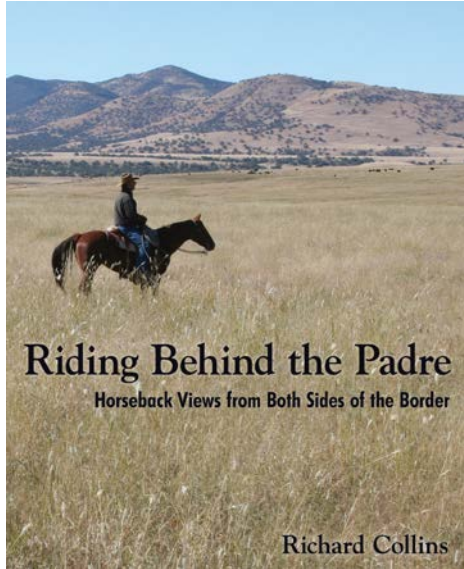


Riding Behind the Padre

Horseback Views from Both Sides of the Border



History / Current Affairs

The Book

Borderland immigration and drug trafficking are heated issues for most people living in the Southwest. But for Arizona rancher-author Richard Collins, who operates a 13,000 acre ranch near the Mexican border, they are a daily occurrence. Wanting to hear firsthand from those living and working in the middle of the action, Collins embarks on a series of horseback adventures along the Arizona-Sonoran borderlands in *Riding Behind the Padre: Horseback Views from Both Sides of the Border*. In this true story, Collins joins up with a congenial group of Mexican riders retracing the pathways of Eusebio Francisco Kino, the pioneering Jesuit priest who explored the same borderlands three hundred years prior. The riders include a cross-section of Mexico's growing middle class, bonded by faith

in the Catholic Church, love of family and their country, and dedicated to the cause of Kino's sainthood. They are also troubled by America's failed war on drugs and its outdated immigration policies, and they often wonder if the United States is their ally or adversary.

Through their perspectives and insights, the reader comes away with a better understanding of borderland complexities and a difficult but workable road map for the future. With a passion for landscape, horses, and history, this modern-day horseback adventure unfolds in the Sonoran Desert where the dangers are fewer than advertised, beauty far outweighs ugliness, and most people are still friendly and caring.

The Author

Richard Collins is a rancher, writer, horseman, and conservationist who has owned and operated farms and ranches on the borderlands since 1983. Earlier, he worked in the public health arena on the farms and villages of Central America and southern Mexico during the civil war decades of the 1970-80s. While there, he witnessed the environments of violence, poverty, and disease that are the root causes of much of today's turmoil on the borderland. From 1992 to 2013 he operated the 13,000 acre C6 Ranch in the Canelo Hills of Arizona twenty-five miles from the border, where he often bumped into not only illegal immigrants and drug mules, but also the wreckage and refuse they left behind. Today, he writes from the Sonoita, AZ crossroads where he lives with Diane, his partner of fifty three years.

"I wrote *Riding Behind the Padre* out of admiration for the horseback reenactments of Sonora's *Por Los Camino de Kino* group, but also to inform the public, especially Arizonans, about the forces behind today's turmoil, and the misinformation on the current affairs of today's borderlands."

What readers say about *Riding Behind the Padre*

“From his saddle, Collins, a Sonoita rancher and Arizona native, sees the border region much differently from most Americans, even those living north of the line. Collins sees a rich region and a people who share common geography, history and concerns.”

Ernesto Portillo, Jr., Arizona Daily Star

“An altogether fresh approach to borderland issues. Informed by scholarship but rooted in visceral knowledge of the region. A unique, mature, well-informed, and compassionate voice.”

Gary Paul Nabhan, PhD, Kellogg Endowed Chair, Southwest Center, University of Arizona.

“I found *Riding Behind the Padre* to be a significant work...culturally and environmentally astute, blending the author’s own remarkable knowledge of landscapes and ranching with sensitive observations on human nature, and of course, horses.”

George B. Ruyle, PhD, Marley Endowed Chair for Rangeland Stewardship, University of Arizona.

“Collins presents a thoughtful, balanced view of life on our borderlands, tempered with equanimity and fairness to all factions living, working, and crossing the border.”

Kelly Fleming, Patagonia Regional Times.

“*Riding Behind the Padre* 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.”

