AYER Y HOY en TAOS
Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

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The front porch of the studio at the D.H. Lawrence Ranch in San Cristobal, taken in 1971. Photo courtesy The Taos News

WRITERS & LITERATURE IN TAOS

The Far Mountains: Frank O’Rourke’s Taos Country by David. L. Caffey
The Mystery of Taos: William Goyan by T.N. Luther
The Novelist as Historian by Arthur J. Bachrach

A PUBLICATION OF THE TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AYER Y HOY en TAOS

Yesterday and Today in Taos County and Northern New Mexico

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The Taos County Historical Society’s publication, AYER Y HOY en Taos County and Northern New Mexico, is published semi-annually by the Historical Society.

We invite articles of a scholarly nature, as well as book reviews of recent publications pertinent to the Taos and northern New Mexico area. We are open to publishing occasional reminiscences, folklore, oral history and poetry that are of lasting historical interest.

The Taos County Historical Society endeavors to maintain high standards of quality in AYER Y HOY, and we seek to make improvements as we go along. Readers’ comments and suggestions are welcome.

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AYER Y HOY is mailed to all members of the Taos County Historical Society as a benefit of membership. Memberships are $10 for individuals, $15 for families, and $25 for sustaining memberships.

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The Taos County Historical Society is a New Mexico nonprofit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of the historical resources of Taos County and northern New Mexico. Membership is open to any interested person, regardless of residence.

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EDITOR’S PAGE

AYER Y HOY explores the topic of writers and literature in Taos. The subject has proven to be greater than I had anticipated, warranting an additional issue devoted to how Taos has been such a draw for writers of all kinds.

In this issue is an article by David Caffey, Dean of Instruction at Clovis Community College, and formerly editor of AYER Y HOY in its formative years. His article is about Frank O’Rourke, a writer who lived in Taos only briefly, but profoundly affected by the people and geography of the area.

There is also an article from T.N. Luther, book collector and author of Collecting Taos Authors (New Mexico Book League, Albuquerque, N.M., 1993). His article is on William Goyen, whom he considers to be one of Taos’ lesser known authors.

Another Taos bibliophile, Art Bachrach, proprietor of Moby Dick Books, has given us the text of his speech to the Society, delivered April 13, this year, regarding the novelist as historian.

Also in this issue are reminiscences by Sadie Ortiz Knight about the Gaspards and Peter Douthit, a.k.a. Peter Rabbit, who has been a part of the Taos literary underground since the mid-fifties.

I’m reminded of an appropriate quote to kick off this issue:

... Artists and writers constitute only a small percentage of the population, but their influence is wherever you look. Taos was a sordid little mud village when some of us first knew it. Now no one visits the Southwest without going to Taos. Its artists and writers are known throughout the world.

The town is one of the jewels of New Mexico and of this country. ...

- Edgar Lee Hewett, “Introduction to “Artists and Writers: A List of Prominent Artists and Writers in New Mexico,” edited by Alison Dana and Margaret Lohfker as a special issue of The Santa Fe New Mexican, June 26, 1940.

As the new editor of AYER Y HOY, I hope to maintain the publication’s established quality, and in time, make improvements in keeping with its stated purpose, as expressed in the masthead.

I wish to thank Faye Lutz for twisting my arm to take the position and being consistently available for answers to just about any question I had, including how best to prepare a fresh elk roast. Her suggestions resulted in possibly the most delicious roasted game I have ever prepared.

I’d also like to thank Andy Lindquist for his encouragement and for expressing his confidence in my abilities. Elizabeth Cunningham has also been a tremendous help as a sounding board and source for ideas about where this publication can go.

I would also like to thank Kathy Cordova and her dedication to AYER Y HOY in past years, especially considering her other duties and involvements, including teaching and addressing gambling issues for the State of New Mexico.

I’m hoping to take AYER Y HOY into the new century with dignity. Here’s to fostering a respect for the past and an awareness of history as it is being written right now.

Melody Romancito, editor
When writer Frank O’Rourke left Taos in 1957, it wasn’t that he no longer cared for the mountains, the adobe village steeped in history, the art colony, or the society of his poker playing companions. It was just that he had soaked up the surrounding country and exhausted its inspiration in a frenzy of creative activity, and it was time to move on.

