on the planet. In a power dive, or stoop, coming from hundreds of feet in the sky, they'll exceed over 200 mph. This speed allows Peregrines to catch such speedy prey as swifts and pigeons. They also catch birds from sparrows to ducks and other waterfowl.

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The Aplomado falcon is a beautiful medium-sized falcon once found on the desert grasslands of southern New Mexico. Easily identified by their spectacular colors, a steel gray back, red breast and striking black and white markings on their head. Unfortunately, the last record of their nesting in New Mexico was in 1952.

Their loss is likely due to habitat destruction and pesticide contamination of prey species, consisting mostly of insects and birds. An attempt by the Peregrine

Fund of Boise, Idaho to release captive-bred Aplomados, proved unsuccessful. The bird still survives in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

The Prairie falcon is a more common and slightly smaller brown and tan version of the Peregrine. This highly adaptable falcon is found in open country throughout the state where they'll feed on a wide variety of prey, from mammals (ground squirrels and prairie dogs) to small and large birds (sparrows to ducks). Although they use the same style of hunting as the



peregrine, the primary method is to come in fast (over 50 mph) and low in a surprise attack on their ground-dwelling prey.

The Prairie falcon plumage is gray-brown above, with brown dots on a white breast. When flying, a large dark brown patch next to their body on the underside of their wings is a good identifier of the species. There is little difference in coloration from an immature to an adult. In spring, they'll lay three to four eggs on cliffs and embankments.

The Merlin is a small pigeon-sized falcon that winters in open areas of our state. They nest north of New Mexico into Canada. There are three species of Merlin's in the United States, but only the Prairie or Richardson winters in New Mexico. This falcon resembles a smaller version of the prairie falcon. However, uncommon in raptors, the much smaller adult male has different plumage than the female by having a sky-blue back with black wings.

Continued on next page

FACING PAGE: Jean-Luc the falcon takes flight.

BELOW: Jean-Luc the falcon with Tom Smylie.



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Jean-Luc the falcon mugs for the camera while perched on Tom Smylie's hand.

Continued from previous page

The dashing little falcon hunts much like the prairie falcon coming in a low and fast attack, preying solely on birds. They are most often seen perching in trees or on fence posts.

The Robin-sized Kestrel is beautiful, and the most abundant and commonly seen falcon in the United States. Often mistakenly called the sparrow hawk (a different species) is found in every habitat of the state, including cities where they're commonly seen balancing on power lines. Its colorful feathers and long tail easily identify the Kestrel falcon. The brilliantly marked male has a black-spotted rufous breast, sky blue shoulders, a rufous black-tipped tail, and a sky-blue head with a rusty patch on the top. In contrast, the female is all brown with a streaked breast. Kestrels have unusual feather markings by having what appear to be two black eyes at the back of their head. These false eyes help protect the small falcon from predators; in other words, "I'm looking at you," no matter which way they turn their head.

Often Kestrels can be seen hovering, much like a helicopter, into the wind over open ground. The Kestrel is using its ultraviolet vision to detect mouse urine, which is ultraviolet. The urine shows a mouse is nearby and the falcon waits for it to show itself. Besides mice,

this beneficial little falcon preys on small snakes, lizards, insects, other birds and mammals. Kestrels are cavity nesters using holes in trees made by woodpeckers or on dirt banks or cliffs. They'll lay four or five eggs that hatch in about 30 days with the young leaving the nest in another 30 days.

There's been a gradual, but persistent decline in Kestrel populations. The cause is not fully understood but may be loss of nesting cavities, habitat or chemicals in the environment. There's a nationwide

effort to assist the Kestrels by providing easy to construct and install nesting boxes. Instructions and plans can be found at the Peregrine Fund website at www.peregrinefund.org/AmericanKestrel. An excellent youth project; this nationwide effort is part of the Fund's American Kestrel Partnership.

