BORDERLANDS

INSPIRATION

Produced by the Students of El Paso Community College
For the past several years, Borderlands has faced numerous challenges, especially with its tiny part-time staff of two or three, one or two students and an English professor, with another faculty member providing journalistic advice on a volunteer basis. This year, the student editor found other adventures, and other good candidates already had plans for the summer or disappeared into thin air after school ended.

I finally called a previous editor, Isabel Hernandez, who has returned to college this fall as a part-time student, and she enthusiastically agreed to edit, while working full-time at a familiar El Paso financial institution. I forgot she was going to Poland in July for World Youth Day, having also attended the celebration in Brazil three years ago. Somehow, that did not register until I received a text written in the wee hours of the morning that she was getting ready to leave for the airport and would not have a cell phone with her while in Europe. Gulp! We were a long way from being ready to go to print.

Rachel Murphree to the rescue! A part-time librarian who works with my English 1302 students who produce the research for Borderlands, she was working on an article on Rabbi Floyd Fierman. This evolved into a history of the rabbis at Temple Mount Sinai in El Paso. She dove into further research and finished the article and then helped us locate photos for other stories. Thank you, Rachel!

So we offer you stories of inspiration—not only of Fierman and the other rabbis who have served their congregation and given to the entire El Paso community, but of others who have put El Paso on the map, inspiring those just starting in their career. Luis A. Jiménez Jr. may be better known in other cities than he is in El Paso, even today after his Los Lagos sculpture has been refurbished and reinstalled in the downtown Plaza. He is a giant in modern art and even gave his life for his art.

Richard “Tuff” Hedeman suffered severe injury and personal loss in putting El Paso on the map for a rodeo event that grew to be a stand-alone sport and a multi-million dollar enterprise. Ruben Salazar has inspired scores of journalists to dig deeper and stand their ground, he, too, giving his life for his career. Blake Barrows, lawyer and CEO, runs the El Paso Rescue Mission instead of making a six-figure salary here or elsewhere. All of these current or former El Pasaos stand as inspirations for the rest of us never to give up.

The biggest challenge of this summer was losing Joe Old, our faculty editor who checked our Associated Press (AP) form and facts of local history. Joe was a gentle, kind, generous soul whom I will miss terribly. He was a former El Pasoan and inspired us to be that detective Ms. Vise taught me to be in her English class. It has been challenging this year due to my full-time job; however, when I was asked to participate in this year’s issue, I had to say yes! I had made the decision at the beginning of the year to enroll in school to continue my education but also to do something different this summer besides work.

I currently work at a financial institution and love it: I love the people I meet every day. Although the financial institution and Borderlands are two different paths, I have used all my skills and the values I hold for both jobs interchangeably. At my full-time employment, there is a consistent need for customer service, requiring a lot of patience but also humility. Many of these people are not only individuals I help, they become my family. At Borderlands, I have applied my same ideals. I am not only honored to be a part of the issue, I am very happy to have learned about these inspirational individuals that contributed to El Paso history.

Towards the end of July 2016, I traveled to Poland with a youth group for World Youth Day to see Pope Francis. Upon visiting several churches and also the Auschwitz concentration camp, I discovered how people in Europe prospered even after so much pain. In Poland, many individuals had been motivated by the Church to reach out to their community. One of the churches I visited had a hall honoring women that have served their congregation and given to the entire El Paso community. They became my family. At Borderlands, I have applied my same ideals. I am not only honored to be a part of the issue, I am very happy to have learned about these inspirational individuals that contributed to El Paso history.

Hedwig of Silesia, Duchess of Silesia, canonized in 1267, was known for her humility. Having suffered the loss of her siblings as well as her husband and children, Hedwig founded churches and hospitals and cared for those in need. She fasted often and donated food and money to the poor. Her story taught me that despite one’s personal problems and pain, there is always someone out there who has it worse and needs help. That leads me to the theme for this year’s issue: Inspiration.

All of the individuals you are about to meet in the following pages have inspired others and continue to do so. Whether it was Ruben Salazar uncovering buried facts and inspiring the community through his words or the Rescue Mission of El Paso being the friend to those in need, both lit the hearts of the community and the world. Every day is a chance to do something different or to do something for someone else. I never put much thought into this, but you never know when you will be the person inspiring others or the person being inspired. Time is gold, so be that treasure someone else needs, for we never know if we will live another day.

Ruth E. Vise
Faculty Editor and Advisor

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From the Editor

From the Student Editor

Isabel Hernandez, Student Editor

Isabel Hernandez
Building Bridges Instead of Walls: Temple Mount Sinai

By Rachel Murphree

It has often been a matter of comment that the relation between the Jewish and Christian population of our city has been so cordial … in social, educational, philanthropic work, we too can cooperate. Above all things let us each see the good in the other and remember we are brothers,” said Rev. H. W. Moore, First Presbyterian Church, at the dedication of the first Temple Mount Sinai in 1899, according to an issue of the El Paso Herald. Interfaith dialogue is trending in our current decades of unrest as a way to bridge the divide between groups and to heal the issues that lead to strife. When we look at the history of interfaith dialogue in the El Paso border region, we see that it has always been a part of the fabric of our lives. We can see this interfaith dialogue by exploring the history of Temple Mount Sinai and its rabbi.

When the first Jewish immigrants came to town, as early as 1856, as we have written about in other Borderlands articles, they quickly immersed themselves in the civic and social aspects, working with Catholics and Protestants to meet the needs of the growing city. With the death of a Jewish person in the community formed the Mt. Sinai Association in 1887, to purchase a cemetery for Jewish residents and also to be a benevolent society engaged in charity work.

The celebration brochure for the Temple’s 25th anniversary says that the Association was begun with 32 members, each contributing $1.25 each quarter to its existence. The members were respected civic leaders and merchants in the community: the Schutzes, Kraukauers and the Kohlb ergs. This was the beginning of Temple Mount Sinai, the oldest Jewish congregation in the Sun City, and the “oldest congregation in the entire Southwest, between Dallas and Los Angeles,” according to Rabbi Floyd Fierman in a 1965 El Paso Herald-Post article on Rosh Hashanah.

After a time, the congregation organized a Hebrew Sunday School which met at the Courthouse and realizing they needed the services of a rabbi. A December 1898 El Paso Herald article said that their services were often held at Chopin Hall on Myrtle Street and later in Christian churches until they were able to build the first temple in 1899 on the corner of Oregon Street and what was then Idaho Street (now Yandell Boulevard). The plan was to house artifacts from the time, but the items were stolen before they could be sealed into the cornerstone.

El Paso Times articles written in 1998 at the 100th anniversary celebration of the Temple, noted that the original temple was built with “nearly equal donations from Jews and Christians” and also remarked that during various constructions of buildings in both faiths, they shared each other’s places of worship. Three Christian ministers (from St. Clement’s Episcopal, First Presbyterian and Trinity/First Methodist) spoke at the dedication, a fact that was written up in the largest selling newspaper, the El Paso Herald and Signs of our Times, according to a January 1900 issue of the Herald.

In later years, the interfaith cooperation continued. The congregation of St. Clement’s met in the temple for several months in 1906 while their church was being built. In the 1940s when the church was being renovated, the Jewish community donated $10,000 to the effort.

Mount Sinai’s first rabbi was Oscar Cohen, a rabbi who came from Mobile, Ala. because of his asthma issues. His wife was a brilliant soloist and choir director, described in the El Paso Herald in 1898 as “without an equal among soprano singers in El Paso.” El Paso Herald articles of the time recorded that in his short three years of leadership, he and his wife were involved in civic activities such as promoting the new city park, doing benefits for the firemen and speaking at various Elks events and joining other college fraternity members in town to start a Pan-Hellenic organization.

In 1900, Rabbi Cohen left to lead the largest Jewish congregation in Texas, in Dallas, where he died the following year at 35. Later rabbi and historian Floyd Fierman described him as a “strong personality with splendid powers of leadership.”

The first temple served the congregation well. In 1900 the congregation hired Rabbi Martin Zielonka who was born in Berlin, Germany, and who came to the U.S. when he was four. He and his wife Dora moved to El Paso from Waco, Texas, at a time when our city had 18,000 people, 40-45 Jewish families were members of the congregation and “Sin City,” as El Paso was known then, had gambling halls in every saloon, according to a September 1930 issue of the El Paso Herald. The temple had only gas lights because there was no electricity or sidewalks north of the railroad tracks. Rabbi Zielonka built a sidewalk in front of the first temple to encourage sidewalk building in the city, and he joined in the fight to clean up gambling, according to an article in the 1936 El Paso Herald-Post.

As the congregation grew, the rabbi recommended building a parsonage and enlarging the school facilities, and work was begun on those issues. In 1914, the board voted to rebuild, and in 1916 the first temple was sold and the new building started, according to the Temple’s 75th anniversary brochure. The Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) website tells of large numbers of troops who were amass at the area to protect the border during World War I, including many Jewish men for whom the Temple created a downtown clubhouse because they had no physical home at that time.

The second temple at N. Oregon and Montana streets seated 750 people. At the dedication, the cornerstone included mementos such as photographs of the first temple and the boys’ Sunday school class. The Jewish Federation of El Paso’s website describes the second temple. “In 1916, El Paso opened its new Temple Mount Sinai building, which boasted a gym with showers, a stage, a billiard room, a library, a moving picture booth, a large kitchen and a social hall, one of the first ‘modern’ temple buildings West of the Mississippi.”

In the 1920 Rotarian Magazine, Rabbi Zielonka wrote about the temple facilities and the practice of using Judaism to benefit the community:

Temple Mount Sinai attempts to give a social service interpretation to life … but all these features are not for the exclusive use of the Jewish community. One not need not be a member of Temple Mount Sinai to enjoy these privileges. One need not be a Jew to participate therein. The orthodox Jew mingles with the Reform Jew and both with the non-Jew.

During Rabbi Zielonka’s tenure, the Temple purchased a beautiful organ and built a parsonage. By the time of the congregation’s 25th Silver Jubilee, a perpetual care fund had been established to wipe out the Temple’s debt, spearheaded by A. Schwartz with a donation of $2,500. By 1926, the congregation was debt free. However, the 75th anniversary brochure tells that during the Great Depression the size of the congregation dwindled as families moved to find employment.

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Building Bridges continued from page 3

Rabbi Zielonka passed away suddenly in 1938, and there were numerous El Paso Herald-Post articles on his accomplishments and stature in the city. He was very active in civic life and was especially interested in bettering children's lives. He addressed the Equal Franchise (Suffrage) League in 1915 on issues of safety and illness of children in the public schools. He worked with Miss Louise Dietrich, another El Paso pioneer and nurse who have profiled in an earlier Borderlands. He organized the El Paso Health League (formerly the United El Paso Consumptive Relief Society) and brought the first visiting nurse to El Paso and to Texas. He founded the Family Welfare Association and the Sunshine Day Nursery, both of which were closed on the day of his funeral.

El Paso Herald and El Paso Evening Post articles tell how he vigorously defended children who were whipped and beaten in the public schools and consistently questioned the practice of only approving Christian holidays for the public school calendar. He wanted separation of church and state, or if not, equal access to Jewish holidays for those students and teachers. He also focused on higher education. In 1918 Zielonka founded the College of the City of El Paso which in time became the Junior College and later merged with the Texas State School of Mines and Metallurgy to eventually become the University of Texas at El Paso.