R. Dean Fish, Rancher, Sonoita Weekly Bulletin.

“This is no diatribe. It is a revelation by a border rancher of the history, cultural diversity, politics and economics certain to give its readers a reasoned understanding of what’s taking place on both sides of the wall. *Riding Behind the Padre* is a superb book!”

Bernard L. Fontana, PhD, Field Historian Emeritus, University of Arizona Library.

“*Riding Behind the Padre* is a wonderful introduction to the history and people of our bi-national region.... It’s more than that, however. In my opinion, this book should be read—and absorbed—by every leader, legislator, and policy former who deals with “border issues.”

Big Jim Griffith, Arizona Daily Star Blog.

230 pages, paperback

Suggested retail price: \$20.00

Author: Richard C. Collins

ISBN: 978-1-62787-133-4

[Available from Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and all major online book retailers

For complete information, see WWW.RichardCCollins.Com

Richard C. Collins

stormytiptop@gmail.com

www.richardccollins.com

Riding Behind the Padre

Horseback Views

from Both Sides of the Border

Richard Collins

Riding Behind the Padre: Horseback Views from Both Sides of the Border

Copyright © 2014 Richard Collins. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or retransmitted in any form or by any means without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by Wheatmark®
1760 East River Road, Suite 145
Tucson, Arizona 85718 U.S.A.
www.wheatmark.com

ISBN: 978-1-62787-133-4 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-62787-134-1 (ebook)
LCCN: 2014905811

Contents

Prologue	1
Part 1: The Western Desert: 2008	5
Part 2: The Sierra Madre Occidental: 2009	57
Part 3: Discovering the Sobaipuris: 2010	97
Part 4: Cerro El Nazareno: 2011.	147
Part 5: Coda	179
Acknowledgments	205
Endnotes	207
Selected Bibliography with Commentary.	211
Photography Credits.	217



At the Caborca Corrals

*For Oscar and Lea Ward,
borderland vecinos and friends*

Prologue

JUST BEFORE DAWN, I saddle and leave the Britten corrals on the western margin of the Sierrita Mountains, fifty miles southwest of Tucson, Arizona. For the first hour we ride south across the gently sloping *bajada*, a stony alluvium scattered with creosote bush, burro weed, and prickly pear, crossing over sand washes that meander down to the bottom of the Altar Valley. Approaching the San Juan windmill, a dozen black, humpy cows trot away from the water trough and vanish into the mesquite thickets. An abandoned mining road climbs into the hills, and we follow it into an interior basin treed with mesquite and juniper and framed by three high ridges. Two whitetail deer stare at my horse, more out of curiosity than fear, and then bound over the north ridge, waving their white flags good-bye. We climb steadily on for another hour, weaving through thickets of ocotillo and wait-a-bit thorn. A herd of javelina is feeding on shindagger agave, a rooting more suggestive of the pig than the aberrant dog-like relative that they really are. They catch our scent as the wind shifts, and bound away down the hillside, leaving a rank, musty stink floating in the air. The day brightens and fills with birdsong: cactus wrens, Gambel's quail, and a splendid cardinal in full breeding plumage.

On the mountaintop, the air is clear—so clear, the beyond becomes visible. I can see south, deep into the neighboring state of Sonora, Mexico. To the west, Baboquivari Peak, revered by the O'odham people as the home of I'toi, their "Elder Brother," stands radiant and shining above a fringe of dark clouds. The air is rich with the native smells of damp creosote and horse sweat, the kinds of scents that lodge in memory like a childhood dream.

In the distance, a rugged, wide-open landscape rises and falls and rises again toward the southern frontier. This is the Sonoran Desert basin and range, a harsh, thirsty land

of rare beauty, few people, and a rich history that stretches back past antiquity. A little of it I know from riding over the ranches on the Arizona side. But across the border in Sonora is a wider sky, pulsing with the exotic—a new language and culture as well as other things only half imagined and illusory.

* * * * *

I WAS IN my twenties then, and I could not have guessed that four decades later in the midst of all the turmoil over immigration and drug trafficking that I would be riding over the borderlands with a happy-go-lucky group of riders from Sonora. But even less could I have imagined that a Doubting Thomas like myself would be following the trails of Eusebio Francisco Kino, the Jesuit priest who explored this same land over three hundred years before.