Falcons are proven environmental barometers in detecting disturbances in our ecosystems. By being at the top of the food chain, they're the first to suffer. The best example is the case of the world's fastest animal, the Peregrine falcon. These nationwide falcons' rapid decline began in the 1950s going from an estimated 4,000 pairs to only 40 pairs in the 1960s; totally disappearing as a nesting bird east of the Mississippi River. With only surviving in the West, the Peregrine falcons' decline alerted the world to the dangers of insecticides and other chemicals in our environments.

First seen in the 1950s, songbirds were sick and died after areas were sprayed with the insecticide DDT. Through the process of biomagnification, where toxins are magnified in their toxicity in moving up the food chain, Peregrines consumed several contaminated birds that had eaten large amounts of sprayed insects, leading to their inability to metabolically transfer calcium from their prey into the making of thick enough eggshells for incubation. As a re-



Jean-Luc the falcon enjoys a post-flight snack.

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sult, the Peregrine was facing extinction and was labeled endangered.

However, New Mexico played a key role in their recovery. In my studies of raptors in New Mexico, I knew of a few remaining nesting sites in our state. New Mexico and several other western states had a few peregrines left because of remoteness and less use of DDT. In 1970, I gave the newly established Peregrine Fund at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. three pairs of baby peregrines that became the seed crop for the species breeding and releasing of captive-reared falcons. Over 30 years almost 5,000 captive-reared peregrines were released throughout the nation. As a result of this effort and the banning of the use of DDT in 1972, peregrines are flourishing throughout the country, with about 150 pairs in New Mexico. The species was delisted as endangered in 1999, after 28 years of recovery by efforts by The Peregrine Fund and others.

Falcons have a legitimate and important role in nature's scheme of life, their loss would make our skies impoverished and empty without them. 

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Amanda Martinez

East Mountain artist
to the bone

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CLARKE CONDÉ

In its most simplistic form, that is to say, to give the easiest answer, Amanda Martinez makes artwork out of bones. Always challenged to describe what she does, Martinez has refined her answer to those types of questions over the years, but it is apparent that she has always delivered her response with charm, grace and a bit of a smile. It is clear that she likes what she does and puts an enormous amount of patience and thought into each piece that she creates. It is also obvious that she has a lot of respect for the remains of the animals she works with. Working with the dead properly requires reverence.

Born and raised in Carnuel, New Mexico, Martinez grew up in the East Mountains and worked her way through local jobs until pandemic lockdowns brought with them time, space and the need for her to expand her web presence and take her business, Lust for Dead, from an after-hours job to a full-time pursuit. She hasn't looked back.

East Mountain Living's editor Clarke Condé sat down with Martinez at a pop-up show this spring to find out what she makes, why she makes it and how living in the East Mountains influences her work. The following is an edited version of that conversation:

Clarke Conde: How do you describe what it is that you do?

Amanda Martinez: It's always a weird question. A lot of people see my stuff and they're like, 'Oh, you do taxidermy.' Taxidermy is absolutely not what I do. I don't do taxidermy at all. I always tell people I make animal bone jewelry. I use everything from antlers to bones to skulls in my artwork.



Amanda Martinez shows off her wares at a local pop-up show.

If there was a Venn diagram between deer hunters, Goths and people who have the Michaels app on their phone, where would you be?

[Laughing] Probably more towards the Goths. My aesthetic is very pagan-oriented. I respect the animals that I use and I use everything I've got. I've got friends that are hunters that I get some of my stuff from. I have friends that breed rep-

tiles that I get reptiles from. I want to try to use every part of the animal that I can. My stuff, everybody buys my stuff. Little, tiny, 80-year-old ladies buy my stuff for their grandson and they like it too. They always compliment it. It is very different and unique. I really want to catch their attention, but not gross people out at the same time.

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A handmade bone necklace by Amanda Martinez sits on display.

You have been doing this for over a decade. How have you been able to sustain your business?

A lot of hard work. Consistency is the key for sure. I went full time in 2021, but I'd been doing this part-time when I wasn't working up at the restaurant or working retail. I was working at Ribs for the past six years, but before that I worked full time in town.

I saw an exquisite piece of pet articulation that you did. How complicated is that?