He was an avid fisherman, but there was at least one instant where he did not like water! In an El Paso Times article on the dedication of the current temple, Irving Schwartz, one of the boys from the Sunday school photo placed into the first temple cornerstone, told the story of the rabbi giving them a clubhouse on Temple property. The boys rigged up a bucket of water over the door as a practical joke, which backfired when the rabbi came through the door and got soaked.

Another story about the rabbi was told by his wife in a 1932 El Paso Times article. Because their own wedding ceremony was a grueling 45 minutes long, the rabbi always performed 12-minute ceremonies, to take it easy on the couple.

Martin Zielonka was an active member of Interreligious Good-Will Council, president of the Rotary, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, a Scottish Rite Mason and a Shriner. He helped establish Memorial Park in what is now the Manhattan Heights Historical District. Zielonka was internationally known for his work in rescuing Jews in Mexico who fled Europe, helping to found the Jewish Relief Society in Mexico City, the country’s first Jewish organization.

The congregation elected him Rabbi for Life in 1927, and after his death, the Sisterhood, an internationally known for his work in rescuing Jews, established Memorial Park in what is now the city. He was an avid fisherman, but there was at least one instant where he did not like water! In an El Paso Times article on the dedication of the current temple, Irving Schwartz, one of the boys from the Sunday school photo placed into the first temple cornerstone, told the story of the rabbi giving them a clubhouse on Temple property. The boys rigged up a bucket of water over the door as a practical joke, which backfired when the rabbi came through the door and got soaked.

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The congregation elected him Rabbi for Life in 1927, and after his death, the Sisterhood, an organization for women in the Temple, gifted Zielonka Memorial Hall to commemorate his 37 years of service and love of the people for their rabbi. Rev B.M.G. Williams, St. Clement’s Episcopal, spoke at his burial service which was attended by people of all races and religions, according to the Jan. 6, 1938 El Paso Times article “Jews, Gentiles, Remember Rabbi.” His wife Dora passed away a year later.

As the Depression continued, the congregation faced the horror of Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust during World War II. During this time they were led by Rabbi Wendell Phillips into another phase of their development. Phillips led the congregation into including more tradition in the ceremonies. Temple historian and Rabbi Floyd Fierman wrote of these years that Rabbi Phillips “reacted with a strong Zionism, or Jewish Nationalism, and the urgency to rescue those of our brothers that were still alive. This spirit gave the congregation and the Jews of El Paso vigor and a new outlook.”

Rabbi Phillips became the new rabbi in May 1938, just months after Rabbi Zielonka’s death, bringing with him his wife and newborn son. Previously he was the Director of Field Activities for the Jewish Institute of Religion from which he graduated. Rabbi Phillips was born in Germany to American parents while his father was the dentist to the royal family. His father and family returned to the U.S. after World War I.

According to a 1948 El Paso Times article, Phillips was a chaplain to the Marine Hospital (a public health quarantine station established here at the turn of the 20th century). He was president of the Central Council of Social Agencies. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-1946 and served as a naval chaplain. The Austin American in 1948 stated that after World War II, he served as Correspondent to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine.

Phillips made friends in El Paso with Christian clergy, which led to open forums in which they discussed issues of religion, politics, democracy and fascism. In 1941, he worked with Christians from the College of Mines to set up a work camp in Cloudcroft, N.M., for men and women to “study the ills of the world.” A May 1942 El Paso Herald-Post article reported that at a celebration for new citizens with Fort Bliss commanders, he spoke out against derogatory comments based on ethnicity. The ISJL website states that “Phillips also insisted that African Americans be allowed to serve on the USO Board during World War II.”

In a 1975 El Paso Times article on the 25th anniversary of Providence Hospital, Chairman of the hospital board and honoree Sam D. Young cited the contribution made by three spiritual leaders in El Paso who first purchased and operated the old Providence Hospital — Dr. Paul Newton Poling, First Presbyterian; Dr. L. Evans, Trinity Methodist; and Rabbi Wendell Phillips, Temple Mount Sinai. According to a 1967 El Paso Herald-Post article, these three saw a need for improved medical services in the community, and they joined with civic leader Mrs. Walter F. (Irene) Wulfjen to approach a group of businessmen headed by Sam Young. The result was the new Providence Memorial Hospital which opened on Oregon street in 1952.

So after what could arguably be his most important contribution to the entire city population, Rabbi Phillips left the community in 1949 to take a position in Chicago. In announcing his departure, the El Paso Times said, “Rabbi Phillips has crusaded for the defense and extension of democratic ideals and has been a vigorous leader in community affairs.”

Rabbi Floyd S. Fierman was hired to head the congregation, and his arrival in 1949 coincided with the economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s and consequent Temple growth. The Temple congregation more than doubled between 1940 and 1960, according to the ISJL website. After starting to renovate the existing temple, the Board saw the need for a new edifice. Planning began in 1952 and in 1962 the modern beautiful building at 4408 N. Stanton Street, designed by Los Angeles architect Sidney Eisenhštat, was dedicated. This architect is well known for his innovative architecture, largely in California. The El Paso Times reported that Melvin L. Potash, President of the Temple congregation and grandson of a charter member, led the ceremonies. Rabbi Fierman documented that by 1971, the Temple was debt free.

Dr. Floyd S. Fierman is the longest running rabbi the Temple has had and was much beloved. He came to town from Pittsburgh, Pa., with his wife Edythe and toddler daughter Leslie. Their family would later include a son, Gordon. Dr. Fierman, a social worker before entering the ministry, graduated from the Hebrew Union College and received his doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh. In his 2013 El Paso County Historical Society Hall of Honor nomination as reported in their journal Password, Susan Novick wrote that “His leadership extended far beyond the Temple. He was actively engaged in combating racism and fighting for civil...
rights in El Paso. He also was dedicated to interfaith education and communication and to tracking the history of Jews in the Southwest.”

The influence of Texas Western College on the cultural activities on the community was a factor that drew Fierman to El Paso. After the death of Rabbi Joseph Roth, Rabbi at B’nai Zion and head of the Philosophy Department at the college, Fierman joined other local Protestant and Catholic clergy in teaching in the department, according to a 1984 UTEP oral history interview by Sarah John with Tom Chism, the former Chair of the Religion Department. Fierman taught for 12 years, continuing to “touch the life of the Non-Jew, particularly those of Latin American background,” according to the 75th anniversary Temple brochure.

The congregation under Fierman’s leadership embarked on a new time of interfaith activities. He introduced the Bar Mitzvah ceremony and full Hebrew program in the religious school and organized the Men’s Club. This group existed concurrently with the Sisterhood that since the Temple’s inception had supported the religious school and youth groups. The Board, Men’s Club and Sisterhood strengthened the congregation with their support of sending confirmands to Israel and making camperships available to members of the Youth Group. The Rabbi spoke in almost every historic church in the city, and the Temple often hosted visiting rabbis that addressed interfaith meetings.

In addition to his strong leadership at the Temple, he is remembered as an educator and historian, having written numerous books and scholarly articles on Jewish history in the Southwest and founding the El Paso Jewish Historical Society in 1980. He amassed an archive of historical research that is kept at the Special Collections of the University of Arizona Libraries. El Paso Herald-Post articles from the 1970s show he was honored outside El Paso by being elected President of the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis, and he received an honorary doctorate from Hebrew Union College and a special award from the state of Israel.

In 1966, Rabbi Fierman was given life tenure as the Temple’s rabbi and in 1979 became Rabbi Emeritus. Temple administrator Sally Parke recalls his 6-foot-6-inch stature and booming voice and presence. Fierman could be seen wearing a beret and 2010, and increased musical culture with congregation participation. Rabbi Bach was a leader in interfaith and social change and an avid musician and guitarist. He was one of the founders of the West Side Interfaith Alliance, a group of clergy committed to social justice. That group has grown to include laypeople and is now known as Border Interfaith, further described by Jan H. Wolfe on Newspaper Tree online.

As reported by the El Paso Times, he was involved in workforce training and Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, which provides low-cost legal aid for immigrants, and he was on the board of Project ARRIBA. In 2007, the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region named him “racial justice ambassador” for his work in these areas. In 2014 he helped organize a series of interfaith lecture and dinners where Muslims, Jews and Christians met at each table to discuss issues. In a June 2015 El Paso Times article entitled “Jewish leader leaves legacy of interfaith dialogue as he moves to the East Coast,” Rabbi Bach said, “because Jews are a minority in El Paso, I think it’s important for us to be visible and open and both teach and learn with our neighbors.”

Rabbi Sandra Bellush joined the Temple as Associate Rabbi in 2011 and was devoted to interfaith work in relieving hunger in the region. She initiated a Temple partnership with a local food pantry, and initiated a Baby Boomers group to strengthen the bonds within the Temple and also promote social action projects in our area. She is now the Rabbi at Temple Am Echad in New York, whose website describes her contributions in El Paso.

When both rabbis left in 2015, the congregation hired Rabbi Ben Zeidman, who came to town with his wife Katie and toddler son Oliver. Their daughter Isabel was born shortly after their move. He was Associate Rabbi at the historic Temple Emanu-El in Manhattan, was born shortly after their move. He was Associate Rabbi at the historic Temple Emanu-El in Manhattan, and while they enjoyed life in New York City, they were looking for a good fit and good place to raise their young family. He will be the next rabbi to make his mark on the congregation and the larger community.

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He views the congregation as strongly committed to each other and to the Temple. He would not be surprised if the majority of the congregation on continued on page 12

Rabbi Ken Weiss came to El Paso in 1980 and led the Temple until his retirement in 2002. He and his wife Sue had three children. Under his leadership the Temple celebrated their centennial, and the El Paso Times reported the service included a speech by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and community representatives from all faiths.

Rabbi Weiss was a huge proponent of Union of Reform Judaism camping (engaging youth in a lifetime of Judaism) and promoting the philosophy of Jewish peoplehood, belonging to the Jewish collective and embracing the rich past and shared future of faith and culture. The Temple’s website credits him for his promotion of a strong, caring Jewish community. This philosophy extended to support of Israel, including two congregational trips there during his time as Rabbi. Rabbi Weiss also became President of the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis and was on the advisory board of Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, according to a 2002 El Paso Times article.

During the years of Weiss’s tenure, the idea of a dual clergy was explored, and Rabbis Mark Goldfarb and Lawrence Bach, and Cantor Judith Ovadia served alongside Rabbi Weiss. In 2002, Rabbi Larry Bach assumed the position of Senior Rabbi, providing a seamless transition. In 2014, Rabbi Bach posted a eulogy on his blog, remembering Rabbi Weiss as a gifted pastor and someone who would go the extra mile for someone in need.

Under Rabbi Bach, the congregation’s focus turned back to interfaith education and learning in the community and a continued support of Israel, including five congregational trips between 2004 and 2010, and increased musical culture with congregation participation. Rabbi Bach was a leader of Reform Judaism camping (engaging youth in a lifetime of Judaism) and promoting the philosophy of Jewish peoplehood, belonging to the Jewish collective and embracing the rich past and shared future of faith and culture. The Temple’s website credits him for his promotion of a strong, caring Jewish community. This philosophy extended to support of Israel, including two congregational trips there during his time as Rabbi. Rabbi Weiss also became President of the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis and was on the advisory board of Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, according to a 2002 El Paso Times article.

