

Book Reviews

***The Whole Damned World: Aggies at War, 1941-1945* edited by Martha Shipman Andrews.** Albuquerque: Rio Grande Books with New Mexico State University Library, 2009. ISBN 978-1-890689-51-3. 384 pages, 155 photographs, index, \$49.95, hardcover.

During World War II, the Dean of the College of Engineering at then New Mexico A&M (today New Mexico State University) Daniel B. Jett did something truly extraordinary: he corresponded with over a thousand of his engineering students and alumni who were in the military during the war. He wrote an estimated 5,000 letters to 1,027 Aggies, spliced together twenty-six newsletters which he mailed to his former students, and consoled parents whose sons had been killed in the war.

These letters were preserved in twenty large file boxes in the University Archives at NMSU and were forgotten until University Archivist Martha Andrews discovered them recently. With support from Library Dean Elizabeth Titus and the State of New Mexico's Historic Records Advisory Board, she organized and edited the letters and newsletters. The result is a superbly edited volume of some 250 letters, dozens of Dean Jett's replies and a sample newsletter of the twenty-six which were mailed to every former student whose APO address he could secure. The volume is rounded out with an excellent introduction by Richard Melzer which describes the New Mexico context from whence the Aggies went to war.

Although this is not the only edited collection of its type (there is at least one other of which this writer is aware), what "Dad" Jett did was without precedent. The much beloved Engineering Dean became a kind of lifeline. As the late Morgan Nelson (Class of 1941) put it so eloquently in his Preface: "...writing to Dad Jett was a freedom where we could express our triumphs and our trials with someone who truly understood us. It was a freedom that some could not even share with their parents, sometimes to protect them and sometimes to brag a bit to someone who really wanted to know." (p. 3)

What accentuated the number of Dean Jett's students who served in World War II was the mobilization of the New Mexico National Guard in January, 1941, a number of whom were engineering students and graduates of A&M. In addition, because A&M was a land-grant college all male students were required to serve for two years in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program at the college. As a result the number of Aggies in uniform by early 1943 was over 1,500, a

significant number given the size of the small college. Many of these were engineering students. The Aggies would see 124 students and alumni killed during the war both in the Pacific and in Europe. One of the reasons the death toll was so high was because the New Mexico 200th Coast Artillery—the National Guard unit sent to the Philippines—endured the infamous Bataan Death March in April, 1942.

Dean Jett's most difficult letters were to console the parents of his students who had been killed in combat. But write them he did. Furthermore, in the twenty-six newsletters he sent out, he would pass along information to all of his former students about who had been killed, information on wounded Aggies and where their classmates were serving. "Dad" Jett assiduously collected APO addresses so that he could send the newsletters to as many of his students as possible. His newsletters were enormously popular and in many cases were literally the only way Aggies could learn where their friends were serving and all too often their fate.

Beginning in 1943, hundreds of Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) students were enrolled at A&M. When they shipped out to Europe over two hundred of them corresponded with Dad Jett and thus became part of his extended family. Inevitably the great majority of Aggies served in the Army but there were men (and women) who served in the Navy, the Army Air Corps, the Marines, the Coast Guard, and the Merchant Marine. There were also a number of Aggie pilots, who flew in the Army Air Corps and in Naval and Marine units who were in the ranks of Dad Jett's correspondents. Furthermore, there were a number of women who served, for example, in the Coast Guard Women's Reserve, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, the Navy Nursing Corps, the Women's Army Corps and the Navy Waves and they were also in the ranks of Dad Jett's correspondents.

A number of photographs of his correspondents add to the value of the volume. In addition, a useful appendix lists by military affiliation his correspondents with details of their service appended.

This unique collection of letters between the Dean of Engineering and his students during World War II is well worth remembering. And this volume says it all.

Louis R. Sadler
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Tidball, Eugene C. *Soldier-Artist of the Great Reconnaissance: John C. Tidball and the 35th Parallel Pacific Railroad Survey* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004)

I had no inkling when I first opened the cover of this small, unprepossessing book that I would find myself so quickly and thoroughly engrossed. The author brings to vivid life the story of a relatively unfamiliar military and scientific expedition—the search in 1853-54 for a viable transcontinental railroad route along the 35th parallel. Midway through the first chapter, the armchair adventurer wants to sign up, saddle up, and ride at dawn toward the unknown horizon along with the young soldiers, Indian scouts, gallant officers, topographical engineers, and ad hoc artists who people this story of the American Southwest.

