Volume 33

2015-2016

BORDERLANDS

HOPE

COURAGE

HUMOR

COMMUNITY

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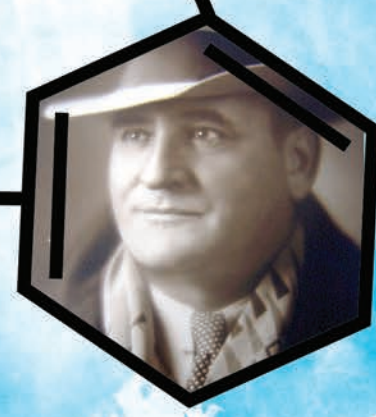


COMPASSION

STRENGTH

EDUCATION

SERVICE

The Anatomy of Heroes

EL PASO COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Best Place to Start!

Produced by the Students of El Paso Community College

From the Editor

The theme for this issue of *Borderlands* is Service and three articles that appeared in our "Web only" issue two years ago are included. A friend and advisor of our project was adamant about printing all articles for posterity, and so we have. The subjects of these articles are individuals who are/were political, religious and educational leaders and two who valiantly served the country during wartime.

Students in my English 1302 classes at EPCC learn how to conduct research and write academic papers by learning about local history. Students themselves discovered several of these topics, while others, such as the children's hospital in T or C and the Tingleys of New Mexico, were topics which I believed students would enjoy.

The research was not easy, and in this time of social media and the Internet, it is often difficult to motivate students to leave their computers and phones and dig for sources that are found in only one place (and not on the Web!) or to interview a relative of someone most people do not know or have forgotten. But students discover the treasures of El Paso such as the public libraries, the Historical Society, Fort Bliss and many others, and they realize that they live in a very special place.

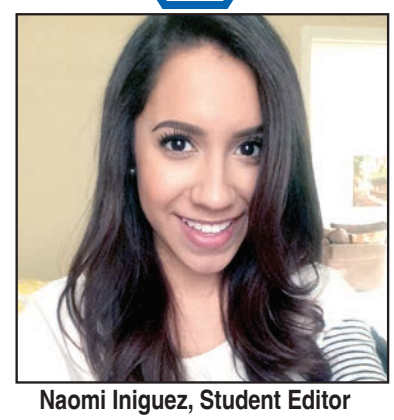
As we began working on this issue, I discovered that the sister and mother of our student editor, Naomi Iniguez, had both excelled in my class, and they gave Naomi no choice but to enroll in my section of English 1302. What a joy to discover that the third member of this family to take my class was so talented!

Last year in a casual conversation I learned that one of the best known professors at EPCC was considering retirement. I knew then that we had to feature Leon Blevins in *Borderlands*. He has taught thousands of students and performed for many more in the community for almost 50 years — all for the love of teaching others about subjects dear to his heart. So while the young are enjoying watching their favorite superhero on screen, EPCC can celebrate its own "Superman," who still loves to don a costume, dance a jig and teach us about Uncle Sam or Santa or Shakespeare.

Big Tex and a Texas Bluebonnet in 1999, a.k.a. Leon Blevins and Ruth Vise *(Photo courtesy of Leon Blevins)*

We hope you enjoy reading these articles as the summer winds down, students commence another year of school and other special people of the Borderland continue serving others. Thank them now — don't wait until they are gone!

Ruth Vise, Faculty Advisor & Editor



Naomi Iniguez, Student Editor

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El Paso Community College — The Best Place to Start!

From the Student Editor

I did not imagine that my experience in Ms. Vise's ENGL 1302 class would lead to this amazing opportunity. I would like to thank both my mother and older sister for encouraging me to enroll in Ms. Vise's class because they both had both taken it. They warned it was going to involve hard work, and from the first day of class I knew they were not joking. I want to thank Ms. Vise for teaching me what writing really entails. Through my experiences in ENGL 1302, I have improved my writing and, of course, my research skills.

My mother tells me I will take all the skills I learned in Ms. Vise's class and apply them to future assignments. No research paper I am assigned will feel like a mountain peak I cannot reach. Thank you, Ms. Vise, for making me a fearless writer.

Spending this summer working on *Borderlands* has also shaped me as a writer. The stories on Major General Heidi V. Brown and Medal of Honor recipients Jesus S. Duran and Victor H. Espinoza taught me so much about the military, a subject with which I was not too familiar. I spent a great deal of time finding details for General Brown's story that I did not have for the research paper I had written in the spring. I was amazed at the work that she has done in the Army. I learned more about the military with every new source I found. I would like to thank Wendy Brown of the *Fort Bliss Bugle* and Barbara Montoya and Pat White from the League of Women Voters of El Paso for so kindly helping with my research.

The cover of this year's *Borderlands* is considerably different from the previous year. The idea of using the anatomy of a molecule to symbolize our theme of Service came from brainstorming adjectives that reflected some of the different traits that the subjects of our stories possessed. Using this scientific symbol helps to see the personal qualities that led to the different kinds of service these extraordinary people provided not just to El Paso but to the rest of the United States as well. I hope you enjoy these stories and marvel at some of the hidden gems of El Paso.

Naomi Iniguez, Student Editor

Left to right, Naomi poses with mother Veronica Smith and her sister Alina Iniguez, all former students in Ms. Vise's English 1302 class. *(Photo courtesy of Naomi Iniguez)*

Nothing Is Impossible: Major General Heidi V. Brown

By Naomi Iniguez

A woman's place in society is constantly evolving. As women continue to occupy traditionally male jobs and careers, gender neutrality and equality has become a hot issue in the military. Women have begun the long battle to demonstrate that their gender does not affect their ability to perform.

Some believe that the integration of women into the military has led to a decrease in professionalism and competence in soldiers. Yet others such as *New York Times* journalist Steven Lee Myers maintain that women continue to transition into the field as they endure the same situations that male soldiers do. Women's military involvement in Iraq has proven just that. Retired Army Col. Peter R. Mansor agreed that women "have earned the confidence and respect of male colleagues." These female soldiers, most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, have served in combat roles once assigned only to males. Women have conducted raids, patrolled streets with machine guns, driven trucks down bomb-ridden roads and disposed of explosives.

Lizette Alvarez of the *New York Times* wrote that until the beginning of 2013, a big issue that prevented the further advancement of women was a Pentagon policy that allowed women to lead — but not serve with male troops in combat. This policy, among other obstacles, led to a scarcity of opportunities of advancement for women in higher positions. Even with all these barriers set in place, some women have shown that in a combat zone there is no difference in gender. One of the most important figures in this ongoing battle is El Paso native, Army Major General Heidi V. Brown.

Donna McAleer, Military Writers Society of America's Gold Medal Award winner, recollects Brown's early life in the book *Porcelain on Steel: Women of West Point's Long Gray Line*. McAleer wrote that a major influence throughout Brown's life was her father, William Brown. A field artillery officer, William Brown served in both World War II and the Korean War before retiring as a major. It was while serving in Germany that William met his wife Virginia, who was working in Regensburg at the time with Special Services. Their family, Heidi Brown and her five siblings, spent their time in both Fort Bliss and Germany until her father's retirement. After his retirement, the Browns permanently settled in El Paso. El Paso's close proximity to Fort Bliss would increase the military influence that surrounded Heidi Brown through her childhood.

Being the second youngest of six children would also impact her future decisions. Early on in high school, Brown envisioned becoming an Army doctor. While Brown made the choice not to join the Junior Reserve Officer Training Course (JROTC) during high school, both her older brothers, Brian and Robert, were involved in the military organization at Austin High School. They and their sister Anne, as well as Heidi, had military careers.

As Brown explored career options after high school, she realized that the Army might pay for medical school if she became a soldier. However, Congress opened all military academies to women in 1976, a year before Brown graduated from Austin High School. The Air Force Academy actively recruited Brown for its swim team, and her uncle Dan Graham encouraged her to pursue admission there. He was not happy about West Point, his alma mater, opening its doors to women.

Among all the options presented to her, Brown selected West Point, with its rich two-century-long history, over her other options. Looking back at her decision, Brown said in

A portrait of Maj. Gen. Heidi V. Brown shows her many military awards and decorations. *(Photo courtesy of U.S. Army)*

an article by Kari Hawkins on the U.S. Army home page, "When the Army's service academy opened for women, it didn't even dawn on me what that might mean."

During her time at West Point, Brown competed with the Army swim team that began as a club and would later finish third in the New York State Women's Intercollegiate Swimming and Diving Championships during her fourth and final year.

During her last year on the swim team, Brown learned an important lesson she still applies to her life. After not being named the team captain, Brown began to skip practice in protest. Her swim coach, Dr. Sue Tendy, warned Brown that one more absence would lead to suspension from the team. Testing her authority, Brown missed practice the following day. True to her word, Tendy suspended Brown two weeks before Christmas break. As a result, she also was not invited to attend a training camp in Puerto Rico. Instead, Brown was to train at home during vacation and rejoin the team in January.

Brown told McAleer, "It was a real lesson in respecting authority. … I learned that leadership and discipline are essential in working as part of a team. To this day, this lesson is present in all I do and how I lead my soldiers."

Before leaving West Point, Brown was hit with the hard truth that graduating in the bottom ten percent of her class would limit her options coming out of the Academy. In 1981, Brown was part of the second coed graduating class and was the first female graduate from El Paso. When deciding on her choice for a military specialty after graduation, Brown settled on the Air Defense Artillery, a combat arms branch.

In 1989, according to McAleer, Brown and Mary Finch, a fellow graduate of the Academy, became the first women at West Point Academy to serve as Tactical Officers, the primary leadership developers for each company of cadets. Before officially taking this position, Brown returned to graduate school and earned her Masters of Education from the University of South Carolina.

Brown later went on to become the first woman to lead a Patriot Missile Battalion and the first woman to command an Air Defense Artillery Brigade. According to Hawkins, in 2003 she commanded the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade during the invasion of Iraq, which Kari Hawkins notes as her most memorable position as a commander.

During this mission, Brown's father died. After he was diagnosed with colon cancer, time became precious for William and the rest of his family. Yet the illness did not stop his support for Brown. He optimistically told his daughter, "I will live to see you take command." William arrived in an ambulance at the ceremony the day Brown accepted command of the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade.

Virginia, Brown's mother, was also one of her strongest supporters. Virginia's obituary stated that she "believed that her legacy was her children." In fact, her daughter has insisted on using the middle initial "V" in her formal name to honor her mother.

While preparing to depart to Iraq, Brown was hit with the news that the cancer had won. William Brown died the morning of August 18, 2002. While finishing the preparation for the mission, Brown and her family flew to Virginia to bury her father at Arlington National Cemetery.

Through not only emotional but technical struggles, Brown led her troops into the initial march into Iraq in 2003. She had received three battalion units, one Patriot battalion from Fort Bliss, one from the V Corps in Germany, and the third she was given once they were in the war theatre. These battalions had previously not worked together nor with her. On March 20, 2003, after a month of battle rehearsals, these units prepared their movement towards Iraq. The units quickly began to face obstacles: vehicles began to sink into the sand and the units had to spend precious time bringing them back onto solid ground.

McAleer wrote that the 507th Maintenance Company of Fort Bliss, the last unit in the convoy, detached from the main convoy as soldiers recovered vehicles still trapped in sand and repaired others all along the cross-country route. On March 23, 2003, the 507th Maintenance Company lost its way and was ambushed in the Iraqi town of Nasiriyah. Nine members of the company were killed and six were kept prisoners of war by Iraqi forces. The remaining five members were wounded but were not captured, according to the *El Paso Times*.

El Paso local Shoshana Johnson was one of the soldiers captured by Iraqi troops. In an *El Paso Times* article by Diana Washington Valdez, Johnson commented that the military could have done more to prepare the unit and prevent it from taking so many casualties. Johnson and the other eight members remained in captivity until Special Forces soldiers worked with Marines to locate and rescue the POWs. After three weeks, Marines were able to liberate these captured soldiers.

McAleer wrote, "While Heidi would not change the maneuver, she would change the outcome." And when the brigade redeployed in June 2003, Brown implemented training that included convoy live-fire excises. Later realizing the lack of preparation the 507th Company had received, Brown believed that the training would save lives of soldiers on the battlefield.

