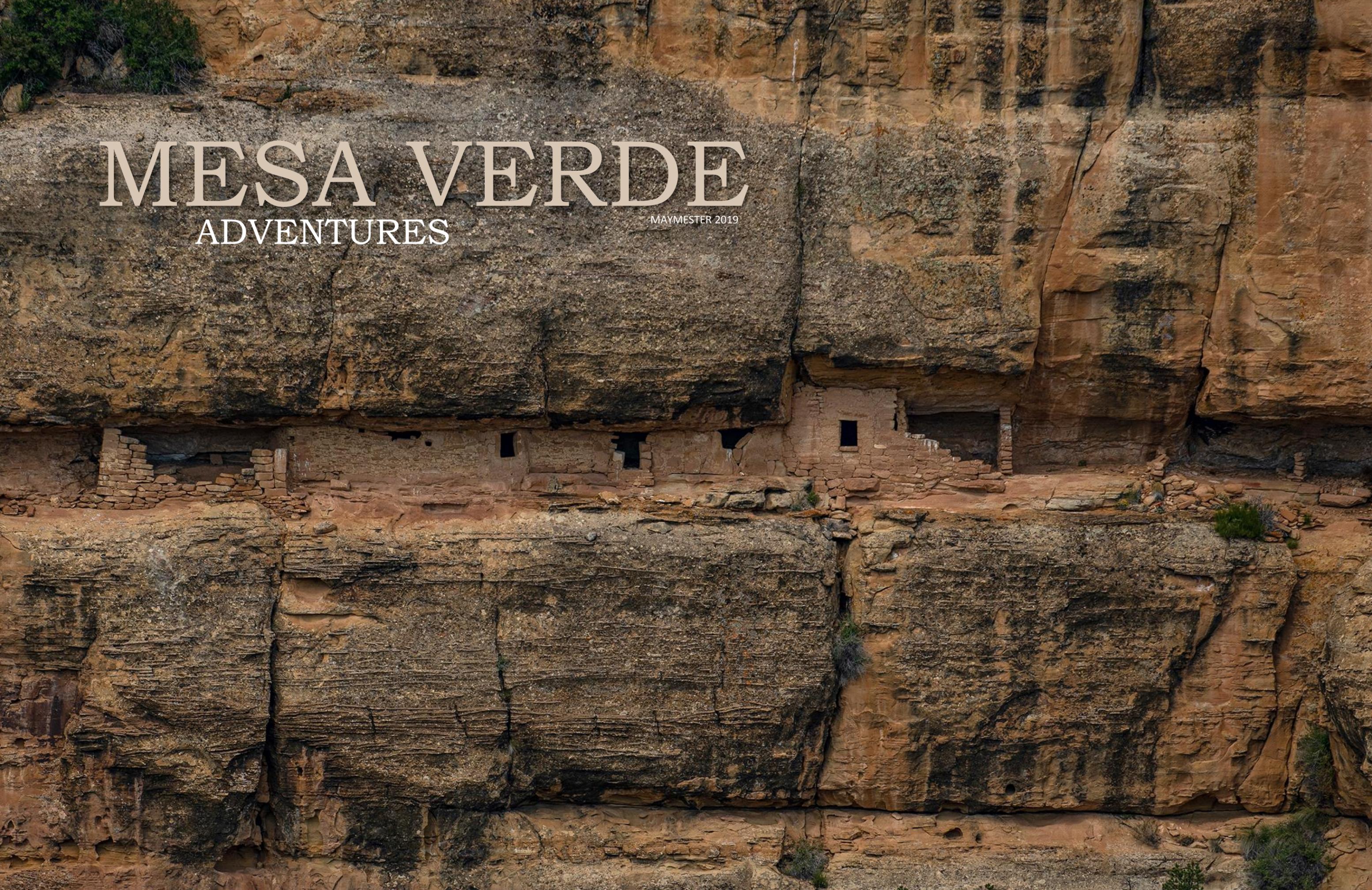


MESA VERDE

ADVENTURES

MAYMESTER 2019



May 2019

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Ancient Canyon, Modern Change



Amela Posey-Monk

Rising out of the scrubby landscape, built of timeless stone, the Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum, like the structures it celebrates, shows a flat roof and lateral wooden beams. Unlike those ancient structures, whose contours can still be glimpsed in the surrounding landscape today, this building is made of glass and steel as well as stone, keeping a cool 72 degrees inside with the miracle of modern air conditioning. Times change.

Greeting the day, Director Amela Posey-Monk emerges from the center each morning with an American flag, which she slowly raises over the parking lot. Today, she glances up with a smile as an older man, a favorite volunteer, ambles up beside her. She greets him with a warm hug and they head inside to begin the center's work for the day.

