



# BOOKS



Review by Kelly Fleming

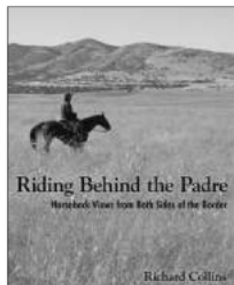
## Riding Behind the Padre Horseback Views From Both Sides of the Border By Richard Collins, Wheatback Press

Richard Collins has given us a lively, openhearted look at life in the Arizona-Mexico borderlands with his new book *Riding Behind The Padre: Horseback Views From Both Sides of the Border*.

Collins' C-6 cattle ranch is headquartered in Sonoita. Many years of ranching here have given him a deep love of and respect for this land. A thoughtful man, he has long wished to know more about the lives of inhabitants on both sides of the Arizona-Mexico boundary. Finally, in February 2008, despite being a busy rancher, he was able to accept an invitation from neighbors Oscar and Lea Ward to join the horseback riders of Los Caminos de Kino who explore the country in which Father Kino worked, encompassing the borderlands in Arizona and Mexico.

The riders sponsor a yearly group ride called *cabalgatas* to spotlight a portion of the remarkable travels of Father Eusebio Kino, a Jesuit priest who spent the last 24 years of his life in the Pimeria Alta (Sonora, Mexico, and southern Arizona) around the turn of the 18th century. The first year Collins joined the riders, 2008, they traveled from Sonoyta, Mexico (just across the border from Lukeville, Arizona, to Caborca, Mexico, 125 miles in four days. There were long days in the saddle, campfire cooked dinners, lumpy ground for beds, caring for the horses, and wonderful conversations...adventures cherished by all who come along.

Collins's fellow riders on the *cabalgatas* are a welcoming, engaged group of middle-class Mexicans, including a father-son pair of veterinarians, businessmen, and members of the Salgado family from Hermosillo, who originated the rides in the mid-1980s. This small band of horseback travelers becomes quickly bonded when facing the thrills and perils of riding through relatively wild land threaded with dangers Father Kino never faced. The Pimeria Alta on both sides of the border is heavily used by smugglers of drugs and people. The smugglers, in turn, are controlled by the drug cartels, who brook no interference. It can be a dangerous trip for the inexperienced.



enced. Often local guides are hired to take them through areas that may be unsafe because of large marijuana fields or other illicit activities. Trip participant José Luis Salgado says, "Father Kino had the Apaches, while we have the *sicarios* (assassins) to worry about."

Los Camino de Kino riders have covered much of Father Kino's paths in the last 20 years. Most of the journeys have been taken in Mexico, although in 2010 the *cabalgata* entered Arizona, following Father Kino's footsteps from the Arizona border north to near Cascabel. These physical pilgrimages become excursions through the historic past, days and nights of agreeable companionship and fresh, firsthand looks at our borderlands now added

by furtive illegal activities and drug smuggling—and semimilitarized by the U.S. Border Patrol.

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

As he and his fellow riders are planning their next ride he says, "So once again, I am on the brink of embarking on Father Kino's trails with the hope of new visions, some further understanding and the *companerismo* urging me along".

*"Riding Behind The Padre"* is an important work deserving of a wide audience. It is available online, and locally at the Mini Mart in Sonoita and Bird and Pet in Patagonia.

**Learn more about Richard C. Collins and *Riding Behind the Padre* at [www.richardccollins.com](http://www.richardccollins.com).**

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