From the Editor

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 dived 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 in history, 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 Lagartos 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 Pasos 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. I visited him the day before he passed and was able to tell him once again how much I appreciated his work on 22 issues of Borderlands. As I write this, I am thinking about how talented he was and how much he loved teaching. I had just attended his retirement party in May, but I knew he was not in good health then. Joe was well informed about local history and delighted in editing our articles for no other reason than he “always learned so much from them.” Well, we always learned so much from him, not only about history but about writing and giving to others. He truly reflected our theme of inspiration. He was a gentle, kind, generous soul whom I will miss terribly.

This one’s for you, Joe!

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From the Student Editor

My first time helping with Borderlands was as a student at the Northwest campus of El Paso Community College during 2011-2012, but every time I am asked, I am ready 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 I 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 helped the country.

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.

Isabel Hernandez

Student Editor