It's very complicated. There are not a

Continued on next page

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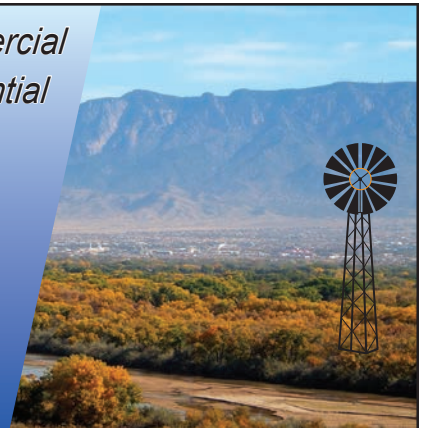
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LEFT: Amanda Martinez's pieces incorporate a variety of different animal bones and other materials.

art and going to sell her work at pop-up shows]. This is my primary focus.

I imagine pet articulation is in huge demand.

Oh yeah. It's definitely a constant thing, especially on my Instagram. I get messages daily saying, 'Hey, I know your commissions are closed, but I had a cat that died or my dog or my bird...'

What was it like for you growing up in the East Mountains?

I love the mountains. I've never lived in town and I never want to live in town. It's quiet out there. My mom lives in Car-

"My aesthetic is very pagan-oriented. I respect the animals that I use and I use everything I've got. I've got friends that are hunters that I get some of my stuff from. I have friends that breed reptiles that I get reptiles from. I want to try to use every part of the animal that I can. My stuff, everybody buys my stuff. Little, tiny, 80-year-old ladies buy my stuff for their grandson and they like it too."

Amanda Martinez

nel and that's where I grew up. Now I live in Tijeras. It's quiet. The neighbors are way over there. The wild animals are right there and it's just the place that I need to be mentally and physically in order for me to be inspired. I can't do that in the city. There's just too much noise. There's too much going on and it just overwhelms me a little bit. So, when I'm at home, I'm in peace and quiet. I'm good to go. That's just my element.

What do the East Mountains not have that they need?

I'm actually very happy that they're starting to get more businesses out there.

Continued from previous page

lot of people that do what I do in New Mexico. There's maybe a couple of us.

How many people do pet articulation throughout the country?

There's a lot. I'm part of the oddities community across the country. We're all friends with each other. There are three people that do pet articulations in different states that I completely would trust. I'm not doing pet commissions anymore because I'm overloaded with this [making

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It would be really nice if there were small businesses that were opening up. I remember when the whole Walmart thing was going on in Edgewood. There was a huge stink about it. There were a lot of people that didn't want it there. It was necessary though. It eliminates having to drive all the way to town just to go for a couple of groceries. It's nice to see the small businesses still there that have been there forever, like Pizza Barn and Ribs in Cedar Crest. I grew up eating that food and then I worked there. It would be nice having more small businesses out there of any kind. It doesn't matter if they're restaurants or laundromats or pet shops. Any of those little kinds of shops would be kind of nice to have.

Would you do retail if given the opportunity?

It's hard to say. At this point, I already have my stuff in a couple of storefronts, but I enjoy doing pop-ups and markets. I'll be traveling to three different cities this year for the Oddities and Curiosities Expo. This is what I enjoy doing. 🦋



Amanda Martinez is among a very short list of artists in the state who have their own line of fragrances.

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We Are the Long Haulers

Navigating Post-Covid Illness

BY JEANNE C. DRENNAN, OT, CNMT

Like sunshine breaking through dark clouds on a gloomy day, we may finally be seeing light at the end of the Covid tunnel. As we emerge from over two years

of uncertainty, illness, restrictions, fear, grief, isolation and disruptions of all sorts, many may be wondering how exactly to get back into life. Will we ever be the same after these hardships that rocked our respective worlds?

This transition back to normal life is proving far more difficult for the 10 to 30 percent of Covid-19 patients who become Long Haulers. Most people fully recover from Covid-19 within a month but for others, myself included, the effects of having Covid last far beyond the acute viral phase. While this phenomenon goes by many names: Long Covid, Post-Covid conditions, Chronic Covid, Longhaul Covid, Post-Covid Syndrome and Post Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2, according to the American Lung Association, it represents any combination of symptoms that occur four or more weeks after initial infection.