Centuries ago, a civilization of people lived and thrived in the Mesa Verde area. While much of their existence will always be a mystery, they left behind a world of artifacts and structures that survive to tell their own story. But, to reap the benefit, the story must be studied, interpreted and explained, and this is where Posey-Monk's army of volunteers come in. Nearly 80 people volunteer at the Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center and Museum, each with their own unique ties to the collection.

As the Center opens for business, volunteer Darren Upton bustles through on an errand. Upton's family has been in the area for over a century and they have observed local change first-hand. His grandparents grew beans and wheat, on land "mostly cleared with grubbing hoes and shovels," as they struggled along with dry farming.

For the Uptons, all this changed in the 1980s with the

coming of the McPhee Reservoir, and not for the worse. Damming the Delores River meant the beginning of irrigation, and real sustainable agriculture in the area. Upton's grandmother lost her land to the reservoir through eminent domain, but she felt she got a fair price for it, he said. She resettled nearby and continued in agriculture, now with irrigated farming. Unlike archeologists, who might have mourned the loss of millions of artifacts to the deluge, the Uptons and other local farmers saw little downside.

Ironically, it was the coming of the McPhee reservoir that created the visitor center where Darren stood. Local residents knew that the area was rich in artifacts, and when plans for the reservoir were announced, they demanded an effort at preservation. Archeologists mounted a massive exploration and excavation effort,



McPhee Reservoir

retrieving as many artifacts and describing as many sites as possible before the reservoir put the entire area underwater in 1981.

This effort produced literally millions of artifacts which needed to be stored, sorted and catalogued. For this reason the Canyon of the Ancients Center was born. Today the collection draws scientists from all over the world to see priceless pieces of Native American history.

This is what Marty Costas, another volunteer, gets excited about. Costas is a retired schoolteacher who conducts behind-the-scenes tours of the museum's most precious relics. Her short, crisp grey hair looks businesslike, but her eyes sparkle with excitement as she opens up wide, flat drawers to show off first one of her favorite treasures, and then another. With her badge carefully positioned behind her back so the lanyard will not touch the artifacts, she explains the unique histories of each of her favorite pieces.



Volunteer Marty Costas



Volunteer Tom Hayden

One artifact Costas shows off is a rare scrap of woven basket over 7,000 years old, which, she explains, displays weaving patterns almost identical to those used by modern Native Americans today. The connection is even more evident in one of the museum's most prized possessions – an intact bowl showing the ritualized figure of a woman with hair buns. This figure was unknown to researchers until it was identified by a Zuni girl on a school field trip who recognized the figure from her tribal heritage.



himself with a smile as “an old worn-out schoolteacher curmudgeon.” Hayden said the currents of change flow through the area. For example, the place itself used to be called the “Anasazi Heritage Center.” But when tribal people were consulted, it was found that the name “Anasazi” was a mispronunciation of a Navajo word meaning “the ancient enemy.”

Hayden said that some descendants today insist, “We are nobody’s enemy,” and so the designation of the group has been changed to “Ancestral Puebloans.” The center is in the process of updating its exhibits.

At the end of a long day of educating the public, the flag is slowly lowered and folded for the night. The setting sun delivers a golden hue to the sky that must have stunned the hearts of the Ancestral Puebloans just as it does ours today. Some things never change.

“Yes, this happens,” confirmed expert Bridget Ambler, supervisory museum curator for the center. “The drawing was identified first by a little girl from the Zuni tribe, and then later by another school-aged child from the Acoma.”

Tom Hayden, the volunteer greeted so warmly by Posey-Monk early that morning, introduces

CLICKITY-CLACK

History is Back



Story and
Photographs by
Eric Uran



Barbara Cummings, owner and operator of The Shady Lady

DURANGO, Colorado – Passengers are finding their seats among history aboard the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Rail Road scenic tours. Completed in 1881, the Durango Depot began operations and in late 1882 the route to Silverton was finished and began hauling freight to the mining town.

Train operations in the US began in 1805 and as mining towns flourished then failed, train operations made the switch from hauling freight to hauling passengers on scenic tours.

“Taking the bus and train tour gives you a better view of the river and mountains,” Bus Driver Debbie Kielb explains.

In 1987 the original round house burnt down and renovations were promptly started as the embers cooled. 1989 the rebuilt round house was back in operation catering to train enthusiasts and passengers once more.

“It’s an amazing experience to see the mountains,

and get a good taste of Colorado history,” Ken Scheard III states. Ken Scheard III is a return visitor to the train tours and frequently visits the area as he owns a vacation home in Durango.

Visiting his grandson, Ken Scheard Sr. from Ft. Lauderdale Florida hopped aboard for his first historic train tour and says “Outstanding ride, beautiful ride and a beautiful country.”

Upon reaching your destination in Silverton, you step off into one of the few historical towns that remains after the mining operations dried up. With only a few paved roads, the fine dust from well-worn roads is kicked up as you make your way thru the town. The business owners are welcoming and want to share the history of their town with anyone who will lend their ear.