In 1853 Secretary of War Jefferson Davis created a special branch within the army called the Office of Pacific Railroad Explorations and Surveys in response to a Congressional directive to explore the feasibility of a transcontinental route from Mississippi to California. The choice of proposed routes—from Minnesota Territory to the Puget Sound; from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas through Colorado, Utah and Nevada; from Fort Smith, Arkansas along the 35th parallel to Los Angeles, and an extreme southern route from Texas along the 32nd parallel near the Mexican border to San Diego—was fraught with sectional politics. Southern politicians and their ally, Secretary of War Davis, clearly perceived the southernmost route as a convenient means to expand southern commercial interests and, not incidentally, slavery to the west coast. Politics notwithstanding, the resulting expeditions guaranteed the comprehensive scientific exploration of the American West, resulting in major ethnographic, botanical, zoological, geographical, cartographic and geological discoveries.

West Point graduate and veteran army topographer Lt. Amiel W. Whipple led the 35th Parallel Survey team to which was attached a large civilian scientific corps organized by the Smithsonian Institution. The army assigned the expedition a company of nearly 100 soldiers led by two lieutenants, one of whom was John C. Tidball. An 1848 graduate of West Point, Tidball's schoolmates would have included future generals Ambrose Burnside, John C. Buford and Stonewall Jackson. Like all his fellow cadets, Tidball would have received instruction not only in topography and cartography, but

also in drawing and painting. Artists had become integral components of scientific and military expeditions because of their ability to embellish dry reportage with a sense of romantic adventure that appealed to the public and, more importantly, Congressional sponsors. In fact, today, if these expeditions are remembered at all, it is because of the widely circulated lithographic images by George Catlin, John Mix Stanley, Richard and Edward Kern, Seth Eastman, Karl Bodmer, and Alfred Jacob Miller and their majestic renderings of the American West that grace the walls of our finest museums. These evocations of the mystery, beauty, and otherworldliness of the West were the material face of Manifest Destiny and a powerful political tool.

West Point oddly enough provided perhaps the finest art education available in America at the time. Tidball would have studied under Robert Walter Weir, one of the great art pedagogues of the 19th century. Weir's lofty ideals of landscape as transcendent natural religion must have alternately intimidated and bored young cadets—or driven them from the Academy as in the case of James McNeill Whistler—but his Ruskinian insistence on meticulously accurate observation of scenery brought practical results for Lt. Tidball. Commissioned to create a visual document, he was able to bring artistic sensibility to the task.

Part way through the 35th Parallel Survey, a Lieutenant Stanley records in his diary: "The bottom of the canyon is sandy and the whole country entirely uninteresting. Everyone is thoroughly tired and disgusted." Lieutenant Tidball, on the other hand, finds sufficient interest in the landscape and the resident Mojave Indians to generate several beautiful and evocative drawings that were later included in the final published report along with those of the official Survey artist, Heinrich Möllhausen.

As keen an observer of his fellow travelers as he was of the Southwestern landscape, Lt. Tidball kept a diary full of humorous incidents including a "balky and depraved" mule—"a beast of the Apocalypse" that fell to its death from a cliff over the Colorado River to the applause of the entire expeditionary force. Lieutenant Tidball's observations in his diary also put many of his perceptions of the survey at odds with the official report prepared by Lieutenant Whipple. The author, a descendant of the book's protagonist, skillfully enlivens the text with a comparison of the differences among the

“old grannies of our party...young dandies [who] look with rueful countenance upon the destruction of their perfumeries.” One wishes the publisher could have enlivened the book yet more with full-color plates of Tidball’s artistic contributions as the small black and white illustrations do no credit to the originals. [Fortunately, the NMSU Archives and Special Collections Department has a copy of the original 1856 publication and images from that volume accompany this article.]

Events of great moment intervened to delay the construction of a transcontinental route and, of course, the 35th Parallel option through the desert Southwest

did not prevail. Nonetheless, this account of what became essentially a footnote to history remains a very worthwhile and enjoyable journey of exploration for the modern reader.