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Ruben Salazar: A Bridge Between Two Societies

By Migdalia Howell, Fernando Medina, Kelsey Torres and Isabel Hernandez

W

hy, ask some Mexican-Americans, can’t we just call ourselves Americans?” Ruben Salazar posed this question in a 1970 article. In the past, Mexican-Americans suffered from inequality in many areas of American life. For some, they were too Mexican and for others, they were too “American” or Anglo. Many lived what they considered a “second-class life.”

Salazar, born in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico, and raised in El Paso, Texas, was to be a man of many firsts. He was the first Mexican-American journalist at the El Paso Herald-Post in the mid-1950s when Edward Pooley was editor and championed the rights of Mexican-Americans. Salazar was also the first Mexican-American journalist to work for the Los Angeles Times, the first to be sent as a foreign correspondent and the first to have his own column in a major American newspaper. His achievements were all due to the consistent quality in his work and his belief that American residents should be treated as equals.

For years there was a clear divide between mainstream society and racial minorities in the U.S. While attempts to remove such divisions existed, discrimination continued. Historian Julia Young recalled that with the influx of immigrants to the U.S. after World War II, discrimination increased, in particular against Mexican immigrants. In the late 1960s, the U.S. began experiencing resistance by Mexican-American groups, and the Chicano Movement was born. Ruben Salazar was one of the first voices for the Mexican-American community, and he stood up for what he saw as injustice. Salazar became the bridge that attempted to connect mainstream American society with Americans of Mexican descent in a time of conflict.

According to the Ruben Salazar Project created by the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, Salazar was born in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on March 3, 1928; his parents Salvador and Luz Salazar moved to El Paso shortly after. Here he attended Lamar Elementary School, and on Jan. 17, 1946, he graduated from El Paso High School. In 1947, he applied to become a naturalized citizen, a process that took almost six years because of bureaucratic red tape. Salazar studied at Texas Western College, now the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), from 1946 to 1948, working with his father in a jewelry shop for the next two years. Salazar enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1950, serving in Germany. He returned to El Paso to continue his education and graduated from Texas Western on May 30, 1954, with a B.A. in journalism.

Luz McFarland, Salazar’s sister, recalled that her brother always had a desire to read and received a certificate for reading in elementary school. “He was always getting certificates from school for reading books. He made good grades in school and always liked to write,” McFarland reminisced in a 1995 El Paso Times article by Ken Flynn.

His college education was interrupted by full-time work and military service, but he graduated, a feat that was difficult for most students in the 1950s, but especially so for Mexican-Americans. Salazar had initially thought of studying mechanical engineering, but his desire to write was much stronger. He would become a remarkable writer, one ahead of his time.

Noted El Paso educator, artist, humanitarian and UTEP alumna Rosa Ramirez Guerrero lived in the same neighborhood on Arizona Street as Salazar, who was eight or more years older than she. They both attended El Paso High School at different times. In an interview with Isabel Hernandez, Guerrero described his early impact on her:

My late husband used to deliver the newspaper to him and his family. [In] elementary school I used to run home to see the El Paso-Herald Post where he was a writer. You can say my encounter [with Salazar] was when I read all his articles. He was one of the first Mexican-American writers for the Post. Being a first impressed me tremendously. So I felt I knew him through his writings.

While attending El Paso High School, Salazar was part of the school paper, The Tattler. At Texas Western, he joined The Prospector. His writing style progressed from being observational and non-controversial to political and opinionated, according to Kira Brekke in the Ruben Salazar Project. During his sophomore year he became editor and started a column named “This Shot World.” Salazar’s journalistic voice was just beginning to develop. His focus shifted with time to a refined direct commentary on a range of topics, including segregation.

Salazar then entered a new era as a journalist. In 1955, he started working for the El Paso Herald-Post. He produced a remarkable story when he pretended to be drunk and was intentionally arrested. His article “25 Hours in City Jail—I Lived in a Chamber of Horrors” revealed through investigative reporting the disgusting conditions of the city jail. He was in Tank 6 where he vomited twice because of the smell. He wrote:

Tank 6 is a disgusting combination of live and inanimate filth. The men are systematically killing themselves: some with liquor, the rest with narcotics. The cells are like pigsties. There are two stinking toilets in the 22-foot-long tanks. At one end of the tank is a bathtub. The whole inside is one solid black bathtub ring. The “cots” are thin slabs of interwoven steel strips attached to the walls. One blanket is given to each man.

Salazar had arrived at the jail at 7 a.m., but by 2:30 p.m. he saw who the “bosses” were, the chain gang who had come in from work and entered the tank with authority. The meek “friendly” inmates made for their cells immediately. At 4:40 p.m. the men were fed and a redheaded inmate, referred to as “Red” in the article, told Salazar that he liked his shoes and wanted to trade. Salazar refused and Red yelled indecencies at him.

The inmates were rushed to finish eating, so Salazar gobbled down his food and witnessed something else in the jail — drugs. Red had taken two red capsules from a tissue and drank them with coffee after eating. “Then a small brown paper bag was passed to him, coming quickly from the direction of the food servers, and he immediately took the bag and dropped it down a convenient hole to his cell downstairs,” Salazar wrote.

Salazar was later called to Red’s cell where he threatened the newcomer. Red grabbed him by the collar and said, “See these hands? They can beat you up or kill you and no one here will say anything about it.” Salazar went back to his bunk where lice began to crawl over him, but all he could do was lie still. Minutes later, Red and his gang started acting funny and began to wail. Then they started to “sing” at the top of their lungs. “It sounded more like the writhing of sinners from hell you read about,” said Salazar.

The night went on slowly, and Salazar explained that neither he nor the other inmates could sleep because of the lice crawling on them and the noise from the “hopheads,” a term in familiar use from the 1920s or 1930s through the 1950s for drug addict. It was not until morning that the noise abated and Salazar decided he wanted to leave. He could no longer continue with the experiment and called his newspaper to bail him out. The journalist left distraught by his experience and barefoot, according to Flynn.

After the El Paso Herald-Post article, El Paso city officials set out to clean the jail and stop contraband in the cells. After a few days, Salazar found the cells clean and in better condition. The individuals that were part of smuggling narcotics were sentenced to jail. Salazar had not only succeeded in exposing jail conditions about which the community was ignorant, but his investigative reporting also spurred action by city officials.

Guerrero mentioned in her interview that this one was of her most memorable memories of Salazar: writing stories nobody else had ever attempted to write. “There was discrimination in the 50s and no one ever talked about it. We just took it as part of our life. No one never ever protested, demonstrated or complained about sometimes blatant racism towards people of color,” said Guerrero. Salazar wanted to experience the stories he was writing about and share them with his reading public. Guerrero added that people began reading his stories, eager to learn what else what going on in their community now that there was a journalist revealing the truth.

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As he was beginning to be more involved in investigative writing, Salazar found another way of uncovering the drug situation. Ignacia Jasso González, also known as “La Nacha,” had supplied drugs to Juárez, El Paso and other cities for more than 50 years. From the 1920s to the 1970s, “La Nacha” was the first major drug dealer in Juárez, according to Howard Campbell in his book Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez.

La Nacha at one point lived in El Paso, recalled El Paso historian Fred Morales in Campbell’s book. Morales said that he lived in the same apartment complex as La Nacha before she moved to Juárez in a house on Violetas and Bellavista Street, where Salazar visited her in the 1950s. In his Aug. 17, 1955 article “La Nacha Sells Dirty Dope at $5 a ‘Papel’; Herald-Post Reporter Makes Purchase from Border Queen,” Salazar described the day he purchased narcotics in Juárez.

Salazar asked a drug or dope addict, referred to as “Hypo,” to take him to buy heroin. “Hypo, who says he wants to quit, cannot live without heroin,” wrote Salazar. Hypo had sold all his furniture to buy heroin and had even been evicted from his apartment for not paying rent. He had stolen and borrowed for this drug and gave Salazar the story for $15.

Salazar described La Nacha’s house as the most decent one in the Bellavista neighborhood; the rest were adobe houses on an unpaved road. The yellow house with fancy iron grillwork on the windows was also filled with modern appliances and furniture. When the men reached the house, Hypo did not knock since he knew La Nacha so well. When meeting with the “Queen,” Hypo told her Salazar was a musician wanting to buy a “load.” She looked at Salazar’s arms and Hypo explained that Salazar was not a “mainliner,” that is, he did not inject himself, only breathed in the heroin. They paid her $5 and left for a hotel. Salazar then observed the process Hypo went through making heroin, from preparing the drug to his reaction after he injected it:

**Hypo then placed the hypodermic syringe in the [bullet] cap and the brownish substance could be seen running up into the syringe. Hypo’s wild eyes gleamed with excitement. Hypo crouched on the floor balanced on the front of his shoes. He injected the heroin in his vein. His vein was swollen from so many punctures. Almost as soon as the heroin had gone into his vein he started rocking back and forth. I asked him how he felt. “May suave, ese,” he said. “Real good.” Before long he passed out. ... I tried to wake him. I couldn’t. So I went home.**

Later, Hypo explained to Salazar that he had overdosed and could have died because the heroin was “real clean,” or pure, as opposed to the usual “dirty load.” Salazar wrote that the second time the men bought a load, the substance was not as clean, or perhaps Hypo judged the amount better. He needed to be “cured” quickly, and as soon as he injected the heroin, he looked and acted better. Salazar wrote that Hypo was only “half dead” instead of three quarters.

He had stopped shaking and was smoking and talking. The article ended by Hypo stating he wanted to quit heroin for his daughter. Salazar hoped for this as well.

Because of this article, Salazar was asked to testify in a narcotics hearing in San Antonio; his article had gotten attention. Salazar testified for 45 minutes about his experience purchasing narcotics in Juárez. Many believe Salazar’s story on “La Nacha” might have affected the “dope” market in Juárez since the “Queen” dropped out of the drug trade after the article appeared. Flynn repeated a story that Salazar wanted to show how easy it was to acquire drugs in Mexico and bring them across the border, calling for tighter border inspections. He dropped a package of marijuana on the desk of editor Ed Pooley who quickly flushed the drugs down the toilet and reprimanded Salazar soundly.

Salazar also wrote about the illegal alcohol sold in “speakeasies” in South El Paso. These illicit establishments, often in apartments, sold rubbing alcohol watered down with boiling water for 10 cents a drink. His 1956 article “Speakeasies Sell ‘Atomic’ Booze in South El Paso” described a visit with a “bum” to a speakeasy that Salazar made after a citizen called him and asked why police did not do anything about such places. He concluded there were about 20 speakeasies in South El Paso. Residents hated them because they attracted drunks, making it hard to raise a family in such an environment and also because the police ignored these speakeasies. One man asked, “Just because we’re poor down here does it mean we’re not entitled to police protection?”

Salazar moved to northern California in 1956, working for the Santa Rosa Press Democrat and the San Francisco News. People wanted to hear the truth, and here was a journalist who wrote of the reality of their community. Grace Jang, writing for the Ruben Salazar Project, noted that in 1957, he wrote in the Santa Rosa paper, “Probably a newspaper’s most important function is to inform. In a free country the people have a right to know and a newspaper’s first duty is to give them the facts — pleasant or unpleasant.”