Brown next served as Executive Officer for the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Pentagon and then returned to Fort Bliss. She became the first woman to become Chief of

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Local Latino Soldiers Receive Medal of Honor Decades after Heroism

By Michael Rojas

The Korean War occurred some 65 years ago, but its American veterans have not forgotten their experiences, especially if they lost good friends in battle. Korean War veteran Mitchel Libman, who is now 83, was convinced that his childhood friend from Brooklyn, Pfc. Leonard Kravitz, should have received the Medal of Honor but did not because he was Jewish.

In a 2014 National Public Radio (NPR) interview with Audie Cornish, Libman described Kravtiz's heroic acts in the Korean War. While under Chinese fire, his unit began a retreat. Kravitz stayed at his machine gun to protect his buddies, saving members of his platoon but dying during his effort in March 1951. Libman says, "And this is what makes him such a great hero, knowing that he was going to die, yet he was willing to give up his life." Kravitz was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award for valor, but Libman felt he deserved the highest award.

The U.S. Army Congressional Medal of Honor, our nation's highest medal for valor *(File photo)*

Libman and his wife Marilyn began a process that would take them more than a half century to convince the government that Kravitz deserved the Medal of Honor. After looking into Kravitz's case, Libman found that there had been other Jewish-American soldiers who should have been considered for the award. Through Libman's work with Florida Congressman Robert Wexler, the Leonard Kravitz Jewish War Veterans Act of 2001 was drafted. Kravitz, incidentally, was the uncle of contemporary musician Lenny Kravitz, for whom he is named.

Journalist Matthew E. Berger wrote that the bill was later amended to include Hispanic veterans of Korea and was included in the 2002 Defense Authorization Act. Ashley Southall wrote in the *New York Times* that the investigation "was intended as an inquiry into prejudice against Jews and Hispanics, but was later broadened to include all veterans whose actions merited the medal." The congressional order asked investigators to review the period from December 1941 through September 2001.

The Army alone would identify more than 600 records, and the other branches found 275 records that needed reassessment. After a 12-year inquiry, it was found that 24 veterans who had previously been awarded Distinguished Service Crosses for their gallantry had actually warranted a Medal of Honor, including Kravitz.

The Medal of Honor, the military's highest award for valor, was created during the Civil War. On December 9, 1861, Iowa Senator James W. Grimes introduced to the Senate a bill designed to encourage the efficiency of the Navy by authorizing the distribution of medals of honor. On December 21, President Lincoln signed this bill, called Public Resolution 82, containing provisions for a Navy Medal of Valor. The Congressional Medal of Honor home page states that this medal "was to be bestowed upon such petty officer, seaman, and marine as shall most distinguish themselves by their gallantry and other seamanlike qualities during the present war."

Massachusetts Senator Henry Wilson introduced a bill two months later with provisions for a similar medal for the Army. According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society home page, "It would authorize the president to distribute medals to privates in the Army of The United States who shall distinguish themselves in battle." On July 12, 1862, President Lincoln signed and Congress passed this bill into law and the Medal of Honor was created, becoming a permanent award in 1863. Today, there are three variations of the medal: one for the Army; another for the Air Force; and one for the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

El Pasoan Victor H. Espinoza fought in the Korean War, becoming a hero. *(Photo from whitehouse.gov)*

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society in 2014 stated that since the 1860s, some 3,495 Medals of Honor have been awarded to members of all Department of Defense services. Of those, 88 have been awarded to African Americans, 59 to Hispanic Americans, 33 to Asian Americans and 32 to Native Americans. Individuals have fought over the years to have friends or relatives honored long after their military service. The Defense Authorization Act of 2002 led to the examination of many cases of minorities being denied or awarded medals of lesser grade.

From this investigation emerged two dozen veterans, all from the Army, who would qualify for the Medal of Honor. Seventeen of the 24 recipients were Hispanics and included two soldiers with local ties: Victor H. Espinoza and Jesus S. Duran, men who, because of their Latino roots, were not given proper recognition at the time of their service.

The early to mid-1900s was a harsh time for minorities and especially for Latinos in the Borderland. Many families were first- or second-generation Mexican Americans. The El Paso area was still awash in discrimination during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. This time was especially tough for young Latino men looking to create opportunities for themselves.

Guillermo Rojas, who grew up in the Smeltertown community during the 1940s and 1950s, a predominantly poor Hispanic area in South El Paso, said in a personal interview with this author, "I remember the white kids going to school in the upper west side schools such as Coronado. The poor Hispanics went to Bowie. We used to caddy [for] these kids' parents [at the El Paso Country Club] who were the prominent El Paso figures at the time." Rojas recalled the racial divide between Hispanics and Anglos in El Paso, which was predominantly Mexican American even then.

Though discrimination limited opportunities for minorities, one positive alternative lay in the armed forces. Rojas himself joined the Marine Corps in 1960 as a way of creating a future for himself while still serving this country. Similarly, Espinoza and Duran also joined the armed forces. In an article entitled "Fighting on Two Fronts: Latinos in the Military," University of California Professor Lorena Oropeza wrote, "Latinos have not only taken tremendous pride in their record of military service, they have also adroitly used their status as soldiers and veterans to advance the equal treatment and integration of Latinos within U.S. society." Yet after joining the services, many minorities were to discover that discrimination was still an issue.

Victor Hugo Espinoza was born on July 15, 1929, in El Paso, Texas. From the beginning, Espinoza had a particularly rough childhood. He and his brother David were orphaned at an early age. His father left his family when the two boys were young, and his mother died in her thirties, according to Aaron Montes of the *El Paso Times*. Wendy Brown wrote in the *Fort Bliss Bugle* that until Espinoza and his brother left for the Army, they were both in foster care.

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Latino Soldiers continued from page 4

Once in the Army, Espinoza distinguished himself as an excellent soldier. It was during his time in Korea that he would make his mark on history. A rifleman, Cpl. Espinoza served with Company A, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. According to the Medal of Honor News home page, on August 1, 1952, while securing "Old Baldy," an enemy hill in Chorwon, Korea, he and his fellow soldiers were "pinned down by withering artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire from strongly fortified positions."

Fully aware that the odds were against them and of the hazards that lay ahead of him, Espinoza decided to leave safety and take charge. He made a deliberate one-man assault on the enemy and silenced a machine gun and its crew. Douglas Sterner, *Army Times* writer, quoted General Orders No. 37 describing Espinoza's actions: "Continuing up the fire-swept slope, he neutralized a mortar, wiped out two bunkers, and killed its defenders. After expending his ammunition, he employed enemy grenades, hurling them into the hostile trenches and inflicting additional casualties. Observing a tunnel on the crest of the hill which could not be destroyed by grenades, he obtained explosives, entered the tunnel, set the charge, and destroyed the tunnel and the troops it sheltered."

Because of Espinoza's actions, his unit was able to continue the attack and hold their position. Espinoza was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions that day in Korea. Remembering his award, David Espinoza, Victor's brother, said to Aaron Montes of the *El Paso Times*, "When he received the Distinguished Service Cross, he did not say much about it. He was humbled and never tried to brag about it." Pilar Arias, also writing for the *El Paso Times*, said that along with this award, Espinoza was also honored with the National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal with one Bronze Service Star, the Combat Infantry Badge, the United Nations Medal and the Republic of Korea War Service Medal.

Espinoza retired from the Army with the rank of Master Sergeant. He returned to El Paso where he worked at the Dick Poe Toyota dealership, cleaning and buffing cars before he moved to the small town of San Gabriel, Texas, 50 miles northeast of Austin. There he married and had a daughter and son. Some years later, Espinoza returned to El Paso, living with his sister on the East Side until his death on April 17, 1986, at age 56. He was buried at Fort Bliss.

Tyronne Espinoza, Victor Espinoza's son, accepted the Medal of Honor on behalf of his father in 2014. When asked about his reaction when he first heard the news, Tyronne said to *Army Live* writer Brittany Brown, "I was thinking it was about time and it is well deserved." Although Espinoza did not live long enough to be awarded in person what was rightfully his, his legacy still resides in the lives of his loved ones. Family members recalled Espinoza's love of cooking and singing. Tyronne also proudly said to Brown, "I live, eat and breathe the military. My father motivated me to consider serving my country. I actually joined the US Marine Corps."

Espinoza's brother David, also a Korean War veteran, attended the ceremony in Washington, D.C., along with other relatives. The two brothers as young men actually met for the first time in a long while in Korea, years after they had been in foster care, according to Brown.

Espinoza's son told Montes, "For my dad, the war never ended." Celia Lucero, his sister, said that Espinoza suffered from what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. There were no treatments for the condition then. His son said, "I don't think words can explain how … hurt I am that he can't accept it [the award]."

Another local soldier to receive the Medal of Honor posthumously along with Victor Espinoza was Jesus S. Duran. Born in Juárez, Mexico, on July 26, 1948, Duran was the sixth of 12 siblings. Early in his childhood, Duran immigrated to Riverside, Calif., where he was raised. As a Mexican immigrant, Duran faced much discrimination during that time. Duran's son, Chuy, said to Darrell R. Santschi, staff writer for the Riverside *Press Enterprise*, "[He] was born in Mexico and I don't think that favored him."

Duran joined the Army on May 13, 1968, at the age of 20. He was soon shipped off to Vietnam to serve with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Duran served as a machine gunner in his unit which was in charge of conducting search and destroy missions against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong.

A new headstone at Fort Bliss National Cemetery for Victor H. Espinoza indicates that he received the Medal of Honor. *(Photo by Naomi Iniguez)*

On April 10, 1969, during the third phase of the Vietnam War, Duran's actions would eventually lead to his Medal of Honor. While moving into an intricate enemy bunker, his platoon began to take heavy ambush fire from all sides. As his Medal of Honor citation reads, "With an M-60 machine gun blazing from his hip, Spc. 4 Duran rushed forward and assumed a defensive position." Duran went on to obstruct the enemy with a barrage of machine gun fire, shooting directly into enemy foxholes and eliminating those who tried to flee. His actions saved several wounded soldiers and led to the enemy's retreat.

Duran originally received the Silver Star, the nation's third-highest combat award. A few years later, the award was upgraded to the Distinguished

Spc. 4 Jesus S. Duran courageously attacked the enemy in Vietnam, saving wounded soldiers. *(Photo from the Fort Hood Sentinel)*

Service Cross for his actions on that day. Santschi wrote that after Duran's discharge from the Army, he returned to California. He married twice and had two children. In California, Duran pursued a career as a juvenile detention officer. He spent his time enjoying his family and mentoring young offenders and leading them on educational trips. In 1977, Duran was tragically stabbed to death in a Riverside bar.

Alma Brigandi, Duran's wife, always believed Duran deserved the Medal of Honor although he never mentioned it. Duran's daughter, Tina Duran-Ruvalcaba, received the Medal of Honor from President Obama on her father's behalf. Although not born here in the United States, Duran fought for this country like many other immigrants. "He just wanted to better himself, to do something for his country. By joining the service, he was able to become a U.S. citizen," Brigandi said to Santschi.

On March 18, 2014, in a ceremony inside the White House, these brave men and 22 others were finally recognized as they should have been for their heroic actions in the military. Had it not been for Mitchel Libman and his wife, the stories of these 24 men, including Kravitz, Espinoza and Duran, would not have made headlines all over the country. Although they answered the call when their country needed them, their country was not ready to see them as equals. Three of the 24 were still alive to accept the Medal of Honor in person.

Alex Leary of the *Tampa Bay Times* wrote that after awarding the medals, President Obama ended the ceremony acknowledging the Medal of Honor awardees with these moving words, "Today we have the chance to set the record straight. No nation is perfect, but here in America, we confront our imperfections and face a sometimes painful past, including the truth that some of these soldiers fought and died for a country that did not always see them as equal."

Vernus Carey Known as Mr. YMCA

By Isabel Hernandez

Bullying among children is common today, but even 100 years ago, children bullied others because of their physical appearance, their family's situation or other reasons. One little boy from the Midwest suffered ridicule because of his size and his feminine sounding first name: Vernice, a variant of Bernice. In time, his small frame filled out and he came to be known as Vernus, a variant of Vernon and a name that hit its peak as a boy's name in the 1920s.

Vernus Carey came to El Paso in 1914 with his widowed mother when he was 12. The young boy became active in the early Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and found a father figure in A. L. "Doc" Holm, physical education director and later general secretary of El Paso's YMCA. Carey went on to serve his adopted city for 44 years in this organization dedicated to young people, a feat that earned him the name of "Mr. YMCA of El Paso."