Martha Shipman Andrews
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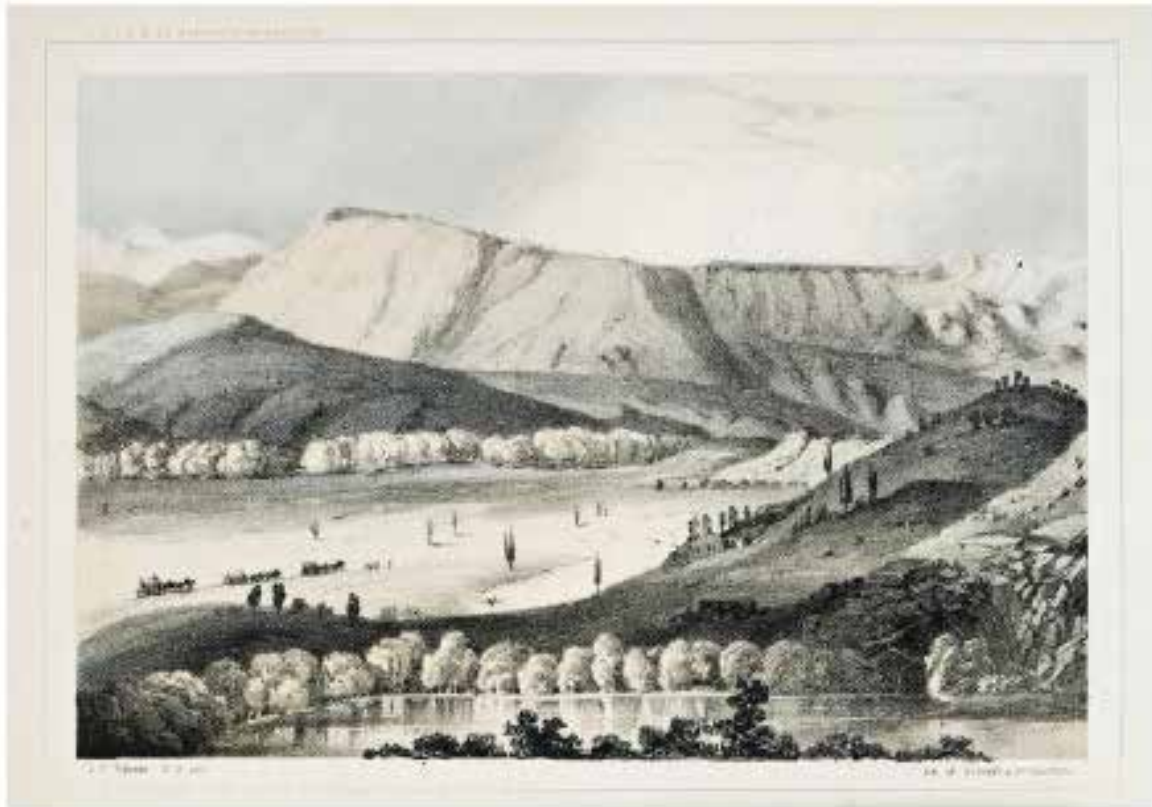
U.S.P.R.R., EX & SURVEYS, 35th PARALLEL - SAN FRANCISCO MOUNTAIN
Courtesy NMSU Archives and Special Collections Department



U.S.P.R.R., EX & SURVEYS, 35th PARALLEL - BIVOUAC, JAN. 26
Courtesy NMSU Archives and Special Collections Department



U.S.P.R.R., EX & SURVEYS, 35th PARALLEL - BIVOUAC, JAN. 28
Courtesy NMSU Archives and Special Collections Department



U.S.P.R.R., EX & SURVEYS, 35th PARALLEL
Courtesy NMSU Archives and Special Collections Department



U.S.P.R.R., EX & SURVEYS, 35th PARALLEL - CAMP SCENE IN THE MOJAVE VALLEY OF
THE RIO COLORADO; Courtesy NMSU Archives and Special Collections Department

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Eichstaedt, Donna *Silver City's Bear Mountain Lodge: the Untold Story*. Las Cruces, N.M.: Southwest Senior Books, c2008. ISBN 9780982261705 \$12.00. ix, 76 p. ill.

The Bear Mountain Lodge, outside of Silver City, was built to house a school for troubled boys by the psychologist Walter Langer and his first wife, Juanita Franks Langer. Unfortunately, after a year the Great Depression led to the closing of the lodge and a move to Boston. Juanita Franks and Langer were divorced in 1936, after Juanita had returned to Silver City and converted the school into Bear Mountain Ranch. She later became a social worker and sold the lodge in the mid 1930's. Langer became a well-known psychoanalyst and wrote an influential psychological profile of Adolf Hitler during World War II. The ranch changed hands six times between 1936 and 1959, when Fred and Myra McCormick purchased it. Myra ran the ranch after Fred's death in 1978 until her own death in 1999. During Myra McCormick's tenure, there was considerable emphasis on wildlife, particularly on bird-watching. Upon her death, the ranch was willed to the Nature Conservancy in New Mexico, which remodeled and enlarged the facilities and the ranch and added some land. Unfortunately, at the time this review was written, the website states that the lodge closed while "we seek new ownership" (<http://bearmountainlodge.com/>).