Thus far, there doesn't appear to be a predictable way to determine who will develop Long Covid. Oddly enough, severity of disease, vaccination status and hospitalization are not determining factors in the development of Long Covid. According to longcovid.org, people of all ages and previous levels of health and fitness are at risk of experiencing the life-changing effects of Long Covid.

The lungs are typically the first organ affected by Covid, but according to the American Lung Association, the long-term impacts of the virus can affect nearly every organ system. The symptoms are numerous and, like the virus itself, can vary from person to person. One study in particular identified over 200 symptoms of Long Covid including fatigue, body pain and even changes in taste or smell. Worse still, original symptoms can linger and new ones can appear weeks and even months after the acute phase, even returning after a period of feeling well.

The medical community is beginning to recognize Long Covid as a real syn-

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drome affecting people all over the world but the jury is still out on what exactly causes the symptoms of Long Haulers to persist. One theory is that there is a viral persistence, reactivation of a latent virus, even viral fragments, at work in the bodies of Long Haulers. While research is ongoing in this area, some physicians now believe that pro-inflammatory cytokines are triggering a harmful immune response. In the realm of Long Covid, my personal account is not unusual.

In December 2021, I tested positive for the virus and quickly spiraled into severe illness. The intense pain and fatigue, coupled with the myriad of other debilitating symptoms, were unlike anything I had ever experienced, but it was the extreme breathlessness and low oxygen saturations that led to urgent medical care, chest CT angiograms, Covid pneumonia, nebulizer and oxygen therapies and even more medications. Fast forward to March 2022, I continue to require oxygen therapy and at least two new symptoms have popped up this month. Although I'm exponentially better than I was a few months ago, like many other Long Haulers, I still have a long way to go.

As of this writing, there are at least 66 health systems that have launched post-Covid recovery programs or clinics across the country. Because fatigue and brain fog are the most common symptoms in Long Haulers, whenever possible, it would be prudent for a patient to be seen in a clinic set up specifically for this population with providers who are familiar with treating the intricacies of Long Covid. Having everything in one place can alleviate the stress of having to navigate various specialists in different locations.

Once the acute phase is over and a Long Hauler has been cleared by their physician the question becomes, what now? How does one begin the long road to recovery? As with all things Covid, Long Covid recovery may look different for each person. Self-care can be critical for Long Haulers as recovery for some becomes a full-time job. Long Haulers have to be very careful where we choose to spend our energy because overdoing it can cause serious setbacks. Simple activities that were previously part of our everyday life may prove very difficult, like

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putting on our shoes or even sitting upright for too long. Enter the 3 P's – pacing, planning and prioritizing, a program developed by The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) to assist Long Haulers in their recovery.

Pacing will allow you to have enough energy to complete a task even if you have to take rest breaks. If you're at the point in your recovery where you can do more, the RCOT recommends planning out your day and week, remembering to

Continued on next page



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Continued from previous page

include rest days. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Whether that be from family or friends or professional services such as house cleaning or meal delivery – do what is necessary and within your means to continue recovering well. Prioritizing will ensure that the most important things get accomplished. Some activities really don't need to get done in a day. Consider what you need to do in a day and what can be put off. What can you ask someone else to do for you? What is important to your health that you want to do today? Also, don't feed the fire! Since inflammation is a culprit in the body of a Long Hauler, eating an anti-inflammatory diet can be very helpful and reducing sugar and eliminating alcohol may help you to recover more quickly.

There was a point in my recovery when I needed assistance to walk even short distances, so accepting that your pre- and post-Covid exercise routine will look very different now and will allow you to align your expectations with your ability to move. Set small goals and adjust accordingly as you regain strength. Purposeful movement like tai-chi can be very helpful because it engages the brain and body simultaneously. Practices like this calm the nervous system and bring health to the body.