So why did I go along when I had plenty to do on my own ranch? Out of curiosity and a sense of adventure—at least in the beginning. I wanted to experience the borderlands and its people with the full dimensions of sight, sound, smell, and texture in the same way the earliest explorers had—from the back of a horse. Also, I wanted to find out what my peers in Sonora thought about the borderland immigration and drug wars, since they live and work in the middle of the action and their voices are seldom heard in the United States.

But over the years, these rides the Mexicans called *cabalgatas* became more than just the fulfillment of curiosity. The book you hold in your hands is a story of personal exploration into the history and present-day state of affairs of my native land. And one goes exploring not only to discover new landscapes and cultures but to gain new perspectives—or to paraphrase a famous explorer, to gain new eyes with which to see.

Along the way, our trails would cross the modern-day escape routes for Mexico's poverty-stricken immigrants, trudging hopefully toward a paying job. During their exodus, they often fall prey to their own countrymen, like migrating wildebeests to hyenas—the Mexican guides who lead them to the border and across; the criminal cartels who use them as drug mules to deliver their contraband into America's heartland. The southern end of my ranch is located a scant twenty-five miles north of the line, and I regularly bump into not only the immigrants and *burrero* drug mules heading toward Interstate 10 but also the wreckage and refuse they leave behind.

But despite the damage, I understood the immigrants' plight, having lived and worked in the rural villages of Central America and southern Mexico during the civil war decades of the 1970s and 1980s, places where extreme poverty often amounted to

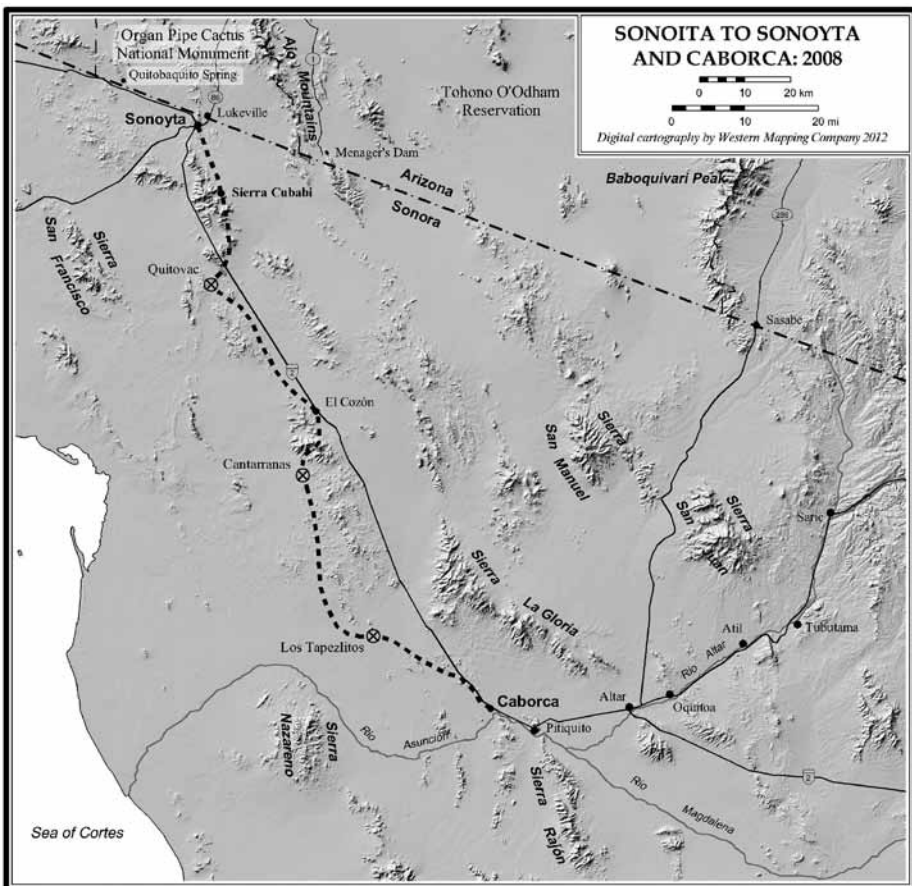
extreme violence. In those days, landless people lived in cornstalk and cardboard huts, men and women who cut sugarcane and picked coffee and cotton for one dollar a day, when they could find work. These were societies where any plea the workers made for a better deal was ruthlessly suppressed. On my last trip to the region in 2006, little had changed except that about one-quarter of the able-bodied men had fled to *El Norte* (¹United States), either as migrant or immigrant workers (see below).