The YMCA movement began in London, England, in 1844 by George Williams and a group of young men, who, like many, had come to the city in search of jobs and found only pubs and brothels as places of recreation. The men began the organization to study the Bible and hold religious services, hence the name they adopted that year, "Young Men's Christian Association" or YMCA. The idea grew, with 24 more such groups rapidly forming in the city. Seven years later, an American sea captain, Thomas V. Sullivan, helped establish the YMCA in Boston, the first one in the U.S. Just two years later, 13 more Ys had been opened across the country.

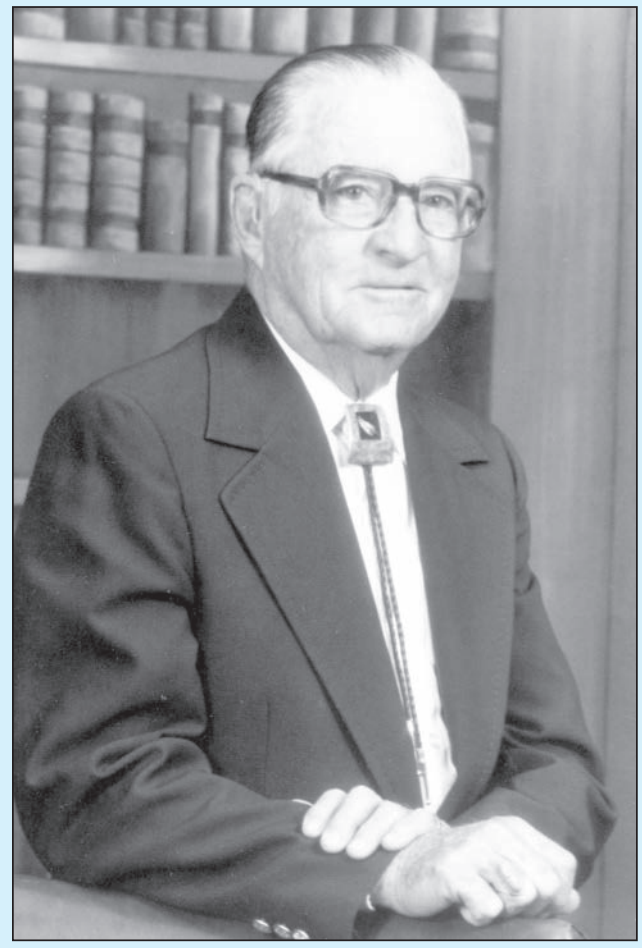
In 1886, a group of El Paso businessmen met in the First Baptist Church, then located on San Antonio Street where the Toltec Building stands, to form the El Paso Young Men's Christian Association. Its first activities were Christian fellowship and prayer meetings for young men held in a simple bare room. The group subsequently moved to a space near a livery stable on San Francisco Street.

An *El Paso Times* article by Carol Viescas tells us that after this first YMCA closed twice because of financial problems, the board decided to build its first facility and raised a whopping $105,000 in 1906, a sum with a purchasing power of at least $2,050,000 today, according to the Web site *Measuring Worth*. In 1909, the YMCA opened a modern building, designed by noted architects Trost and Trost, on Oregon and Missouri Streets, across from the public library. The Y had a swimming pool, gymnasium, handball courts, an indoor track and four bowling alleys, this at a time when desperados still walked El Paso streets, and just across the river, the Mexican Revolution was about to commence.

As time has gone by, the Y has developed from being a strictly Christian movement to a nonsectarian organization dedicated to the development of mind, body and spirit. It has also progressed from being a "boys" club into a place where people of all faiths, genders and ages can find recreational and educational activities in branches all over the city. (The acronym YMCA officially gave way to just Y in 2010 in the U.S. Both terms will be used in this article.)

Over the years there have been leaders who have stood out as models of excellence at the YMCA: Vernus M. Carey is one who made working at the Y his life's work.

Carey was born in Burlington, Ind., and after moving to Texas, he attended El Paso High School



Vernus Carey spent his life working with young people through the YMCA. *(Photo courtesy of El Paso YMCA)*

and graduated from El Paso Junior College in 1922. Carey married Mary Louise Simpson and the couple had one child, Joan, born in 1930. When Carey found the YMCA, he formed a strong friendship with Doc Holm, who became his mentor. In 1922, Carey became the assistant physical education director at the Y, after having served as a volunteer. This would be the beginning of his long career with the organization. When Doc Holm became general secretary, Carey moved up to director of physical education, a position he held until 1946.

Carey's love for athletics helped him motivate the youth of the community. As a child, Carey often had to protect himself by fighting physically when others teased him about his size and name. Little did he know then that in the future he would become a boxer and a wrestling champion in the Southwest. In his 1991 tribute to Carey upon his induction to the El Paso Historical Society Hall of Fame, Wallace Lowenfield, civic leader and owner of Casa Ford and other El Paso car dealerships, said that Carey "arranged for the first Golden Gloves tournament in El Paso," an activity that continues today.

According to a 1919 El Paso High School yearbook, Carey also played basketball. Apart from using his fists and dribbling a ball, Carey was also a member of Holm's first hexathlon team of gymnasts to win a YMCA international championship of North America, a feat the team repeated four more times.

The fact that Carey was an outstanding athlete helped him to guide others in various sports. Among many of the sports he directed was basketball, a game that was invented in 1891 by alumnus and faculty member James Naismith for Springfield College in Massachusetts, a YMCA Training School. Naismith had been asked to come up with an indoor game that would amuse and distract students during New England's harsh winters. He had 14 days in which to do it. Naismith nailed two peach baskets to a railing 10 feet high and participants used a soccer ball. By 1893, iron hoops and a net replaced the fruit baskets, and by 1903, open-ended baskets saved players the task of retrieving the ball after every basket.

El Pasoan Bud Lassiter, who was a member of the Y's Leaders Club, said in Lowenfield's *Password* article, "Most of us came to the 'Y' attracted by athletics. … That some became outstanding athletes is verified at least in part by the 1941 Texas Miners Basketball team, which won the first championship of any Miner team, in any sport." All the members of the team had competed in leagues run by Vernus Carey.

Many athletes were created at the Y with Carey as their mentor and coach. In 1942, Carey even began a program to condition young men who had not passed the physical requirements of the military by participating in calisthenics, body building, gymnastics and basketball. His own love of sports motivated him to teach others the discipline and enjoyment sports bring.

Another of Carey's most effective programs was the Leaders Club which taught young people leadership skills and empowered them to help others to develop in their own community. Carey had been part of this Y activity himself under Doc Holm and led members for years to respect themselves and others with the same caring attitude which his own mentor had displayed. The club, with some similarities to the Big Brothers program, included boys from ages 12 to 18. Today it is important for young people to develop a healthy self-esteem, an idea Carey inculcated into the young men in this organization through sports and other team activities.

According to a 2011 *El Paso Times* article by Kevin Pearson, then-president and CEO of the El Paso YMCA, 18 of the 20 members of the Leaders Club known as the Desipers enlisted in the military after the U. S. entered World War II, with the other two working at war plants. Several of these young men were also members of the aforementioned Miners basketball team; they listened to their coach who encouraged them to wait until after their season ended to enlist.

These "boys" became engineers, pilots and officers, leaders in their country at war. The young men corresponded regularly with Vernus Carey who then shared news with the others. Pearson wrote that even after the war, the men continued to meet at the YMCA, becoming leaders in their community, with several serving on YMCA Boards of Directors.

During World War II, Carey and his wife established a club for young married couples, known as the 50-50 Club, and maintained it following the war to help these young adults readjust to married life, even forming basketball and volleyball leagues. Because older adults found a way to help the war effort and young men and women were serving their country, less attention could be paid to teenagers and their plaintive cry of nothing to do in El Paso. Enter Vernus Carey and the YMCA.

Carey established the Y Co-ed Club for high school students and found a way to provide a distraction from the war that consumed their parents: the Teen Canteen. Frank Mangan pointed out in his book *El Paso in Pictures* that despite the war, "life went on for the local kids." Carey somehow knew the right thing to

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do: create a place for youngsters to meet and have fun. Mangan wrote that the teens danced to Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman while drinking Cokes, and they "puffed an occasional cigarette outside." The Teen Canteen opened in the old Jewish Temple on Oregon Street and Yandell Boulevard in 1944 and was later incorporated into the Central Y.

Apart from mentoring others in sports and other leadership activities, Carey also enjoyed educating children about the importance of loving nature. His purpose was to teach city children to discover and respect all forms of life and to love the outdoors. Carey ran the Y's Skyline Camp in the Sacramento Mountains near Cloudcroft for about 10 years during the Depression. It must have been an unforgettable experience for those who attended these camps as they still remembered their times in Y activities led by Carey even after he died. The late Frank Mangan, El Paso writer, historian and publisher, was one of the children that Carey cared for. In Lowenfield's tribute to Carey, Mangan said, "Some of my fondest memories are those summers spent at Skyline Ranch. As a camp director, Vernus taught us more than any other human being could have — about nature and how to get along with and appreciate other campers."

Holm and Carey worked together for about 20 years, and in those years they inspired many young people. After 22 years as the YMCA's general secretary, Holm retired and chose Carey to succeed him as the next general secretary in 1946. The trust and affection that Holm had for Carey inspired him to take the same ideas and expand on them while initiating new programs for the Y. Carey became the YMCA's executive officer and would continue to serve as trainer, mentor and confidante to El Paso youth for 16 more years.

In 1946, Carey organized the Boy's Trail Camp, later known as Carey's Ranch, a private camp for boys in the Sacramento Mountains six miles from Cloudcroft, N.M. Carey bought 160 acres to design a camp for boys to learn horsemanship, to explore natural sites, to participate in polo and other horseback games and to go on pack trips. The program also offered archery, marksmanship, golf and crafts. Carey's love of nature and passion for sports led him to offer opportunities for different outdoor experiences than the Y.

Carey opened the camp early on to girls, who, for the most part, had few opportunities for camping, organized outdoor activities and horseback riding. In later years, Carey's daughter Joan led the sessions scheduled for girls, with her husband Jim Goodman leading the boys' sessions. Carey himself directed the equestrian activities, using his own string of quarter horses. The culmination of each session was a two to four-day wilderness pack trip.

Lowenfeld quoted Barbara Kaster who recalled her experiences at Carey's Camp this way: "He continually encouraged us to try new things, to mount the horses with pride and strength, to shoot with accuracy, to learn the names of all the wild flowers." So long before women won broad civil rights and the right to compete in athletics through Title 9, El Paso girls were learning how to explore nature on horseback and participate in camping and competitive sports through Carey's camp.

Sessions were organized by gender and age, with an emphasis on teens. In a 1966 *El Paso Herald-Post* article, Carey explained, "A lot of people don't like to fool with teenagers because they are tougher to handle. But they make as much if not more use of what we have to offer as the little ones." That many of Carey's campers learned how to handle horses well is illustrated in the same article which made note that "many a Carey's Camp graduate and undergraduate came off with top honors" at a 1966 Riding and Driving Club Spring Horse Show.

Carey motivated and captured the attention of thousands of young El Pasoans with such activities. In 1956, Y-Indian Guides came to El Paso, a program for fathers and sons six to nine years old, using the lore of American Indians. Carey said, "It is a home centered program based on the simple conviction that educating a son is the father's responsibility as well as the mother's … [it] is a program for the busy but thinking father which gives him an opportunity to be a companion to his son at an age when the boy is most receptive." The national program included crafts, storytelling, informal discussions, hikes, swimming, campouts and more.

Perhaps keenly aware of how important a father is to raising a daughter, Carey also began a similar program for fathers and daughters called Indian Princesses. Today these programs have shed the references to Native Americans at the national level, and the groups are known as Y-Guides or YMCA Adventure Guides, still promoting a love of nature and the importance of family ties and community.

By 1948, the Y was serving a community of about 130,000, more than four times the population of El Paso when the first Y was built on North Oregon Street. That was the year the Board of Directors decided to buy an entire block of land on Montana Street where Baily School was located. This year also kicked off the beginning of a 10-year fundraising program, culminating in the building of the Central YMCA, an all-inclusive community center, including lodging and food service for young men away from home. As general secretary, Carey led fundraising activities to the tune of more than $2 million. This large complex, considered one of the finest in the nation, opened in 1958 at 701 Montana.