The cycle was one O’Rourke repeated often in his career of some forty-five years as a writer. A restless soul, he lived in California, Mexico, Texas, Minnesota, Florida, Arizona, Switzerland, Washington, Maine, Nevada and Utah, but no period of his life produced more or better work than the five years he spent in Taos, 1952 to 1957. O’Rourke’s name is not generally among the first to surface when the subject of Taos writers comes up, but of his 68 published books, 22 have New Mexico settings, with all
but a few of these set in or around Taos, sometimes called “Rio Arriba” in his stories.

Born Frank Maurice Phillips, Jr., in 1916, O'Rourke grew up in Hoskins, Nebraska, where his father owned a lumber yard. While a student at Kemper Military Academy in Boonville, Missouri, he discovered a wider world of ideas and developed the urge to become a writer.

O'Rourke chose not to pursue university studies, but he retained the urge to write and became an avid reader and researcher, amassing a library of several thousand volumes.

O'Rourke's boyhood experiences in the small midwestern town provided material for his early “Joe” stories, published in Collier's magazine. These recalled days at the local swimming hole, a boy's first rifle, and other scenes from life. O'Rourke served in the U.S. Army 1941-1943, and from his war experience came his first novel, E-Company (1945).

O'Rourke began his career in the twilight of an era of opportunity for writers. Before television, more than a dozen thriving weekly magazines provided entertainment for Americans and a steady market for short fiction. The young writer made regular appearances in Collier's and the Saturday Evening Post, adopting the pen name of Frank O'Rourke, which he took as his legal name in 1961.

O'Rourke wrote contemporary fiction and sports stories early in his career, but he gained recognition as a writer of adventure westerns. Success had its price, as he was placed within a genre that proved too confining. Random House, publisher of O'Rourke's hardcover fiction from 1948 to 1954, wanted “straight westerns” from him and disparaged proffered mysteries and serious novels as “off-trail” efforts. Random House published two such titles, apparently to accommodate a valued author, but O'Rourke's editor was plainly frustrated with his refusal to stick to westerns.

The publisher likewise discouraged subtlety in the westerns and frequently prescribed titles that better fit the genre. “The people who read westerns don’t want geographic titles like, The Rolling Hills,” editor Harry Maule told O'Rourke, “they want action and violence.” So “The Green Land” became Thunder on the Buckhorn and “Up the Broad Missouri” became Gunsmoke Over Big Muddy. Tensions between writer and publisher persisted, and by the end of 1954 the relationship with Random House was over.

O'Rourke continued to write adventure westerns for several mass market publishers, and in 1956 he began a relationship with William Morrow & Company for publication of his more substantial works. Morrow supported O'Rourke's creative endeavors, including contemporary fiction, historical fiction, and a series of humorous spy novels published under the pseudonym of Patrick O'Malley.

O'Rourke moved to Taos in 1952 and set out to explore the majestic landscape and its varied cultures. His wife, the former Edith Claire Carlson, studied painting with Emil Bisttram.

O'Rourke studied major reference works like Twitchell's The Spanish Archives of New Mexico, and he studied the landscape, but much of his research consisted in listening to such authentic stories as could be heard around town and along the rural byways.

O'Rourke typically circulated and visited during the day, sometimes sitting in on a poker game with Bisttram, E. Martin Hennings and others. According to T.N. Luther (Collecting Taos Authors, 1993) O'Rourke was not a good poker player—a notion his widow confirms. By Mrs. O'Rourke's recollection, O'Rourke approached the game with unbounded enthusiasm and enjoyed himself immensely, win or lose. He wrote every night, working into the early morning hours, until a book was finished. He wrote rapidly, sometimes confounding publishers with his prolific output.

O'Rourke had not been in Taos long when he met Doughbelly Price, barber, real estate dealer, and ex-ranch hand and bronc rider. The two men became friends, and O'Rourke found material for two novels in Doughbelly’s stories of his early years. Although O'Rourke had never worked livestock or lived on a ranch, he produced remarkably authentic stories of ranch life from Price’s accounts and from his own extensive research.

The Diamond Hitch (1956) was dedicated “To my friend Doughbelly Price who lived this book.” Although written as fiction, the book is based on Price’s early life. The fictional Dewey Jones is seen first as a cook and horsebreaker on the Flying “A” Ranch in Arizona, then as a rodeo cowboy winning the big prize at the Cowboys’ Reunion Rodeo in Las Vegas, New Mexico; and finally as a young man lucky enough to marry a nice girl and land a job managing a horse ranch in the Moreno Valley.

