

The Weekly Bulletin

Covering Northeastern Santa Cruz County



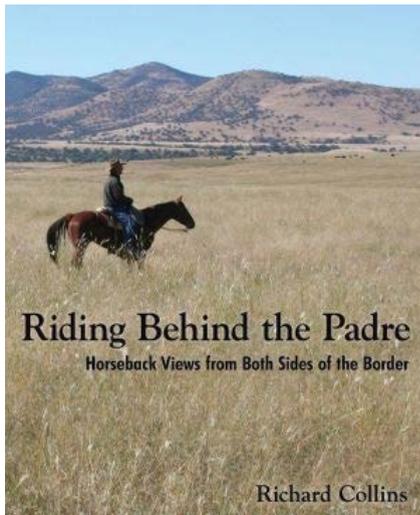
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A powerful statement on current affairs in the borderlands

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Riding Behind the Padre

"Riding Behind the Padre: Horseback Views from Both Sides of the Border" is available through amazon.com or www.richardcollins.com.

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By R. Dean Fish
For the Bulletin | 0 comments

"Riding Behind the Padre" by Richard Collins opens with the author describing the Sonoran Desert basin and range landscape in the Altar Valley from horseback and pondering his journey from a historical, cultural, social and ecological viewpoint.

Collins is a Southern Arizona rancher who has a curiosity about borderland issues and wants to explore the region in a way that early explorers did, from the back of a horse. Encouraged by his good friends and neighbors, Oscar and Lea Ward, Collins begins the first of many cabalgatas. Cabalgatas are rides that were dedicated to retracing the steps of the pioneering Jesuit priest, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino.

The author describes four of these rides and the trials and tribulations associated with each. His companions on these rides are a cross-section of Mexico's middle class who love their family and country, bonded by Catholic faith and are dedicated to the cause of Kino's sainthood. The stories are told in a way that intertwines history and culture with the modern challenges that the region faces.

The final portion of the book deals with Collins summarizing what he has learned from his new friends and offers his viewpoints on the myth and reality of the U.S. and Mexico borderlands. He also advocates the idea that the culpability for border violence does not just lie with Mexico. The vast majority of borderland



residents are seeking the same dream, to be able to work and raise families in a peaceful environment that is ecologically and culturally unique.

Collins has a gift for seamlessly describing his journey and intertwining history as he rides with his new friends and immerses himself in the cabalgata. As each journey progresses, the self-described Doubting Thomas gains an appreciation for the importance of Father Kino and his work. The reader is soon immersed in unique landscapes and pondering the ecological changes that have occurred over the 300 years since Kino explored

the area.

Collins has a passion for these landscapes, as well as history and horses. His background growing up on a ranch, working in Latin American countries and owning a ranch all serve him well as he describes the terrain, plant and animal life and livestock he encounters, as well as the horses he is mounted on.

The author soon realizes that the borderland issues are extremely complex and gains a new perspective from his fellow riders on America's failed war on drugs and immigration policies. His companions question whether the United States is actually an adversary or ally in combating border violence and the root causes behind it. As the author studies the underlying issues and viewpoints behind the drug war and borderland violence, he begins to comprehend that the much aligned region and its residents are not what is portrayed in the media.

"Riding Behind the Padre: Horseback Views from Both Sides of the Border" is a powerful statement on the current state of affairs in the borderlands area that can only be told by someone who has lived through those issues. This work offers something for everyone interested in the region. From history enthusiasts to policy makers, this is a must read.