For decades, the Y provided housing for hundreds of young men coming into the city. In addition, it had a food service, a men's health department, a co-ed department, snack bar, lounge, club rooms, craft shop, gymnasium and swimming pool — with a women's dressing room. Carey is given the credit for opening the Y to women through various activities even before the building of the Central Y.

In addition to his Y duties, Carey belonged to the Lions Club and the Valley Congregational Church in the Lower Valley where the Careys lived. He was president of the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame in 1962 and worked with the Sun Carnival (Sun Bowl) Association for many years. Not surprisingly, Carey was a member of the El Paso County Sheriff's Posse, under the leadership of Chris Fox, when riding horses was still a condition for membership. It was an adventurous way to watch over the town. The Sheriff's Posse enjoyed their Sundays "riding for the sheer joy and pleasure of it," wrote Hawley Richeson in his history of the organization titled *The El Paso Sheriff's Posse: Fifty Fit 1936-1986*. The posse went for a five-day "Spring Trail Ride" for years.

The late Wallace Lowenfield met Carey when Lowenfield was just a young boy. In his 1991 tribute to Carey published in 1992 in *Password*, the journal of the El Paso Historical Society, he wrote that Carey "was the rock we could rely on. And to this day thousands of El Pasoans stand proudly and securely upon that rock."

Vernus Carey retired on January 1, 1963, after more than 40 years of service to the El Paso community through his work at the Y. At the time of his retirement, the Y boasted a membership of 8,600 and Carey was deeply involved in the plan to begin branch locations in other parts of the city and to improve facilities at Skyline Ranch Camp.

Still fit and youthful at age 60, Carey continued raising and training horses as well as directing the equestrian program at his camp in Cloudcroft until 1972 when he and his family sold it. In a 1962 *El Paso Times* article, Carey said, "I have always loved kids…I look back over 40 years and events, at the young men scattered all over the country and there is satisfaction that you watched the normal kids and the problem kids grow up and develop into something worthwhile. I have enjoyed it very much."

After all the years of hard work, dedication and love, the general secretary was honored with several awards and acknowledgments. He also was inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame in 1971, the same year as Don Haskins. Carey was a Hall of Honor inductee into the El Paso County Historical Society in 1991, four years after his death in 1987.

Carey inspired countless lives and was a man ahead of his time. He appeared to know the importance of every stage of childhood and strived to develop programs for children of all ages — and adults as well. He knew that girls and women also needed opportunities for sports and outdoor pursuits and designed activities for them as well. He knew how important the father-child relationship was at a time when many men had little to do with the day-to-day raising of children. He raised his own daughter to love nature and taught hundreds of children to love and care for horses, beginning the Kids Rodeo in El Paso and directing horse shows for children.

Today the Y is a different place than it was in Carey's day. The once bustling building on Montana was closed as a YMCA facility in 2007 and turned into the city's Pat O'Rourke Recreation Center in 2010 after renovation through Community Development Block Grants. The YMCA now is organized by branches, including the Westside Family Y, the Loya Family Y in the Lower Valley and the Bowling Family Y in the Northeast. Skyline Ranch Camp continued operations until 1980 when it was sold to private parties.

Children do not go to outdoor camps as much as they used to; rather they attend computer camps and play video games. But the Ys of El Paso and the rest of the U.S. still offer a multitude of exercise classes and promote fitness for the entire family. Their goal is still the one that guided Doc Holm and Vernus Carey: the development of body, mind and spirit.

Additional research by Emmanuel Correa.

Will the Real Leon Blevins Please Stand Up?

By Ruth E. Vise

It's a bird! It's a plane! It's Superman!! No, it's mild mannered Leon Blevins dressed as Superman on his way to a political science class where he might be lecturing on surviving in a global economy.

For more than 40 years, Leon Blevins has taught classes at the Valle Verde campus of El Paso Community College, often dressed as historical and classic characters in order to get and keep the attention of his students and to make the concepts of government and history come alive. And yes, perhaps to satisfy a lifelong love of drama.

Blevins earned a B.A. degree from Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas, where he and his future wife Shannah were both involved in drama. Receiving his M.A. at UTEP in political science, he also did graduate work at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, becoming an ordained minister. During his college studies, he taught various undergraduate subjects. However, he also taught speech and drama, English, civics and American history at high schools in California and New Mexico, coaching debate and drama in Deming, N.M., his first full-time teaching post.

In the 1970s, Blevins played in Paul Green's musical drama "Texas," now in its 50th year, presented in the Pioneer Amphitheater in Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Wherever Blevins taught, he had students act out scenes of political events to stimulate critical thinking. Using drama in classes was just part of being the natural performer Blevins is. Appearing as his various characters later on was a natural transition.

His first costume was a sailor suit his father, who was serving in the Navy during World War II, sent him. Later, a neighbor of the family sent Blevins a child-size U. S. Army uniform that he loved to wear. He enjoyed make-believe and any situation became an opportunity for creative application. When his father was a janitor for the Terry County, Texas, Courthouse, the young Blevins played judge as the elder Blevins cleaned the courtrooms. When he cleaned the sheriff's office, little Leon played the sheriff. If he didn't have a costume, he pretended he did. Blevins says he never was afraid of being different; he was inquisitive and creative since childhood. He built treehouses and fashioned tools and devices to do what he needed.

Like other children in the 1940s and 1950s, Blevins had an extensive comic book collection, his favorites being those about "superheroes." He would tie a "cape" around his neck and jump out of trees and over fences, pretending to fly and leap over buildings, defeating the bad men of the world. Likewise, he loved to listen to radio dramas about action heroes at his grandparents' home, portraying Batman, Dick Tracy, and, of course, Superman, during his career.

In the late 1960s, Blevins and his wife Shannah bought their son Timothy a replica Superman outfit with cape. Then Leon became Superman again in the 1970s when a hearing impaired child living with the Blevins family one day signed that Leon and Superman were the same because of their black hair. The child referred to him as the "bearded Superman." Shannah bought Leon a tight Superman tee shirt and red "Underoos," and in 1979, he had his first birthday party with a Superman theme, complete with a cake with a bearded Superman on it.

His Superman tee shirt became his uniform, and then he ordered a Superman costume complete with muscles from a catalog. He wore it to his classes, and

Leon Blevins and his wife Shannah have appeared as Uncle Sam and Aunt Sammie at community events.

a student from Singapore took photos of Blevins and sent them home, "proving" that Superman indeed lived in the United States — and taught his class! Carrying a boom box playing the theme from the 1978 Superman movie, Blevins took this character throughout the community to fitness centers, schools, Ys and day cares.

One of the most controversial characters Blevins has portrayed is Don Juan de Oñate, the Spanish explorer and first New Mexico governor who crossed the Rio Grande in this area in 1598. For many years in the late 1990s to the late 2000s, Blevins participated in and sometimes directed the First Thanksgiving Re-enactment in San Elizario, written by Hector Serrano and celebrating what El Pasoans claim to be the "First Thanksgiving" based on historical accounts, more than 20 years before the Plymouth, Mass., observation. Blevins dressed in narrow legged black pants, a white collarless pleated shirt, black velvet vest and black cape, sporting a silver sword with metal scabbard. Sometimes he appeared as "Don Leon," a fictitious Spanish nobleman who traveled with Oñate.

As locals learned more about Oñate and his cruel subjugation of native peoples, Blevins became a subject of animosity. One student who had a Spanish name and spoke Spanish but identified as Native American vehemently expressed his displeasure when his professor appeared in class as Oñate. Blevins listened and pointed out that in our area the food and culture are more Spanish and Mexican than Native American. He said to his students, "We cannot change the past. We need to understand how the past affects our present and consider how it may affect our future," reminding them of his support of cultural diversity.

Protestors also picketed his character at an event at Cougar Park in Socorro. The highlight of his appearances as Oñate came in 2005 when descendants of the Sumo and Manso tribes appeared at the Thanksgiving Reenactment and "read a touching statement of reconciliation with the people of the present," according to Blevins.

In 2007, he appeared as Oñate for the dedication of the massive, controversial statue created by artist John Houser, originally named for the Spanish explorer. After intense protests over installing the sculpture downtown as originally planned, the city renamed it "The Equestrian," and moved it to the entrance of the El Paso International Airport. Some of the protesters at the dedication were Native Americans from Acoma, N.M., where Oñate and his men killed hundreds and imprisoned and enslaved hundreds more, cutting off the right foot of men over 25, in revenge after an ambush by natives. Blevins,

never afraid of controversy, was interviewed by newspapers and television stations from New York and California.

Another controversial character was simply called the "American racist," dressed in everyday street clothes and using racial slurs, a figure Blevins began using in 1970. The character infuriated students at first, leading to heated class discussions and helping to teach the importance and power of language, abuses of power, racial discrimination and civil rights. "You don't have to wear a hood and burn crosses to be a racist," professor Blevins reminded his students.

Blevins played Jesus for eight years at Jesus Chapel for pageants directed by his wife. He says it's his most demanding character. In "How Great Thou Art," Blevins hung by his wrists on a cross for 17 minutes, his feet supported on a slanted board, balancing his weight. He told student reporter Barbara Gomez in a 1985 article in the EPCC student newspaper *El Conquistador* that he designed the brackets into which he placed his hands, making it appear that nails pierced his hands as he reenacted the crucifixion of Jesus.

He also played the religious figure for the passion play called "Hosanna! The King Comes" presented by Jesus Chapel at McKelligon Canyon Amphitheater, accompanied by some members of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. The play, directed by Shannah, moved to the larger venue after it outgrew Jesus Chapel East where hundreds were turned away. Blevins said it was an honor to play Jesus, noting, "We think of our work together as a ministry, a sermon in drama."

When asked about his controversial characters, Blevins responded, "Well, I am an actor. Sometimes I play good people and sometimes I play bad people. I have played Jesus and I have played Herod and Judas. A good actor should be able to portray all kinds of people."

Playing Santa for children and adults alike every year is pure pleasure for Blevins, whose appearances span the community. He and wife Shannah will appear as Santa and Mrs. Claus for the last time at the International Museum of Art in December 2015.

Other popular characters that Blevins has portrayed include Rambo, Abraham Lincoln, Davy Crockett, Big Tex (cowboy), Texas Ranger, frontier sheriff, Chopin, William Shakespeare and Chico, the mariachi dancer.

He has changed costumes and characters as many as seven times in one event. In 45 years, Blevins has portrayed about 100 characters in one form or another. Wife Shannah, who taught hearing impaired students in the El Paso Independent School System as well as speech and drama for Jesus Chapel School, helped Leon collect costumes from such places as thrift stores, flea markets, mail order catalogs and places they visited during their travels.

The most popular and unforgettable character that Blevins portrays is Uncle Sam. His first costume consisted of a flag patterned tie and a cardboard Uncle Sam hat in 1971. He brought this first costume to El Paso Community College to help him teach the topic of nationalism when he began his career there in 1972. The costume evolved over the years to the one he sports today with red pants, a bright blue cutaway coat with tails and brass buttons, white shirt, flag tie and cummerbund, white gloves, a red top hat with red and white striped crown and blue hat band with white stars and granny glasses. While his hair was once jet black, today his snow white hair, beard, sideburns and moustache give Uncle Sam the perfect look. Over the past 40 years, he has appeared as Uncle Sam not only in class and on campus but throughout the community to support military and patriotic events and children's reading programs.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Blevins spoke out against government policies in Vietnam. He explained, "I support the troops. But I don't support the public policy on the war." Leon always supported U.S. troops. When he began to teach at EPCC in 1972, the majority of his students had just returned from the Vietnam War. Many of those students also disagreed with government policies that put them at unnecessary risk on the battlefield.

Blevins explained to Tere Valenzuela in a 2003 article in the EPCC *El Conquistador*, "When I dressed up as Uncle Sam at the Vietnam War Memorial replica exhibition in El Paso in November 2002, it was one of the most satisfying events in my life. I got to talk and pray with the war heroes, and that moment was an experience I will never forget."

He appeared in 1991 as Uncle Sam in a Desert Storm homecoming parade and subsequent VFW parades. He has walked, danced and ridden in the Del Norte Lions Club parade, known as the "People's Parade," on the Fourth of July almost every year since the first one in 1979. In 2015, Blevins walked the parade route, alongside his "float," a decorated walker complete with the Betsy Ross flag with 13 stars.