Neuro-Covid, often referred to as brain fog, is perhaps the most alarming aspect of Long Covid, as it affects the patients' memory and cognitive abilities. An occupational therapist or a speech/language pathologist can aid in recovering cognitive abilities. At home, find what works best to calm your brain and deter-

mine what part of the day you feel most alert so you can tackle tasks that require more focus.

Feeling ill day after day to the point where you may not even recognize your life is a harsh reality in Long Covid and can lead to depression and anxiety. Joining a Long Covid support group and getting professional help are encouraged, but

Neuro-Covid, often referred to as brain fog, is perhaps the most alarming aspect of Long Covid, as it affects the patients' memory and cognitive abilities. An occupational therapist or a speech/language pathologist can aid in recovering cognitive abilities. At home, find what works best to calm your brain and determine what part of the day you feel most alert so you can tackle tasks that require more focus.

also, spending time outdoors, meditating, engaging in activities that you enjoy and even educating yourself about Long Covid can all help to lift your mood and encourage you to be an active participant in your recovery.

If you are in the midst of Long Covid, I hope you will give yourself permission to pace, rest and heal. 🐼



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The Arroyos Head East

Fences, rubbish and rusty pipes abound

BY MICHAEL FARRELL SMITH

One of the most distinctive features of the Sandia Mountains must be its range-spanning network of grassy arroyos that run through its villages and neighborhoods, and in corrugated and concrete tunnels under its roads, from cracks in the highest peaks, all the way down to the valleys. Mountains attract weather, blocking clouds and winds, and precipitation has to go somewhere, and it does, and it shapes the mountains, slowly carving away their rock and moving away their dirt. On the western side of the Sandias, facing Albuquerque, the mountains' arroyos run from the sheer cliff faces of the mountains' western face all the way down to the river, since 1989 mostly in completely concrete channels. People would move up Albuquerque's "Heights,"

to escape the river's seasonal flooding and then discover floods could also come from above.

But on the mountains' more gradually sloping eastern side, facing mostly only the bare Staked Plains and other plains beyond for hundreds of miles, the side on which most people (by far) who live in the mountains live, those arroyos cut gentler paths and have frequently doubled through their histories as footpaths and even wagon roads. That these features have been important to people is evident upon even learning their names: Tijeras was named for the junction of two mountain canyons and/or their roads that crossed like the blades of scissors, tijeras. Cañoncito means "little canyon," like: an arroyo, like where it's located. And arroyo names have sometimes predated town names, for instance, there are maps fea-

turing "Arroyo Coyote" just north of the Sandias that predate the little coal town of Coyote. Arroyos have sometimes been reasons for towns to form.

In San Antonio, in the area that's now a county Open Space behind the old church, farmers once floated apples down acequias channeled through various storm-and-time-cut arroyos. (There's more about this in the KNME documentary *The Sandias*, which is well worth looking up.) Carl Webb, tubercular founder of Cedar Crest, tried to dam one arroyo with a stone dam, but soon discovered how merciless spring floods can be. In Tijeras, around Molly's Bar, est. 1952, Molly and her patrons would use a bulldozer to make earthen dams across the nearest arroyos during storms and would place bets on when the dam would break. Up around La Madera, the arroyos were the original area mining roads and the sites of many placer-and-other mines.

BELOW: *East Mountain arroyos double as footpaths for man and beast alike. Photo by Clarke Condé.*



Animals use them as well, as highways, of course, and evidences of them abound to anyone walking these grassy flood-cut thoroughfares, as do evidences of history.

Growing up in Cedar Crest in the '90s, living there again as an adult, and visiting the mountains often, I have watched the

But the changes I've seen the most in these arroyos is just how carved up they have become by fences. You can't really walk most of the arroyos anymore, not the ones you can see from North 14, anyway, as now every one has fences, sometimes many.

arroyos and how they have completely changed. I can remember when most of them around Cedar Crest and Cañonci-to were full of trash, "hard rubbish," from full-size satellite dishes, to mattresses, to

Continued on next page



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Rusty pipes in East Mountain arroyos are a common sight. Photo by Clarke Condé.