Barbra Cummings owns The Shady Lady restaurant on Blair Street, and has owned and operated it for the past 47 years. The Shady Lady was not always a restaurant and during the mining days until 1947, it was operated as a brothel.

It was one of 40 brothels in Silverton found on Blair Street’s Red light district.

Cummings loves to greet the visitors and is the first smiling face and waving hand you will see when you get off the train. She has nothing to hide and will happily tell you about the last Madam who ran the brothel, Jew Fanny, who locked the doors in 1947, saying, “How can I run a business when the high school girls give it away for free?”

While there are remnants of the mining days in photographs on the walls, Cummings says with a smile “If the walls could talk, we’d have to burn it down.”

The tour guides and the locals all have stories to tell but Klieb says it best regarding all the changes throughout history: “All that’s left is the sound of the creek, the song of the birds and memories.”



Bus Driver Debbie Kielb

Once a Potter

Story and photographs by Shara Merrill

From Janet Lever-Wood's hilltop studio in Cortez, Colorado, the view spans the generations of time. The area is home to ancient ruins of a vanished civilization. It is from this venerable landscape that she draws the inspiration for her pottery. Lever-Wood has lived here on this hillside for more than a decade, creating usable art from a tradition going back for thousands of years.

Her home is filled with her creations: earth-toned cups, bowls and platters, tinted in blues and ochres. Some reveal distinct highlights bearing similarity to ancient petroglyph designs. She said she feels that an artist's work is inescapably impressed by the surroundings, and her home near Mesa Verde has left an indelible mark on her art.

"It's like you are held in the landscape," she said, gazing out over the rich, green hills.

The life of a potter comes with many challenges. Even the physical ordeal of working with clay can be daunting. Clay is heavy, and Lever-Wood hauls it to and fro, bag by bag, almost a ton every year. She laughed ruefully as she reflected on the chiropractors and orthopedic doctors she had supported with her work over the years.

Even more challenging was starting in the world of pottery as a young woman. Though it was great to be a potter in early 1970s Santa Barbara, California, where she was educated, she faced some discrimination. Many expected her to teach, or simply become a "hobby potter." It took dedication and talent to overcome the stereotypes. Even her parents wondered if she would ever get a "real job," but at 70, she now says, "Too late!"

Lever-Wood's work reflects her lifetime of experience. She explained that it takes many years to learn the rules of a craft, and then many more to go beyond them. Only this level of skill allows her to work in a state of "refined flow," where she can simply create, without "stumbling over right and wrong."



Janet Lever-Wood near a shelf of her creations.

Today, she said her biggest challenge is staying true to the art of her work instead of caving to business pressures.

"This is not a just product or a commodity," she said. "Pottery is part of a 10,000-year-old tradition."

Even after a lifetime spent with clay, Lever-Wood said she is still learning and growing,

and adapting her work to reflect the landscape she is immersed in. Her latest innovations include "translating materials," attempting to recreate the effects used by ancient potters with modern tools and materials. "I have to keep putting in, but pottery gives back a lot. It still has the power to surprise me, to keep me on my toes."

One of the most important links between artist

and place is the community of like-minded others. She is working with local artists to create an art community in Cortez. She also works with regional activists, protecting treasures like the Bear's Ears National Monument. "I was never political," Lever-Wood said, "but these days you have to be."

Her advice to young artists starting out? "Find your own voice," she said. "And then roll up your sleeves."

MARCHING

TO THE SOUND OF HIS OWN

CHAINSAW

STORY BY OSCAR BARO NAVARRO

PHOTOS BY ALI WATKINS

MONTEZUMA COUNTY, CO – David Sipe grips the chainsaw and readies to commit some raw art in the rural wilds between Mancos and Cortez, Colorado.

Tongue in cheek, Sipe claims he began his art work in fecal wall murals when he was a wee lad. He began to take a stronger, more serious liking to art during middle school and high school. After graduating from high school, Sipe would carve out his own, unconventional path.

“I actually did some pretty serious trading for artwork for various items,” he said. “One of my first automobiles, I traded a painting for it.”

His approach to his wooden sculptures gets rid of painting on a clean sheet of canvas and gets down to the nitty-gritty. With his trusty chainsaw, Sipe

drives to the mountains to cut down the wood for his next soon-to-be wooden sculpture. Before revving up the chainsaw, he straps on his DIY “protective” gear, consisting of some nose plugs, ripped chaps, gloves, earphones and a customized snorkel to not breathe in all the exhaust from the chainsaw and sawdust floating in the room.

Working with power tools, there is an added sense of danger that almost excites Sipe. The loud noise of a chainsaw cutting through log makes it an absolute adrenaline rush to him. It all juxtaposes with the calm and serene classical music playing in the distance inside one of the many self-made sheds he has in his property. Whether he listens to classical music to keep himself focused while cutting through wood with his chainsaw or out of enjoyment still remains unclear to him.



David Sipe and his chainsaw.