The book is carefully and clearly written, although there are a few redundancies and one small puzzle. On page 39, the author states that "Juanita [Franks] sold the lodge in 1936." Earlier in the book, on p. 22, the text gives the same information but there is a note saying "A brochure distributed by Harry Allen Jr. dated 1937 suggests that Juanita may have leased the ranch for a year or two before selling it to Mr. and Mrs. Horton in 1938. There is no record of a sale in 1936 to Harry Allen Jr. in Grant County, NM, deed books." There are also many illustrations, mostly clearly reproduced. Unfortunately, a few of the reproductions are so small (p. 6) or so dark (p. 30) that it is difficult to make out peoples' faces. The book has a bibliography and index.

In this short book, Donna Eichstaedt has told the fascinating story of a building that has served many different uses and had widely varying fortunes in the eighty years since its construction. What differentiates her work from a pamphlet on an historic building are the attention paid to the people involved with the building,

particularly its first owners, and the research that went into the book, documented in a thorough bibliography. People interested in the history of the lodge, a relatively unknown chapter of the life of Walter Langer, or Juanita Franks and Myra McCormick, two strong New Mexico women, will want to read this book.

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Professor and Special Collections Librarian,
NMSU Library

The *Spanish Language of New Mexico and Southern Colorado: A Linguistic Atlas* by Garland D. Bills and Neddy A. Vigil. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8263-4549-3, hardcover, 383 pages, maps, tables, indices, \$80.

The centuries-old survival of the Spanish language, which the authors refer to as New Mexican Spanish, in New Mexico and southern Colorado is a remarkable story of cultural tenacity in an increasingly alien environment. It is also a phenomenon that has spawned many myths and misconceptions. This linguistic atlas addresses the myths and realities of the Spanish language in the two areas of study by studying the history and evolution of Spanish as it is spoken in the region. It also explores what the future will bring for the language.

I would like to examine briefly the authors' discussion of myths regarding New Mexican Spanish as a way of illustrating the nature of the information contained in this atlas. The first myth is "New Mexican Spanish is the Spanish of sixteenth-century Spain." In exploding this myth, Bills and Vigil note that the reality is much more complex than this simple Romantic notion. Speakers of New Mexican Spanish most commonly say they are Mexican and that they speak Mexican. History tells us that most immigrants to New Mexico in the colonial period brought with them a hybrid American form of Spanish can Spanish than to the Spanish of Spain in all of its regional variations. Of course, there are examples of archaic bits of language in New Mexican Spanish, but this is typical in colloquial Spanish throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

The second myth I would like to look at is that "Spanish is an official language of New Mexico." This

myth derives from a misunderstanding of the New Mexico state constitution. The state constitution aims at assuring that all students learn English and that teachers of Spanish-speaking pupils should be given the opportunity to master Spanish. They are not required to speak Spanish. The provision that laws be published in both languages was originally for twenty years. It has twice been extended (in 1931 and again in 1943), but there is currently no New Mexico law requiring laws or anything else to be published in both languages.

This is a book that will provide fascinating reading for scholars and avocational readers alike. It may also make it possible for you to win a few bets!

Rick Hendricks

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***Visions Underground: Carlsbad Caverns Through the Artist's Eye* by Lois Manno.** Albuquerque: Rio Grande Books in Collaboration with The National Speleological Society, 2009. ISBN 978-1-890689-95-7, paper, 177 pages, illustrations, \$19.99.

Take an experienced caver. Combine her with a fine artist and graphic artist. Have her write a richly illustrated book. What you have is the feast for the eyes that is *Visions Underground*. Beginning with the earliest paintings through generations of painters and photographers, the author chronicles the history of the caverns from their discovery through the development of the national monument to the present day.

Of no less interest than the images themselves, is the attention paid to the way the artists went about their work. Among the most interesting aspects of the book is the series of paintings done by Santa Fe artist Will Shuster. His numerous paintings of the caverns have the unusual quality of having been painted in two periods separated by a decade. He first painted the caverns in the 1920s and then returned again in the 1930s as part of the Civil Works Administration's Works of Art Project, a federally-funded program to aid unemployed artists during the Great Depression.

