

# WESTERN MOVIES

*Hell or High Water*. Lionsgate. Blu-ray, \$31.99; DVD, \$19.98. LionsgateShop.com.



The wide-open of the Southwest, sliced by ribbons of highway, has inspired crime writers who took the boiling threat of the city and transplanted it to big sky country. W.R. Burnett, Jim Thompson and Elmore Leonard are among those that saw horse trails replaced by blacktop and found a new Westerner riding there, often in an open convertible, who was no loner with high

purpose, but a thief searching for his stash or a killer looking for a target. And sometimes, he wore a star.

“South West Noir” has become its own twisting genre, pushing boundaries of moral violence when interpreted by directors like Sam Peckinpah (*The Getaway*), John Sayles (*Lone Star*) or the Coen brothers (*No Country for Old Men*). This year’s Spur winner for drama screenplay, *Hell or High Water*, stands solidly alongside these films.



**C. COURTNEY JOYNER**

Loaded with humor, human frailties and failure, that often lead to bloody resolution, Taylor Sheridan’s Oscar-nominated script unfolds with humor in its tension and pays as much attention to human frailty as it does to its shootouts.

Chris Pine is one half of the team of bank-robbing brothers, whose larkish attitude contrasts with his sibling’s, played by an intense Ben Foster (*3:10 to Yuma*). The bank jobs they’re pulling have a purpose, though, and *Hell* might be the slyest movie in a long time about family. No hyperbole, just feeling, sometimes articulated, most times not, because these boys have too much fast driving and shooting to do.

Jeff Bridges brings much to his role of the retiring marshal, whose racist attitudes reflect an older, simpler and, for some, better time in Texas. His partner, Gregory Cruz, does not agree, and his experience from the other side is brought home in a superb performance.

*Hell* is more than an honorable South West Noir. It’s the best story you ever heard from a buddy, sharing a beer on a hot afternoon.

The disc includes five making-of documentaries.

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**C. Courtney Joyner writes in many formats, including screenplays, fiction and nonfiction. Email him at [olcourt@yahoo.com](mailto:olcourt@yahoo.com).**

## Wrangler Award winners

Presented in April at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City:

### Literary

**Western Novel:** *Robert B. Parker’s Blackjack* by Robert Knott (G.P. Putnam’s Sons)

**Nonfiction Book:** *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains* by Dan Flores (University Press of Kansas)

**Art/Photography Book:** *Photographs by Barbara Van Cleve* by Susan Hallsten McGarry (SF Design, LLC/Fresco Books)

**Juvenile Book:** *The Green Colt* by S.J. Dahlstrom (Paul Dry Books)

**Magazine Article:** “Warriors to Ride the River With” by Gabriella Schiavino (*American Cowboy*)

**Poetry Book:** *The Woman Who Married a Bear: Poems* by Tiffany Midge (University of New Mexico Press)

### Film

**Fictional Drama:** “Chrysalis,” *Longmire* episode

**Western Lifestyle Programming:** *Red Steagall is Somewhere West of Wall Street*

**Theatrical Motion Picture:** *Hell or High Water*

**Documentary:** *What Was Ours*

### Music

**Original Western Composition:** “Keeper of the West” by Ryan Fritz

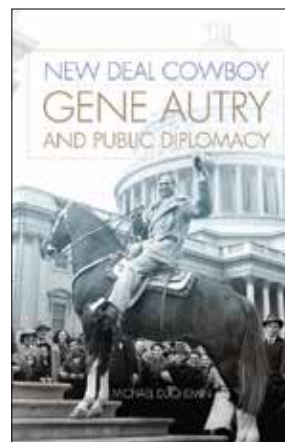
**Traditional Western Album:** *The Cowboy Way*

**New Horizons:** Trinity Seely



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**LIZ MASTERSON (WITH MIKE DOWLING & FRIENDS).** *Linger Awhile*. Wind River Guitar, \$16, LizMasterson.com.

I wonder if producers Mike and Jan Dowling realized what a hot-button issue immigration was about to become when they selected “Deportee” as one of the 11 cuts on this album of cover tunes. Folksinger and social activist Woody Guthrie wrote “Deportee” in 1948 as a poem protesting what he perceived as the racial mistreatment of Mexican migrant workers.