Left: David Sipe in his natural element. Above: Sipe in his workshop.

Sipe is the kind of artist who has many ideas in his head for the next great piece of wood sculpture. Unfortunately, there aren't enough hours in a day to etch those ideas in the wood he collects. There are many started projects that he hopes to one day complete. The ones that are completed are displayed everywhere in his 17-acre territory.

Sipe said he enjoys cutting wood and appreciates painting too. His rough, calloused hands show the tough side of his wooden sculptures, yet the paintings in these wooden art pieces show disciplined strokes.

In his earlier years before coming to Colorado, Sipe competed in several competitions, winning the world championship in a little town called Hill City, Minnesota. When he began doing it more professionally, he mentions there were hardly any wooden carvers in the United States.

Sipe emphasizes the wittiness of his wooden sculptures, dismissing the "fine artists" who take their work a little too serious.

"I try to put a little humor in all my work," he said. "Some have a funny mixed message, you interpret it one way or another. Just have fun with it. I don't

take myself extremely serious. I'd rather put a smile on somebody's face."

Now semi-retired, Sipe recognizes the struggles of living between Cortez, a tourist city, and Mancos, a small town.

"If you're trying to figure out the market out here, forget it," he said. "It's kind of a joke, because the next town up and the next town all think, 'we're going to have a million artists and be an artist town.' There aren't enough people around here. The tourists are flying or they rent a little car. They're not hauling this stuff home."

"This is the Montezuma County," he said. "It's one of the poorer counties in Colorado. So that makes it a little tougher to make a living here. Over half of the population is retired people and they're not the wealthiest of people."

Today, he and his wife, Nancy Segal, live life the way they chose to live it, out in the wilds.

"I'm lucky enough to live in a colony that doesn't have a lot of building codes," Sipe said. "That makes it a lot more pleasant. If I was in the town of Mancos, I'd be in trouble. They have too many rules there."



TEAMWORK MAKES

Story by David Mann Photography by Eric Uran

Dolores, CO— The Greater Dolores Action, and a team of volunteers, welcomed visitors to the 16th annual Dolores River Music Festival held at Joe Rowell Park, June 1.

John Chmelir, chair of the board of directors for the Greater Dolores Action, is in his 10th year with the festival. From improvements to trails and paths around the river, to hiring a back hoe operator to remove debris from its banks, Chmelir stated, “the Greater Dolores Action is responsive to what the community wants.”

The community uses the profits from the music festival to fund projects protecting and enhancing the quality of the river that dominates this Southwest Colorado town.

“Our funds were specifically tagged to the archeological interpretation signs, leave no trace signs, and other informative signage on the river,” Chmelir said.

Chad Wheelus, the Mayor of Dolores said “protecting the river is a big deal. And when you can bring people together over a resource, a lot can get done in a community.”

Wheelus said the tax revenue from the festival is “critical.” He sees the river as an invaluable resource to the community. With agriculture and ranching being a large part of the local economy, the water’s health is

vital for the area, Wheelus said.

With nearly 200 volunteers at this year’s event, Festival Producer Sharon King said it takes a lot of organization.

“It’s a lot to put together in a short period of time.” King said. Her duties include booking all of the bands, the equipment and stage for the show and organizing the event staff and vendors. King has been involved with the music festival for 10 years. This was her first year as producer.

She said she is looking forward to planning next year’s show and hopes to continue her role as producer.

“The good news is that organizing is my thing. Right after this festival I’ll be planning next year’s.” King said. She estimated this year’s attendance to be over 1500 people.

Volunteer John Tiveira is all about his “gem of a town,” as he calls it. He was happy to work the event. “I’m just an all-around volunteer kind of guy, it keeps me out of jail,” Tiveira laughed.

Tiveira was so overwhelmed with emotion that he shed tears when speaking of the locals and how important they are to each other as well as the event.

“We’re a small community of 900 people, we help each other, and know each other, its special,” Tiveira said.