Admirers of the photography of Ansel Adams will be fascinated to learn that Carlsbad Caverns represented one of the most difficult challenges in his career. He was, in the words of the author, "Stymied by the lack of natural light, long exposure times, and the kind of highly developed, recreational atmosphere that Adams disdained in national parks." Even though Adams was not

satisfied with the results of his efforts, his photographs of the caverns bear the hallmarks of his more famous landscapes and are stunning in their own way.

My personal favorites are the posters and promotional advertisements for the Santa Fe Railroad and Southern Pacific Railroad from the 1940s. These images were used to promote tourism by rail. The Santa Fe boasted daily Pullman service from Chicago and Los Angeles direct to Carlsbad, New Mexico, where motor coaches met the train to transport visitors the twentyseven miles to the caverns. Anyone who has visited Carlsbad Caverns by train, and anyone who will never have the opportunity should find this book a delight.

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Literary Glimpses of New Mexico: Frank Waters, well-known southwestern writer of fiction as well as non-fiction, received honorary doctorates from UNM and NMSU, among others, and was nominated for the Nobel Prize several times. He was ever drawn to the timelessly beautiful qualities of the Southwest and the mystic experiences and worldview of Spanish and Native American peoples. His own experiences during and after World War II positioned him at the intersection of these ancient patterns of life with the most seminal episode of the 20th century at Los Alamos. Having edited a Taos weekly paper during the post-war period of atomic testing in Nevada, he also served as an information consultant for the Los Alamos scientific laboratory, according to the Frank Waters Foundation at frankwaters.org. In this fertile ground of ancient and modern at the foot of the Los Alamos mesa, the true wartime experiences of Edith Warner became the seed of his enduring novel.

Warner was an unusual loner drawn from the eastern US to eke out a living in a small adobe beside an old bridge across the Rio Grande. A biography of her written by Peggy Pond Church, whose father was the last headmaster of the Los Alamos boys' school taken over for the secret wartime lab, offers biographical details of her life (*House at Otowi Bridge: The Story of Edith Warner and Los Alamos*). Published posthumously, Edith Warner's own writings edited by Patrick Burns give more insight into this real woman: *In the Shadow of Los Alamos: Selected Writings of Edith Warner*. But Waters wrote his

own fictionalized and hypnotic account of a mystical awakening directly alongside the most arcane of scientific developments. He explores the transcendent spiritual awakening of Helen Chalmers, his main character, as she tries to release herself from the ties of the corporeal existence to explore the energies of the psychic oneness she glimpses. Her sense of her mystical differentness drew her to the Spanish and Native American people she lived among. Revered as something of a seer by them, she remained an enigma to her more worldly Anglo friends and family as the story unfolds.

Full of local sights and sounds, scents and flavors of real New Mexico places, the novel becomes a fascinating look at the area seventy years ago. The “baby railroads” hauling chiles along narrow-gauge tracks, cliff dwellings and pottery finds in remote canyons reached over age-old foot paths, images of the Rio Grande rimed with ice or fringed with fall cottonwood yellows — for these details alone, the well-written and colorful story will appeal to those interested in the state and its history. But the compelling details of the life of scientists at Los Alamos who frequented her small wayside tearoom add a chilling aspect to Chalmers’ visions of an apocalyptic cloud, equal parts destructive and aweinspiring in its elemental oneness with all things living and nonliving. Hungry for some small contact with the outside, many

of the most well-known names working at the laboratory sought out dinner reservations at the small tearoom famous for posole and chocolate cake served in its rustic and completely private setting at the foot of the mesa. Readers will hear about real scientists, actual events like the treason of Klaus Fuchs, tension laden sessions arming the test devices, and the death of a scientist whose experiment went terribly awry exposing him to lethal radiation.

Waters’ unique position in the region and experience as a newspaperman bring an eye-witness quality to the story. Read at those two levels alone — the local lore of that region of New Mexico and the world-altering events concentrated at Los Alamos — this older title is well worth examining. But much more is offered to readers enticed into exploring the mystical realms of human experience in the beliefs and practices handed down through cultures and peoples of the southwest, embodied in the life of an Anglo woman attuned somehow to vast powers beyond her ken. This memorable and vivid story will reward readers who will enjoy its literate style and its unique position in the lore of New Mexico in the twentieth century.

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Las Cruces