He was offered a job by the Los Angeles Times in 1959 and moved south. He met Sally Robare, who had worked in the classifieds department, and the couple married on May 16, 1960. They would have three children: Lisa Marie, Stephanie Ann and John Kenneth.

When Otis Chandler became publisher of his family’s newspaper in 1960, the Los Angeles Times began the change from a “provincial” political organ to a newspaper based on “high quality reporting and writing,” according to Mario T. Garcia in his book Ruben Salazar: Border Correspondent.

By 1963, Time magazine included the Los Angeles Times in its list of the country’s 10 best newspapers.

Between 1961 and 1965, Salazar’s work focused on economic and cultural issues of the U.S.-Mexico border, especially problems in education and employment of Mexican-Americans. He also described the problems of Braceros and domestic and commuter farm hands in California. He began raising the consciousness of Mexican-Americans, forcing them to think about who they were and why they were so powerless politically and economically.

As he became more successful, Salazar came to the attention of the foreign editor of the Los Angeles Times who thought he would be perfect to cover the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. He was sent the same year to report on the increasing U.S. presence in Vietnam. In one story he reported on a young man from Alabama who was killed by mortar fire and then refused burial in his home town because he was black.

In 1966, Salazar was then sent to Mexico City and became Mexico City bureau chief for the Times. He had a particular interest in the plight of Indians in Mexico. Salazar also reported on the 1968 anti-government student demonstrations in Mexico where soldiers clashed with groups of students protesting the quality of education, the lack of jobs and the power of the ruling political party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party).

In an ironic twist, Salazar’s newspaper sent him a letter in June 1968 requesting his return to California to cover the “uproar” being caused by protests in the U.S. by Mexican-Americans, according to the PBS documentary Ruben Salazar: Man in the Middle. Massive walkouts by high school and junior high school students protesting the poor quality of education and discrimination in the school system in East Los Angeles had occurred. Border Correspondent author Garcia noted that there were few Mexican-American reporters on the Los Angeles Times, and that had made it hard for it to cover the budding Chicano Movement, now concerned with poverty, racism, police brutality, poverty and the Vietnam War. Salazar and his family returned to California.

Back home, he was involved with the Mexican-American community reporting on the students’ demand to be able to speak Spanish on school grounds,

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Luis Jiménez’s Art Creates Dialogue

By Ruth E. Vise with additional research by Justin Davila and Kevin Garcia

I
f you are a native El Pasoan or have lived here for any length of time, you’ve heard about the alligators that once lived at the downtown plaza. Since 1995, a big blue sculpture of four alligators has held court at the plaza to take the place of the real ones, long gone. Young students and others may not believe at first that reptiles actually had a home there but then realize that there must be a reason for that sculpture of alligators in a desert town. Don’t alligators need water?

Accounts of how and when the alligators got to the Plaza vary. According to El Paso Times reporter Art Leibson, local miner A. Munsenberger received six baby alligators from his friend in New Orleans in the 1890s and gave them to the city of El Paso, which found them a home in a then-newly built circular pond in San Jacinto Placita. The lethal reptiles apparently enjoyed their life in the sun for decades. Children would watch them for hours even though the reptiles seldom moved.

While most El Pasosans and tourists simply enjoyed and marveled at the reptiles, others taunted and injured them and made them the target of pranks. One alligator even landed in the office of a Texas Western College professor! Two alligators died, one was shot with a BB gun and another lost an eye when a drunken soldier put out his cigarette on it, according to Paul Monrez Diaz, El Paso Times reporter. Others say a spike was driven through his eye. As a result, the remaining alligators were moved to the zoo in the 1960s. All that was left at the Plaza were memories of the unusual desert visitors and the unofficial name of Plaza de Los Lagartos (alligators).

(See our 1995 article on the plaza in volume 13 online.)

In the 1980s, the El Paso Art Alliance approached an artist known for public art to create a sculpture to honor the unusual feature of the Plaza. Although the real alligators were a whimsical gift between friends, the spectacular sculpture Los Lagartos is the work of noted artist Luis A. Jiménez, Jr., one of the children who sat and watched the alligators whenever he accompanied his grandmother downtown. It took him nine years to finish Los Lagartos, with the finished piece dedicated in June 1995.

Jiménez, whose works appear across the country in museums and galleries and outdoors in public places, including Washington, D.C.’s Smithsonian American Art Museum, was an El Paso native born on July 30, 1940. He was a pioneer proponent of public art, large pieces meant to be installed outside and made available to view by large audiences. He received criticism for sending mixed messages to various populations with sweeping the shop. An uncle on his mother’s side reflected a traditional apprenticeship, starting with the statue on top of Mount Cristo Rey. He also became familiar with the art books his father had in the shop. Sometimes he remembered his father’s work. Older El Pasosans may remember the concrete polar bear outside a cold storage business on Wyoming Avenue or the little blonde girl eating bread from the Sunbeam Bakery or the horse’s head from the Bronco Drive-in and others.

The younger Jiménez began working in his father’s shop when he was six and became familiar with industrial materials. Jiménez recalled that his work in the shop reflected a traditional apprenticeship, starting with sweeping the shop. An uncle on his mother’s side also worked there, and the shop had a family atmosphere about it. Most of the workers attended the same small Protestant church the Jiménez family did, and the shop workers and families socialized together. Jiménez was raised very strictly — no smoking, drinking or dancing. He had to be home by 9:00 p.m. and rarely dated, all behaviors Jiménez credited to the family’s religious beliefs.

By the time he was 16, he could do almost everything in the shop. Marvel indicated that is where Jiménez learned to use metal, a medium he used for early pieces. But it was fiberglass, a material more often used in automobiles, that fascinated the younger Jiménez.

As an elementary student, the younger Jiménez won art contests and had an especially supportive art teacher in junior high. He saw little art in El Paso but was impressed with Tom Lea’s mural in the Federal Building downtown and with Urbici Soler who designed the statue on top of Mount Cristo Rey. He also became familiar with the art books his father had in the shop. However, his family visited Mexico City every year and when he was six, they stayed for three or four months. Jiménez went to every art museum in the city and drank in the murals of Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco.

At 14, the boy was shot in the left eye with a BB gun, an injury that eventually cost him the sight in that eye. When he was about 18, he bought a Studebaker with a crushed front end and repaired it himself using fiberglass, his first experience working with that material, according to Bremer, foreshadowing his massive sculptures-to-be. He won high school competitions in sculpture but took mechanical drawing courses instead of art, buying into his father’s philosophy that art was OK as a hobby, but a man needed a real profession.

After high school, Jiménez’s father decided his son needed to go to college and made it clear to Luis Jr. he would support his education if he majored in architecture, a practical subject from which he could make a living. After a year of basics at Texas Western College (now UTEP), Luis enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin and completed four years of the
Luis Jiménez continued from page 8

five-year architectural program. In an interview in *Cite: The Architectural & Design Review of Houston*, Drexel Turner and Bruce C. Webb wrote that Jiménez had been taking art courses all along as electives. Then he took a design course in architecture with a professor who approached the class as if it were a 3-D art course, clearly a very different philosophy from that of most of the architecture professors Jiménez had taken who looked at courses from the engineer’s viewpoint.

When Jiménez changed his major to art, his father cut off all financial support and stopped speaking to him for five years. Graduating from UT in 1964, Luis went to Mexico City for a few months of graduate study. Jiménez told Bermingham that it was in Mexico that he realized he was of Mexican descent but he was American. The “pilgrimage” to the country of his ancestors was valuable in many ways, not the least of which was meeting many Mexican artists. He spent time with Francisco Zúñiga, one of Mexico’s greatest sculptors and muralists, and it was he who told Jiménez that he needed to go to New York to further his craft.

Jiménez had married another art major he met in college, Vicky Balcou, and they had a daughter whom they named Elisa Victoria. When his wife fell ill in Mexico, the couple returned to El Paso, where Jiménez took a job teaching to support his family. During that time, Jiménez suffered a broken back in a car accident and was paralyzed for a time. Father and son were able to reconnect, and the younger Jiménez actually did some work for his father. He tried to convince his wife to go with him to New York, but she would not go. Shortly after he moved there, the couple was divorced. Jiménez told Bermingham.

Finding a job in New York was made easier because he spoke Spanish, and he became a recruiter for Head Start and worked for a community program called Youth Board. Jiménez also became an assistant to the metal sculptor Seymour Lipton. He sent slides of his work to gallery after gallery with no luck. Jiménez told Bermingham that when he entered the prestigious Castelli Gallery between exhibitions and could not find anyone to talk to, he placed three of his sculptures he had in his pickup in the exhibition space without permission. This bold move impressed the director who referred him to the Graham Gallery, a prestigious program connected to his art museum. Jiménez pulled up to his compound in a truck which had a sign in Spanish on it with the words “Electric Signs,” borrowed from his father. His own Volkswagen van had blown a motor.

He was mistaken for a repairman at first but eventually was able to speak to Anderson who wanted nothing to do with him until he saw some of Jiménez’s work, which Jiménez just “happened” to have with him. Anderson gave him the $5,000 so he could finish the iconic *End of the Trail*. Jiménez would stay in Roswell and work on his sculptures there for six years. Anderson would end up with a big collection of Jiménez’s work. *End of the Trail (with Electric Sunset)* shows a Native American on a horse, making a viewer recall the source of this piece, the sculpture *End of the Trail* by James Earle Fraser, depicting the end of the fight of the Native American against the White settler and government. But the two pieces differ in many aspects, besides the fiberglass and neon lights. Jiménez’s Indian rider does not have his head down in defeat; he looks sideways as if to say “Don’t count me out, yet!”

The horse also is not the exhausted creature he is in Fraser’s original. He is energized, one back foot off the ground, his eyes are bright red neon lights and the sunset looks like anything but a dying sun. It is round and shining bright and surrounded by neon lights, looking more like a sunrise than a sunset, a beginning rather than an end. Although the idea of Fraser’s vanquished Indian has become a cliché of American history, Jiménez’s version provides a different look at that “truth,” something Jiménez’s art would do more and more.

Jiménez’s *End of the Trail* was exhibited at the Whitney Museum in New York, and the Long Beach Museum bought it. As part of the agreement made with Anderson, Jiménez had the right to make a total of five castings, something he was able to do with each commissioned sculpture. Someone familiar with images of his *End of the Trail* may notice that each of the castings is different. There are differences in paint colors and surface texture, true for all of Jiménez’s commissioned sculptures.

*End of the Trail (with Electric Sunset)* can be viewed at UTEP. In a “Visit El Paso” post, prominent art dealer Adair Margo told the story of how UTEP acquired this iconic sculpture. In 1985, she discovered that Frederick Weisman of Los Angeles owned a large collection of American and European art which he loaned to American cities without charge, and in time, she arranged his collection to be exhibited in El Paso. Weisman came with the paintings and when he visited Margo’s gallery, he looked at pieces of local art being exhibited and especially at *End of the Trail (with Electric Sunset)*, a seven-foot fiberglass sculpture with blinking lights by Luis Jiménez. Not only did Weisman like it, he bought it! And then he asked Margo if she thought UTEP might accept it as a gift. Generous? Thoughtful? Someone who truly loved art and wanted as many people as possible to enjoy it, Weisman made the offer, President Diana Natalicio of UTEP enthusiastically accepted the rest is history.