“Deportee” tells the story of the January 28, 1948, plane crash near California’s Los Gatos Canyon, which killed 28 Mexican farm laborers who were being deported. Martin Hoffman set the poem to music 10 years later. Here, the talented Liz Masterson renders a haunting rendition that is especially relevant during today’s tumultuous debate on the immigration issue.



**OLLIE REED JR.**

“Deportee” provokes thought and scratches at the conscience, but there’s plenty on this CD to stir up the heart and good humor. Vocalist Masterson, honored

in the past as Western Music Association female performer of the year, does memorable work on the title tune; “Salt River Valley” and “Ridin’ On Down,” both by the late Texas songwriter Cindy Walker; “Texas Echo” by David Ball; and “Along the Santa Fe Trail.”

Backing musicians Mike Dowling, Ben Winship, David Lange and Bill Plummer cut loose on their own with a rousing version of Paul Anastasio’s “Montana Glide.”



**SWING SISTERS.** *Somewhere There’s Music*. Swing Sisters, \$15, KristynHarris.com.

The Swing Sisters is an all-star lineup of Kristyn Harris, WMA’s 2016 entertainer of the year; Jeanne Cahill, twice WMA’s musician of the year (guitar, bass, steel guitar, etc.); and champion fiddler Brook Wallace.

Their talents shine on this 12-cut CD, a mix of American standards (“How High the Moon,” “The Sunny Side of the Street”) and Western favorites (“Red River Valley,” Dave Stamey’s “Buckskin Horse”).

But the song I liked best is Cahill’s “Cowgirl’s Home on the Range,” a tribute to nontraditional girls, women who value a good horse, a good saddle and good friends more than makeup and hairstyles.

\*\*\*

E-mail Ollie at [oreedjr@gmail.com](mailto:oreedjr@gmail.com) and send CDs to him at P.O. Box 2381, Corrales, NM 87048.

## FICTION

**JOHNNY D. BOGGS.** *Return to Red River*. Pinnacle. Mass-market paperback, 371 pages, \$7.99, KensingtonBooks.com.

Straight off, this book had big boots to fill. Johnny Boggs has written a sequel to the Borden Chase novel that became the unforgettable 1948 film *Red River*, which starred John Wayne (bullheaded rancher Tom Dunson) and Montgomery Clift (his adopted son Mathew Garth) as two men on an epic cattle drive. This novel finds Mathew, 20 years later, facing the loss of his ranch. He is more like old man Dunson than the people around him can bear, gambling everything by making one of the last great Texas cattle drives. The story moves with impeccable pacing and crisp realism, from its stark beginning to the fireball climax. By story’s end, Boggs rides away with his seventh Spur Award (tying Elmer Kelton’s record) and wearing big boots that fit just fine.

– Micki Fuhrman

**C.J. BOX.** *Off the Grid*. G.P. Putnam’s Sons. Hardcover, 373 pages, \$27, PenguinRandomHouse.com.

*Off The Grid*, this year’s Spur winner for contemporary novel, sets a new standard for excellence. It has a tense, ambitious plot – masterfully executed – with characters worth rooting for. Subplots intercept in an explosive ending. Set in Wyoming’s isolated Red Desert, Joe Pickett’s family is drawn into the intrigue of domestic terrorism while he tries to protect a Middle Eastern friend. The stakes rise when Pickett learns that his daughter, April, naively becomes involved in the same terrorist plot Pickett is pledged to disrupt. *Off the Grid* is perfect for readers who love suspenseful mysteries. Box’s inclusion of information about falconry and grizzly bears demonstrates his deftness with juggling subplots without losing his focus. The Joe Pickett series is solidly Western and fearlessly tackles social and environmental issues.

– Charlotte Hinger

**PETER BRANDVOLD.** *To Hell on a Fast Horse: A Western Duo*. Five Star. Hardcover, 386 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

Two new bold, engaging, fast-moving stories of bounty hunters Lou Prophet and his beautiful partner Louisa Bonaventure: “The Devil’s Ambush” and “Bring Me the Head of Chaz Savidge!” Excellent stories of intrigue, and an ending that’s a shock. Thanks, Mean Pete, I loved them.