Doughbelly also provided raw material for The Last Ride (1958), a story set on a ranch in the sprawling Valle Vidal, in the Vermejo country. John Hatton and two young companions are hired to round up wild horses for sale to the army as World War I cavalry mounts. The reader learns plenty about horse traps, hobbles and hackamores, but the story finally is one of an old cowboy who loves his freedom, chasing a proud old stallion who loves his just as much.

One of O'Rourke's proudest achievements was an historical novel, The Far Mountains (1959). The book follows Blas Pelletier and John O'Brien—who conveniently becomes Juan Obregon—from a landing on the Texas Coast with the ill-fated Philip Nolan expedition in 1801, through a trek to "the far mountains" of Taos. There the
two men spend their lives, Obregon marrying a local girl and raising a family, growing up with the land and witnessing a new day with the military occupation of the Americans in 1846.

The geography of *The Far Mountains* is drawn with meticulous accuracy. As part of his research for the book, O'Rourke took a long trip with Doughbelly Price and Ray Quinn in October 1956, starting at Nacogdoches, Texas and covering the distance to Taos. Quinn kept detailed notes on the route to aid O'Rourke in describing the journey of Pelletier and Obregon.

The book won the first Southwestern Library Association biennial award for a work exemplifying "the spirit and culture of the Southwest." Writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, Walter Havighurst called it an "ardent and often eloquent novel," deserving of a place "among the lasting novels of the Southwest."

Several of O'Rourke's Taos novels develop as fables—entertaining but improbable stories which provide edifying object lessons. In *The Bride Stealer* (1960), Talache Coyote, a bandit with a higher purpose, intercedes to save a young girl from a marriage arranged to serve the selfish interests of her father and her husband-to-be. Through Coyote's intervention, the thoughtless men are made to see the error of their ways, and to see the young bride with greater respect and appreciation. In *The Springtime Fancy* (1961), a young girl of Rio Arriba gives birth out of wedlock but refuses to name the father. Wisely, she knows that marriage should be for love, so she contrives to exact support from the child's father, while remaining single to accept a husband of her own choosing, in her own time. In the novella, *A Private Anger* (1963), John McFeeters, embittered at the mine closure that took his job as a powder man, carefully, spitefully plans an explosion that will reduce the plaza, the hotel and the courthouse to rubble. But events of chance intervene to thwart McFeeters's purpose; his revenge fails, and his plot takes the lives of three decent people for whom he cared.

One of the best such works—perhaps O'Rourke's best novel of all—is *The Man Who Found His Way* (1957), one of the few works of fiction to make effective literary use of the lore of Hispanic witchcraft in northern New Mexico. The book also evokes the Prohibition era, but Joe Baker has a secret which is more closely guarded than the bootlegging business he runs out of his home on Ranchitos Road. Along with three others, he is guilty of a bank robbery committed four years ago—before he married and settled down to the life he now leads.

With one of the men threatening to talk, the other three have a problem. Since Abad Ramos's loose tongue seems to be the work of a witch, Joe quietly inquires around Taos to find someone who can reverse the spell.

Only trouble is, once released from the spell, Abad still wants to confess the crime. In a theme common to O'Rourke's fiction, Joe Baker endures a struggle of conscience, between the guilty man who wants to escape punishment and the better nature that calls him to set matters right.

Hoffman Birney, reviewing for the *New York Times*, wrote of the book, "This novella ranks with the best, the very best, we have read in many years." O'Rourke's notes indicate that the novel was inspired, in part, by stories of a witch called Antonina, who reportedly flew twenty-two miles from Costilla to Questa one night.


Many of O'Rourke's westerns were based on historic persons and events. One of these was *A Texan Came*
Riding, inspired by the story of Arthur Rochford Manby of Taos. In O’Rourke’s book, the Texan is John Kearny, and he comes riding from the Big Bend country to settle accounts with Charles Malcolm, an Englishman who is busy amassing a fortune in Taos, and who has stiffed Kearny’s relations in a former life. Malcolm quits Taos in a hurry, leaving a gruesome mystery of the sort that made legend of Arthur R. Manby.