On January 11, 2002, Uncle Sam Blevins and his wife, dressed in a blue Victorian styled dress and calling herself "Aunt Sammie," read an original work entitled "America Still Stands" for the El Paso Writers' League in honor of those lost in the September 11 attack. In 2003, Uncle Sam participated at Cohen Stadium in a tribute to the members of the 507th Maintenance Company, seven of whom became prisoners of war in Iraq, including Spc. Shoshana N. Johnson of El Paso and Spc. Joseph Hudson of Alamogordo. Blevins as Uncle Sam was also present at Fort Bliss when the former POWs arrived home.

Blevins' Uncle Sam character has also appeared at the Sun Bowl, the Amigo Airsho and Veterans Day parades. He has highlighted many political rallies, including those for George W. Bush and Bill Clinton and in 2008 for 12,000 people who attended a rally for Hillary Clinton. Many of his appearances have attracted the attention of national newspapers, which seem to love his portrayal of Uncle Sam.

According to a 1997 *El Paso Times* article by Debra Dominguez, Blevins uses the character of Uncle Sam not only to entertain his classes and the public but to educate them about the figure, a "living symbol" of the United States, which gained official recognition by Congress only in 1961.

In 1917, a major public image of Uncle Sam appeared, complete with white hair, goatee, top hat with blue band and white stars and striped pants, drawn by James Montgomery Flagg. Most Americans know the image from World War I and II military recruitment posters, but today the figure is known as a patriotic symbol, representing the country itself. Blevins donated his extensive Uncle Sam memorabilia collection to the El Paso International Museum of Art in 2011 for their annual patriotic exhibit entitled "Happy Birthday, America," during which he was honored.

Leon Blevins is also known for his dancing. Many of his best known characters, including Superman, Oñate, Chico and Uncle Sam dance during their appearances. In class, the dancing helped attract and maintain student attention, and as Superman, both professor and students participated in high impact aerobics for a few minutes, while his dancing Santa, Superman, Chico and others entertained his fans, whether in a parade or other event. But it was not always so. Blevins became a dancer only in his late 40s, one of his few regrets.

Taught that dancing was "sinful," Blevins was introduced to the physical and mental benefits of dancing through the aerobics classes that he first took with Professor Maureen Henry (he was the only man in a women's aerobics class) and continued to take for 20 years. He developed routines that he used in his appearances, always knowing when to begin the dancing to keep his audience's interest. Blevins enjoyed watching live or TV dance performances and learned much from movies, professional videos and ballroom dance classes.

He danced at El Paso's summer programs Music under the Stars and Alfresco! Fridays, sometimes leading conga lines, with children imitating his every

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Carrie Tingley Hospital and the Couple Who Built It

By Zana Alqadi and Ruth Vise

In the late 19th and early 20th century, many tuberculosis (TB) patients from the East and Midwest traveled west with hopes they could find life-saving treatment. A dry, hot climate was thought to be the best medicine, and many TB victims settled in the Southwest and lived long, productive lives. Nancy Owen Lewis, writing for the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe, said that such health seekers were sometimes called "lungers," and those with money went to sanatoriums.

The railroad industry advertised the Southwest as a healthful place, and in 1882 in Las Vegas, N. M., the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad opened the Fred Harvey Montezuma Hotel principally for those using the local therapeutic hot springs. Lewis said that Santa Fe, Silver City and Albuquerque all advertised the curative properties of the clean air and abundant sunshine found in New Mexico.

In 1899, the military opened a hospital in Fort Bayard for tubercular soldiers and by 1912, some 30 sanatoriums had been established, with 30 more to come in the next 10 years. But private ones were expensive: $50 to $100 per month. Tubercular victims without funds often had no place to go, or they found themselves in "tent cities." The average stay was nine months, but even with good food, fresh air, plentiful sunshine and rest, 25 percent died in the sanatoriums, and 50 percent died within five years, according to Lewis.

Mo Palmer in a 2008 *Albuquerque Tribune* article wrote that Albuquerque, located in the high desert mountains of New Mexico, had only one TB sanatorium in 1903, and it had a waiting list. But a Presbyterian pastor from Iowa named Hugh A. Cooper, who himself had recovered from TB and decided to stay in New Mexico, convinced the Presbyterian Synod to create a new sanatorium on Central Avenue between today's downtown and the University of New Mexico. It would be known as the Southwestern Presbyterian Sanatorium, opening in 1908. It later would become Albuquerque's Presbyterian Hospital.

One woman who came to the Southwest in search of treatment was Carrie Wooster. She was born to a prominent wealthy family on May 20, 1877, in Madison County, Ohio, an only child whose father had died of tuberculosis. At the age of 33, she, too, began to show signs of tuberculosis. In 1910, she and her mother set out for Phoenix, Ariz., in the middle of the desert, in search of a cure. However, she had an acute attack in Albuquerque, and the two left the train for an overnight stay. That overnight stay in New Mexico became a lifetime. She would become one of those many "lungers" who stayed in the Southwest, some becoming leaders whose own illness led them to accomplish a great deal to help others.

Her fiancé, Clyde Tingley, who was still in Bowling Green, Ohio, was a machinist and supervised the Gramm Truck Company. He had been born in an actual log house on a farm near New London, Ohio, in the early 1880s. When he received the news that Carrie was ill, he traveled to Albuquerque to be at her side. Because of the miraculous dry heat that helped Carrie Wooster with tuberculosis, they decided to stay in Albuquerque to seek the therapy that Carrie needed. They were married by the aforementioned Hugh A. Cooper in his pastorate on April 21, 1911.

While Carrie recuperated, her husband Clyde Tingley went to work in the Santa Fe Railway shops, according to Howard Bryan in his book *Albuquerque Remembered*. Suzanne Stamatov wrote that he entered local politics in 1916 as an alderman for the Second Ward, beginning a 40-year career in public service. A Democrat, Tingley was elected to the city commission in 1922 and served until January 1935, when he began two terms as New Mexico's governor. In 1939, he was reelected to the city commission, where he remained until 1956. As chair of the commission, he was the informal mayor of Albuquerque. He appealed to blue-collar voters with his background in the trades, and while he lacked a college education, he had a flashy, larger-than-life appearance.

He was tenacious, crusty and loud. John Pen La Farge in a book on Santa Fe wrote, "He was Mr. Malaprop; he butchered the King's English." Bryan said when a newspaper criticized him for using the word "ain't," Tingley replied, "I ain't agonna stop using the word 'ain't.'" In another anecdote, Bryan recorded that at a political rally Tingley said, "When I became your governor, I found that the Republicans had left New Mexico in a state of chaos [pronounced "chowse"]. These "Tingleyisms" abounded; even *Time* magazine recorded them.

Regardless of his lack of higher education, Tingley brought much to the state, especially through his relationship to Franklin D. Roosevelt. He first met Roosevelt in 1928, and in 1936, the president asked Tingley to join him on a political tour of Western states. The two became close friends and Tingley visited the White House some 23 times. More importantly, New Mexico benefitted from Works Project Administration (WPA) funds that Roosevelt's New Deal provided.

Turtleback Mountain in Truth or Consequences overlooks the town. *(Photo courtesy of Sherry Fletcher, Campo Espinoso, Truth or Consequences, NM)*

One institution that was created from Tingley's friendship with Roosevelt was a children's hospital in New Mexico. Besides TB, another potentially fatal disease was ravishing the country: poliomyelitis. Known as polio or infantile paralysis, although not all victims were young, the disease targeted a person's nervous system. In severe cases, victims suffered full or partial paralysis; in the most severe cases, the chest and throat became paralyzed, preventing breathing, and the person died. The first epidemic occurred in 1894 in the U.S., but it was not until 1905 that the disease was discovered to be contagious through human contact.

Carrie Tingley was New Mexico's First Lady and helped establish the children's hospital in T or C named for her. *(Photo courtesy of Sherry Fletcher, Campo Espinoso, Truth or Consequences, NM)*

In 1908, the cause of polio was discovered to be a virus, but that there were three types of poliovirus was not known until 1931, and it would be 1951 before this could be demonstrated. Summer became the season for polio, and public swimming pools were closed, victims were quarantined, schools, camps and theatres closed.

In 1916, the country suffered another epidemic of polio, and in 1921, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was stricken with the virus and became permanently paralyzed from the waist down. Then he learned that a polio victim had shown improvement after swimming in the mineral waters of a resort in Georgia owned by his friend, George Peabody. Roosevelt immediately tried the waters at Warm Springs and was able to stand on his own, and the muscles of his hip and shriveled leg strengthened.

Roosevelt bought the resort in 1926 and turned it into a famous center for treating polio patients: the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation. Roosevelt regained enough energy to serve as governor of New York and to be elected President of the United States for four terms although he lived the rest of his life in a wheel chair and died in 1945, just a few months into his last term. He rarely was photographed in the chair, however, and he pulled himself up and stood with the help of crutches and braces to further the illusion that he was not paralyzed.

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Roosevelt established a home at Warm Springs, calling it the "Little White House" to make it more convenient to continue to receive treatments at the center. In the 1930s, he made polio a national concern, establishing the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (NFEP) to conduct research into the disease and to assist victims. The NFIP became the March of Dimes.

The dapper Clyde Tingley loved people and politics; as governor of New Mexico, he secured the funds for the hospital. *(Photo courtesy of Sherry Fletcher, Campo Espinoso, Truth or Consequences, NM)*

Carrie Tingley's recovery from tuberculosis and FDR's experience with polio encouraged the Tingleys to establish a hospital to treat children suffering from polio. New Mexico also suffered through the polio epidemics and made the couple empathetic with those who could not afford any kind of treatment. Clyde and Carrie Tingley never had children of their own but made the children who sometimes spent months and even years at the hospital their concern.

During the outbreak in the 1930s, children, infants, pregnant women and the elderly developed this dreadful disease. There was no cure for polio; even today, the "cure" is immunization. Children had to be kept at home in bed, away from society, because polio is a highly contagious disease. Treatment for polio in the 1930s included isolation and rest, mineral water baths in places with such natural resources, some physical therapy and placement in a contraption called the iron lung in severe cases. The first iron lung, which breathed for the patient, appeared in 1928 and an improved version, in 1931. Only the patient's head remained outside of this tank-like machine, and the equipment was incredibly expensive.

Carrie and Clyde provided emotional support for the President when he went through polio, so they were intrigued when they found out he went to a rehabilitation center with hot springs in Georgia. Carrie was fascinated that such a place with its mineral waters could help such a horrific disease. Carrie and Roosevelt had both suffered potentially fatal diseases and had been able to find treatment because they were wealthy. However, because the Tingleys were sympathetic with the poor and the sick and they loved children, they wanted to help others in need of a place to regenerate themselves.

In searching for locations for the hospital, Carrie and Clyde found a town 150 miles south of their Albuquerque home called Hot Springs. According to another *Borderlands* article entitled "Hot Springs Have Long History," the area was originally named "Palomas Ojo Caliente" by the Spanish, which means "Hot Springs of the Doves." Joseph Miller in his book *New Mexico: A Guide to the Colorful State* wrote that the Spanish referred to the thousands of doves that once lived in the cottonwoods along the river and around the hot springs.

In 1914, the mayor changed the town's name to "Hot Springs," which was the name used most often. In 1949, a national radio show hosted by Ralph Edwards called "Truth or Consequences" sponsored a contest seeking a town which would change its name to Truth or Consequences. In 1950, Hot Springs changed its name to Truth or Consequences (T or C) when it won the contest.

Truth or Consequences is located near the southern Rio Grande Rift. According to Craig Martin, "tectonic forces create an extension, or stretching, of the crust. … where the crust is thinned, heat flow from the interior is high, and if water can circulate deep enough, it will be heated and rise." The water rises through faults or cracks, flows over rocks, and spills onto the ground's surface, where hot springs form. At Truth or Consequences, the temperature of the resulting springs is from 98 to 115 degrees. These various springs are the reason for the original name of the town.

The Warm Spring Apaches occupied this area of New Mexico and discovered the hot mineral waters that the Rio Grande Rift produced. The natives bathed in the water, believing it healed many types of wounds, especially battle wounds. The Indians were very territorial over the waters, not allowing weapons or anything negative near the water.