– Phil Dunlap

**BRETT COGBURN** (editor). *Showdown*. High Hill. Hardcover, eBook, 268 pages, \$27.95, \$4.99, HighHillPress.com.

With stories by McKendree Long, Michael Zimmer, D.B. Nelson and editor Brett Cogburn, this is a fine collection of a dozen short stories. Two are particularly outstanding. “Umpire Colt” by Johnny D. Boggs, recognized as a Spur Award finalist

in short fiction this year, places Wild Bill Hickok in a baseball game with a surprising “last pitch.” This is Boggs writing about what he knows best – baseball and an icon of the Old West. L.J. Fletcher tells a tale that spans from Georgia to Wyoming’s Wind River Country in “Death in the Wind River,” a powerful story of loss and perseverance that is also superbly told.

– Candy Moulton

**JERRY S. DRAKE.** *Treasure Canyon.* CreateSpace. Trade paperback, eBook, 224 pages, \$16.95, \$7.99, Amazon.com.

It’s not every day that you run across a novel advertised as being modeled on a literary classic but with an entirely different setting. That’s exactly what you get with this tale that transplants Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* premise into the Rocky Mountains, circa 1843. For those unfamiliar with Stevenson’s original, a young boy, Jim, comes into possession of a treasure map and prompts an expedition with some good-hearted companions, but cutthroats infiltrate the party, putting the boy and his friends in mortal danger. Despite the borrowed storyline, Jerry Drake presents an enjoyable adventure with characters that come across fairly true to Stevenson’s cast. Of course, for most of us, there’s not much question whether Jim will survive and gain the treasure.

– Loyd Uglow

**PHIL DUNLAP.** *Crimson Harvest.* Five Star. Hardcover, 258 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

Phil Dunlap’s spare but expressive writing style, reminiscent of Ernest Hemingway, should interest many Western readers. Set during the War of 1812, *Crimson Harvest* pits Indians allying with the British against American settlers. Dunlap’s protagonist enters the fray as a young settler who early on saves the life of a girl about to be slain after Shawnee Indians raid her family’s home, murder her parents and burn their family cabin. His role in assisting fellow settlers grows throughout the story and becomes a solid force in their survival. *Crimson Harvest* will grip readers from its first page.

– Lynn Bueling

**JAMES T. HUGHES.** *Jasper Spring.* Dog Ear. Trade paperback, 397 pages, \$19.95, DogEarPublishing.net.

*Jasper Spring* is an uncommon boy-meets-dog story. What a dog! What a boy! In this year’s Spur winner for best first novel, we are drawn into the herding world of border collies through a bittersweet tale of love and chance. A fragile marriage is given new life when an abused boy, Ray, enters the couple’s homestead. Their relationship is complicated by the child’s distrust and his determination to hide his unstable mother’s neglect. The collie, Tommie, fuses the trio into a rickety new family when Ray is hired so he will have money for food. His envious mother threatens to destroy everything. But her threats are secondary to an encroaching environmental disaster. Highly recommended for readers who yearn for tales about people to whom honor is sacred.

– Charlotte Hinger

# One Last Look

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**PAULETTE JILES.** *News of the World.* William Morrow. Hardcover, 224 pages, \$22.99, HarperCollins.com.

In Reconstruction Texas, 71-year-old Jefferson Kyle Kidd drifts from small town to small town, reading from newspapers to let people, at 10 cents a head, hear the news of the world. Kidd’s life changes in Wichita Falls, though, when he accepts a \$50 payment to bring 10-year-old Johanna Leonberger, captured and reared by Kiowas four years earlier, to her relatives in Castroville, roughly 400 miles south. What follows is a searing, beautifully told story as Captain Kidd and a girl, more Kiowa than “civilized,” form a bond during their misadventures. Told in exquisite prose, Paulette Jiles’s Spur and National Book Award finalist explores not only history – but humanity as well.