Three novels from O’Rourke’s prolific output were produced as motion pictures. The books were The Bravados, The Great Bank Robbery (1961), and A Mule for the Marquesa (1964), from which Hollywood made the classic adventure film, “The Professionals.” Gregory Peck starred in “The Bravados.” O’Rourke’s story depicts the jailbreak and flight of three fugitives who lead the law on a wild chase through the Taos mountains. O’Rourke’s account is, as usual, true to the geography of the Hondo Valley, Questa and the Red River country. When Hollywood made the story, the fictional town of Rio Arriba looked more like Taco Bell than Taos, and the pursuit moved south instead of north. The screenwriters added an O. Henry-like ending, in which justice is served through ironic circumstances.

Writing as Patrick O’Malley, O’Rourke produced The Red Mosaic (1961), one of the early literary treatments of Los Alamos and the atom bomb. The book features Harrigan and Hoeffler, secret agents who appear in other O’Malley spy spoofs. The agents are in town to prevent the theft of secrets from Los Alamos. They do the Taos gallery scene and seek out Mrs. Bedlington-Collier, a Mabel Dodge Luhan type, who seems to be involved in espionage under cover of her activities in the art colony.

Although the torrent of published works was reduced to a trickle in the last years, O’Rourke continued writing to the end of his life, and his last works may yet prove his most enduring.

In his final years O’Rourke devoted himself to the creation of stories for children. One of these, Burton and Stanley, was published by David R. Godine in 1994 and won numerous accolades in the children’s book trade.
Although he rarely inhabited the bestseller lists, O’Rourke created stories that have been enjoyed by millions. With the exception of some of the paperback westerns, his books are virtually unobtainable. Some will not be missed, but the best of O’Rourke’s works should be enjoyed by new readers interested in the times, places and ideas he wrote about. Preeminent among these is The Man Who Found His Way, O’Rourke’s best on literary and stylistic merits. The Diamond Hitch and The Last Ride are also especially worthy. They are authentic works of the West—the one Max Evans, Jack Shaefer and Norman Zollinger have written about.

Beset by constant pain, Frank O’Rourke took his own life in 1989, in Tucson, Arizona. He never lived in one place long enough to amass a local following, and he shunned notoriety. But in the books he created, O’Rourke left a legacy that speaks of his energy, creativity, and humanity, and of the breadth of his remarkable imagination. From the plains of Nebraska to the far mountains of Taos he followed a winding trail, taking in the stories each place had to tell, writing incessantly, and pursuing the freedom he prized for himself and for others.

AN EXCERPT
from Frank O’Rourke’s A Private Anger,
William Morrow and Company,
New York, 1963

When two painters came to Rio Arriba in 1905, they saw the upper river country with the eager eyes of children. The first man they painted was John McFeeters. He posed against the crumbling adobe wall on Placitas Road, gripping a hammer in one hand, the other one resting thick-calledous on the wall. From his stance you sensed that his legs were bad, that he suffered from varicose veins, and perhaps his kidneys were not all that could be desired. He was bald and his white forehead, customarily shaded by the hat he laid aside at their request, made a startling contrast to his weathered face, a common enough set of features staring from the canvas with quiet resignation.

Although he never knew, he influenced their staying on until, half-a-century later, their kind had changed the face of the town. For they sold his painting through their New York gallery, were thus encouraged to linger, and soon to stay. Five years later they were accepted members of the community. They saw Rio Arriba with the innocent clarity of the painter: one thousand souls, give or take a few loaned to the devil, living in adobe houses and frame shacks; dusty streets and rutted alleys, willow-shaded creeks; no sewage, city water, or lights; open wells, closed minds, coal oil lamps, pinon and pine for the cookstoves; business, a lot of it, but never apparent; and the half-mystical pull of a country clouded the outlander’s blood, bemused his sense of economics, stimulated his reproductive glands, absorbed him, yet held him apart forever from complete acceptance with that strange negation, that feeling that the intruder no Anglo could escape. The two painters saw their town clearly after five years, but they no longer saw John McFeeters. He was still living, doing odd jobs, but they never painted him again. They had come to practice what their honest brush had preached five years ago: he was the man they never saw, he was there and they looked right through him.