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East Mountain arroyo infrastructure combines the natural and man-made. Photo by Clarke Condé.

Continued from previous page

car frames. It was unsightly, but as a teenager, I once found a full-size medieval iron mace (or maybe a replica) in one arroyo. As the area developed, for better or for worse, I was happy to see all these arroyos get cleaned out, despite all the happy memories of building clubhouses out of things we found. In the mid-to-late-'90s, there was also a real culture of "mountain

boarding," skating the arroyos on skateboards with huge tires and shocks, with at one point two different area stores selling only mountain boards. I would bike and hike the arroyos with my brother and friends, and would often run into these mountain boarders, some of whom we knew from school. Years later, as a young father, walking the arroyos with my first baby in a carrier, trying to get her to sleep,

right beside North 14, I/we would find a desiccated dead coyote wrapped around a knot of storm-swept driftwood and a large tire, a look of panic still-frozen on the coyote's face, and I/we would find what really seemed like a human skeleton wearing a shirt but what police later told me was a dog. That got my kid and me on the news. A writer I told this story to later adapted it into a werewolf novel.

But the changes I've seen the most in these arroyos is just how carved up they have become by fences. You can't really walk most of the arroyos anymore, not the ones you can see from North 14, anyway, as now everyone has fences, sometimes many. Nature will no doubt have the last word on all such fences built in seasonal floodpaths, no dam or border ultimately lasts, but for now, their ubiquitous presence has reshaped what had in places become a public commons, greatly limiting its access to most people. It's interesting too that the arroyos around Cañoncito have suffered the same fate as document-

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A rainstorm hits Albuquerque and the Sandia Mountains. Precipitation like this helped form the area's arroyos.

ed land in Cañoncito, being divided up and divided up, in the land's case by families having ever-more generations sharing an inheritance.

The histories of towns and cities tend to get written more often than the histories of mountain arroyos, but these histories are still worth knowing, and of course interconnected with so many other histories. Look for these places on old maps, and look for mentions of them in old documents. And of course, where the fences will allow it and there are public trails, experience these places yourself, on foot if you can, at their own speed. Look for animal footprints, wildflowers, wild grasses, animal burrows, old rust and glass, furtive coyotes or wildcats, birds or bears, or even a ringtail drinking at a puddle.

On human-made roads, maybe driving up here, you see human things. So much traffic. Such a hurry. But on roads made by nature, and patrolled by nature, you might see literally anything. Real life moving along at its own speed. That's the arroyos. Just stay out of them when it's raining. 🐿

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Songs from the Hills

Dick Bills, Glen Campbell and the Sandia Mountain Boys

BY DIXIE BOYLE

Dick Bills and the Sandia Mountain Boys became famous in the 1950s on KOB's first radio station with the popular *K Circle B Time* children's show. The Country and Rockabilly band was well-known throughout the region and frequently made the main billing at the state's biggest events including the New Mexico State Fair, the Gallup Rodeo, Taos Fiesta and at Albuquerque's annual March of Dimes Parade.

Members of the Sandia Mountain Boys included Dick Bills and his wife Judy, Jake Reymore, John Laswell, Dale Anglin and Judy's nephew, a teenager from Arkansas named Glen Campbell on lead guitar. The band was known for their energetic presentations and crowd appeal. It was not uncommon for the group to play six or seven nights a week at one nightclub or another in the 1950s and 1960s.

Dick Bills was no stranger to entertaining when he first arrived in Albuquerque from Texas in the 1940s. He had starred in two earlier radio shows, *Pass the Biscuits Pappy* and *Hillbilly Parade*, produced in Dallas, Texas. He performed at the Grand Ole Opry and on the *Quiz Kids* radio program before starring on Albuquerque's Channel 4 television station. Early in his career Dick Bills changed his last name from Billingsley to Bills in order to stand out and pick up more performing engagements for his band.