A word on labels: an immigrant is one who moves to another country with the intention of taking up residence. Documented immigrants have legal permission to be in the United States. Illegal immigrants do not, and many of the immigrants I write about are, or plan to be, illegal. For them, the difference is real, but they cross over anyway, because they have no opportunity in their homelands. A migrant is one who travels in search of work and intends to return home after the job ends. Many of the people I have met in Mexico, Central America, and on my ranch are migrants who will eventually return home by choice. In the book, it seemed bootless to make the distinction (even if I knew) every time immigrant or migrant is mentioned, but neither one is an “alien,” as if from outer space. They are real people. Also, I use the border slang term “narco” for a drug smuggler or drug runner, rather than for a narcotics law enforcement officer. The label in Spanish is *narcotraficante*. People who carry drugs across the border are *burreros*, or drug mules. *Coyotes* are Mexicans who put together groups of people to cross the border and often work for the drug cartels who now control illegal immigration. The bad guys are the *narcotraficante* managers for multinational criminal organizations labeled as Mexican drug cartels. Today, they operate in the United States as well as Mexico, feeding on America’s addictions.¹

Richard Collins
September 30, 2013
Sonoita, Arizona

Part 1

The Western Desert: 2008



Calling on the Virgin Mary is useless.
Instead, one must know the language of the land.

—Ofelia Zepeda, Tohono O'odham poet



THE CABALGATAS WERE dedicated to retracing the steps of the pioneering Jesuit priest Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, who, from 1687 until his death in 1711, rode thousands of miles over this thirsty land he labeled the Pimería Alta (see map). This designation came from the Spanish recognition of a native people living in the upper (Alta) Sonoran Desert who spoke a common dialect of the Uto-Aztec language family that stretched all the way from Central Mexico to the Gila River. (The Spanish term *Pima* comes from the first indigenous peoples' response—"Pi ma:c"—to the Spaniards' incomprehensible queries. Their response translates to "I don't know what you are talking about."). Kino's overarching goal was to "civilize" the natives by converting them to the Catholic faith, but he was a vigorous man with other more worldly interests.

Born in 1645 in the Tyrolean Alps of northern Italy, Kino as a young man worked on his family's farm. Although he was unaware of it as a boy, growing crops and caring for livestock was good preparation for missionary work among the tribes of the Sonoran Desert region. Also, the youthful Kino was an able student. When his father died, the family sold the farm to finance Kino's education in private Jesuit and Austrian schools. Struck down by a mysterious illness, he vowed to commit to the priesthood if God would restore his health. Inside the cloistered halls of the university, he excelled in mathematics, astronomy, geography, and cartography, in addition to religious studies. After completing formal training, Kino taught school, another experience that served him well as a missionary. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw Spain's conquest of vast new continents, and the Jesuit order was pledged to impose the Catholic worldview on people who had evolved a simpler communion with their earthly surroundings.

Ordained at the age of thirty-two, Kino volunteered for overseas missionary service several times before he embarked for New Spain at the age of thirty-six.

A physical sketch of Kino, the man, has emerged from descriptions in Jesuit and Spanish documents, anatomical studies of his remains, and studies of his relatives in Italy. Eusebio Francisco Kino, at nearly six feet tall, towered over the native people and most of his Spanish colleagues. He was bowlegged from a lifetime on horseback. Artists' paintings show him as lean-faced with a prominent nose, deep tan, high cheekbones, black hair, and always wearing a long black robe. How he managed the robe for thousands of miles on horseback remains a mystery even today.

The cabalgatas were the inspiration of Jesús Enrique Salgado Bojórquez, the eldest brother of the large Salgado family living in Hermosillo. Bilingual and gregarious, Enrique had a gift for capturing the essence of a situation with succinct, to-the-point statements. His first trip in 1984 had been a family outing with brothers José Luis and Arturo Oriol, riding the 150 miles from Hermosillo to Caborca, where the family patriarch, Enrique Salgado Martínez, lived. "We had grown apart," Enrique recalled, "so we made that first ride to become brothers again." The next year, the three brothers rode from Delores to Cerro el Nazareno, starting the cabalgatas—*Por Los Caminos de Kino*. A devout Catholic and aficionado of Sonora's colonial history, Enrique then came up with the ingenious idea of annual cabalgatas to highlight the remarkable accomplishments of Father Kino, promoting the cause of his sainthood. Each year, starting in 1987, they have retraced a section of the Jesuit's trails that meandered over the Pimería Alta.