SOURCES

Frank O’Rourke’s New Mexico Novels:

Other Sources:
Luther, T.N., Collecting Taos Authors. Albuquerque: The New Mexico Book League, 1994. The author is indebted to Mrs. Edith O’Rourke for the above listing of Frank O’Rourke’s New Mexico novels, as well as for information provided in a personal interview in Salt Lake City, Utah, June 30, 1995.
THE MYSTERY OF TAOS: WILLIAM GOYEN
by T.N. Luther

Most of the major authors who lived in Taos have used the area as a setting for at least some of their work. This was true for Myron Brinig, Fredric Brown, Frances Crane, Max Evans, D. H. Lawrence, John Nichols, Frank O'Rourke, Frank Waters, Robert Bright, Joseph Foster, and others. Edward Abbey and Walter von Tilberg Clark did not, but they only lived here for six or seven months. William Goyen's case was a bit different. He wrote three poems after he moved to Taos. They appear in the book Nine Poems, which was published 31 years after his arrival and 26 years after the publication of his first book.

Goyen mentioned in his introduction to Nine Poems that the first three were written from his excitement over what he regarded as one of the deepest influences in his life—"Frieda Lawrence and life around her in El Prado, New Mexico." The three poems bear the titles "Frieda Lawrence," "Lawrence's Chapel at Kiowa," and "The Hailstorm at Mabeltown."

These poems offer us a clue as to where to find references to Goyen during his life here. I've had to refer to these sources plus the publicity material about him which appears on the dust jackets of his books. This is so because I have found no one who remembers knowing Goyen or who recalls incidents of his stay. Even Frank Waters, who spent a good part of some 56 years in this area, could supply nothing.

Goyen was born in Texas in 1915. He attended Rice, and, upon his graduation with a master's degree, taught literature at the University of Houston for a year before serving a four-year stint in the U.S. Navy as an officer on an aircraft carrier during World War II. He came to Taos after his discharge in 1945 and remained here until sometime in 1947. He was working on the manuscript of what was to become his first novel, The House of Breath. He maintained a house even though he left here in 1947 for Napa, California. In 1948, he lived in Portland, Oregon, Chicago, near San Francisco, and in New York City. In 1950, he lived for several months in England.

He had been awarded Guggenheim fellowships in both 1951 and 1952. He spent a year in Italy and Switzerland, returning to Taos in 1954, when he produced his third book, In a Farther Country, published in 1955. He continued to maintain a home in Taos until he sold it to John Manchester in 1962, although from 1957 until 1960 he lived in New York City.

Frieda Lawrence, in a letter to Witter Bynner in February 1947, indicated that Goyen and a companion, Joe Glasco, also a painter, after leaving the Navy had been waiters and were currently building a house on three acres of Frieda's El Prado land next to Brett's house (both pieces of land being donated by the generous Frieda). In a letter to E.W. Tedlock in March, 1948, she mentions that Goyen and Glasco were looking for work in Dallas, and that they hated their teaching jobs with awfully tough kids. Frieda's letter to her daughter, Barbara, of August 4, 1956, indicates that the "boys" were again living in Taos. Both Glasco and Goyen helped to nurse Frieda at the time of her stroke on August 8, until her death on August 11. At her funeral, Goyen spoke a few words of farewell and read Lawrence's poem that she had loved so much, "Not I, But the Wind ..."

Goyen's first novel, The House of Breath (1945), received great critical acclaim. Stephen Spender cited "its great poetic insight." Elizabeth Bowen declared that the book "impressed, exalted and moved me." The book was more of a critical success in England than in the United States, although fellow Texan, Katherine Anne Porter, declared, "There are long passages of the best writing, the fullest and richest and most expressive that I have read in a very long time."

His second book, Ghost and Flesh (1952), consisted of eight short stories. His third book and second novel, although set in New York City, was conceived and written in Taos, In a Farther Country (1955).

Goyen resented being referred to as a young Southern writer, and insisted that he was from Texas, which is Southwestern. Many critics have commented that his use of language in the regional idiom of Texas was extraordinary. Goyen stated, "My work has no affinity with the eccentricities of Southern personality or Gothic bizarries."

His fourth book, The Faces of Blood Kindred, consisting of ten short stories and one novella, appeared in 1960. He had been teaching from 1959 to 1960 at the New School in New York City. Goyen spent part of 1962 in Germany, where his work was well received critically. The novel, The Fair Sister, was published in 1963. It was not until 1973 that his next book, non-fiction, A Book of Jesus, appeared.