– Johnny D. Boggs

**CARLA KELLY.** *Courting Carrie in Wonderland.* Sweetwater. Mass-market paperback, 380 pages, \$9.99, CedarFort.com.

Carla Kelly, a Spur winner for short fiction in 1978 and 1981, has twice won the RITA Award for Regency romance. She wins again for this love story set in my favorite place, Yellowstone Park, in 1903. Sergeant Major Ramsey Stiles, with the Army in the park, is haunted by a firefight in the Philippines for which he won the Medal of Honor. Carrie McKay is a poor college student from Bozeman who works as a pastry chef at the Wylie Camp and slays Ramsey with a single

piece of cherry pie smothered in whipped cream. But the way to love finds obstacles while Ramsey and Carrie serve as tour guides for famous singer Louise LaMarque, offering us the opportunity to see the park as it was. A great read!

– Linda Jacobs

**L.J. MARTIN.** *West of the War.* Wolfpack. Trade paperback, eBook, 342 pages, \$9.69, \$2.99, WolfpackPublishing.com.

Teenager Bradon McTavish, the son of a prosperous slave-owning family in Missouri, gets caught up in the Civil War when his father is lynched by Unionists. After a brief stint in the Confederate army, he heads west. Gunfights, Indians, a steamboat explosion and an interracial romance highlight this fast-paced, action-filled Western adventure that arguably ranks among L.J. Martin's best.

**S.K. SALZER.** *Frontier: Powder River.* Pinnacle. Mass-market paperback, 326 pages, \$6.99, KensingtonBooks.com.

Dr. Daniel Dixon, embittered by the loss of his wife in childbirth, moves with his high-spirited young twins to Johnson County, Wyoming, to start anew. He quickly learns that he has landed in the midst of a savage range war, and few men – neighboring ranchers and lawmen alike – are to be trusted. The grieving doctor can barely relate to his brooding son Cal and headstrong daughter Lorna, who is in love with a half-breed Indian. The plot wobbles a bit in places, but the author succeeds in doing what many overlook by capturing

the growth of central characters as circumstances challenge and change them, for better or worse. This Spur finalist is a solid, worthy read.

– Micki Fuhrman

**JAMES C. WORK.** *The Grub Rider: A Keystone Ranch Story.* Five Star. Hardcover, 286 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

One of a series retelling Arthurian legends, the author says *The Grub Rider* is the story of Sir Gareth. Wanting to become a “Keystone Rider” (Knight of the Roundtable?), Gabe (Gareth) serves in the ranch-house kitchen for a year before rancher “Art” sends him to rescue the sister of a woman who came asking his help. She is dismissive of Gabe despite repeated demonstrations of his prowess, ably assisted by a dwarf cowboy. He eventually fights the big bad guy, rescues the fair maiden and rides away. Many events, perhaps in service to the Arthurian connection, do not ring true to Old West ways – then again, the book is no further removed from reality than many “traditional” Westerns.

– Rod Miller

**MICHAEL ZIMMER.** *Billy Pinto's War.* Five Star. Hardcover, 231 pages, \$25.95, Gale.Cengage.com/FiveStar.

When Billy Pinto, a young half-blood Shoshone, sees the men who raped and murdered his mother set free, he retaliates by ambushing the killers and kidnapping the judge's granddaughter. That sets in motion a manhunt that only makes it more difficult for the county sheriff to track down the kidnapper and rescue the girl. As usual, Michael Zimmer tells the tale with style, using his “American Legends Collection” series format to the utmost, interweaving and fleshing out the first-person oral history with court transcripts, excerpts from other realistic – if fictional – sources and editorial insertions. Also evident is the author's encyclopedic knowledge of the Old West, which is, in this book, on the verge of the modern era.

– Rod Miller

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## JUVENILE

**LAURA B. EDGE** (author) and **STEPHANIE FORD** (illustrator). *Tad Lucas: Trick-Riding Rodeo Cowgirl.* Pelican. Hardcover, 32 pages, \$16.99, PelicanPub.com.

This well-illustrated, fun and informative biography for children tells the life story of Nebraska-born Barbara “Tad” Barnes, who was riding and rodeoing long before she married bronc rider Buck Lucas. The trick-riding cowgirl helped form the Women's Professional Rodeo Association and is the only woman inducted into the National Rodeo, National Cowgirl and Pro Rodeo halls of fame. A great story that shows that cowgirls are just as tough as cowboys.