*End of the Trail (with Electric Sunset)* was installed in 1988 on the second floor of the university library. It has traveled all over the world in exhibit and now makes its home on the first floor of the Chemistry and Computer Science Building, right across from Starbucks. Jiménez might find this location a fitting place, his modern version of the “disappearing Native American” myth next to another modern American icon!

Although the downtown Museum of Art and UTEP have several pieces of Jiménez’s art, the second best known piece of his sculpture in El Paso might be *Vaquero*, a piece he completed in El Paso for a Houston park. Many El Pasaos will remember that a casting of this sculpture stood in front of the Museum of Art for more than 10 years. What many did not know was that the piece was only on loan. *Vaquero* shows a Mexican cowboy with raised hand clutching a pistol atop a blue bucking horse, with prickly pear cactus under and behind the front feet of the horse. Commissioned in 1974 by the city of Houston, the 16-foot figure celebrates the Mexican origins of the American cowboy (*vaquero* meaning “cowboy”). Jiménez told one author, “I’m redefining an image and a myth.”

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Richard “Tuff” Hedeman: The Michael Jordan of Professional Bull Riding

By Patricia Renee Tapia

He was only four years old when it happened: that old rodeo cowboy slammed the little boy’s hand in the truck door. The tyke never made a sound, not even a whimper. Once the old man realized what had happened, he dubbed the youngster “Tough Nut.” As the little boy grew, it was eventually shortened to “Tuff,” and the name suited him well because he proved to be one of the toughest professional rodeo riders the sport has ever seen.

Professional bull riding has become “the toughest sport on dirt,” a phrase coined by Professional Bull Riders, Inc. Josh Peter, lead sports enterprise writer for the New Orleans Times-Picayune, commented that even in the beginning, the bull-riding event always came last in the rodeo because of the possibility of seeing a cowboy get battered or, even worse, killed, would keep the fans there for the entire show. What else could make an audience wait to watch an event where each ride lasts for only eight seconds? No other cowboy understands the danger or the attraction better than four-time World Champion Bull Rider, Richard Neale “Tuff” Hedeman.

In a phone interview, he provided some insight as to how it all started. Hedeman made his debut in the world on March 2, 1963, at Providence Hospital in El Paso, Texas. He is the youngest of seven children born to Red and Clarice Hedeman, and he grew up at La Mesa (Raton), Ruidoso Downs, and Sunland Park racetracks where his dad and mom both worked. Hedeman got his first job at the young age of eight as a groom at the Ruidoso racetrack. Hedeman said that at 15, he began galloping and working the race horses before school.

This led to the dream of becoming a jockey someday, but that dream went up in smoke after he started college and grew too big. Hedeman said his weight rose to 135 pounds, and although that does not seem very heavy, it is a considerable amount for someone wanting to become a jockey. The average jockey weighs between 108 and 118 pounds. Once Hedeman realized his chances of becoming a jockey were doomed, he focused on the only other thing that excited him: rodeo.

According to Hedeman, he rode his first “bull,” which was just a calf, at the age of four in the Upper Valley Arena, which was built by his father and some of the other men that worked at Sunland Park Racetrack. He continued to ride as he grew up, and while attending Coronado High School, he won a couple of high school rodeo titles his junior and senior years. Hedeman said, “I competed in saddle bronc riding, bull riding, steer wrestling, and roping while in high school.”

Graduating from Coronado High in 1981, Hedeman won a rodeo scholarship to Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas. In an article published in American Cowboy, Kendra Santos wrote that he captured the bull riding title at the National Collegiate Finals in 1983. He rode a bull that no other professional cowboy had been able to ride at the National Finals Rodeo.

That same year he bought his Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) permit, which was the first step to becoming a professional rodeo cowboy. PRCA commissioner Karl Stressman explained on the Wrangler Network website how to obtain a PRCA permit. The competitor must be 18 years old, complete the permit application and pay the initiation fee. Once the performer has received the permit, he needs to compete and win $1,000 to be eligible to become a PRCA cardholder, which makes the rider an official PRCA rodeo cowboy. The cardholder does not have to win $1,000 within the first year, but each year he does not reach his $1,000 earnings he must pay the permit fee. After winning $1,000 in PRCA events, he may apply for his PRCA card.

In the first year after purchasing his permit card, Tuff Hedeman fulfilled the conditions of the permit. According to Jan Reid, author of 10 books and senior writer for Texas Monthly, Hedeman won $2,000 at one rodeo in El Paso, which was twice the amount needed to fulfill his permit and become a contestant cardholder, qualifying him as a professional rodeo cowboy.

In his book Fried Twinkies, Buckle Bunnies, & Bull Riders: A Year Inside the Professional Bull Riders Tour, Josh Peters wrote that “Hedeman turned pro and attacked the circuit like a starving man who would attack a buffet.” Richard “Tuff” Hedeman lived up to his nickname and went on to become a world champion bull rider despite the heartache he endured and the injuries he suffered.

Hedeman’s career as a professional bull rider took off in 1984. Reid noted that in Hedeman’s second year as a professional bull rider, he won almost $50,000, and at an event in Oklahoma City he qualified for the National Finals. The National Finals Rodeo (NFR) is held in Las Vegas, Nev., at the end of every year and is always a sold-out event. Only the top 15 regular season finishers in each event, which includes saddle bronc riding, bareback riding, calf roping, team roping, steer wrestling, barrel racing, and last, but not least, bull riding, have a chance at the prize money at the National Finals Rodeo.

Not only did Hedeman’s career take off that year, but so did his love life. According to Reid, Hedeman met Tracy Stepp in Oklahoma City, a professional barrel racer from Pilot Point, Texas. The following year he placed second in the bull riding standings. Then came 1986, a great year for Hedeman. He won his first bull riding world championship title in the PRCA, and he also became the first bull rider to earn $137,000 in a year, unheard of at the time. To top it off, he and Stepp were married on May 20 of that year.

Tuff Hedeman soon learned that with the success of bull riding came hardships interwoven with the friendships made along the way. Reid explained that it was common for rodeo cowboys to team up and travel together to events in order to split travel expenses and make time on the road much less lonesome. According to Hedeman, the first year he traveled with Bart Wilkinson, a college acquaintance. Over the next several years, he would travel with Cody Lambert, Clint Branger, Jim Sharp and Lane Frost.

Lane Frost began traveling with Hedeman in 1985. According to Santos, Hedeman and Frost first became acquainted in 1980 at the National High School Rodeo Association Finals. Jan Reid said that Jim Sharp joined them in 1986, and according to

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Josh Peter, that was “more bull riding talent than anyone had ever seen in one vehicle.” Reid confirmed this in his statement, “For six straight years, either Tuff, Lane, or Jim was the world champion.”

Hedeman and Frost developed a close friendship, and according to Santos, “An all-out passion for riding bulls was what drew Lane and him together.” They became the best of friends, and according to Hedeman, he spent more time with Frost than he did his wife. Peter pointed out that although Hedeman had won more championships than Frost, Frost had been the more popular rider with his “lanky frame and an undeniable charm.” Hedeman and Lambert would threaten to leave Frost behind after an event because Frost always took the time to sign autographs and chat with fans.

Then came Frost’s untimely death. The tragedy occurred on July 30, 1989, in Cheyenne, Wyo. According to Jan Reid, Lane Frost rode a bull for the required eight seconds, but when he dismounted, he landed on his hands and knees. The bull gave Frost a jab with a blunted horn. Hedeman watched from 10 feet away. Frost got to his feet but then collapsed on the ground and remained motionless. The bull’s horn had broken a rib which, in turn, had severed a coronary artery. Frost bled to death within a matter of minutes.

Josh Peter wrote that “with Frost gone, Hedeman became the sport’s number one Ambassador.” He began staying after the events to sign autographs just as Frost had. Though many people would have quit because Frost always took the time to sign autographs and chat with fans. Hedeman and Frost developed a close friendship, and according to Santos, “An all-out passion for riding bulls was what drew Lane and him together.” They became the best of friends, and according to Hedeman, he spent more time with Frost than he did his wife. Peter pointed out that although Hedeman had won more championships than Frost, Frost had been the more popular rider with his “lanky frame and an undeniable charm.” Hedeman and Lambert would threaten to leave Frost behind after an event because Frost always took the time to sign autographs and chat with fans.

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Josh Peter wrote that “with Frost gone, Hedeman became the sport’s number one Ambassador.” He began staying after the events to sign autographs just as Frost had. Though many people would have quit after witnessing a tragedy that amplified the brutality of bull riding, Rick Cantu, a veteran sports writer for the Austin American-Statesman, recounted what Hedeman told him in a phone call. Hedeman said, “I had quit bull riding when he died, I wouldn’t have been happy. I surely wasn’t happy about losing him, but to say I wouldn’t do this anymore wouldn’t make any sense.”

Proving the solemnity of this statement, Hedeman won his second PRCA World Champion Bull Rider title at the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, just months after his best friend’s death. After successfully riding his last bull of the night and clinching the world champion title, Hedeman rode for an additional eight seconds in honor of Lane Frost.

It was that kind of determination that drew the respect and admiration of fans and fellow bull riders. Hedeman had worked hard to get where he was. Santos explained in her article that Hedeman was not a natural at bull riding. She said he gave some of the credit for his abilities to riding racehorses, which gave him good balance. Jan Reid explained that there are bull-riding schools to help teach riders the technical skills to stay on the bull, but according to Hedeman, the sport is really basic. In Reid’s article Hedeman claimed, “Riding bulls is about ten percent talent. The rest of it’s balls.”

According to Reid, Hedeman projected this attitude in his prime. Reid explained that Hedeman had the physique of a “light-heavyweight boxer.” And though he was bowlegged and pigeon-toed “to the point of slapstick comedy,” he walked with an air of confidence. Willard H. Porter, rodeo journalist and former rodeo director of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, declared that even at the beginning of Hedeman’s career, the PRCA riding director, Bryan McDonald, noticed the mental toughness Hedeman had. It was his mental toughness that led him to win his third PRCA World Championship Bull Rider title in 1991.

In 1992, Tuff Hedeman and 19 other professional bull riders organized the Professional Bull Riders, Inc. (PBR). Hedeman was president of the PBR until 2004. Kendall Hamilton, a writer and editor for Newsweek, pointed out that until the early 1990s, bull riders had been risking their lives for the chance to win a small amount of money and a trophy belt buckle. He noted that it was the goal of these 20 bull riders to make bull riding a stand-alone event and increase the prize money, keeping the cowboys’ interests at heart. The PBR succeeded in doing this and took bull riding to an entirely new level. One way it made the Professional Bull Riders Tour a success was to give fans what they wanted: danger. The PBR matched the best bull riders with the toughest bulls, or as professional bull riders like to call them, “rank” bulls. According to Josh Peter, “The ranker the bull, the more dangerous and the tougher to ride.”

Peter explained that early on, many bulls would not buck, so a couple of rodeo promoters introduced a crossbreed of Brahmas, which were known for their mean streak and ungovernable hankering to buck. Riding one of these rank bulls gave the rodeo cowboy a better chance for a high score, “and no one had wanted to win more than Tuff Hedeman.” He was known for riding the rankest of the bulls, and that is why many of the fans admired him.