New Mexico State Veterans Home is located at 992 S. Broadway in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. This is the site of the former Carrie Tingley Hospital. *(Photo by AllenS/Wikimedia Commons)*

Many years later, people who crossed this area also felt that the water was reparative. The Riverbend Hot Springs Web site explains that the water is rich in calcium, chlorides, potassium, magnesium, sodium and other minerals. These hot springs resembled the springs used in the treatment facility in Warm Springs, Ga., where President Roosevelt spent time. In Georgia, the Creek Indians and other tribes had utilized these waters many years before white men discovered them, similar to the situation in New Mexico.

During the Depression, Governor Tingley secured millions of dollars in federal funds for public projects throughout New Mexico, including University of New Mexico buildings, state fair buildings, Albuquerque's zoo and the airport terminal and the hospital in T or C. The WPA approved some $275,000 for construction of the hospital, and two additional grants helped pay for staff quarters and the power plant.

Jack Loeffler in *Survival Along the Continental Divide* wrote that Bill Lumpkins, one of the hospital's architects, did not know what should go into a hospital for polio victims. Loeffler said that Carrie Tingley picked up the phone, called FDR's wife Eleanor Roosevelt, who in turn called the architect in Warm Springs. He flew to New Mexico and guided Lumpkins and Frank Stoddard in building the hospital along the lines of the Warm Springs facility.

Many other concerned citizens were pushing for this hospital to be opened. They had the support from President Roosevelt, who was working on the national front to seek treatments for children with polio as soon as possible. To honor the governor's wife for her compassion for children, the sick and the poor, the hospital was named for her.

On Saturday, May 29, 1937, the Carrie Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children opened to the public. The hospital was beautifully built on 118 acres of land and the building included steel beams and a concrete roof, ready for the second story. Built in Territorial Revival style, the exterior of white stucco featured attractive tall columns. The nurses and staff stayed on the second floor of the hospital. The hospital had approximately 100 beds and served children from birth to 21 years.

The primary focus of the hospital when it opened was to help children with polio, but it also treated other orthopedic problems. Most of its first patients were children with polio from Indian reservations. In 1937, the hospital provided hot mineral baths as part of their treatments which helped many children work the muscles in their limbs and the rest of their bodies. Patients with severe cases were placed in iron lungs. Surgery, physical therapy, braces and corrective shoes also were used to treat patients. The staff also took advantage of the climate — the hot dry air the children enjoyed.

The hospital had two very important therapies, heliotherapy and hydrotherapy. When performing heliotherapy, the nurses would wheel chairs and beds (they were on wheels) to place the children in the courtyard and allow the sun to shine on them. Hydrotherapy consisted of putting children in the mineral water to soak. Devices called Hubbard Tubs held several children at a time. Sometimes the patients were so sick that they would have to stay at the hospital for weeks or even months. Their parents had to leave them there and return to work or home. As Tingley had promised, the hospital did not discriminate by race, religion or ability to pay.

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Suzanne Stamatov stated that Carrie Tingley worked for the hospital mostly behind the scenes. She visited the children often and raised money for the children's surgeries and medicines. Carrie advised these children to continue their lives as normally as possible. She did not want them to think of themselves as having a disability.

According to the New Mexico Office of the State Historian, the Tingleys had built huge shelves in their Albuquerque home at 1524 Silver SE to hold the hundreds of toys they collected all year long for the holidays. On Christmas, every child at Carrie Tingley received gifts, dolls for the girls, airplanes or trucks for the boys, given out by Santa Claus. Some children preferred to stay at the hospital for Christmas because they received more gifts there than they would at home! According to the *Albuquerque Journal*, Carrie always made sure that the young patients focused on their education. She also made sure that they had a good pair of shoes.

The children at the hospital were surrounded not only with the natural beauty of the springs and Turtleback Mountain in the background, but also with art produced through the WPA's federal art project. According to Charles Bennett, Eugenie Shonnard created the "Turtle Pond," a lovely terra-cotta fountain in the hospital's inner courtyard which featured four sculpted frogs on the top tier, four ducks on the second tier, with the animals streaming water, and four turtles on the bottom tier facing the four directions.

Related to the turtle pond and Turtleback Mountain overlooking the hospital building is the fact that one of the hospital's renowned orthopedic patients was New Mexican author Rudolfo Anaya, who wrote *Bless Me, Ultima*. He also wrote a novel entitled *Tortuga* (Spanish for turtle), a narrative by a young man in a body cast, ostensibly based on Anaya's own experiences as a youth at Carrie Tingley Hospital.

Cisella Loeffler created two large paintings at the hospital reflecting New Mexico's Indian, Hispanic and Anglo cultures done in child-like figures, including a nativity scene, according to Kathryn A. Flynn in her book *The New Deal: A 75th Anniversary Celebration*.

Another artist who benefitted from New Deal programs to provide public art was Oliver LaGrone, the first African-American to graduate from the University of New Mexico Art Department. He depicted a mother gently holding a young boy in front of her to memorialize his mother nursing him through malaria. Children often climbed on the life-size sculpture entitled "Mercy." Jason Silverman in *Untold New Mexico: Stories from a Hidden Past* wrote that the sculpture was moved to Albuquerque when the hospital moved, and the mother's missing thumb, worn down over the decades from being touched, was replaced by the artist.

The staff treated the children as if they were their own, and the hospital was fairly self-sufficient. In an interview filmed for New Mexico's Centennial in 2012, a nurse who worked at Carrie Tingley Hospital, Daisy Wilson, said the hospital "treat[ed] the whole child." Children attended school in grades K-12, taught on site. Every attempt was made to keep the children busy so they did not have time to obsess about their condition. Area farmers provided fresh vegetables and ranchers provided beef, mutton and lamb. Even the braces some children needed were made on site.

In the 1950s, a vaccination for polio was developed, the inactivated polio vaccine by Dr. Jonas Salk, and then the oral polio vaccine was developed in the 1960s by Dr. Albert Sabin. Fear of the disease began to subside along with the number of polio cases. The Carrie Tingley Hospital began to focus on other orthopedic problems of children such as cerebral palsy, scoliosis, clubfoot and others.

Carrie Tingley Hospital moved to Albuquerque in 1981 because it was closer to other medical facilities and was easier for doctors and consultants to access. Its purpose was no longer the treatment of polio, which was eliminated from the U. S. in 1979, but all pediatric orthopedic conditions. It is now a division of the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center. It still accepts patients from birth to 21 years old and is the only rehabilitation hospital for children in New Mexico. The hospital created the Carrie Tingley Hospital Foundation to raise money for surgeries and equipment to help families of patients.

The Tingley Hospital was only one of an estimated 4,000 projects funded in New Mexico as part of the WPA program, many related to education. According to Howard Bryan, Tingley opened a series of ponds for swimming in the 1930s called Tingley Beach on the Southwest side of the city, so large it had eight lifeguards and was a popular picnic spot. Swimming is no longer allowed, but it has been renovated and now is known for its fishing and pedal boats.

Tingley Beach is part of the ABQ BioPark, which also includes what was once Tingley Field, the baseball stadium which hosted the Albuquerque Dons, later renamed the Dukes. The BioPark also includes the zoo, an aquarium and the botanic garden. Tingley Coliseum, part of the state fairgrounds, is used for musical and sports events and was once home to the Albuquerque hockey team. Clyde and Carrie Tingley are honored with near life-size bronzes at Tingley Beach for their philanthropy and efforts at beautifying early Albuquerque and providing recreational opportunities.

Clyde Tingley often visited the children's hospital named for his wife. In 1937, he even had the entire New Mexico legislature drive down to Hot Springs to tour the hospital. He established a political machine in the state and governed with an iron hand. But regardless of his politics, he was a compassionate man and cared about the poor, the hungry, and those out of work, and he tried to solve the problems the Depression caused.

Tingley loved red chile, and his wife, who called him "Buster," carried Tums in her purse just in case he needed them. He died on Christmas Eve 1960 in Albuquerque. He was a tenacious man, often flamboyant in public, known for wearing his linen suits and the famous 1890s hat, the fedora. He loved schmoozing with celebrities and would often meet the train in Albuquerque when he knew movie stars were on it. But he enjoyed talking with all types. He was a true "people" person.

Carrie Tingley went about her philanthropic activities without much ado. She held little truck with elaborate entertaining in the Governor's mansion in Santa Fe, and social classes meant little to her. However, she was a very animated and outgoing person who enjoyed collecting antiques, the color lavender and going to the movies weekly. She had big, beautiful red hair and loved wearing huge, colorful hats. She died at her home in Albuquerque on Nov. 6, 1961, less than a year after her husband. According to Richard Melzer, she was 84 and had suffered from leukemia and a stroke. Carrie and Clyde Tingley are buried at the Fairview Cemetery in Albuquerque. Melzer noted that the Tingleys left the hospital and other charities a large amount of money in their will.

Bronzes of Carrie and Clyde Tingley and a child greet visitors to Tingley Beach in Albuquerque, N.M. *(Photo by Naomi Iniguez).*

The original hospital building in T or C was later turned into the New Mexico State Veterans Home. The residents still use the mineral waters. The exterior of the building looks almost the same as it did when it housed the hospital, so well-built it was. The town of T or C also offers many opportunities for its residents and visitors to use the healing mineral waters.

Carrie and Clyde Tingley ended up in New Mexico by chance, but she was transformed by her illness and the couple used their influence, energy and money to change many lives. It is a tribute to this passionate couple that the children's hospital in Albuquerque kept the name Carrie Tingley.

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move. A former student taught him the "Mariachi Loco," which he often danced at Cinco de Mayo or 16 de Septiembre celebrations. The pure joy he finds in dance is obvious to anyone watching him. "I'm not good, but I'm fun," he is fond of saying.

He didn't dance with his mother Virgie Dobkins until she was a senior citizen during the town's Early Settlers Days in his native Levelland (Texas), but he had watched her and his stepfather square dance and win awards for their performances as he grew up. He also danced with his granddaughter Dasha Rose, whose own dance group performed many places, including Disneyland. He even danced with her at her high school homecoming dance, everything from polka to swing to rock 'n roll. He got her to dance with him and Shannah when they were Santa and Mrs. Claus at EPCC Senior Adult Christmas Shows at the Chamizal. In 2014, he was able to dance with her at her wedding. Leon and Shannah also enlisted Dasha's younger sister, Teah Rose, to perform with them as an elf when they did Christmas programs.

Blevins as Uncle Sam is shown at the Vietnam War Memorial replica when it came to El Paso in 2002.

And Leon danced with dozens of women over the years at his many performances, some very beautiful women. What does his wife say about this? Shannah, a beautiful woman herself, says, "Oh, he's harmless" or "I trust him." Blevins attributes his popularity with women to the "teddy bear effect." He says, "Everybody loves a teddy bear, but the one that lives with the teddy bear is usually the one who loves him the most."

Because of his unique teaching style, Blevins is recognized by former students all over Texas and other places. Besides commenting on his numerous characters, many remember the "funny money" they earned (and lost) for answering quiz questions at the end of each chapter, the points they won added to exam scores. Blevins took the idea from TV game shows in the 1980s and 1990s. Other students recall the "security blankets" (one-inch squares of felt) he gave them to rub to relieve stress while taking exams. Students wore them on coats and sweaters or put them around pens, some asking him to autograph them and others keeping them for years. When anyone asked Blevins if he had a doctorate, he would simply say, "My doctorate is a D.C., a Doctorate in Creativity."

Having modeled as his various characters for Tony Guerrero's EPCC photography classes for about 10 years, Blevins composed and printed calendars showing him as a presidential candidate in the early 1990s with his friends, relatives and students, all produced by hand. He also created posters and videos of many of his costumed characters.

Blevins said he developed his sense of humor through his belief in God, dealing with his father's alcoholism and his parents' divorce, subjects not discussed in public when he was growing up. He had to learn to be resourceful and streetwise. He failed a couple of grades in elementary school and was put on academic probation at Texas Tech. Seeing Christ as a master teacher, Blevins wanted to produce "a heightened awareness" in his students. That Blevins has reached his students is reflected in the fact that he has been honored with outstanding teaching awards seven times by either students or faculty committees and has received two NISOD Teaching Excellence awards. In 2003, the Texas House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring Blevins for his unique teaching style.