– Johnny D. Boggs

**RACHELLE “ROCKY” GIBBONS.** *Big Buckaroo Goes to the Special Olympics.* Tate. Hardcover, paperback, 32 pages, \$19.99, \$10.99.

Inspired by real-life heroes, this colorfully illustrated book – a Storyteller Spur finalist for illustrated children’s book – continues the journey of Big Buckaroo. He and nephew Firefighter Joe join together and volunteer to coach at the Special Olympics. The story not only showcases the power of friendship, it shares the mission of the Special Olympics and how its athletic programs help motivate children to reach for their dreams. A fun read that shows us, “Win or Lose, the goal is always to be brave in the attempt!”

– Quackgrass Sally

**HOLLY ARNOLD KINNEY.** *Sissy Bear at The Fort.* Fur Trade Press. Hardcover, 30 pages, \$14.95, TheFort.com.

The charming true story of Sissy Bear, a 2-month-old Canadian black bear cub that went to live with the Arnold family at The Fort, a Morrison, Colorado, replica of the historic Bent’s Old Fort in southeastern Colorado. The author was only 9 years old when her father, restaurateur Sam Arnold, acquired the cub from the Denver Zoo.

Sissy lived the good life at The Fort from 1963 until her death in 1982, and during those years she befriended Lobo the German shepherd and entertained and delighted countless guests. This Spur finalist for juvenile nonfiction will touch the heart of anyone who has had a treasured pet in the past. Great vintage photos and beautiful illustrations by Christina Wald.

– Rachele “Rocky” Gibbons

**NANCY OSWALD.** *Trouble Returns: A Ruby and Maude Adventure.* Trade paperback, 208 pages, \$8.95, FilterPressBooks.com.

The author brings back her characters in this delightful third book for young fiction readers – and comes away with a Spur Award for juvenile fiction. Continuing the adventures of 11-year-old Ruby May Oliver and her mule, Maude, in the Colorado mountains of the 1890s, Oswald blends the rustic everyday life of a young girl growing up in the mountains with historic descriptions of Colorado Springs, where Ruby must testify at a murder trial. As fitting a true

adventure, there’s a surprise ending that will delight young and old readers alike.

– Quackgrass Sally

**DONNA ALICE PATTON** and **EMILY CHASE SMITH.** *Saddle Up!* Chase Smith. Paperback, 250 pages, \$11, RawhideRanch.com.

The gift of a weeklong stay at “Rawhide Ranch” Summer Camp brings 12-year-old Bridget face-to-face with her dream of riding a *real* horse. The Western-themed camp has a variety of activities, all leading to the final horse show. Bridget makes new friends but then finds she must face the challenge of keeping a serious secret from them all. While helping others, Bridget discovers there is no shame in trying, even if you are scared. But when the secret is exposed, Bridget’s whole week could end in disaster. A delightful read, this Spur finalist for juvenile fiction has a sparkling epilogue to make all “horse lovers” smile.

– Quackgrass Sally

**GINGER WADSWORTH** (author) and **DANIEL SAN SOUCI** (illustrator).

**Western History Books by Rod Timanus**

On the Custer Trail  
Rod Timanus  
Pioneer Press

On the Lewis and Clark Trail  
Rod Timanus  
Pioneer Press

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ROD TIMANUS  
Amazon or Barnes & Noble

Creating Texas: A Brief History of the Revolution  
Rod Timanus  
Lauric Press

Montezuma Castle National Monument  
Rod Timanus  
Arcadia Publishing

On the Crockett Trail  
Rod Timanus  
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www.rodtimanus.com

*Seasons of the Bear: A Yosemite Story.* Yosemite Conservancy. Hardcover, 32 pages, \$15.95, YosemiteConservancy.com.