To draw one of these rank bulls at a rodeo meant there was a chance that the rider would get seriously injured, and up until 1993, Hedeman had never been seriously injured. He had gotten hung up once and booted around the arena, but nothing serious enough to keep him from riding for a lengthy period of time. Santos wrote that this changed in 1993 at the National Finals Rodeo when Hedeman was paralyzed for the longest ten minutes of his life after being thrown from a bull. Although he regained feeling, he underwent surgery to remove a bulging disk and the doctors fused his neck with a steel plate and a bone graft from his hip.

The irony was that earlier that year, Hedeman had accomplished what no other rodeo cowboy had done before: he had accumulated $1 million in his career as a rodeo cowboy, according to Reid. Santos said that Hedeman was out the entire year of 1994, recuperating. He returned to bull riding in 1995. It started off as a good year for Hedeman, but as Kendall Hamilton said, “Injuries and bull riding go together like cowboys and hats.” According to Josh Peter, Hedeman had already earned enough points to win the 1994 PBR World Championship title. For those who do not understand the concept of winning the PBR World Champion title, here is a brief explanation.

According to the PBR website, each ride in a PBR event is eight seconds long. If the bull rider stays on the entire eight seconds, he can receive a score of up to 100 points. Fifty of those points are for the rider and the other 50 are for the bull. The bull is judged on his athleticism and difficulty to ride, and the rider is judged on his control during the ride. If the rider does not stay on for the full eight seconds, he receives no score. Based on points earned throughout the season, the top 40 bull riders in the world compete at the PBR Built Ford Tough Finals at the end of the year.

At the PBR Finals, the bull riders compete in six rounds of competition over a period of five days. The bull rider who accumulates the most points throughout the season, to include the PBR Finals, becomes the PBR World Champion. Tuff Hedeman had one final ride at the 1995 PBR Finals although he had already clinched the PBR World Champion Title. He had drawn Bodacious, considered one of the rankest bulls in the world. In fact, Bodacious had only been ridden successfully six times out of the 135 times a cowboy had been on his back, one of them being Hedeman, according to Peter. They were now paired up again.

In a documentary video on YouTube, Hedeman described what happened next. Not long after exiting the chute, Bodacious jerked his head back and Hedeman’s face smashed against the bull’s head. Hedeman’s face was shattered and he lost teeth. He underwent six and a half hours of reconstructive surgery and six titanium plates were placed in his face. Hedeman lost his sense of taste and smell.

Kevin Simpson wrote in an online news article for The Denver Post that just after Hedeman’s run-in with the bull, he promised his then 3-year-old son, Lane, that if he drew Bodacious again, he would “chicken out” or forfeit his opportunity to ride the bull. As luck would have it, Hedeman did draw Bodacious six weeks later at the 1995 PRCA National Finals.

Josh Peter said that Hedeman climbed on top of the bull, but when the gate opened, he “turned him out,” letting the bull leave the chute without him and tipping his hat to Bodacious. According to Peter, Hedeman continued to ride bulls until 1998 when another neck injury made him realize it was time to retire.

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reading this article would know most of this history because they have either grown up here or have been told the stories by congregants who are long time members. The Temple is led by lay leaders and congregation participation and commitment, and the commitment to its history and existence was fostered by the leadership and teachings of the rabbis that came before. He states that not all rabbis or temples have been successful in this, and other congregations around the country are struggling to have a sense of self as an organization, but Temple Mount Sinai has always had that. It is one of its strengths.

The history of the Temple is celebrated throughout the building. In a literal and figurative expression of continuity, the chapel entrance houses the cornerstone of the first temple which serves as the physical base of the stand that displays the Temple’s Centennial Commemorative Torah book. The pages of this special book are turned as it is read through the year.

The second temple’s cornerstone is in their beautiful courtyard. Panels from the first Zelonka Memorial Hall were transferred to the new temple, and plaques, photos and memorials line the halls showing important people in the life of the congregation. The building itself commemorates the tradition and history of Judaism.

The curved lines on the inside ceiling of the Hayman Krupp Memorial Chapel represent the curved lines of a tent, memorializing the long years of Israelite exile in the desert, and it can also represent the inside of a prayer book. In the striking stained glass, the yellow Hebrew numbers one through ten represent the Ten Commandments and the Ark that holds the Torah scrolls, the Lectern and the Eternal Light are inspired by the revered Tree of Life symbol.

The pointed shape of the outside of the temple also represents the outlines of a prayer book. When the building was being erected in the 1960s, the TV show The Flying Nun was very popular, and the story goes that the neighborhood kids thought its shape was a nun’s headdress, based either on their Catholic experience or on the TV show! In keeping with other stained glass installations, Zelonka Memorial Hall was graced in 2001 by congregant Hal Marcus’s Torah in Glass, a five panel stained glass mosaic depicting the stories of the Torah, or first five books of the Bible.

Tradition is carried on in other ways, including the commitment to providing space for other faiths when they need a place of worship. In recent years, Protestant congregations that have met in the temple have included Westside churches Christ the King and St. Francis on the Hill. Wonderful friendly relations and shared worship experiences have occurred as an outgrowth of this cooperation.

Judaism has many shared concerns with the broader interfaith community. Rabbi Zeidman said in a recent personal interview that the Reform Jewish heritage teaches the extreme importance of social justice and social action. “We view ourselves as being taught to care for people no matter where they are. We are taught to be ‘a light to the nation,’ and I interpret that as we are to be a role model on what it means to live a life of value and meaning.” He also explained that from the arrival of Jews in America, it was important to let non-Jews get to know them as people, to not see them as different or strange, and to create a space for themselves that was different from the anti-Semitic experience. Being part of the broader community is not only part of Reform Judaism values, but it is also partly influenced by the violence the Jewish community has experienced, especially in Europe.

He continued by saying that “our shared narrative as Jewish people is that we were slaves in Egypt and that’s what teaches us to care for the stranger, the widow, the orphan.” There are three congregations in El Paso, all on the Westside which is where most Jewish people settle, plus a chapel at Fort Bliss. The congregations are the Chabad Lubavitch, the Congregation B’nai Zion and the congregation Temple Mount Sinai. Each fills a niche for people who want to experience or live their Judaism in different ways. The distinction lies in how each interprets Jewish law, whether literally, as in the case of the Chabad, or with exceptions codified into conservative law at the B’nai Zion synagogue, or the Temple’s evaluation of the context and spirit of the law and how each individual chooses to apply that to their own meaningful life. In addition, the worship experience is different in each, based again on interpretations of ancient laws.

The relations among the congregations are very cordial, especially between the Synagogue and the Temple who have congregants with dual membership or have family branches that worship at one or the other. Competition between groups in town is not an issue here, as it may be in other large cities, and all participate in celebrations and activities fostered by the Jewish Federation of El Paso, the local chapter of a national group that provides a meeting place for practicing and non-practicing Jews to gather.

Temple Mount Sinai has provided more than a century of commitment to its congregation and the broader community, with many of its leaders focused on interfaith dialogue, commitment to social betterment and social justice and listening to the concerns and views of all groups of people, whether Christian, Jew or Muslim. As Rabbi Weiss said of El Paso in a 1998 Times article during the 100th celebration of the Temple, “The truth is that we build bridges here instead of walls between religious groups ... It is certainly not as in other places.” The words of Rabbi Zeidman add to this fact: “Whether or not you see the Temple name or logo on an effort, we as Jewish individuals are involved in almost everything in our community. This is part of what we teach: the importance of being part of the larger community and to speak out and to live our values.”

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Hedeman settled down in Morgan Mill, Texas, with his wife Tracy and their two boys, Lane and Trevor. According to Peter, Hedeman resigned as president of the PBR in 2004 because he felt the riders were no longer the main concern of the PBR. Hedeman then became president of the Championship Bull Riding (CBR) organization in May 2005, which was founded in 2002 by a stock contractor, Terry Williams, and a businessman, Joel Logan.

The CBR is a stand-alone bull riding organization like the PBR. Hedeman explained his mission as ambassador for the CBR when he stated, “My goals are the same as they have always been and that is to create a system based on merit only — with no politics or favoritism. I want to create events that guys want to come to, that they have to come to.”

In May 1997, Hedeman was inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame. Later that same year he was inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame. Then in 1999, he was inducted into the Professional Bull Riders Ring of Honor and in 2002, into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame. With four professional bull riding world titles and a number of business accomplishments, he has definitely earned the status of the “Michael Jordan of bull riding.”

Hedeman has certainly lived up to the nickname “Tuff,” and despite the heartache of losing his best friend and the serious injuries he suffered in the latter part of his career, he managed to become one of the most revered World Champion bull riders. Hedeman was instrumental in helping make professional bull riding what it is today. With its tremendous increase in prize money and broadcasts on national television, bull riding has grown into an international sport.

Although Hedeman no longer competes, he is still active in the bull riding community as ambassador of the CBR and broadcaster at numerous bull riding events. The tale of Richard Neale “Tuff” Hedeman is an inspiration to all. Despite injury and loss, champions do not quit. With heart and determination, Tuff truly showed he was — tough!
a river, reminiscent of his own background. It was not a favorite of those against undocumented Mexican immigrants. Fiesta—Jarabe which the General Service Administration commissioned for the Otay Mesa border station near San Diego, Calif., shows a couple dancing the traditional Mexican hat dance. Critics said the woman’s dress was Spanish not Mexican and was too tight. Others criticized the man for being fat and too dark. Jiménez countered by saying he was showing “real people in a real situation,” according to the Smithsonian American Art Museum website.

In a Los Angeles Times article, Jiménez said that his sculpture was “Not cute. … It’s not a Disneyland version.” Many other sculptures by Jiménez have had such criticism leveled at them, but cities kept commissioning the huge pieces and he kept making them. The faces were seldom pretty, but even though made of fiberglass, the human figures were realistic.

Even El Paso’s Los Lagartos became controversial when the city began drawing up plans to renovate the Plaza. The original plan called for the removal of the sculpture. Yes, it was in need of restoration, but much of the damage had been caused by the sun and neglect. Only through the work of community activists was the sculpture saved.

In 2013, Los Lagartos was transported to Oberlin, Ohio, where McKay Lodge Conservation Laboratory teamed with the coating and finishing division of PPG Industries to restore the sculpture. The company actually developed new methods of application of their most advanced finishing materials for the fiberglass piece. Typical deteriorations of such works include cracking, fading colors and disbonding of clear coatings. Coatings were designed to withstand sunlight and extreme temperatures, graffiti and chemicals. The sculpture only needs to be washed to remove surface soil. The same company has since restored the Smithsonian’s Vaquero and Fargo, N.D.’s Sodbuster, using the same techniques so successful on Los Lagartos.

It took two years to bring the alligators “back to life,” and the perfectly restored sculpture was returned to El Paso in 2015 and stored inside the Museum of Art until it was reinstalled in February 2016. On April 16, San Jacinto Plaza reopened with 2,000 attending the ceremony and once more viewing a bright, shiny, beautiful Los Lagartos, now protected by a huge canopy secured with cables. The sculpture is in the middle of a pond on the floor of which “swims” five tile mosaic alligators. The renovated Plaza with its water features, game tables, large wood and rock benches and lush with trees, flowers and bushes, also includes several walking paths, all of which end at the Jiménez sculpture.