THE DREAM WORK

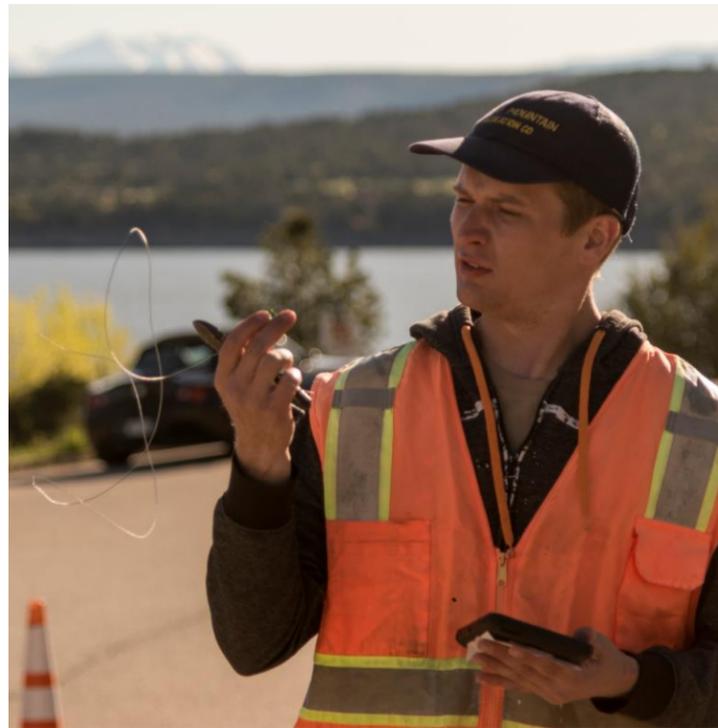


McPhee Reservoir

Not All Tourists Welcome

Story by David Mann Photography by Eric Uran

at McPhee Reservoir



Person's Name Here

DOLORIS, CO- Zebra and quagga mussels are aquatic hitchhikers that have a negative impact on all water they infest, and McPhee Reservoir is no exception to the danger of these unwanted stowaways.

Located in Montezuma County, McPhee Reservoir's 50 miles of shoreline makes it one of the largest bodies of water in the state, and a popular recreation destination for boaters. The reservoir was finished in 1986, and is

operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Since its completion, McPhee has provided irrigation water to Montezuma and Dolores Counties, and the Ute Mountain Indian Reservation. It has proven to be a crucial part of the economy in the Four Corners area.

Prior to the reservoir, agriculture production was limited to dryland farming. This farming technique has no irrigation systems, and is totally dependent on the weather. The lack of consistent water limits the types of crops that can be grown. Dating back centuries to the residents of Mesa Verde, dryland farming is still used to this day to grow some crops in the region.

Time has changed the area around McPhee, and with change comes new threats to the agricultural systems.

"People coming and boating down here and buying into the recreational side keeps us afloat," said Andrew Cagnolatti, a boat inspector for Rocky Mountain Recreation at McPhee Reservoir. It is his job is to inspect every boat launched from his station for invasive species to ensure the quality of the water for agricultural use. Proceeds from boaters' fees to use the water for recreation helps pay to maintain the decontamination equipment that is vital to the job.

Recognizing the benefit of the boaters to the reservoir, and the damage that can be caused if any invasive species get in, Cagnolatti takes his job seriously.

"The introduction of mussels into the reservoir would destroy the local irrigation systems, and cause millions of dollars in damages to the area."

Scott MacPherson, a farmer in Montezuma County, said: "The irrigation has totally changed the area. The water that the reservoir provides means that area farmers are no longer dependent on the dryland farming. It would be hard to grow what we now grow without it."

Kendra Brewer, the general manager of Southwest Farm Fresh couldn't agree more with MacPherson as she heard him explain the importance of the water.

"I can't emphasize enough about how detrimental the water is to sustaining the areas agriculture and economy."

Southwest Farm Fresh is a cooperative that connects a network of farmers in Montezuma and Dolores Counties that offers fresh produce kits to consumers throughout the network's area.

Beverly Gillespie, assistant manager for Rocky Mountain Recreation said "education is key to protecting water resources."

"If allowed in, the mussels would filter the water depriving it of the nutrients needed by area crops," she said. "A mussel infestation would hurt the farmers because the price for water usage will go up from having to clean water pipes and irrigation systems.

"Water is life, without it we all fall."





Informal Education

Story and photographs by Shara Merrill

Rebecca Coon helps CU educate tourists about biology.

Rebecca Coon and her team perform a travelling show, educating children in the biology of the Southwest. "The young have inherited a big challenge from us," she said. "It's up to us to give them the tools to handle it."

Coon is in Cortez this spring leading a delegation from the University of Colorado Boulder. The Mesa Verde area attracts tourists from all over the world to see the famous ruins and artifacts from previous human habitations. Less information is available about the natural environment in the area, and that is part of why Coon is here.

During their three-week stay, her crew spends time under pop-up shade near the Mesa Verde visitor centers, using exhibits and answering questions to raise awareness of the landscape and animals in the surrounding area. They help to establish the natural context, which is more important than ever under the looming threat of climate change.

Wearing sprightly earrings hand-made from hazelnuts, Coon looks every bit the natural leader, and her effortless connection with kids, teens and adults shows why she was selected to head the project.

"Rebecca is amazing," said Connor Fisher, one of her students. "She knows everything about this."

With her background, she's a perfect fit for this work. Coon started out in biology, but wanted to be more creative; she switched to studio art, but missed science.

Then a trip to The Butterfly Pavilion in Westminster, Colorado showed her how much could be learned outside the classroom through informal educational settings. "This was an opportunity to influence how people think and connect with nature and with each other," Coon said. "If we're excited, that helps our audience."