Vibrant illustrations and the “read-aloud” storyline make this book perfect for young children and adults. This year’s Storyteller Spur winner for illustrated children’s book follows a mother bear and her cubs as they learn and discover life during four seasons in Yosemite National Park. Author of more than 25 nonfiction children’s books, Ginger Wadsworth incorporates “bear sounds” to help express the Yosemite bear-family story. Complemented by the masterful artwork of Daniel San Souci, this book is a fun insight into how changing seasons affect bears in Yosemite’s forested high country.

– Quackgrass Sally

## NONFICTION

**SAMUEL K. DOLAN.** *Cowboys and Gangsters: Stories of an Untamed Southwest.* TwoDot. Trade paperback, 329 pages, \$16.95, Rowman.com.

This action-packed, fact-based book chronicles what it calls “wild tales from a forgotten corner of the Wild West.” Using section titles such as “Six-Guns and Automobiles” and “The Wail of the Bootlegger,” the book describes numerous violent encounters between lawmen and criminals in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, mostly during the Prohibition years

of the 1920s. Samuel Dolan uses official records, newspaper accounts and oral histories to compile detailed accounts of gun battles in which the old West and the new West clash in ways that might have inspired a Sam Peckinpah film. Many historical photographs and 44 pages of endnotes document Nolan’s painstaking research.

– David Morrell

**DAN FLORES.** *American Serengeti: The Last Big Animals of the Great Plains.* University Press of Kansas. Hardcover, 213 pages, \$24.95, KansasPress.ku.edu.

In a fascinating study of the wildlife of the Great Plains and their exploitation by the human population, the author examines the ages-old interaction between humans and their prey. Both a celebration of the varied species that once overspread the region and an indictment of their organized slaughter for profit, this Spur finalist for historical nonfiction is a wistful look back at a time long gone and an angering story of selfish, heartless greed and misguided policy. For anyone who ever imagined, from reading early accounts of the Great Plains, a West teeming with animals from horizon to horizon, this book will explain why that view no longer exists and why we are all poorer for it.

– Rod Timanus

**GLENN FRANKEL.** *High Noon: The Hollywood Blacklist and the Making of an American Classic.* Bloomsbury. Hardcover, 377 pages, \$28, Bloomsbury.com.

In his follow-up to *The Searchers: The Making of an American Legend*, Glenn Frankel tackles the backstory of another classic American Western film. Starring Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly, 1952’s *High Noon* was made quickly and cheaply but won four Academy Awards. What started out in screenwriter Carl Foreman’s mind as a testament to the United Nations became an indictment of the anti-Communist witch-hunt that spread across America and led to Hollywood’s blacklisting of several players, including Foreman. Relying on recently released governmental files and unpublished interviews with the film’s principals, Frankel captures the story behind a movie and the traumatic period in which *High Noon* was made. Although somewhat lacking the flow of Frankel’s *Searchers*, *High Noon* remains a solid read.

– Johnny D. Boggs

**JOE JACKSON.** *Black Elk: The Life of an American Visionary.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Hardcover, 622 pages, \$30, FSGBooks.com.

In this well-written and impressively researched book – this year’s Spur winner for biography – Joe Jackson tells the story of the Oglala mystic best known for *Black Elk Speaks* (1932), based on his conversations with Nebraska poet John Neihardt. The raw details of Black Elk’s life, spanning the era of Lakota dispossession, in themselves make for a compelling read – a young combatant at the Little Big Horn and eyewitness to Crazy Horse’s death, touring Europe with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show, the Ghost Dance fervor and Wounded Knee, reservation and family life, conversion to Catholicism and his relationship with Neihardt. But Jackson casts a much wider loop, describing through Black Elk’s experience the physical, spiritual and

JUNE 2017

## UNDENIABLY NORTHWEST READS

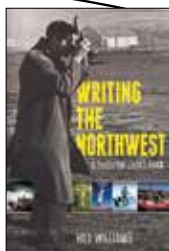
### Writing the Northwest

*A Reporter Looks Back*

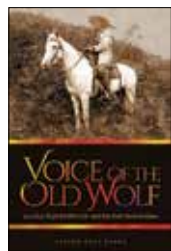
Hill Williams

Foreword by Jim Kershner

Amiable, award-winning journalist Hill Williams spent decades reporting Northwest news. Now, in his distinctly regional and most personal book, he transforms his stories about unforgettable people, places, and events into inviting, candid narratives.