In 1973, Blevins published the *Topical Dictionary of American Government and Politics*, designed so that students could understand the language of political science, and in 1987, his textbook *Texas Government in National Perspective* appeared. Over the years, he also published numerous study guides. Published in *Church and State* in June 2015, his most recent article was on politics and religion

Today, Blevins has had to make several adjustments. Still teaching, he has retired from appearing as his favorite characters because of a knee replacement and changes in class technology and in students themselves. Blevins sees students who have grown up with standardized tests and the influence of electronic media, students who are passive and not used to critical thinking. He refuses to simply show videos, films and Power Points and has developed a system of textbook chapter reviews and small groups, teaching students organization and reading skills.

He has had to cut way back on his dancing and often rides in convertibles in parades as Uncle Sam, waving to cheering fans. He still has the energy of a much younger man, attributing his enthusiasm to his mother and to "clean living." Never smoking or drinking alcohol, Blevins believes in daily exercise and has unconditional acceptance from his wife Shannah and his family, children Timothy, Keith and Shaleah and his grandchildren.

For the past eight years, Blevins has hosted a weekly television show on Sundays at 11:30 a.m. called "Perspectives: El Paso" on EPCC-TV and KCOS, during which he interviews professors, historians and leaders in politics, government and the military. His reduced appearances have allowed him to write his autobiography, *Crystal Moments of Leon Blevins*, still in progress, on which much of this article is based.

In July 2015, Blevins was invited to participate in an educational symposium sponsored by the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in Washington, D.C., for teachers who want to incorporate the subject of the Korean War into their curriculum. Blevins prepared a paper on the Korean War and showed participants how to conduct oral history.

Blevins plans to retire from teaching at EPCC at the end of the spring semester 2016. The International Museum of Art plans to host a reception on May 22, 2016, for an exhibit of photographs and caricatures entitled "Leon Blevins: A Man of a Thousand Faces; Half a Century on the U.S./Mexico Border." The exhibit will be from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Call the museum at 915-543-6747 for other days and hours the exhibit will be on display.

Blevins admits he's still a kid at heart. When accused of being childish during some of his appearances, he corrected his detractors by saying he is "childlike," always "in wonder of the world and the adventures that it provides, just like an inquisitive and adventurous child."

Professor, performer, preacher. Actor, dancer, writer. He is all these and more. This warm, charismatic man with the strong voice and piercing blue eyes has taught thousands of El Pasoans about politics and cultural history. It is no wonder that fans have called him "The Spirit of El Paso" for his energy, spontaneity, enthusiasm — in short, the essence of the Sun City. ¡Viva Leon! 🎩

Leon and Shannah Blevins pose as the Texas Gambler and Shady Lady.

All photos courtesy of Leon Blevins.

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Staff of the Air Defense Center and Fort Bliss, a position she held until 2008. Although disappointed she was not promoted to the rank of brigadier general upon her arrival at Fort Bliss, Brown held on to hope that "nothing was impossible."

In January 2009, Brown's patience finally paid off. After being nominated in 2008 by President Bush for a promotion, Brown became the first woman in the Air Defense Artillery to be promoted to the rank of brigadier general and also became the first woman general on the I Corps Staff.

Besides being the first in many of the positions she has held in the Army, Brown's hard work is reflected in the numerous awards she has received. The United States Strategic Command Web site lists Brown's awards and recognitions including the Defense Superior Service Medal; Legion of Merit (four oak leaf clusters); Meritorious Service Medal (six oak leaf clusters); Army Achievement Medal (four oak leaf clusters); and the Bronze Star Medal (one oak leaf cluster). Each oak leaf cluster denotes a subsequent award of that decoration. These are medals given to individuals for their meritorious and heroic service in different situations. She is also authorized to wear the Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge and Secretary of Defense Identification Badge, among others.

Brown's contributions have also focused on her hometown, El Paso. Brown received the League of Women Voters of El Paso's BRAVO Award in 2004. This award is "presented to individuals who have shown exemplary dedication to the community by their work for the betterment of El Paso." Brown has worked with other El Paso organizations, including the Center against Family Violence. In 2012, she gave $250,000 to establish the William G. and Virginia Maxell Brown Center for Pediatric Audiology Development and Learning located in the El Paso Children's Hospital. The El Paso Children's Hospital Foundation home page noted that several of her siblings had dealt with hearing issues, and as a result, Brown wanted to dedicate the only center of its kind in El Paso to this underserved area of health.

General Brown credits her success in the military not to her gender but to her ability to lead and command other soldiers. Brown told McAleer, "I am going to do my job like any other battalion commander, not based on my gender but on my experiences. My intention is to leave the battalion I command better than I found it." It is this attitude towards gender neutrality that shows why Brown has become so successful. General Brown has always viewed herself not as a woman but as a soldier in command, an opinion that she continues to stress as she moves through the ranks.

Maj. Gen. Heidi V. Brown is given a tour of operations by Col. Stephan Richmond during air defense training in 2012.
(Photo by Sgt. Tyler Placie, U. S. Air Force)

As a woman in the military, there have been times when Brown questioned whether she wanted to continue her career. In an interview with Rachel Martin of National Public Radio (NPR), General Brown mentioned that many women leave their military career to seek time for family or other related choices. Brown instead found herself living with her golden retriever Sandy, and she explained how different she felt compared to other commanders: "I'm female. I'm single. They [commanders] are all male. They're all married. They all have kids. I have a dog."

Yet once the moment of hesitation passed, Brown remembered why she continues to serve. She said in an *El Paso Times* article by David Burge, "It's very rewarding to know what you are doing is for the security of our homeland and the protection of our allies. … This is my passion, serving in the military. I can't think of doing anything else and I don't want to."

On the Army home page, General Brown in 2012 explained to Hawkins, "I love working with soldiers and they never cease to amaze me. ... Because of them, I love serving. I will serve until they tell me to leave." True to her words, General Brown has been serving for more than three decades and has continued her career in the branch of air defense artillery.

In another NPR interview with Rachel Martin in 2011, Brown acknowledged that artillery or infantry command jobs in combat are what lead to fast promotions, which is one factor that puts women at a disadvantage. In the immediate past, women were most often "coded out," or denied higher positions in combat, because of policies set by the Pentagon. As a result, the lack of women in ranks above Brown's brings back to reality the lack of equality that is still present within the military. Four years ago, Brown said in her interview with Martin, "Gender now shuts the door for me."

Brown served as the Director of Test for the Missile Defense Agency in Huntville, Ala., for the last three and a half years. Contrary to her belief that she had hit the glass ceiling in the Army, Brown was promoted again in 2012 to Major General (two stars). In February 2015, she became Director of Global Operations, U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, according to Burge. Another first, Brown serves as an operations officer, a position that is normally occupied by a two-star Air Force general or a two-star admiral. When Burge asked how she felt about the new position, Brown replied, "If you are first and you don't succeed, you are probably the last."

There is only one woman in the Army who has reached the rank of four-star general, the second highest rank in the Army (a five-star general position is only occupied at time of war). In 2008, Ann Dunwoody became the first female to be awarded the rank of four-star general in the military. Dunwoody, however, served in logistics, not combat. She retired from the Army in 2012.

The Pentagon slowly has begun to integrate women into different combat positions in the military. In January 2013, the U.S. military ended its policy excluding women from open and direct combat jobs as announced by then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. He set the goal to integrate women as much as possible by January 2016. As U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., said in a CNN article by Chris Lawrence, "Thousands of women in the military have already found themselves in combat situations."

Pentagon figures in 2013 revealed that of 976 generals and admirals in all branches, 69, or 7.1 percent, were women, according to the CNN online article "By the Numbers: Women in the U.S. Military." According to Arwa Gunja and Mythili Rao of Public Radio International, as of 2015, women make up nearly 15 percent of the U.S. military active duty forces and now serve in 95 percent of all military positions. As of August 2015, two women, both West Point graduates, were in the final phase of training to become Army Rangers, the first time the elite unit has extended this opportunity to female soldiers.

Through changes in the Army and other branches of the U.S. military, more women are being given opportunities to achieve higher ranks. And in the article by Lawrence, a senior defense official agreed, stating, "We know they [women] can do it." Maj. Gen. Heidi V. Brown *has* done it! ★★

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Dena Hirsch wrote that the convent building was completed first, called Praxedes Hall, where both the nuns and boarding students lived and where classes were taught as well, beginning in September 1923. It would take 14 years for the chapel and the academy to be finished.

In March 1924, building of the chapel began. This was the middle building, with the convent and academy forming the wings. Hirsch described the trio of buildings "like a human figure who holds out her arms as if to embrace the cities of El Paso and Juárez spread at her feet." Indeed, Mother Praxedes had wanted the school to overlook both cities, just as she wanted the school to offer a Christian education to the young women of both the United States and Mexico. The one-story chapel features a high, peaked roof which makes it dominate over the two wings, although they are three stories high. Hirsch wrote that the ten arched windows are of "pink and light green marbleized stained glass."

The Great Depression hit the country, and in an effort to gain finances for the new school, Mother Praxedes traveled back to St. Louis in 1931 to secure an $80,000 loan. While there, she fell and broke her hip, and although she was able to return to El Paso, she now had to oversee the construction from her bed — and for two years, she did. On December 16, 1933, Mother Praxedes died in the convent at Loretto.

In an article published by the *El Paso Times* on Feb. 20, 2012, Sister Mary E. Boesen, Loretto Academy's current president, wrote that "Loretto Academy is proof of her [Mother Praxedes'] breadth of vision and building genius."

Thanks to Mother Praxedes' belief that serving God meant serving others, probably no one woman has ever done more to influence the parochial education of girls here in the Borderland. The pioneer nun was inducted into the El Paso County Historical Society Hall of Honor in 2001.

The words of Father J. Garde, spoken at her Requiem Mass and reprinted in the aforementioned *El Paso Times* article, remind us of her wisdom and foresight: "Her chosen field was education and she was one of the finest souls to see the necessity of higher education for women. How wisely she planned and how well she executed these plans will be attested to long after our day by the finished product which will be scattered throughout the west and the world." ✝

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Sister Praxedes' health and spirits soon improved. She also became fluent in Spanish. It was while still in Santa Fe that Sister Praxedes took her final vows to become a nun.

In 1878, Sister Praxedes was given a new assignment and was sent to Bernalillo, N.M. There she accepted responsibility for educating young girls, remodeling St. Vincent's Academy and planting gardens to make the order more self-sufficient and debt free. Her family background which forced each member to contribute to the well-being of others, as well as her business background gleaned from her days at Hilliker's store, served her well when it came to financial matters.

In August 1880 shortly after ordering the lumber for their new porch in Bernalillo, Sister Praxedes traveled to Santa Fe for a spiritual retreat. On Aug. 24, she was called to the office of Mother Francisca. A major scandal was brewing in Las Cruces. A priest and a novice had renounced their vows, gotten married and stayed in the area. Sister Praxedes was ordered not to return to Bernalillo but to go to the Loretto Academy of the Visitation in Las Cruces, a school which had been founded in 1879. Mother Magdalen would accompany her.

The chapel stands between the two "wings" of the former convent and the academy of El Paso's Loretto Academy *(Photo by Isabel Hernandez)*

Upon their arrival in Las Cruces about 2 a.m. after a grueling stage coach ride, Mother Magdalen informed Sister Praxedes that she would be known as *Mother* Praxedes from now on. It would be her responsibility to finish the half-built academy that was $5,000 in debt as well as to restore the Order's damaged reputation.

The new Mother Superior quickly realized that most residents of Las Cruces were poor, but "through bazaars, fairs, sales, charging tuition, and bank loans she quickly set about liquidating the debt," according to an exhibition on the history of the Sisters of Loretto in Las Cruces by Portia Vescio and Wendy C. Simpson, found in the Rio Grande Historical Collections, New Mexico State University (NMSU) Library Archives. The written comments also indicated that parents delinquent in paying their children's tuition were forced to do so when Mother Praxedes took them to court. She was tough and she became skilled in raising money.

However, she also made the Order a part of the community by socializing with the residents and making the Academy self-sufficient. Vescio and Simpson in the above mentioned source in the NMSU archives mentioned that the Sisters of Loretto were sued by Eugene Van Patten, tax assessor for Las Cruces, because he believed that their land was being used to make a profit, when in actuality it was being cultivated as a vegetable garden for the nuns and their boarding students. It was Mother Praxedes who testified in court that the land helped feed the school's poor students.

The school grew to the point that two wings were added, one designed by noted El Paso architect, Henry C. Trost. Loretto Academy would provide education for students in the Las Cruces area until it closed in 1943.