Kino, according to his biographer Herbert Eugene Bolton, was unlike some colonial Jesuits in that he became like family to his converts, and the Salgados followed that example. Each in his or her own time, the Salgado spouses and children joined the rides when and wherever possible. With each succeeding year, the cabalgata attracted new riders, and out of the adventure, hardships, and camaraderie, they too became like family. In 2008, my first year, twenty-five cabalgantes (the individual riders) rode from Sonoyta, Sonora, southeast to the town of Caborca, an ancient settlement that figured prominently in Pimería Alta's history, dating from Kino's era and continuing on to the immigration and drug wars of today.

MY NEIGHBOR, BIOLOGIST Oscar Ward, had invited me to ride the cabalgata several times, but I had been unable (or unwilling) to go. One reason was that our ranch required constant attention. Diane and I had a herd of cows spread out over a few

thousand acres of the Canelo Hills and a band of broodmares to take care of. But other reasons stood in the way, as well, including the fact that I would be going without her. Although we worked the ranch together on horseback, Diane didn't fall for my vacation scheme of riding daylight to dark over the hinterlands of Sonora.

Lots of times on the ranch, I go prowling alone, just to see what I can see. Diane jokingly accuses me of preferring inarticulate company, but the horse is inarticulate only if you don't know what to look for: the position of its ears, the direction of its gaze, how it holds its mouth; or the tension coming up through its legs that could signal a panicky runaway, a threat to start pitching, or readiness to work a cow.

The second reason I hesitated was that as an Arizona native with an amateur's interest in its history and literature, I didn't like what I had read about the Spanish conquest of Mexico and the Southwest. The conquistadors arrived, cuirassed and mounted on horses, heavily armed with crossbows, muskets, lances, swords, and attack dogs. Entering a native settlement, they read the natives the *Requierimiento*, an edict written in 1513 requiring the natives to pledge allegiance and everything they owned to the "two Majesties," the Catholic pope and the Spanish Crown. If they did not, then "with the help of God . . . we shall take you and your wives and children, and your lands, and make slaves of them."

Afterward came the Jesuits, captains of a faith too sure of its own righteousness. Their courage was excessive—so addled by faith that they did not fear death by the hands of the heathen nor from the heat and thirst of the desert. While the conquistadors scoured the land for gold and silver, the priests tallied their wealth in the number of converts to the faith. For those who rejected Catholic paternalism, forced labor in Spanish-owned mines and haciendas often awaited. But Oscar and Lea claimed that Kino was also an explorer, horseman, rancher, and farmer, as well as an apostle to the native people. The first four pursuits resonated with me, but I was indifferent to the proselytizing part, believing that each person and culture has an inalienable right to their own views of spirituality. Nevertheless, one had to be impressed by anyone who rode thirty and forty miles a day in unpaid service to others. In fact, Caballero Kino rode so hard and long that sometimes his followers had to tie themselves in the saddle to keep from falling from exhaustion.

In an emergency, Kino did not hesitate to ride alone. On May 3, 1700, Kino was engaged in saying Mass at Tumacacori, a mission on the Santa Cruz River in what is now southern Arizona, when he got word that the Spanish were going to execute an innocent Indian in the town of San Ignacio, Sonora, seventy-five miles to the south.

Kino struck out on his mule, arriving in San Ignacio at dawn the next morning in time to stay the execution, demonstrating not only his endurance riding skills but also a commitment to justice (in December, 2013, the cabalgata retraced Kino's heroic ride, but it took 3 days what with navigating the border crossing maze at Nogales).

Illegal immigration and narcotics-related violence was my third reason for staying home. Over the past four decades or so, Sonora's border towns and the nearby mountains have become the staging grounds for immigrants and narcotics destined for the United States. Even so, Lea and Oscar still traveled to Sonora, avoiding the conflicted areas. Lea had continued to lead the Father Kino tours for Arizona's Southwestern Mission Research Center that she had started in 1974. Over the decades, Lea has taken busloads of Tucsonans and others to visit Kino's churches in the Pimería Alta. Raised in Magdalena, Sonora, the gregarious Lea wanted to make Arizonans aware of their historical connections neighboring Sonora, introducing thousands of history buffs to the legacies and realities of the borderlands. "Father Kino's missions in Sonora are just as beautiful as those Spanish missions in California," she has exclaimed, infecting everyone with her spontaneous enthusiasm.

