

GILA COUNTRY LEGEND: The Life and Times of Quentin Hulse. By Nancy Coggeshall. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009. Map, illus., notes, biblio., index, 296 pages. ISBN 978-0-8263-48241, \$29.95 (hard-cover).

The title of this book, while to the point, is misleading because the story told is much more than the biography of a cowman. It is, more accurately, the story of a late-life relationship, spiced with tales of New Mexico rancher and guide Quentin Hulse, his country, and his friends. A Narragansett, Rhode Island native, Nancy Coggeshall arrived in Magdalena, New Mexico in, as she says, full middle age, with education, a lengthy marriage, and a diversity of jobs behind her. Having grown up among commercial fishermen on the Rhode Island coast, she slipped easily into the ranching culture of Catron County. The people living on its spacious rangelands she found not all that different from those working on the ocean. As one old-timer put it, she found "a ready-made life waiting . . . to step into." She and Quentin, both independent souls, became acquainted slowly, but eventually discovered they enjoyed each other's company. She moved in with him when he was past seventy years old and had already sold the ranch on the upper Gila River where he had spent nearly all of his life.

On their first meeting, Quentin asked Nancy, "what are you doing, writing a book." Turns out it was a phrase he often used when confronted with curious, *ergo* nosy, people. At the time, she wasn't sure, but she had been a writer by profession, so a book had crossed her mind. She didn't pursue the book or the acquaintance immediately, but after their second meeting, a year and a half later, the relationship became unabashedly intimate, and *Gila Country Legend* is the entertaining and readable by-product.

Coggeshall paints Hulse as a cowboy, houndsman, guide, humorist, storyteller, and scholar, not all of which she expected to find when they first became acquainted. She also discovered, via his tales and those of his friends, the blemishes of his past, including two brief marriages, some excesses of alcohol, and simple, commercial solutions to his animal needs. She makes no effort to cover up or excuse his younger days nor his stubborn older ways. Having herself gone through a second brief marriage after arriving in Magdalena, she was well aware of the risks involved in teaming with a septuagenarian who had been functionally a lifelong bachelor. But the relationship worked, and the result is a loving portrait of an unusual man. I ended the book feeling that Quentin was lucky for having Nancy enter his life when she did, and that we who enjoy recent southwestern history are fortunate that she recalls so much and tells it so well.

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