His Selected Writings (1974), contains works from five earlier books and one uncollected piece. Another novel, Come, the Restorer, also appeared in 1974. The Collected Stories of William Goyen (1975), consisted of 19 stories from his books plus seven previously uncollected magazine stories. Nine Poems was published in 1976, followed
by four other limited editions, "Arthur Bond," (1974), a short story; Wonderful Plant, a fable, 1980; Precious Door, a series of fables, 1981; William Goyen. New Work and Work in Progress (1983). The latter contains a most informative interview with Goyen. His last novel, Arcadio, was also published in 1983, the year of his death, and, posthumously, Had I a Hundred Mouths: New and Selected Stories, appeared in 1985. Most of Goyen's later years were spent in California after his marriage to actress Doris Roberts. He also authored several plays.

Goyen's reputation as a writer was greater in Europe than in America, although he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1977. The French critic, Maurice Coindreaux, wrote Goyen, "Do you know your masterpiece is still considered in Parisian literary circles the best thing that America sent us in this century?" Ernst Curtius, German writer-critic, found that Goyen's work rivaled Flaubert, Proust and Joyce. Anais Nin and Joyce Carol Oates were supportive, but the general public were not as appreciative. By 1981 all of his work was out-of-print in America, but all or nearly all was available in Europe.

He is better known for his short stories than his novels, several of which are episodic and could be considered a series of short stories. His writing was poetic and he can be regarded a superior stylist. But, as is often the case, concern for style tended to disregard content. His characters were often quaint or distorted, and as his writing career progressed, his characters became increasingly grotesque. Yet, as Goyen proclaimed in describing his writing, "I felt I was rescuing myself ... and that clarification I was able to make on out of what might have destroyed me." As his final Taos poem concluded, "Ashes are more everlasting than fire."

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THE NOVELLIST AS HISTORIAN
by Arthur J. Bachrach

This is a work of history in fictional form—that is, in personal perspective, which is the only kind of history that exists.

- Joyce Carol Oates
Author's notes in Then, 1969

We tend to think of the historian as an objective reporter of events when, in reality, the historian is more likely to be a commentator, viewing happenings with the personal perspective to which Joyce Carol Oates refers. Many years ago I was struck by this role as commentator while reading a book on Latin-American history written by the great historian, Samuel Bemis. Bemis referred to "salutary" events and "sinister" plans. I wondered how an historian could justify using adjectives such as "salutary" and "sinister" to judge events in history rather than straightforward reporting. Perhaps Oscar Wilde was correct when he observed, in Lady Windermere's Fan, that "History is merely gossip."

But historical reporting is always coloured with a personal perspective, and the historian may be allowed (and forgiven) a certain amount of subjectivity and judgment. Mark Simmons, our own fine New Mexico historian, firmly believes that one cannot use contemporary values to judge Oñate, the "Last Conquistador," to be a villain because of his treatment of the Indians of New Mexico while another excellent historian, Charles Kenner, can convincingly condemn Oñate's actions.

When we think of history as it has affected us, we would probably be hard pressed to come up with specific works written by historians from which we have learned, but we would have little difficulty in coming up with novelists who have influenced us. Take, for example, the England of the 19th Century. Is there any work of history that can inform us as well as Dickens' accounts, in his novels, of the life of the poor in England, the social injustices common in his day, of which he had personal experience? Or the works of Trollope and Austen as commentaries on the social life of their time? It is no wonder that such novels as Austen's Sense And Sensibility, written in 1811, survive and are rediscovered. Turning to another 19th Century great novelist, Tolstoy, we can only observe that War And Peace, considered by some to be the greatest novel ever written, is perhaps the finest history of the Napoleonic Wars available to us as well.

The novelist as observer and historian continues to be a major source of history in our own times. What I would like to do today is to discuss a few contemporary
writers as examples of such sources, concentrating on New Mexico.

I would like to begin with the mystery writer, Dorothy Hughes who wrote a famous mystery in the 1940’s called *Ride The Pink Horse*. Set in Santa Fe, at Fiesta time, Hughes provides the necessary local color in her descriptions of the scene viewed by Sailor, the main character, a gangster from Chicago. Sailor has just arrived in Santa Fe.

... He stood there for a moment getting his bearings. This side the square shops. The left side more shops ... the corner, a fancy shoe shop all glass. Right side of the square was the good side, ticket office,a white bank, better shops. And across was a long low, dun-colored building set back from a covered walk. Took up the whole block.

That was all of the town. The four sides and in the center the park, the village green, all gaudied up and tinkling music...

He turned and strode on up the street to the corner. Across, cat-a-corner, was a real hotel, a big one. Not that it looked like one; it was a dun-colored, plastered mass ’dobe, the wise guys on the bus called it with terraces and walls, like an old Spanish hacienda. He knew it was the hotel; he’d remembered La Fonda from the signboards coming in, La Fonda, The Harvey House ...