The group from CU is partnering with Mesa Verde in more ways than one. They are also here to help update the museum. Some of the exhibits were created in the 1930's, and archeological knowledge has advanced since then. Coon has facilitated meetings between scientists, park staff and tribal representatives, discussing how the exhibits could be accurately updated. This kind of sensitive exploration helps Mesa Verde and increases CU presence in this part of the state. "It's a win-win for both organizations," Coon reflected.

The best part of Coon's job is something she never expected - she leads college students in this venture. The students are employees, many on work-study, "...so it's like a class that gets paid," Coon laughed. But it's far more than a job.



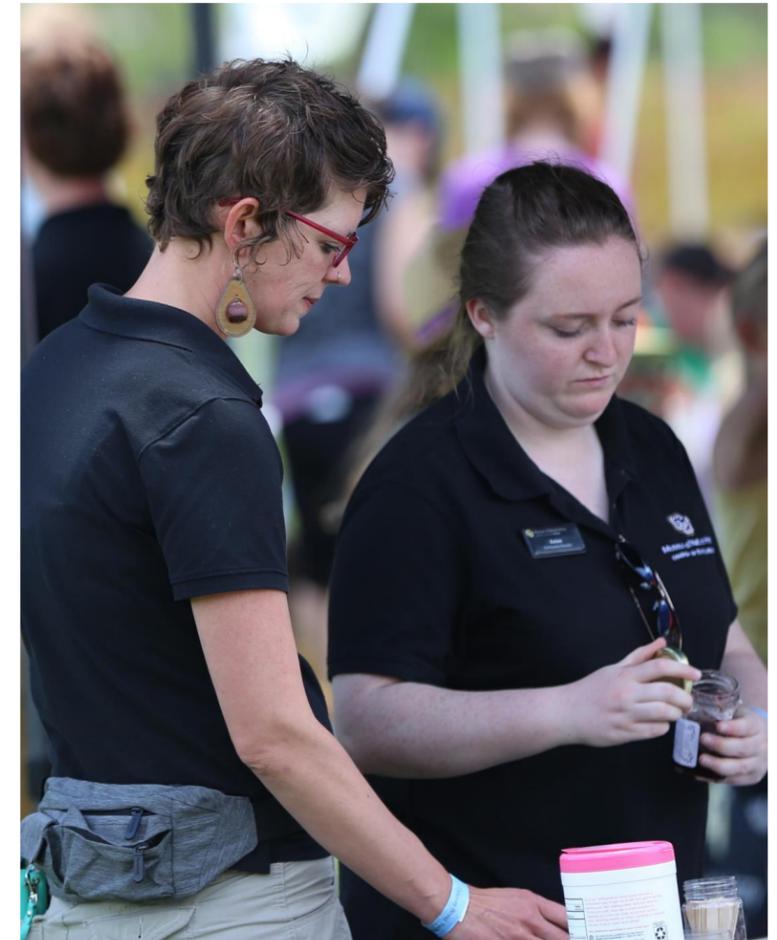
Students from CU man the booth at RiverFest

The group rents a house and lives together, learning to respect one another's differences. Coon enjoys watching students grow, many in the direction of becoming informal educators themselves.

Public awareness of nature is more needed than ever with the looming future of climate change, but it can be a difficult process. Coon is aware that just by talking about the environment, she is treading on political ground, and her students have been challenged by tourists with conflicting ideas. "We just try to help people be more curious and aware," Coon said. It is important to honor the student's comfort level with confrontation. "But," Coon said, "I ask people to think about what impact they want to have on the world."

Ultimately Coon said she is hopeful for the future.

"We can give young people meaningful opportunities, so they will rise to the challenge. But they need hand-holding," she cautioned. "It's okay that they need our help. We need theirs too. We're in this together."



Coon helps a student prepare their booth.