After making improvements to the land around the convent and school, Mother Praxedes helped raise money to restore St. Genevieve Church, originally built in the 1850s as an adobe building. It was replaced in 1886 by a brick building with twin bell towers, 44 feet high, built with money from local parishioners, including Colonel Van Patten. This church would serve Las Crucens until 1967, when it was torn down, and a new St. Genevieve's church was built on South Espina Street. According to a 1963 *El Paso Times* article, when Mother Praxedes left Las Cruces 13 years after her arrival, she was "one of the most beloved leaders that community ha[d] ever known."

In 1893, Mother Praxedes was reassigned to the Loretto Academy in Florissant, Mo. Then in 1894, she was sent to Loretto Heights Academy, an elementary and secondary school for girls, in Denver, Colo., established in 1890. According to an article published in the *Southwest Catholic Register* dated February 1962, it was Mother Praxedes' "strong hand" that saved the academy from "being lost to the society, as a result of the financial panic sweeping the country in 1894." She was determined that girls in the West would not be denied a Catholic education. The strong Irish girl had become a force to be reckoned with even in the boardrooms of big financial institutions.

In 1896, Mother Praxedes was called back to the Motherhouse in Kentucky to fill the remaining two years of a four-year term of Mother Catherine, Superior General of the Loretto Society, who had been asked to resign, along with the Ecclesiastical General, Father Gambon, in a serious dispute over authority. Mother Praxedes was charged to unite the two factions in the Loretto Order, and through much hard work did so, being subsequently elected by the sisters to two full six-year terms, the maximum number of terms allowed for such a position.

So successful and beloved was Mother Praxedes in this position of leadership that she was elected to two more six-year terms, after the sisters asked and were granted papal permission to do so. Mother Praxedes thus served as Superior General of the entire Loretto Order for an unprecedented 26 years.

Mother Praxedes worked tirelessly for her Order. She traveled to Rome three times to petition Pope Pius X for approval of the constitution and rules of the Order, which had existed almost a century with only temporary approval, with a final Decree of Confirmation granted in 1907. During the influenza epidemic, she sent the Sisters of Loretto into some of the worst hit areas to provide nurses for the sick.

Believing it was the Order's duty to educate women and the poor, and that the buildings in which to do so also provided the opportunity to teach God's truth, Mother Praxedes used her incredible mind for business to establish 51 Loretto Academies throughout the country, including two four-year colleges, "normal schools" for educating new teachers.

Her dreams of establishing higher education for young women became reality when she built Loretto College in Webster Groves (St. Louis), Mo., in 1916. It took the name Webster College in 1924 and was one of the first Catholic colleges for women west of the Mississippi. As all-male colleges began admitting women, Webster College began offering courses to men in 1962, and in 1967, the Catholic Church turned over ownership to a lay board of directors.

Today the college is known as Webster University, a private, non-profit, nondenominational international institution which offers graduate and undergraduate degrees in the U. S., Europe and Shanghai, China. Webster University also offers degrees to members of the military as they serve their country, including on our own Fort Bliss Campus.

Two years later in 1918 under the direction of Mother Praxedes, Loretto Heights Academy in Denver also became a women's college, according to Carolyn Dunbar, editor of the *Loretto Magazine*. It was accredited in 1926. Although it educated thousands of young women for 70 years, financial difficulties mounted and this Loretto college was turned over to Regis University in 1988, which in turn sold it to Teikyo University Group in Japan. In 2009, the school, built at the highest point of the city, with the original building constructed of red sandstone, changed its name to Colorado Heights University.

Mother Praxedes also planned the first foreign mission of the Loretto Society — to China. Nuns worked there from 1922 to 1951, when one was martyred and the Lorettines were expelled by the communists.

Throughout her years as Superior General, Mother Praxedes never lost her love for the desert Southwest. After finally retiring her position as Superior General in 1922, Mother Praxedes came to El Paso as the local superior to help plan, fund and build Loretto Academy. The great multi-tasker had to work, even in "retirement."

Despite financial hardships, the building of Loretto Academy proceeded. Rejecting the original suggestion of building Loretto in Golden Hill Terrace, close to present day "Pill Hill" in the Sierra Medical District, Mother Praxedes chose 19-1/2 acres of land far outside the city limits in an area called Austin Terrace. Rather than build one part of the school at a time, she chose to build the entire shell of the school, designed by Gustavus Adolphus Trost, brother of Henry C. Trost, who together had established a highly successful architectural firm in El Paso.

Mother Praxedes believed the school was more likely to be completed if the entire framework existed, and she proved to be correct. However, at the time, some people called it "Praxedes' Folly." After all, it was six miles from the town's center, there was no transportation to the area and education for girls was not a priority, except to Mother Praxedes.

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Mother Praxedes Carty: Serving God by Serving Others

By David Andrade, Priscilla Porras, Angelica Soto and Heather Coons

In El Paso, one of the most recognized private educational institutions is Loretto Academy. Located in the peaceful area known as Austin Terrace, Loretto overlooks El Paso and her sister city, Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. The Academy was established by the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross who celebrated their bicentennial in 2012. The school was the last project of an Irish nun who had led the Lorettines as Superior General for more than a quarter of a century and had come back to her beloved Southwest to spend her last years: Mother Praxedes Carty.

Mother Praxedes was born Susan Carty in Bawnboy, Ireland, on March 4, 1854. According to the book *Only One Heart: The Story of a Pioneer Nun in America*, by Sister Patricia Jean Manion, Susan's father, Mark, was the village miller, while her mother, Ellen, was busy taking care of the family home and Susan's ten brothers and sisters. The Carty Family were devoted Catholics, and for Susan, this love for God was deeply instilled in her heart. The family would kneel together to say the rosary, laugh and joke at dinnertime and tell Irish folk stories at night.

Although Susan wasn't considered the prettiest of the Carty girls, her father always remarked that she "had a heart of gold." At a very young age, Susan served as a guide to Moira, the local blind beggar woman, because, according to the local priest, to serve God was to serve others.

Facing a struggling economy and religious persecution from Protestants for being Catholic, the Carty Family decided to immigrate to America. Susan's first thought was about Moira and how she would get along without her. The young Susan even had a fleeting thought that she should stay behind in Ireland so Moira wouldn't get lost along the road.

In June 1865, the Carty Family left Ireland for a new life in St. Louis, Mo. Their father worked hard as a miller in one of the factories, while their mother toiled to try to make their house on O'Fallon Street a home.

At the beginning of the summer of 1866, Susan was first introduced to the Sisters of Loretto. At the age of 12, Susan and her sister, Maria, along with her sister's new husband, David, traveled by riverboat to Cape Girardeau, Mo. Upon arrival, they were greeted at the river by Mother Bridget and David's sister, Sister Cecilia. Susan was fascinated by the black habits of the nuns, especially the two little red hearts that were embroidered on their capes. When Susan asked what the hearts stood for, Sister Cecilia explained that they represented the hearts of Mother Mary and Jesus.

Mother Bridget and Sister Cecilia escorted Susan to St. Vincent's Academy, a boarding school run by the Sisters of Loretto. The school sat tall and proud upon a grassy hill, with a small chapel and children playing out by the orchard. She even found that the school had its own art studio, but it was the nuns and the pretty embroidered hearts on their habits with which Susan fell in love. After returning home, Susan gained a promise from her father that come the start of the next school year, she would be attending school with the Sisters of Loretto.

In August 1866, Susan's parents decided to return to Ireland because Ellen was homesick and very depressed. Only taking their youngest child with them, they left their other children in care of their oldest daughter, Maria. Because of the expense to go back to Ireland, Susan's father explained she would not be able to attend St. Vincent's Academy after all. She was heartbroken.

That September, Susan began school at St. Philomena's, run by the Sisters of Charity, and while

Susan Carty became Mother Praxedes Carty and served as Superior General of the Loretto Order for 26 years. *(Photo courtesy of El Paso County Historical Society)*

there were girls playing about in the yard and a little church and nuns, there were no little red hearts on their habits. For Susan, it just wasn't the same. She dreadfully missed Mother Bridget and Sister Cecilia, as well as her parents.

In 1868, Maria fell sick and died, either from typhoid fever or pneumonia, or both — a doctor could not determine — and Susan began caring for Maria's three sons. News of their eldest daughter's death reached Mark and Ellen in Ireland, and they quickly made plans to return to America. In the spring of 1869, the family was reunited.

By this time, Susan was 15, and like most young ladies her age, she took great care and pride in her appearance, curling her hair and adorning it with ribbons while making sure her dress and shoes were always perfect. She also found herself the subject of teasing from her family for being so vain.

Although Susan still regularly prayed on her knees with her rosary and attended Catholic services, she had no intention of becoming a nun. She decided to apply for her first job at Hilliker's Dry Goods Store as a salesgirl, much to her family's protest. According to Sister Jean's book, her father agreed to allow her to work as long as "the gold in her pocket didn't steal the gold away from her heart."

On Nov. 1, 1869, the Carty patriarch died from heart trouble. Six short months later, his wife Ellen joined him. On her death bed, Ellen made Susan promise that she would weigh her responsibilities to her family well. Susan continued to work and raise the children left by her sister, Maria. But all the while, in her heart and mind, Susan began to think about her life's purpose and how she could best serve God.

In 1873, Susan began to think about life in the convent. She recalled her younger years and how much she had admired the Sisters of Loretto. Susan spoke about wanting to become a nun with her sister Kitty, who quickly laughed. According to Sister Jean's book, Kitty thought that Susan was too vain and concerned about having a good time to live a holy life. Susan's brother, John, however, suggested she seek out Father McCaffery, the family priest, to ask his advice.

After mass one Sunday, Susan approached the family priest. Father McCaffery suggested that she think long and hard before making such an important decision, that life as a nun was not one of leisure. There would be many rules that she might not agree with that must be followed. There would be no husband and no children of her own. He also told Susan that she would no longer be the darling of the family and asked her if she could handle taking a backseat to others.

Over the years, Susan had been given more responsibility at the store: she now kept the books in addition to waiting on customers. Moreover, the store owner's son made it clear that he wanted her to be his wife. But Susan's thought of wanting to become a nun would not leave her. She was sure of one thing: "The only way to serve God is to serve others." But who were the "others"?

In 1874, Susan traveled to Kentucky and the Motherhouse for the Sisters of Loretto to take her vows as a novice. First, however, Susan had to come up with her new Christian name. Sitting before the mistress of the novices, Susan went through a list of names that she preferred: Wilfrid, Henrietta, Mary Henry, Decarose. All were rejected by Mother Dafrosa who suggested rather firmly that Susan take the name of a Roman martyr who died for her beliefs. Susan was now to be known, much to her dislike, as Sister Praxedes.

On July 16, 1874, dressed in the blue habit and white veil of a novice, Sister Praxedes spoke her first vows dedicating her life to Christ and to the service of others.

It didn't take long for Sister Praxedes to learn that the life of a novice was indeed very difficult. There were prayer times to be observed, floors to be swept, meals to be prepared, pots to be scrubbed, clothes to be washed and mended and gardens to be tended, all dictated by the chiming of the church bells. Of course, there was also homesickness to overcome, but it was the sickness in Sister Praxedes' body that would change her life, as well as the future of the desert Southwest, forever.

Shortly after joining the order of the Sisters of Loretto at the Foot of the Cross, Sister Praxedes fell ill. Even with bed rest and medicine, she just did not get better. Sister Praxedes had tuberculosis. The doctor's recommendation was for her to move west, since it was thought in the late 1800s and early 1900s that a dry, hot climate would help tuberculars.

Sister Praxedes' new assignment was in Santa Fe, N.M. According to the article "Mother Praxedes' Deeds Left Imprint on EP Area," published in the *El Paso Times* in June 1963, once in New Mexico, Sister Praxedes "became a character in one of the most historic events for New Mexico." On June 16, 1875, Bishop Salpointe presented the Sacred Pallium to Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy, the first Archbishop of Santa Fe.

The pallium is an ancient vestment (dating as far back as the 6th century) conferred on new archbishops consisting of a band of cloth with six black crosses worn around the neck with pendants hanging down in the front and back. The pallium is worn as a symbol of obedience to the pope by the archbishop.

New Mexico held new challenges for Sister Praxedes, the biggest being that she knew no Spanish. Not only was that the spoken language of the locals, it was also the language in which all church services were conducted. Thanks to the love and assistance of Mother Magdalen, Mother Francisca and Archbishop Lamy,

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