Finally, I was not excited about riding borrowed horses from people I didn't know. Aging is a matter of selectively eliminating enthusiasms while holding on dearly to the ones you will never quit. As I've gotten older, I have become less interested in horses bred and trained for competition. These days, the kind of horse I ride depends a lot on the country and the work to be done. What I chiefly need is a sure-footed mount with a smooth gait, especially at a trot. There is little pleasure in riding all day on a stumble-footed horse or one that jars your teeth with each step.

But Les Shannon, a neighboring rancher, enlightened me on just how good Mexican ranch horses could be, especially in rough country. Small-bodied and barrel-chested, hard-footed and tractable, they are descendants of the Spanish Barb, the horse the Moors left behind in Spain during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Crossing this rock-footed transplant from Africa's rugged Barbary Coast with native Iberian stock produced a durable and courageous mount with an exceedingly smooth way of going. After all, Cortés and his army had conquered Mexico sitting on their loins.

Oscar and I shared several things in addition to an affection for horses. We both enjoyed the writings of Konrad Lorenz and E. O. Wilson, fellow biologists who wrote about small creatures in ways that explained some hard-wired human behaviors, such as aggression and deep attachment to particular places. We also loved Temple Grandin, who used her autism to see the world as our horses saw it, thus helping us to become

more humane. Over the years, I had grown to value Oscar's opinion and enjoyed his company. He had a manner and lifestyle that made him content and pleased everyone around him—a willing attitude and an open smile that beamed from underneath his narrow-brimmed Stetson. In fact, when we worked the Sonoita Quarter Horse Show together, Oscar always got started while the others wrangled over who had to do what. True, he hadn't much opportunity to perfect his riding seat while occupying his tenured professorship at the University of Arizona, but he rode a horse well enough to help me on the ranch now and then. What's more, Oscar knew the Sonoran Desert, and I looked forward to learning from him as we rode together.

And so I went, in late January 2008, as soon as the racehorses had been retired and our son, Richard West, returned home to take over the ranch. To a horseman, Sonora had the authentic pull of western American antiquity, even though writer Wallace Stegner and others claimed the American West started at the one hundredth meridian during the 1800s. Though Stegner was a westerner, he had unwittingly adopted an eastern perspective: "Eastward I go only by force," said Henry David Thoreau, the Massachusetts sage of Walden Pond, "but westward I go free."

But Stegner and Thoreau both got it wrong. The American West did not begin at Plymouth Rock or on Walden Pond, or with Lewis and Clark at the one hundredth meridian. It started in 1519, when Hernán Cortés and his troops unloaded their horses near Veracruz, starting Spain's conquest of northern New Spain that much later became Mexico. The Aztec emperor Moctezuma received word back from his terrified warriors that the newcomers were swift beasts with two heads and six legs, carrying sticks that spit fire and made horrible noises. Rumors quickly spread that their horses fed on human flesh. Cortés landed with 350 foot soldiers [some say 650] and 16 horses in fighting fit, according to Bernal Díaz del Castillo in his 1568 eye witness history of the conquest. Díaz del Castillo listed each horse by the name of its owner, its color and sex, along with its assets and liabilities; for examples:

Capitán Cortés: a vicious chestnut horse...

Francisco de Morla: a bright-colored chestnut horse that was speedy and handled well.

Pedro de Alvarado and Hernán López de Ávila: a sorrel mare, excellent at both fighting and racing.

Gonzalo Domínguez, who was a fine horseman: a dark chestnut horse, very good and a fine runner.

Juan de Escalante: a light-colored chestnut horse with white feet that wasn't any good. [Today, horses with white hooves are considered too soft-footed for ranch work].

Pedro de Alvarado and Hernán López de Ávila: a sorrel mare, excellent at both fighting and racing.

These horses and others that arrived later were crucial to Cortes's astonishingly rapid conquest of the Aztec empire. "Next to God they protected us the most." By "they," Díaz del Castillo meant the Spanish cavalry. To survive and triumph in the chaos of battle, war horse and rider had to trust each other completely and without hesitation. What horsemen today call "unity" between horse and rider was for the conquistador and his horse a matter of life or death.

