I have been around examples of Robert E. McKee construction since I was a child in New Mexico. He built the original structures at Fort Bayard when it was a veterans hospital where my father and neighbors worked. One family member worked at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and another can see the Air Force Academy Chapel in the distance from her home. As I flew into Los Angeles last year, I recalled that McKee had built that airport. And these are all places outside of El Paso.

I discovered the Grand Canyon at 14, and it has become one of my spiritual centers. The buildings in the park are much more appealing than the city of modern hotels and fast food joints that has grown up outside the grounds. Research revealed that McKee built most of the original structures.

Coming to the Sun City long after his death, I often heard McKee’s name. When Borderlands began highlighting prominent El Pasoans, I hoped to include him. It’s taken several years, but finally I received the well-researched papers necessary for an article – this year’s center spread.

Not only did his company literally “lay the foundations” for much of El Paso and other areas, he and his wife established the Robert E. and Evelyn McKee Foundation to support much of the social and educational structure in Texas and New Mexico. The McKee family still administers the foundation today.

It has likewise taken years to produce articles on Kate Moore and the McGinty Club and more modern figures such as Cleofas Calleros, adamant about recording local history, and David Carrasco, the latter two of whom were recognized nationally and abroad. Students discovered that Moore was responsible for many “firsts” in El Paso and Texas, and the McGinty Club provided both mirth and music for the city in the 1890s.

When students in English 1302 begin researching their topics, many are amazed that such people lived right here in their hometown. El Paso is so good at self-deprecation that our children sometimes think that any place is better and more important than their own city.

Hearing students discussing what they have discovered at a library or through field research always excites me. That’s when I know they are going to be successful college students: a subject has become challenging and has engaged them. These students realize that all research cannot be done on the Internet. Our type of research forces them to leave their neighborhoods and discover for themselves what is in their community.

I spent a recent hot Sunday with student editor Kim Wilson, exploring downtown and photographing sites mentioned in our articles. We walked through San Jacinto Plaza, and I told her the story of the original alligators, which I remember seeing as a child, and showed her the wonderful sculpture by Luis Jimenez celebrating “los lagartos.” I pointed out the Kress building and other McKee landmarks, and we found the street named for Calleros in the Chihuahuita neighborhood. It was fun and brought me back to the heart of the city.

Kim Wilson really showed her stuff in producing this issue. She willingly picked up the responsibilities of her co-editor when she could not continue work, as well as going to summer school and taking care of her family. Thanks for a great job, Kim!

Take time to enjoy this issue, readers, and don’t forget to look at page 16 which features the covers of the first 20 issues that I have had the honor to direct.

Ruth Vise, Faculty Advisor & Editor