In 1985, Luis Jiménez bought a large building in Hondo, N.M., that originally had served as the Hondo Elementary School from 1902 to 1955 and renovated it to include living quarters and studios. Five years later, he bought an apple processing building called the “Apple Shed” where he cast and painted his larger-than-life sculptures, including Los Lagartos.

In 2006, he had almost finished another commissioned piece entitled Blue Mustang, commissioned by the Denver International Airport in 1992, a 32-foot blue horse rearing up on his hind feet, made in three pieces. On June 13, 2006, a piece of the sculpture came loose from the hoist that was moving it and pinned Jiménez to a steel beam, severing a femoral artery. The artist bled to death before arriving at a Ruidoso hospital.

His long-time assistant Jesus Medina and others completed the sculpture, and it was installed in 2008. It drew intense criticism by Denver residents who obviously were not familiar with Jiménez’s sculptures and is still known by some of the nicknames its intense color and red neon light eyes suggested to some: “Blucifer,” “Satans’s Steed,” and “Blue Stallion of Death.” It unfortunately is located between lanes leading to the airport in the distance which prevents contemplation of its magnificence, its power. Rather than seeing it as the “Blue Stallion of Death” as some Denverites do, those of us in El Paso who are more familiar with Jiménez’s art see it as the consummate symbol of his desire to capture an icon of the West in a unique material simulating movement and factual detail. He loved horses and many of his works feature them. He had a favorite appaloosa in Hondo, which served as the model for “Blue Mustang.”

Texas, New Mexico and the entire country lost a giant of the art world on June 13, 2006. Working with vision in only one eye and dealing with an impending fourth divorce which never went through, Jiménez died doing what he loved in a place that he and Computer Science Building at Rim Road and Kauhorne Street.

Because of copyright issues, Borderlands was unable to acquire approval to provide photos of the two sculptures in El Paso referred to in this article: Los Lagartos and End of the Trail (with Electric Sunset).

Therefore, the staff of Borderlands invites our readers to visit the San Jacinto Plaza (Plaza de los lagartos) in downtown El Paso to see the magnificent sculpture of alligators, recently restored and reinstalled in spring 2016. Take in the completely renovated plaza while you enjoy this piece of public art by Luis A. Jiménez.

We further invite you to view his End of the Trail (with Electric Sunset) on the first floor of UTEP’s Chemistry and Computer Science Building at Rim Road and Kauhorne Street.
and to be able to be part of American culture, not outside of it. The fight for civil rights was being waged all over the country by African Americans, by Chicanos, by farm workers, by women. It was a difficult period in the nation when individuals joined separate groups united in the common cause of equality — peacefully, if possible, violently, if necessary. It was the time of the Black Panthers, the Brown Berets, militant groups of African-Americans and Mexican-Americans, and Cesar Chavez, non-violent leader of Mexican farm workers.

In one of his articles, Salazar quoted Brown Beret leader David Sanchez, “To the Anglo, justice means just us.” Salazar provided his readers with factual information on the protests and their leaders, as well as revealing prejudice by judicial, educational and political leaders and exposing stereotypes of Mexican-Americans by the media. He was asked to tone down his rhetoric. This was about the same time he decided to leave the Los Angeles Times to go on television.

Salazar resigned from the Times in January 1970. He had taken the position as news director of Channel 34 KMEX, Los Angeles’ first Spanish-language television station, however, he continued to write a column for the Times about Chicano issues.

Both in his column and at KMEX Salazar reported on apparent police brutality and abuse. Garcia wrote that he was being investigated by the FBI and that the Los Angeles Police Department labeled him a “slanted, left-wing oriented reporter.” Spanish-speaking reporters had clashed with police several times while trying to film school walkouts after seeing police drag girls by the hair and being banned from the site because they had the “wrong” press credentials. City Editor Bill Thomas of the Times recalled that Los Angeles “Police Chief Ed Davis once called on [him] to fire Salazar and abolish his column,” according to Garcia. Salazar expressed to colleagues that he felt he was being followed by the police.

On July 16, 1970, two brothers who were Mexican Nationals were killed by Los Angeles police during a hunt for a robbery suspect. Salazar interviewed three people wounded in the shooting, according to the PBS documentary. After the interviews and an article by the Times, the policemen were indicted for their brutality.

On Aug. 29, 1970, the Chicano Moratorium was held in Laguna Park in East Los Angeles. Randy Ontiveros stated in No Golden Age: Television News and the Chicano Civil Movement that the protest, launched by 25,000 Chicanos protesting the Vietnam War and the disproportionate number of Mexican-Americans being killed, was meant to be peaceful. After a scuffle with suspected looters, the police engaged the protesters violently and arrested about 150 people. According to Ontiveros, at least 60 people were injured and three were killed, including Salazar.

Salazar and others had been taking a break from the protest by heading to the Silver Dollar Café, many blocks from the park. Shortly after, Los Angeles County Deputy Sheriff Sergeant Thomas Wilson shot a 10-by-½ inch tear gas projectile in the doorway of the café. A rumor that several men with weapons had entered the café later proved to be false. The tear gas canister hit Salazar in the head and he died instantly.

Whether Salazar’s death was a homicide or an accident has never been determined. A coroner’s inquest took place and after several days of testimony, no charges were filed against the sheriff’s deputy. In a 1973 Times article by Ray Zeman and Dave Smith, Los Angeles Supervisor Kenneth Hahn said that the tear gas projectile “was not authorized for use in the type of situation in which Salazar was killed.”

Zeman and Smith wrote that after Salazar and her children brought suit against the Sheriff’s Department, the Salazar family was granted $700,000 in 1973 by Judge Alfred J. McCourteny, who added in a Los Angeles Times article that the award did not suggest the police were guilty of misconduct. Even after the records of the shooting were released to the public in 2011, the Office of Independent Review, a civilian agency, could “assign no blame or wrongdoing.” However, many still believe that Salazar was a target.

People from all segments of society attended Salazar’s funeral, and his death impacted people locally as well as in California and elsewhere. On the day of his death, Rosa Guerrero called Salazar’s mother, who invited Guerrero to a mass at Sacred Heart Church. After the mass, about 50 of Salazar’s colleagues and friends gathered for a meeting, a big turning point in her life. Guerrero was the only woman there and had never been involved in a community awareness Chicano group. It was the beginning of her activism. She became one of the founders of the Ruben Salazar Foundation Scholarship Fund for Latinos.

Salazar became a martyr to Chicano activists and an icon to young Hispanic journalism students and remains so. Salazar posthumously received the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award in 1971, and in 1999 the California Chicano News Media Association created the Ruben Salazar Journalism Awards, honoring excellence in published or broadcast work that promotes understanding of Latinos. The city of Los Angeles renamed Laguna Park the Ruben Salazar Park.

In addition, several other schools, streets, buildings and programs across the country were named after him, such as the Ruben Salazar High School in Pico Rivera, Calif., the Ruben Salazar Bilingual Center in Chicago and the Ruben Salazar Hall at California State University. Additionally, the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) established a scholarship in honor of Salazar. The U.S. Postal Service also released a stamp in honor of Salazar on April 22, 2008. He is the first Hispanic journalist on a U.S. postage stamp.

In El Paso, a mural at Lincoln Park commemorates the journalist and his impact, and another mural honors him at an apartment complex named for him on Eucalyptus Street. To honor the trailblazer, the UTEP Department of Communication created the Ruben Salazar Spanish-Language Media Program in 2003, according to Kimberly Miller in a University Communications article. The program strives to educate bilingual journalists by providing them the best resources. UTEP named him their Distinguished Alumnus in 2008, and he was honored as one of the Writers of the Pass of the North in the 2012 Carl Hergtzog Lecture Series.

The PBS documentary by Phillip Rodriguez entitled Ruben Salazar: Man in the Middle was shown in El Paso in honor of Salazar’s accomplishments. The documentary aired nationally on April 29, 2014.

Salazar was truly a man in the middle, a Mexican who became an American and married an Anglo woman. He served in the U.S. Army but admitted it was a mistake for the U.S. to fight in Vietnam. He championed rights for all Mexican-Americans, rights that he enjoyed, and in the last few years of his life began trying to explain the term “Chicano” to his reading audience. He did not intentionally die for a cause but felt he was a target of investigation. Today he is honored by his former peers as well as the newer generations for his journalism and his ethics. Although his name is celebrated in parks, schools, murals and programs, many Americans have yet to learn about him. To those who remember him, Ruben Salazar will always be the one who valued justice, fairness and, above all, truth.
James Carroll, his landlord and mission board member, enumerated them one day. He took a two-thirds cut in pay and finally began the work he knew he was meant for all along.

Barrow himself admits that he is a “shoot-from-the-hip” kind of guy and some of the most successful activities at the mission have occurred from necessity or an epiphany, such as its furniture factory. When the metal beds at the mission began to break, Barrow began wondering how wooden beds would hold up and used his basic shop skills to draw a prototype. He had workers produce a model bed and even had a heavy Chevrolet Suburban placed on top of it to prove its strength! Beds, chests of drawers, desks, even armoires, beautifully designed and made by mission residents, first replaced those already in the dormitories, and then the mission began selling to churches and other missions around the country.

Rescue Furniture, as it is now called, uses solid wood, producing very durable and economical furniture. The bunk beds are not the size of usual bunk beds for children; they allow the person using the lower bunk to sit up comfortably. The wood shop also makes smaller pieces such as crosses.

It is this consideration for the quality of shelter, whether for one night or 30, for children or hospice residents of the mission, that perhaps sets Barrow apart from other directors. When he realized that the food could be better, he set about to make it so — with help from the community. One of the first things he did was begin charging for the meat! Sometimes when everything is free, it means less than when one pays for it, whether with money or labor. Freshly baked muffins made their first appearance. Barbecued turkeys from the mission’s own smoker began to grace the menu.

Meghan Pratt, director of marketing at the Rescue Mission, stated in an interview that residents can eat lunch or dinner for $1.50 a meal. If unable to pay, they can do chores in exchange for the meal. Guests can help prepare meals, sweep floors and complete other tasks. Children and the infirm eat free, as do those with no money, but they work after they eat. The mission’s website indicated that 162,707 meals were served in 2015.

Christi LeClaire, store director for Albertson’s, believes in the mission. LeClaire informed Clarissa Brumley in a personal interview that 12 years ago she decided to make a difference. While working as store director at the Albertson’s on Red Road, she realized much food was going to waste and contacted the mission which was happy to have fresh produce that perhaps was not “pretty” enough for other customers or other perishables with approaching expiration dates. Instead of so much food ending up in landfills, it is now feeding those in need of nourishment.

Because so many residents have problems with alcohol and other drugs, the mission began their faith-based Relapse Prevention Program in 1990, a 13-week program addressing “bio-psycho-social-spiritual concepts in recovery,” as described on their website. The program includes anger management and self-esteem classes, group problem solving, self-help, Bible studies and classes to prevent relapse. Each resident’s problem is dealt with on a case-by-case basis and requires full cooperation and commitment.

Social Services Manager Darlene Domingue in an interview with Denice Ruiz stated that six out of every eight participants in the relapse program go on to graduate. Graduates of the program are given priority for employment and training opportunities, such as with the Rescue Furniture program.