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### Voice of the Old Wolf

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emotional struggle of the Lakota people against overwhelming odds. Both expansive and intimately personal, *Black Elk* deserves a place alongside Angie Debo's *Geronimo*, Robert M. Utley's *The Lance and the Shield* and Edwin Sweeney's *Cochise* as an outstanding American Indian biography.

– Bruce J. Dinges

**BILL C. MALONE.** *Sing Me Back Home: Southern Roots and Country Music.* University of Oklahoma Press. Hardcover, 355 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

As a Kentucky hillbilly with years of exposure to Texas music, I greeted this book with enthusiasm. Didn't last. It's a collection of articles previously published in various journals, all in the language of academe. Some passing discussion of Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills and Austin's Kenneth Threadgill and his bar, but all pretty shallow and, frankly, kind of boring. Mildly interesting enough, I guess – if you're stuck on a 96-hour cross-country Amtrak trek. If you want a definitive review of American country music, Malone's *Country Music U.S.A.* should be better. If

instead you want to read about Western music, a great choice is Katie Lee's *Ten Thousand Goddam Cattle: A History of the American Cowboy in Song, Story and Verse.*

– Ralph Estes

**WILLIAM L. MCGEE** with **SANDRA V. MCGEE.** *Montana Memoir: The Hardscrabble Years 1925-1942.* BMC Publications. Paperback, eBook, 138 pages, \$19.95, \$9.99.

William McGee's story tells of the "hardscrabble years" in Malta, Montana, where an absentee father left McGee's mother to raise four kids alone without adequate funds. At a young age, McGee began working for wages and gave a large share of them to her. The general reader will enjoy McGee's growing-up years when he thumbed rides or rode in boxcars in search of work, picking fruit, working on ranches, building ships, joining the Navy, eventually forming a company to provide sales and training support to the broadcast industry. Numerous pictures accompany an interesting text to add to the 22 other books he has authored.

– Lynn Bueling

**DAVID MORRELL.** *Stars In My Eyes: My Love Affair with Books, Movies, and Music.* Gauntlet Press/Borderlands Press. Hardcover, 283 pages, \$25, GauntletPress.com.

David Morrell, best known for his fast-paced thrillers, reveals his passion for books, films and music in this volume of 20 engaging essays on the likes of Henry James, Marilyn Monroe and Frank Sinatra as well as Western icons John Wayne, Steve McQueen and *High Noon*. Writing in a conversational style, Morrell considers their impact while offering some intriguing insights. Watching *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, he suspects that Wayne would have been a "fabulous stage actor as he moves within crowds" conversing with other actors in the long takes that director John Ford shot. A master chess player, Wayne also liked his liquor, consuming an astonishing 16 martinis before one Thanksgiving dinner. Discussing McQueen, Morrell doesn't ignore the actor's self-destructive narcissism and cocaine use, but he also marvels at both McQueen's graceful physical agility (taught to him by his Broadway dancer first wife, Neile) and his mesmerizing use of props, like the shotgun

## TOM JEFFORDS, FRIEND OF COCHISE

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shells he handles early in *The Magnificent Seven*. Writing about *High Noon*, Morrell delivers a brief objective assessment of this classic Western, admired by some, hated by others.

– Thomas D. Clagett

**FERNANDA SANTOS.** *The Fire Line: The Story of the Granite Mountain Hotshots and One of the Deadliest Days in American Firefighting*. Flatiron. Hardcover, 273 pages, \$25.99, FlatironBooks.com.

This year's Spur winner for first nonfiction book (and a finalist in contemporary nonfiction) tells the alarming story of 19 men who were killed fighting an Arizona wildfire in June 2013. Even though we know from the outset that these men died, Santos, the Phoenix bureau chief for the *New York Times*, employs superb writing and meticulous reporting to build suspense, stir emotions and deftly capture the character and personalities of men who can no longer speak for themselves. More than that, Santos relies on many hours of interviews to draw a vivid picture of how the deadly fire affected the doomed firefighters' family, friends and colleagues.