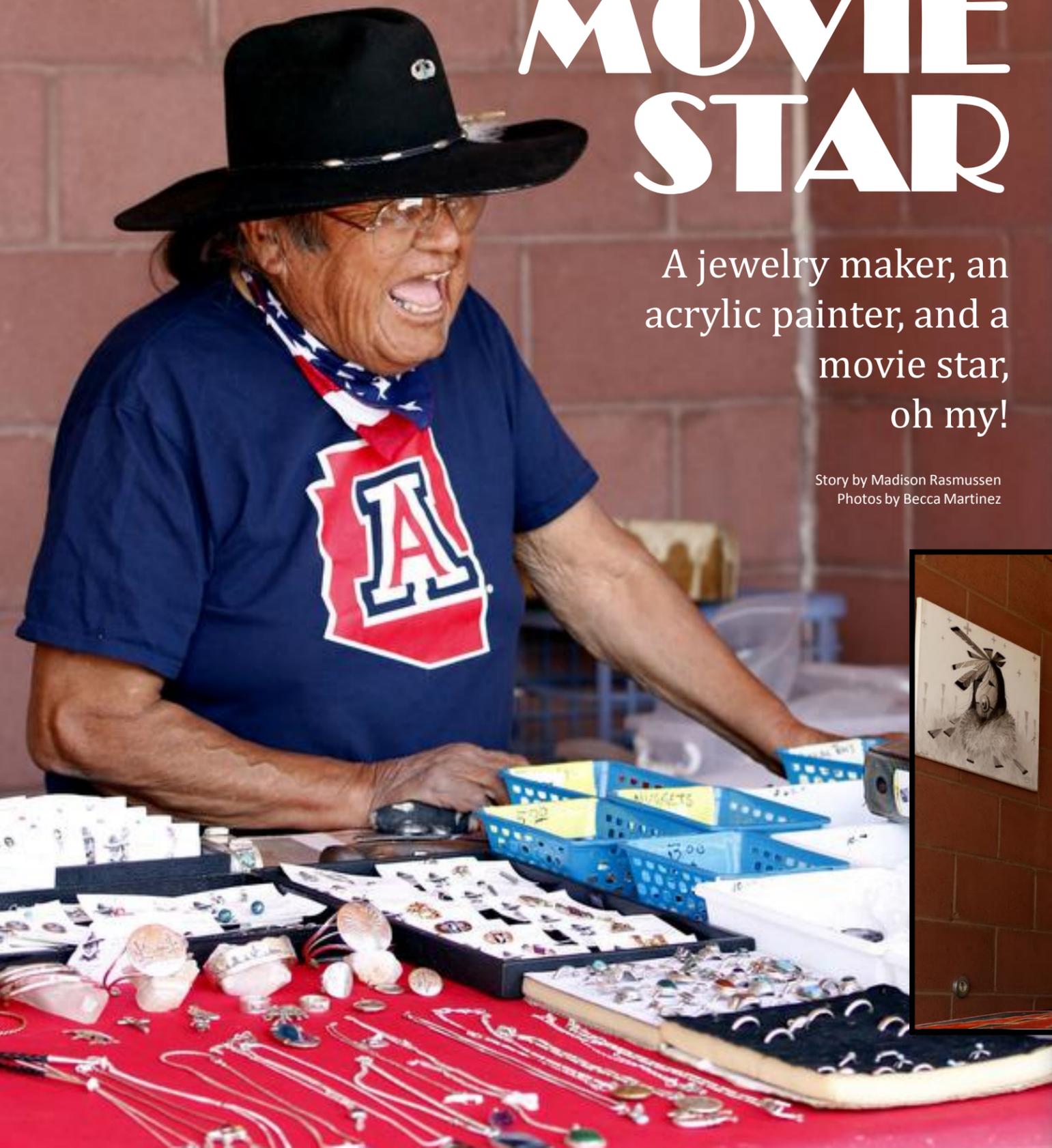


A CU student explains nature to kids.

MOVIE STAR

A jewelry maker, an acrylic painter, and a movie star, oh my!

Story by Madison Rasmussen
Photos by Becca Martinez



Betty Slim

When you stumble across the Four Corners Monument you might not expect to run into all the amazing Navajo creators who sell their art here. Cars from all across the country line up in the dirt parking lot as drivers take a break.

The first women to the right at the monument is the talented jewelry maker, Betty Slim, who has been selling her work at here for the last 50 years. She explained how each culture has their own take on dreamcatchers, a traditional craft often associated with Native Americans. Her family tradition makes bracelets called ghost beads to represent dreamcatchers.

Further down the trail of artists is Rueben Richards who displays his vibrant acrylic paintings. He gets inspiration from his family and life on the reservation. Richards works in all mediums and enjoys meeting different people while selling his art here and there as he travels across the country.

Half way through the different vendors is a man with a big smile and many stories to tell. Joe Begay sells gem stones. He is from Tucson and loves to share his art and experiences. Begay can name any stone on his table and explained how it is made. He also has beautiful carved jewelry that adorns his tables.

Begay has been coming to the Four Corners to sell his wares every summer for 25 years. He told how he was the first Native American actor in Hollywood.

“There was a gal about 36 years ago, I was at a Texas Tech football game, she came to me and said, ‘I like your look and I want you to come to work tomorrow at 5 o’clock,’” Begay said.

That gal happened to be from Hollywood and gave him her card. And just like that, Begay went from an average college football fan to an actor in Hollywood.

His first big part was “Little House on the Prairie.” He worked on “Dances with Wolves,” “Three Amigos,” “Young Guns II,” “Boys on the Side,” and “A Hot Bath an’ a Stiff Drink”. He has starred with many famous actors and said that Harrison Ford was his favorite person to work beside.

Many different characters are at the Four Corners Monument with stories to tell and goodies to sell.



Reuben Richards

Left: Joe Begay

TOURING THE WEST

When Helen West hits the early morning trails for a sunrise tour near Mesa Verde, she brings wisdom and guidance to the path as she works to elevate Cortez, Colorado into a destination.