Substance abuse and mental illness often occur together. According to Pratt, it is difficult to treat the homeless who are mentally ill, for sometimes they come and go rather quickly. Others self-medicate with alcohol and drugs. The Relapse Prevention Program treats the whole individual. The Rescue Mission works with nonprofit doctors who help treat residents with mental illness. Counselors can schedule appointments for residents, or they can confer with the mission’s full-time nurse. The mission also helps with transportation, medication and regular follow-ups. Barrow has created an environment at the mission where everyone who walks in has opportunities and the resources to get their life back on track.

A visit to the Rescue Mission at its current location on 1949 W. Paisano Dr. resulted in an immediate welcome. A small school bus had arrived to take the children in the mission to school. A Sun City Metro van shuttled residents to and from downtown. The very large kitchen was fully stocked and the food smelled delicious. The cozy dining room provided plenty of room for sharing meals and conversation. The chapel had a small altar and lovely stained glass and art. The Rescue Mission also has a children’s area filled with books and activities. The room used for the relapse program also serves as a gym.

Skye Schultz, Volunteer Coordinator of the Mission and UTEP alumna, provided a short tour of their facility which included one of the old grain silos used as a storage and office area. Schultz felt the call to work with the homeless while in college and served for two months in Mexico as a medical missionary. Her pastor helped her obtain a job at the mission in the kitchen. “One thing I like about the mission is that we don’t force anyone to do anything,” says Schultz.

Because of the expansion of the Border Highway and Spur 1966, the Rescue Mission has had to relocate to central El Paso. The news came just as Barrow and staff were completing a $2.6 million three-year renovation and expansion. The state agreed to pay $13.5 million for the mission’s property. The opening date for the new facility at 221 Lee St. has been pushed back to this fall. Construction will result in a 50 percent increase of current bed capacity, a food storage area, a computer room for children to do their homework, expanded laundry facilities and more.

Schultz emphasized that because of the transition, the mission is currently not accepting clothing donations since they will be moving out soon. However, the mission is always looking for volunteers and donations, especially because of the big change.

Along with location changes, Schultz states the residency policy will also be changing in the future. The mission will place more focus on women and children with needs whereas the emphasis has been on men since they comprise the majority of the residents. A recent El Paso Inc. article said that of the 190 beds that will be available, 66 will be for single men, 32 for women and 32 for families. An additional 24 will be provided for semi-permanent residents, 20 for drug relapse prevention residents and 16 for hospice or respite care. But Barrow has future plans to build a separate building on Cotton Street with the capacity for 100 beds for single parents with children and older children who have aged out of the foster care program.

Many know Barrow as a barbecue master, and the mission will open the Hallelujah BBQ Restaurant on the Cotton Street property once used to house El Paso’s trolleys. Barrow will use the restaurant as a mission training and employment center. He told Jeff Brumley in Baylor Proud, the University’s blog, that his in-laws asked what he wanted as a wedding gift and he requested an offset solid-steel smoker he had once seen in the 1970s.

The catering part of the restaurant is already functional and has a website. Although the restaurant will not be ready until next year, customers can place orders for “brisket cooked so long and hot it doesn’t need sauce” and much more. The barbecue website tells readers on its main page, “Hallelujah BBQ was created to provide jobs to people who find themselves at the Rescue Mission of El Paso.”

The Rescue Mission of El Paso is a vital part of the El Paso community and has helped many see the importance of empathy, family and love. In a newsletter, Barrow wrote how the Rescue Mission helped him understand the homeless.

I have achieved a greater understanding of what the El Paso Rescue Mission really stands for. It is the home for the homeless, the friend to the friendless. The Rescue Mission is the place where those who are truly alone can rest their heads and know, without a doubt, they are loved.

Research has revealed that the homeless in El Paso are not only the men we see at downtown intersections asking for change but single women and mothers with children of all ages. Some have family, others do not. The Rescue Mission is not for everyone experiencing problems of homelessness. It does not tolerate drugs or alcohol and it is definitely a place where God and Jesus are not just words.

Blake Barrow and his staff believe in the power of prayer.

The Rescue Mission of El Paso will be the only shelter in the city with a barbecue restaurant staffed by mission residents. The homeless who are not only hungry for food but for honest work and another chance to get their lives together will have that with the new Rescue Mission and restaurant. And the El Paso community will have a chance to savor Texas barbecue by Blake Barrow.
Rescue Mission of El Paso Provides Food and Opportunity

By Clarissa G. Rasberry and Denice Ruiz

Looking at the faces of homeless people in El Paso and other cities, one may wonder how these individuals became homeless in the first place. Loss of a job? Divorce? Substance abuse? Domestic violence? Illness? El Paso has many organizations to help those with the problem of homelessness and everything that comes with it. One such place is the Rescue Mission of El Paso, under the direction of Blake W. Barrow and the many staff members who work diligently to assist people in need of a safe place to call home.

For 64 years the Rescue Mission of El Paso has helped everyone who has entered its doors. It provides warm meals, clothing, shelter, spiritual guidance and employment opportunities to people in the community who are often left with nowhere to turn. The mission also addresses the issues that can lead individuals to homelessness by providing faith-based programs to help with addiction. Other programs can help the homeless who come in these doors make better decisions in their future.

More than 50 years ago, President Lyndon Johnson declared the “War on Poverty.” The plan was implemented in 1964 to “cure poverty,” according to a 2014 Washington Post article by Dylan Matthews. While a lot has changed since then, poverty is far from gone. In 2008, Diana Washington Valdez reported in an El Paso Times article that El Paso ranked fourth among the nation’s poorest cities. In a study released by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, El Paso still ranked among the poorest cities in the country. And we have homeless people, most of whom are in their position due to joblessness or a bad personal situation.

In the early 1950’s, H.W. Wallis felt a calling to move from Carlsbad, N.M. to El Paso. In a 1952 El Paso Herald-Post article, Wallis said he was previously a furniture dealer and he did not want to come to El Paso. Nonetheless, he could not deny the calling to serve others, so he sold his home in the mountains. And he had a small room on 602 N. Oregon St. Wallis started offering religious services. He cooked meals for anyone who attended, including transients who were hungry and tired, according to an April 1955 El Paso Herald-Post article by Kay Maxwell. With $300 that he collected in past due accounts, he was finally able to establish the Rescue Mission in an eight-room apartment in the same building, offering beds to the needy. With the help of Jean Jones, a missionary worker who cooked meals for the mission, and his wife Edna, H. D. Wallis was able to assist the individuals who needed help and love.

In a 1955 El Paso Herald-Post article, Edna Wallis stated they fed those who were hungry physically, but many were “calmed by prayer.” According to the Herald-Post, several El Paso churches donated money monthly to the mission, and many food stores and packing houses donated supplies to help the mission, in addition to private monetary gifts. According to a typed manuscript from the 1960s highlighting the commencement and early history of the Rescue Mission, it served 9,784 meals and furnished 4,988 beds in its first year.

After only three years in operation, the Rescue Mission was already in need of more space. According to the above mentioned manuscript, Wallis operated the facility until January 1955 and it was run by his wife until May 1955 when Gertrude Henry took over. In February 1956, Glen H. Cuddeford, a man who would lead the mission until his death in 1968, bought the mission property with a plan to make it a community endeavor. By 1957, the mission had grown significantly: more than 45,000 meals were being served per year, according to the manuscript. Additionally, the number of beds furnished had more than doubled to over 11,000.

In May 1958, the mission bought the Green Tree Hotel at 604 San Francisco Avenue. A year later, through volunteer labor and donated fixtures and supplies, the mission had a three-story building with 20 rooms available for staff and families, along with a basement providing beds for up to 100 men, bathroom facilities, a laundry and a lounge. The ground floor provided a lobby, dining room and chapel.

After its bylaws and charter were changed to call it a “Christian Mission” instead of a church, the El Paso Rescue Mission became an agency of the United Fund in November 1958. The United Fund allotment was used only for general expenses; donations from the community went toward debt retirement, building maintenance and new equipment. A board of directors, 25 in number, began overseeing the mission, recognized as a tax-deductible charity by the IRS. In 1959, just seven years after its most modest beginning, the mission provided 118,375 meals and 23,634 beds.

Community support had also increased. A 1964 El Paso Times article featured Charlie Tupper, service station operator on North Mesa Street and mission board member, reaching out to the community to donate to the Rescue Mission. In 1961, Tupper posted a sign urging his customers to donate clothing, bedding, shoes and food for the men and families who come to the Rescue Mission” and repeated his drive annually. In 1964, Tupper arranged 16 pickup stations in El Paso to participate in the drive.

The mission’s board decided to expand the facility once again and purchased the Bristol Hotel at 600½ San Francisco Avenue. Although it had grown rapidly the previous 10 years, the mission never closed down its facility and at times had residents assist in its transitions, plastering, painting and more.

Throughout its lengthy and motivating history, the Rescue Mission has always had inspirational leaders including Walter Guthrie and his wife, who succeeded Cuddeford, and the Reverend Vernon M. Tribble and his wife, whom a Herald-Post article in 1975 declared the “mother, father and teacher” to people who passed through the mission. Some volunteer workers became leaders, like David Hoyle.

David Hoyle, also known as “Pappy,” began volunteering at the mission while still working as a motorcycle sergeant with the El Paso Police Department. He was the senior member of the motorcycle branch in his 60s, hence the name “Pappy.” Hoyle retired in 1981. He became executive director of the Rescue Mission in the late 1980s.

According to El Paso Times article, “‘Pappy’ hangs up his halo” by Ramon Renteria, “He set the standard in El Paso for helping street people and families that have skidded on to hard times.” Pappy was a very loving person, continuously “mending wretched lives and souls.” A modest and caring individual, Hoyle guided the Rescue Mission when it first opened on West Paisano in 1966, after buying the property from Centro Vida Church. He retired at the end of the year in 1994, continuing to serve as chaplain.

Long-time mission worker Terry Bell succeeded Hoyle and gave credit to him for helping to develop the El Paso Coalition for the Homeless. The mission continued its services and Bell began reaching out to the community for help through newsletters. Regardless of the holiday or its director, the mission continued to help the homeless, the poor and the hungry.

In his book Stories from the Shelter, Blake Barrow tells the story of how he was introduced as executive director to the mission’s guests on Thanksgiving 1997 at the beginning of one of the religious services that guests attend before eating. Chaplain Pappy Hoyle ended one service and guests entered the dining room. With his Bible in his right hand, Hoyle put his left hand around Barrow and thumped him on the stomach with the Bible and said, “Here, you take the next one.” Barrow did, and almost 20 years later, he still is working to make the mission better.

Barrow, originally from Houston, had been a personal injury trial lawyer with four college degrees, including a Master of Theological Studies from Emory and a Juris Doctor degree and two others from Baylor University. Barrow had felt a calling to share the gospel in the past, but it was not until he was practicing law that he felt the calling again. First, he met Myrna Deckert, then CEO of theYWCA, while representing a woman suing the nonprofit. The YWCA agreed to sign off on an agreement in order to avoid court, but Deckert let Barrow know how much several programs for women and children would have to be cut in order to do that. Barrow came to realize that his client had taken advantage of the legal system. He was deeply ashamed and repaid the settlement amount and worked countless hours over the years pro bono for women theYWCA was helping.

Then Barrow realized that he fit the list of qualifications that the Rescue Mission had drawn up as continued on page 15