– Ollie Reed Jr.

**RICHARD SHELTON.** *Nobody Rich or Famous: A Family Memoir*. University of Arizona Press. Hardcover, trade paperback, \$35, \$19.95, 279 pages, UAPress.arizona.edu.

Richard Shelton's *Nobody Rich or Famous* is something of a prequel to his best-selling *Going Back to Bisbee* (University of Arizona Press, 1992). *Nobody Rich or Famous* loops back into Shelton's early years in Boise, and before that to his forebearers, represented by the journals they kept. *Nobody Rich or Famous*, a Spur finalist for biography, is a book about growing up poor, but it is neither angry nor sentimental. It is often funny and occasionally both tender and terrifying. (Shelton's older brother was something of an up-and-coming sociopath.) It is a telling portrait of a family, usually proud, often enough tripped up by circumstance, but always moving forward, if not always steadily. Shelton is a keen observer and a terrific storyteller. His is a voice we can't get enough of.

– Thomas Cobb

**BRUCE L. SMITH.** *Stories from Afield: Adventures with Wild Things in Wild Places*. Trade paperback, 222 pages, \$18.95, NebraskaPress.unl.edu.

It was while lugging an M60 machine gun in Vietnam that Bruce Smith heard the voice that would influence the course of his life. It was a tiger's roar, proof to him that despite Agent Orange and the devastation of unrelenting bombings, that nature endured. "That feel of being immersed in something that's primordial ... and unrestrained," he would write, "that's what captures the imagination of those of us who cannot live without wild places." In *Stories from Afield*, a Spur finalist for contemporary nonfiction, we have the honor of visiting those wild places with Smith during his 30-year career as a wildlife biologist, though it is a disservice to call this a book of simple narratives. It is much more – a tapestry of adventure, natural history and personal journey that is as

interwoven as the worlds he explores, from the snapping turtle bogs of his Michigan youth to the crags of Montana's Bitterroot Range and the mountain goats that inspire his capacity to wonder – his words from their lofty environs are ours to savor.

– Keith McCafferty

**MICHAEL VINSON.** *Edward Eberstadt & Sons: Rare Booksellers of Western Americana*. Arthur H. Clark. Hardcover, 168 pages, \$29.95, OUPress.com.

An unlikely bookseller in an unlikely location combines his love of Western Americana with commercial ingenuity to become the premier source for Western history. After working in the gold mines of South America he returns home and buys an old Western manuscript for 50 cents. Upon investigation, he discovers that it is a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Mexican publication. That sets off a chain of events that propel him and his sons into the rare world of legendary status as book collectors and sellers. They left their mark by providing archival materials for numerous public and academic repositories of Western Americana. Michael Vinson does a masterful job of telling their unique tale.

– Vernon Schmid



**JOHNNY D. BOGGS.** *The Kansas City Cowboys*. Center Point. Hardcover, 500 pages, \$33.95, CenterPointLargePrint.com.

A Missouri teenager joins Kansas City's first National League team in 1886, and learns just how Western things can get on a baseball diamond. Johnny D. Boggs, whose baseball Westerns include the Spur-winning novel *Camp Ford* and a Spur finalist short story this year in "Umpire Colt," once again blends baseball and the West.

**DAVID JOHNSON.** *John Ringo: King of the Cowboys*. University of North Texas Press. Trade paperback, 366 pages, \$19.95, UNTPress.unt.edu.

The second edition of this definitive biography of the gunman, known primarily for his anti-Earp stance in Tombstone, Arizona Territory, in the 1880s, has been republished as a trade paperback. Originally published in 2008, this edition also contains the 2008 foreword by noted historian Chuck Parsons.

**JOE R. LANSDALE.** *Hap and Leonard: Blood and Lemonade*. Tachyon. Trade paperback, eBook, \$15.95, \$9.99, TachyonPublications.com.

Prolific doesn't come close to describing Joe Lansdale. Here is his "Mosaic Novel" – various stories, some originals, some reprints – that detail how liberal Vietnam vet Hap Collins and black gay Republican Leonard Pine came to unite as the most unlikely Texas crime fighters since the Lone Ranger and Tonto.