Hughes follows Sailor as he looks over the town, searching for a hotel room, difficult because, as the hotel clerks keep informing him, it is Fiesta Time. He crosses the “square” and again sees the dun-colored building, thinking it might be a place to stay.

... He walked towards it past the little white bank and the shops but when he crossed to the building he saw what it was, a museum ... Against the walls of the old museum was a frieze of Indians, a frieze a block long. They sat there on the wide walk, women and children and suckling babies, all in calico and shawls and black, bobbed hair, the women’s bulbous breasts and worn brown wrists jeweled with silver and turquoise. Spread before them on the walks were their wares, bows and arrows and painted drums, beaded doodads, clay birds and vases and ash trays. Behind them, safe from pawing souvenir collectors and curio hagglers were the good things; heavy woven rugs, strands of turquoise, massive silver belts...

In this way Hughes provides color and background to the tale. Compare this to a contemporary commentary, from Jake Page’s 1995 mystery, *The Knotted Strings*, in which a man from Santa Fe is expressing his appreciation of a pin worn by a woman he knows.

“... That’s an exquisite pin ...
Navajo, of course. Nineteen twenties, I’d guess. I prefer their old work, too. So innocent. Much of what you see today lacks a certain sincerity. Have you seen what some of the Indians are selling off the sidewalks over on the plaza? Stamped silver golf-ball markers. But then, the days of innocence are over for the Indians.

Page uses the comments about the Indians and the Plaza to define the character of the speaker.

They walked on, crossing the Alameda, passing The Inn Of The Governors. “Then again,” [he] said ...
“they still seem awfully hagridden, don’t they? The old spooks and spirits still run their lives. Makes you wonder if they’re really ready to—ah—take up the responsibilities of citizens.” He paused. “Oh, dear, I suppose that sounds awfully harsh, doesn’t it? They’re wonderful people.”

Many novelists use real locations, such as “passing the Inn Of The Governors” to lend verisimilitude to their stories. A master of this is, of course, Tony Hillerman whose New Mexico settings and characters, his Navajo tribal policemen Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn, have set a standard and a style for a new generation of writers. The mystery has become an important genre in New Mexico writing.

One famous mystery writer who used Taos and its environs as a setting was Frederic Brown, whose book *The Far Cry* was first published in 1951. This use of a setting contemporaneous with the writing, offers a flavor of what Taos was like. Early in the book, the protagonist, Weaver,
is looking to rent a house and is referred to a real estate dealer named Doughbelly Price, "a little man in a big Stetson." Using a real character such as Price (and "character" has more than one meaning when it comes to describing Doughbelly!) also lends a touch of reality, only identifiable to those readers who know that Doughbelly actually existed in Taos.

In one scene Weaver has breakfast at the coffee shop at La Fonda, decides to visit the weekly newspaper, El Crepusculo ("the oldest newspaper in the Southwest, founded in 1835") to get some information and, because it is lunch hour and the office may be closed, drives "a couple of miles from town in the direction of Santa Fe," to kill time with a drink at the Sagebrush Inn.

As background to his story, Brown uses many opportunities to provide color, mood and attitude. One interesting example is a conversation between Weaver and the editor of El Crepusculo, an Anglo named Callahan. Weaver has rented a house in Arroyo Seco from Doughbelly and asks Callahan about his neighbors:

"Do they like us?" Callahan responds, "Well-no. Not particularly." "But, why" Weaver asks, "I mean, why more than in Santa Fe or other towns where Spanish-Americans and Anglos live together? Why especially in Taos?" Callahan answers, "Oh, not Taos. Just Arroyo Seco—this is one of the last strongholds of the old line Spanish-Americans that hate Anglo ways and everything about Anglos. Especially ones like us who try to live out here among them—taking over their land, buying it when they have to sell—and then fixing it so they can never get it back."

To Weaver's question about what that means, Callahan explains that it means buying a house cheap, then improving it to a point where the original owner, or any of his people, could never afford the price should they wish to regain possession.