The band put on a good show and was in constant demand. They played from

one end of Albuquerque to the other. Their songs rang out at the dedication of the new Greyhound bus terminal and the First National Bank. They also provided music at the Hilton Hotel, Gage Boots and Saddles, the Veteran's Hospital, the Kiwanis Club, the Lobo Drive-In, Albuquerque Ice Arena and most anywhere music was needed for an event.

When not on the road, the band played Country songs at one of Albuquerque's favorite cowboy night spots: the Hitching Post, Club Chesterfield and the Paradise Supper Club in Tijeras Canyon, where Country and Western enthusiasts filled the dance floor while others kept beat to the music or sang along to the band's popular songs.

The proprietors of both the Hitching Post and Club Chesterfield took credit for giving Glen Campbell his start in the music field. For years Campbell honed his musical skills with the Dick Bills' band before recording his first album and going on to fame as an actor and Country



Dick Bills' Sandia Mountain Boys band perform at Club Chesterfield in 1955. Photo courtesy of the Albuquerque Museum, gift of Joyce Graves Barefoot.



Dick Bills' solo record *Songs from the Hills* included "all time hits" like "Yodeling Cowboy."

and Western star. Even after he became famous, Glen Campbell continued to give Dick Bills the credit for his start in the music business.

Dick Bills owned the Hitching Post in the early 1950s. The band provided entertainment for dances as well as for cowboys stopping in for a drink. There were often bar fights among the patrons having too much to drink. The band learned to protect their musical instruments and to get off the stage (and out of the line of fire) as quickly as possible.

Bills retired from KOB in 1968 and disbanded the Sandia Mountain Boys before moving to Roswell where he lived for the next decade. Unfortunately, he would pass away of a heart attack in 1978 after veering off the highway and hitting a bridge south of Roswell. Glen Campbell would follow his old friend 39-years later in August of 2017 when he passed away at 81 after a six-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. Both musicians are remembered for their many contributions to Country and Western music.

The history of Dick Bills and his Sandia Mountain Boys is as colorful a part of the area's past as are the dancehalls where his band once played the nights away. The 250-seat Hitching Post, once located at 4501 Central Avenue NE, was one of Albuquerque's oldest Country and Western night spots. The adobe building that housed the Hitching Post known as El Janiero was destroyed by fire in 1984.

The Club Chesterfield, also located on Central Avenue, was described as one

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Dick Bills and the K-Circle-B Boys perform at KOB Studio, 1953. Photo courtesy of the Albuquerque Museum, gift of Albuquerque National Bank.

Continued from previous page

of the liveliest dancehalls and watering holes in Albuquerque. The establishment publicized “Fine Foods, Fine Service and Dancing Nightly.” The once-classy nightclub was lost to fire in 1968.

The Paradise Supper Club in Tijeras Canyon began its history as Silva’s Dancehall and Saloon. The location would serve as the Town and Country Feed and Horse Rental for its final twenty years before being lost to fire in 1996, as had the two other popular dancehalls before it. In the 1960s the supper club publicized a Happy Hour from 1pm to 6pm with nightly dancing, superb food and comedy shows.

Many still remember Dick Bills’ radio and television programs. For twenty years, the program’s catchy theme song blasted over KOB’s radio and television channels at the beginning of the show – “Heading down the road to Albuquerque – sad-

dle bags all filled with beans and jerky – heading for K Circle B cuz that’s the

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place for you and me.” Everyone knew the words to the band’s popular theme song and sang along.

Bills enjoyed performing and went all out by using guitars, banjos, a wash-tub bass, numerous washboards, a comb and a pair of wooden spoons. The Sandia Mountain Boys presented an active program and easily kept the attention of the children listening and watching their shows. The band strummed their guitars, showed Hopalong Cassidy films and yodeled at the end of their songs while delighting viewers with their quirky antics.

For two decades Dick Bills and his Sandia Mountain Boys reigned as the most well-known Country and Western band in the state of New Mexico. The old honkytonks where the band once played to a packed house are all gone and over half a century has passed since their final public performance. Yet, the legacy of the Dick Bills’ band has not been forgotten by their many loyal fans and for the Rockabilly era they helped to make popular. 🐾

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