PHOTOS AND STORY BY SHARA MERRILL



Helen West of West Adventures & Tours on the banks of the Dolores River.

West was born in Cortez and has deep family roots in the area. But she gained her expertise as a travel guide in Alaska. A steady stream of cruise ships kept West busy explaining local Alaskan plants, animals and history to visiting tourists.

She returned to Cortez to take her "day job," as she calls it, a position she loves teaching music in Shiprock, New Mexico. When she needed a summer job, as teachers often do, she looked for a position as a guide, but she found there weren't any tour companies of this kind operating in Cortez.

"You'll just have to start one yourself," her father told her, and she took his advice to heart.

Now her business, West Adventures & Tours, brings Alaskan-style learning adventures to life in

Cortez, offering hands-on explorations of farms and ranches, a local brewery tour, and a spectacular guided sunrise hike. West's focus on hiking and local expertise and make her tours unlike anything else offered in the area.

"Yes, that's Helen," said Darren Upton of the Cortez Tourism Center. "She really started something different. Her tours are wonderful."

West's tours are one-of-a-kind immersions in the unique culture and flavor of Cortez. For example, the Mesa Verde area has supported agriculture for centuries. Ranching and farming still thrive today. So West teamed up with the local cultural center to offer farm and ranch tours. Visitors can take a hayride, participate in equipment and animal demonstrations, and sit down to a lunch made from produce grown on the farm.



The sunrise over Mesa Verde, which can be seen from the Hawkins Preserve.

Another sort of tourism growing in popularity is beer tourism, and West is out in front of this trend, offering the Montezuma Microbrew Tour. This kind of outing can be tricky, she warned. The last thing a microbrew guide wants is for her guests to become too intoxicated. West laughingly explained that she and her friends have personally calibrated this tour. After some experimentation, her microbrew tour now has careful pacing, with snacks and breaks, making it a fun but not hangover-inducing occasion.

Perhaps her most impressive offering is the Mesa Verde sunrise tour through Hawkins Preserve, a local wilderness area with spectacular views of the region's famous mesas. This hike over cactus-infested ground is treacherous in the dark and should not be attempted without a guide. It is much too easy to lose the trail and end up with a shoe full of thorns.

But with an experienced guide like West, hikers can make their way safely to Patrick's Point in time for the sunrise, and witness one of the most amazing

sights the Mesa Verde area has to offer, all while learning about local flora, fauna and historical lore. Her familiarity with the trail makes the hike easy, and the golden-tinted sunrise makes the early rise worth it.



Cortez offers many rewards like this for tourists who are interested in unique learning opportunities. This helps West with her greatest challenge as a guide. "It's hard to be the first business of your kind in the area," she said. "People come through here to visit Mesa Verde or other sites and don't see Cortez as a destination."

FRYBREAD FROM THE 70's STORY BY MADISON RASMUSSEN PHOTOS BY BECCA MARTINEZ

The Lee family followed its dreams with grandma's frybread recipe and a granddaughter's jewelry craft.

Lilly Lee is now 90 years old and is the creator of the recipe that has been passed down through generations to support their family business. "Grandmas Frybread Shack" has been located at the Four Corners for 35 years now and is a delicious pick me up while traveling.

Their special is Navajo Tacos that has many different toppings for the frybread. Lucretia Lee and her coworker Tiffany Blackcoat currently run the shack with the help of Lucretia's daughter, Ava, 9 years-old. They talked about how happy their family seems to help out and how much their kids want to be involved.

Ivan Kody is 21 years old and grew up playing "with his hot wheels and what not" on the reservation 5 miles south of where the frybread truck is located. He works at the frybread cart and helps provide for his mother and grandmother. He explained to us about how sovereign territory is unique in the fact that they have no government and he deeply appreciates his Navajo heritage. He has worked at the taco truck for about 5 years now and enjoys the culture of the area.

Next to the frybread and taco cart there is a large white plastic table lined with different assortments of art and jewelry. Lucretia's daughter is proud to sell her jewelry alongside her family's frybread business. Ava raises money to go to California to explore religious education. Ava's mother, Lucretia, told us about how there is very little religious diversity on the reservation and this is how they like to learn about God and Christianity.

The reservation and sovereign territory nothing is the same. Churches and religious practices are not the same as the rest of the world. Lee said she and her family are "spiritually hungry and they are trying to understand what God and the world is saying." They are trying to better themselves and their children and this truck is where it all beings.

This inspiring family is able to support one another reach their dreams starting from this frybread recipe.



The Lee Family business



Left: Mrs. Lee laughs while sharing stories about her family history.

Learn
as
We
Go



Eric Uran at the Canyon of the Ancients Visitor Center



Shara Merrill interviews Helen West



Kenny Breslau takes aim.



David Mann, Kenny Breslau and Jay Hamm, significant extra.



Eric Uran and David Mann at RiverFest

