Strong Women Building a Strong City

This issue of *Borderlands* features outstanding women in El Paso. Because of space limitations, we can highlight only a few, but we will include more articles on women in future issues of our student publication.

A word search puzzle on remarkable El Paso women opens this issue. The idea for the article came from a faculty development workshop I attended last year presented by my colleague from the history department, Sarah E. John. I asked her to make the quiz she gave us into an article, and then I thought, why not do a puzzle? I tried many crossword puzzles to no avail, but then my student editor hit on the idea of using a word search puzzle, and we hit pay dirt. We hope you enjoy it!

The articles in *Borderlands* are based on the research projects of select English 1302 (research and literary analysis) classes. As freshmen learn research techniques, they study a topic of local history from a list that changes every year. They learn to research in steps, writing several assignments before they complete their final paper. They must use online and print sources, interviews and community resources, such as the El Paso County Historical Society and the Border Heritage Center of the El Paso Library downtown, as well as other area libraries. They learn that good research means constant questioning, careful analysis of sources, especially those online, and pursuing every lead. They discover that research is detective work, with one source leading to another.

And speaking of detectives, Rachel Murphree, part-time librarian and our web weaver, asked if she could research Callie Fairley, one of the first female police officers in El Paso, and a fascinating character in our history. The result is an intriguing article on the first woman vice detective in our city.

Last year Sally Andrade, Chair of the Oral History Committee of the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region Research, asked us to feature the local Y’s history. The YWCA had begun a project to organize and archive its historical materials, and an exhibit at the El Paso History Museum on the development of this incredible organization opened this spring. The article is based on the exhibit script with updates and additions.

This will probably be the last time *Borderlands* will appear in the *El Paso Times* because the cost of insertion has become prohibitive for us. However, we will find other means of distribution, and we will continue to be found on the Web. Use your favorite search engine and type in “EPCC Borderlands.” I bet we’ll appear in a second.

Remember, we use the *Associated Press Stylebook* for rules on punctuation and form, so comma use and other style matters may differ from academic writing.

Student editor Heather Coons, a strong woman herself, proved to be an excellent editor, meeting deadlines and tracking down details and photographs, always with a great attitude and sense of humor. Thank you, Heather. What a pleasure it is to work with you! Former student Liz Torres volunteered her art talent to produce our cover, in addition to researching Mabel Welch and photographing some of her homes. Thank you, Liz, for your wonderful contributions.

This issue on women is a special one to me and I dedicate it to former editors Gretchen Dickey, Kazestela Vasquez, Adrianna Alatorre, Sandra Pierce and Lynn Cordova, all of whom are creative, energetic, strong, principled. They are made of the stuff that the women featured in this issue are. Ladies, thank you for inspiring me to keep teaching and writing and thank you for lessons only you could teach!

Ruth Vise, Faculty Advisor & Editor

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From The Editor

Within these pages we explore some extraordinary women, some from the past, some from the present, all leaving a defining mark forever etched into the history of El Paso. In the face of seemingly insuperable odds and obstacles, they triumphed, paving the way for others to follow their footsteps. And from their stories we can all learn about living, about love, about success, and yes, failure. But most of all, we learn about the similarities that can never be bound by ethnicity or gender.

Truly, this issue has been a collaboration, from the women who made the history, to the loved ones who supported them behind the scenes, to those who worked so diligently to put it all on paper. To all of you, I give my thanks, but there are a few I would like to thank personally: My husband, Robert, for your unwavering love and support, and my children, Josh and Amanda, for not burning down the house while Mommy was busy. Special thanks to Rosa Guerrero and Alicia Chacón; you were both so gracious and kind. Thanks to Chief Justice David Chew and the Chew Family for a wonderfully informative presentation and taking the time to speak with me. Thanks also to Liz Torres for sharing your art and to Janet Bartlett and St. Alban’s Episcopal Church for your assistance.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank Ms. Vise, for providing me with an opportunity to see my work in print. You’ve been my teacher, my mentor and my friend, but most of all, you’ve given me one of the most precious gifts anyone can receive: knowledge. It has truly been an honor to work with you.

When Ms. Vise first approached me about joining the *Borderlands* staff, I was ecstatic. Finally, I had a legitimate excuse to spend my time reading at the library! Little did I know what I was getting myself into. Publishing an issue consists of a whole lot more than just completing a single research paper in class. There have been workshops and conferences, meetings and deadlines. There have been basement hunts for that all-elusive picture, as well as the inevitable technical difficulties without which no deadline would be complete. And those are only a few of the professional challenges I faced.

I also had no inkling of the incredible personal challenges I would encounter during the making of this publication, or just how much they would call in to question my commitment to see this project through. My father passed away up north on Easter Sunday. My son went through a major reconstructive surgery that could only be performed by specialists out of town. So much for my quiet afternoons at the library. It was more like planes, trains and automobiles!

But through it all, I faced this project with a sense of enthusiasm and excitement as I researched and wrote about the lives of women trailblazers. I was humbled by their compassion; I was amazed by their courage; I was inspired by their dedication. But most of all, I was honored with the privilege of telling their stories.

So for me, this issue has great significance. It is not just a tribute to the accomplishments of local women. It is a tangible symbol of my ability to overcome one of the hardest times of my life. I was profoundly affected by what I learned during the course of this issue, and it is my desire that you, too, will be touched by the lives of some of El Paso’s most amazing women. Happy reading!

Heather Coons, Editor