



NEWSLETTER

February 2024

Doña Ana County Historical Society

Clyde Tombaugh And His Tracking Telescope Will Be Bill Godby's Topic At February Meeting

On Feb. 15, at 7 p.m. in the Good Samaritan Auditorium, 3011 Buena Vida Cr., Bill Godby, an archaeologist at White Sands Missile Range, will discuss the history and significance of astronomer Dr. Clyde Tombaugh's efforts at WSMR from 1946-1955, during the very beginnings of America's missile and space exploration activities. The presentation is free and open to the public. If we can manage it, the talk will also be available via Zoom and an invitation issued a few days before.

This presentation includes many rare photographs, illustrating various evolutions of the tracking telescopes developed during Tombaugh's tenure. Godby's talk will also include a discussion of cultural resource management at WSMR and the role an archaeologist plays in managing historic resources. He is one of three archaeologists at WSMR, managing more than 8,000 historic sites.

The development of missile tracking telescopes begins with Dr. James B. Edson, former astronomer and staff member at Lowell Observatory in the late 1930s. Edson, also brother-in-law of Tombaugh (Patsy's brother), developed the prototype for the first missile tracking telescope, known as Little Bright Eyes, at the Ballistic Research Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in 1946. The telescope used two refractors mounted on

a 45mm machine gun mount to provide 360 degree rotation and included a mounted 35mm Eyemo movie camera.

Edson, brought the telescope to WSMR and handed it over to Tombaugh, who subsequently obtained the first-ever large-scale photography of missiles in flight. Tombaugh resolved many problems with atmospheric turbulence, magnification/angular field of view and film/filter problems by applying his skills as an astronomer. His work in the development of tracking telescopes was ground breaking and led to a new paradigm of data collection still utilized today.



Bill grew up in Flint Michigan attending the University of Michigan-Flint, receiving a BA in both anthropology and philosophy in 1993, followed by a master's degree in cultural anthropology in 1999 from the University of Hawaii where Bill began his career as an archaeologist for the US Army. Leaving Hawaii in 2009 Bill joined the cultural resource management team at WSMR and has led efforts to document Cold War era resources, receiving the Governor's Distinguished Heritage Program Award in 2018. Bill's passions outside of work

include playing guitar, mountain biking and spending time with his family.

Awards Banquet Was Held January 27 At La Posta Restaurant



Returning DACHS President Dennis Daily, left, introduces the four newly elected board members and officers. From left to right are: Faith Hutson, new historian; Sal Patricolo, David Brown and George Helfrich, new at-large board members. It was pointed out that there is nothing new about George's membership as he is a charter member of the historical society.



President Dennis Daily inducting Pat Taylor into the DACHS Hall of Fame. The house image in the background is the historical sign designed by Consuelo Lerma for the Mesquite District in Las Cruces.



President Dennis Daily inducting Consuelo R. Lerma into the DACHS Hall of Fame. Accepting for her mother is Olivia McDonald.

A nice crowd of 73 people attended the awards banquet. If you would like to see the program from the event, it will be on the DACHS website within the week. In addition to the recognition provided by DACHS, the 2024 issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review was available for pick up for paid up members. It is not too early to make a nomination or a suggestion for an award for next year. It will be here before you know it.



The Hermit Of La Cuevas Festival Is February 24 & 25

Most locals know that a hermit once lived in a cave in the La Cueva rocks just below the Organ Mtns. near Dripping Springs. He was found murdered there in April 1869. No one knows who did it so it is another murder mystery for the Mesilla Valley. There is a historical marker on the site now.

So, who was he, where did he come from and why kill him? Attendees to the Hermit Festival will find some answers to those questions with the showing of "The Wonder of the Century," a film co-produced by local historian David Thomas. In fact, after the two showings of the film, the hermit will make an appearance and answer your questions.

The Hermit of La Cuevas Festival will be held in the Rio Grande Theatre February 24-25. The ticket price is \$14, which is good for entry into all events, both days. Tickets can be purchased at the door or online at the Rio Grande Theatre web site: www.riograndetheatre.org.

Program Schedule

Saturday, February 24

3:00 pm - SING THE LEGEND. A live musical presentation by the iconic CROW AND KARLA featuring Dan Crow, Karla Steen, and Sweet Mary Hattersley. They will perform original songs about Billy the Kid, Pat Garrett, Stagecoach Mary Fields, The Fountain Mystery, Deacon Jim Miller, and more.

6:00 pm - Movie, THE WONDER OF THE CENTURY (A MARAVILHA DO SÉCULO), Directed by Marcia Paraiso. Produced by Helio Levcovitz and David G. Thomas.

Sunday, February 25

2 pm - Matinee performance of THE WONDER OF THE CENTURY.

The documentary film is about Giovanni Maria de Agostini, born in Italy in 1801, who combined two seemingly contradictory aspirations: a fervent desire to devote his whole life to "perfect solitude" and an astonishing urge to travel incessantly.


Following extensive travel in Europe, Agostini took vows revocable only by formal dispensation from the Pope. He immediately

left forever his "beloved Italy" for South America. He spent 21 years traversing what was, at the time, a greatly unexplored continent, visiting Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Chile – and doing it multiple times. Seeking change and another continent, Agostini left South America for the northern hemisphere. He passed through Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico and then veered east, going through Cuba..

In Cuba, he was hailed as an extraordinary adventurer. His photograph was taken, and he was proclaimed "The Wonder of Our Century."

After arrival in New York City, he walked to Canada, where he spent almost a year. Then he was off again, this time going west. Eventually he reached the Territory of New Mexico at the height of the American Civil War.

After the movie – Agostini will appear in person and give an interview and answer questions from the audience. Don't worry it'll be in English.



Hermit of La Cueva Festival

Feb 24-25

\$14 Weekend Pass Includes Movie & Music

Music: Crow and Karla 3 pm Sat, Feb 24

Movie: The Wonder of the Century - US Premiere!
6 pm Sat, Feb 24 and 2 pm Sun, Feb 25

Personal Appearance: The Hermit
After the Movie

CITY OF LAS CRUCES At Rio Grande Theatre, 211 N Main St

RIO GRANDE THEATRE

The Back Page -----

For the Awards Banquet program I printed a few photos of the petroglyphs on Tonuco Mtn., a place DACHS recognized for its cultural importance. I included a big fish image. I imagine fisherman centuries ago were similar to fisherman today and often had stories of the BIG one that got away. Is this a representation of that story??? The only problem is that the fish photo I ran does not have any reference points for scale. This photo of my sister examining the "big fish" gives you an idea of scale. It is large.

There are other images of fish at the site but those are more scratched into the rock surface. This one is deeply incised with some sort of punch. In fact, I think it is easy to imagine a miner from just up the canyon at the barite and fluorite vein, coming down in the early 20th century with some tools and making his own petroglyph. Photo by Jim Eckles



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