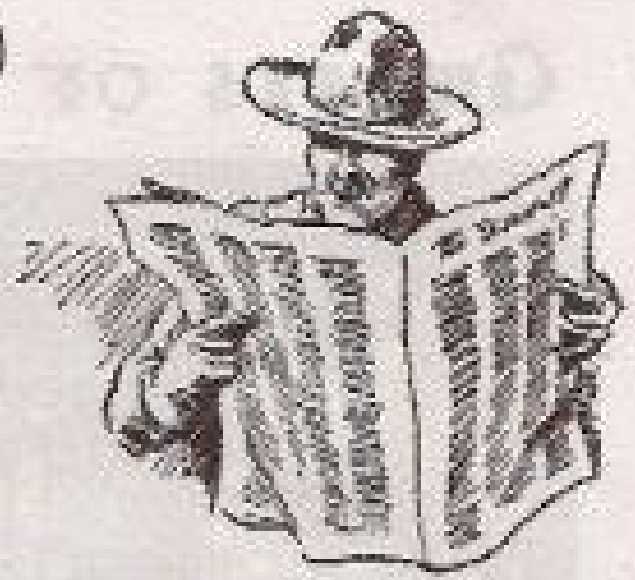


Readin' Round-Up

By Dave Remley

Gila Country Legend: The Life & Times of Quentin Hulse



Nancy Coggeshall, Albuquerque:
University of New Mexico Press,
2009, cloth, 280pp., \$29.95

Quentin Hulse was an old-time Catron County cow rancher, packer, hound man, lion hunter, and Mogollon Mountain oral historian. Raised on his dad's ranch west of Beaverhead Ranger Station, he went to school as a boy in Mogollon town while the mines still operated. Coming home from U. S. Navy service during World War II, he worked from the Hulse Ranch for years packing lion hunters and trout fishermen into the Gila Wilderness. Born in 1926, he died in April 2002.

Like other men of his time and place, Quentin was a "rugged individualist" who believed in a man's own "rights," in the "privacy" of his property, and in "enforcing" the law, for himself if needed. He is once supposed to have fired a shot at a low flying National Guard jet from Kirtland Air Base when he was gathering cows alone. Hard enough in itself, gathering half wild cows in the bush alone is an art akin to roping jackrabbits or herding bobcats, even more so if the cows are scattering to the winds by some jet engine flyboy skimming the needles off the pines. Fortunately Quentin didn't hit the aircraft, but he surely would have felt fully justified if he'd made the snotty kid bale out.

Also like his kind, Quentin was a story teller. When talking for fun (in the day before radio, TV, and movies, country people talked and told stories to entertain one another), Quentin characteristically exaggerated circumstances to the point of absurdity just to get a chuckle all round. He might say of a drinking man that he was "so drunk he couldn't find his ass with both hands," or, of how hard the times were during the 1930s when the "Cats [were] all heads, and the chickens all feathers."

And Hulse knew his vast mountain and range land in an intimate way few men can match. Nancy writes of him, "The Gila Country and its environs bleed history, and Quentin knew it. Its history, culture, and lore colored him the way sunshine produces chlorophyll in leaves." No traveling salesman, bond trader, or bank clerk today knows his territory like that.

And Nancy Coggeshall? An Eastern woman raised on Narragansett Bay, she went off to college, lived all over the world, arrived in N. M. in 1988, and worked for nine years at the university in Albuquerque setting up book exhibits before she met Quentin Hulse one night at a cowboy fiesta in Winston over by Chloride and Monticello N. M. just down the road from Poverty Creek. She was hooked. For Quentin, though already seventy-two, could still "cut a swath with the girls." After a time, the two of them took up with one another and moved in together. Then Quentin became Nancy's subject of study, understanding him and his kind and writing this book a kind of mission in life.

Her new book holds its own. It is a chest full of information about the country and the people Quentin Hulse came up among and knew so well. Time may even add it to the short list of classics of the Mogollons and the country thereabout like Jim McKenna's *Black Range Tales*, Montague Stevens' *Meet Mr. Grizzly*, and Agnes Morley Cleaveland's *No Life for a Lady*.