A few decades later, in 1540, the conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado trotted around the south flank of the Huachuca Mountains with hundreds of horses, crossing into what is now Arizona, less than fifty miles from my home. Coronado was looking for houses roofed with gold and streams shimmering with silver, a fruitless search that took him all the way to Kansas. Sixty years later, Juan de Oñate colonized Santa Fe, establishing large breeding herds that quickly drew the attention of Native American tribes whose economies were already based on raiding: Apache, Navajo, Zuni, and, decades later, the Comanche, who migrated into the region from Wyoming. For the next three hundred years, these horse-mounted marauders ruled the southern plains and southwestern deserts.

Perhaps no other foreign frontiersmen of the New World exceeded the Spanish soldier in physical courage, resilience, and brutality. Conquistadors were more soldiers of fortune for the Spanish throne and the Catholic Church than they were an organized military. Díaz del Castillo defended his compatriots unapologetically: "We were there to serve God, and to get rich." As the conquistadors made their way north from the Valle de México, pillaging, ravaging, and enslaving indigenous Americans, they left behind an implacable hatred for the Spanish settlers and soldiers who followed.

Yet another soldier, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca had a different experience, proving that stereotypes don't always hold true. Shipwrecked in a hurricane in 1528 with six hundred other soldiers, only Cabeza de Vaca and three other men survived, including an African slave, after they finally washed up on the shores of Galveston Island. They too had come seeking riches but got lost instead. Few have ever been so utterly lost: naked, starving, and sick, without even words for the new landforms, plants, animals,

and people they found themselves among. The only direction they knew was where the sun set, and in that direction they might find their countrymen. At first enslaved by a voluptuous tribe of coastal aborigines (probably the Karankawas, who reputedly enjoyed a “manbake” as much as a clambake), the Spaniards became godlike creatures by withstanding diseases they themselves had brought. For almost nine years, Cabeza de Vaca and his compatriots wandered westward, living as faith healers and attracting large crowds of acolytes, while they wandered over the Gulf Coast of Texas and northern Mexico. Estevanico, the polyglot Moorish slave, got them through.

When at last they encountered a Spanish slaving party in Sinaloa, Cabeza de Vaca’s native disciples refused to believe that he and his three companions were of the same race as the conquistadors. In his 1542 memoir, Cabeza de Vaca recorded their reaction, one of the few direct accounts of what indigenous Americans thought of the Spanish when their cultures first collided:

We came from the sunrise, they came from the sunset; we healed the sick, they killed the sound; we came naked and barefoot, they came clothed, horsed, and lanced; we coveted nothing but gave whatever we were given, while they robbed whomever they found and bestowed nothing on anyone.

Cabeza de Vaca’s conversion reads like an Old Testament parable—wandering in the wilderness, stripped naked of everything but hope and direction, losing all pretensions in order to become truly human.

The Spanish and multicultural Jesuits also left behind a wealth of reports, maps, and journals. These histories, of course, contained only the perceptions of conquerors and priests; only they had a written language. Even so, as I continued to read, my interest surged. To know as completely as possible where I might be going and why seemed instinctual; the history of place, people, and region made them what they are today. Kino had worked in the heart of the Sonoran Desert, a near-mythical land of great beauty and complexity. For the newcomer, the unprepared, or the foolhardy, this was hostile country—its plants and animals armed by spine, venom, or fang as if to repel an invasion; elevations ranging from sea level to ten thousand feet above; a thirsty land, prone to extremes of temperature, violent thunderstorms, and prolonged droughts. But to many indigenous Americans, it was home, and for a few biologists, artists, and ranchers, the most interesting landscape on earth. And the most authentic way to experience it all was from the back of a horse.

Now that you've gotten a taste for *Riding Behind the Padre: Horseback Views from Both Sides of the Border* (Wheatmark, 2014), I hope that you'll want to take the next step and read the entire book.

You can purchase on line at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). If you live in Southern Arizona and like to patronize our local book sellers, [see the list on my website for a store near you](#).

If you would like to spread the word about *Riding Behind the Padre*, please contact my publicist, Ann Boland.

ann@annboland.com

520-247-0070

Many thanks,

Richard C. Collins