Such background observations obviously have no direct relationship to the plot which, in this book, revolves around Weaver's obsession with a murder that had occurred in the house some years before. What such background materials do is flesh out the mood, the setting in which events occur and an attempt to make the reader feel a part of the environment and the action. What is interesting in the discussion about relationships in Arroyo Seco between Anglos and Spanish-Americans, as discussed by Weaver and Callahan, is that this is from a book published in 1951, allowing the current historian to have a view of a situation presented by a writer almost half a century earlier. To be sure, this comparison of situations requires a trust in the integrity of the writer as an observer and reporter. In Brown's case, other observations appearing throughout the novel support a sense of comfort and belief.

Novelists may take certain liberties when creating a story. One technique which can be disturbing at times is the use of placing thoughts and quotes into real characters. In Irwin Blacker's novel, Taos, he weaves a well-crafted tale of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and, in a scene near the end of the novel, Blacker writes:

"Popé sat back in his chair and thought for a long time. Now there was no longer a Spaniard in the land of the pueblos. Now the People were rid of the enemy and the enemy was beyond the desert. It was over. His task was truly done. But he did not know what was expected of him beyond this point. He had planned for war and there had been war. He had never really planned the time beyond victory, and now there was victory. He wondered what Governor Otermin would do in his place..."

Did he really?

Blacker, as novelist, may be forgiven for entering the thoughts of the leader of the Revolt as long as he tells a good tale and does not do injury to the integrity of the character. To his credit, Blacker is a sympathetic creator.

It is patent that someone like Blacker was required to go to historians reports on the Pueblo Revolt to develop his story and populate it with the characters who were actually involved. The historian's objective reporting can then be recast as a novel, true to the people and the events, as an entertaining account of history.

In recent years, a genre of novel has achieved much success—the mystery set as a period piece. While Jake Page and Tony Hillerman use contemporary settings and people in their stories, writers such as Ellis Peters and Lindsey Davis set their plots and protagonists in other times. Peters has as her hero Brother Cadfael, a medieval monk, while Davis' protagonist is a private eye named Marcus Didius Falco, living in Rome in 70 A.D. Peters and Davis are principal representatives of a growing family of writers who select an earlier age as a setting. Colleen McCullough's novels, beginning with The First Man In Rome, reflect scrupulous research into Ancient Rome, as does Lindsey Davis' Falco series. If you read enough of
either author's historical fiction, you could wake up in Ancient Rome and immediately find your way around!

The novelist as historian, the historian as a source of objective information for the novelist as well as other scholars—what a happy arrangement!

I REMEMBER ...
Reminiscences by Taoseños

TAOS LITERARY UNDERGROUND SINCE THE MID 50S

By Peter Douthit

I came to Taos in the mid-1950s. I knew I was a writer, a poet, even tho I was too young to have anything to say. I was on the road, it was cool to be on the road. The summer of 1955 I worked in Central City, Colo., and wrote neo-dada plays & a hundred pointless poems. When summer was over I came to Taos & got a job night clerking for Harold & Hilda Street 8 the Taos thru the winter. I met Max Finstein & Judson Crews. They were both writing far-out poetry. They introduced me to Richard Duerden, Robert Creeley & Ed Dorn. Thru Judson & Max the world of American poetry opened for me. Duerden was part of the San Francisco Renaissance soon to become Beat. Creeley was the key to Black Mountain. Dorn was at the height of his Gunslinging power. Finstein & Crews were truly part of the Taos community. Max Evans helped me break up a fight in the men's room @ Horse Thief Shorty's. I stayed in Taos thru the summer of '56 then went to San Francisco & got labeled Beat. Back on the road.

Beginning in the 60s the hip literary scene was dominated by Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, Corso, all of whom spent some time in northern New Mexico including Taos. They were precursors to the wave of hippies that invaded the Sangre de Cristos beginning in the middle 60s. Max Finstein & I dreamed of the artists' commune, a braver new world. The first was Drop City started by artists & writers in 1965. I was there & wrote a book about it. For the next 15 years the communes (Libre, Lama Foundation, New Buffalo, Red Rocks, Reality, Morningstar, Anonymous Artists of America, etc.) attracted a substantial number of writers, several got rich or famous. The hippie era produced an enormous amount of literature from comic book to collage. We were forced to look at literature in a whole new way. The Jack Kerouac School of disembodied Poetics @ Naropa Institute in Boulder, headed by Allen Ginsberg & Anne Waldman, brought the cutting edge writers of the world to the area & they all wanted to visit the communes. Buddhism had a huge influence on many writers. We made them perform their work. We performed for them. The writer stood before his or her audience looking them in the eye, & they were gonna be there the next morning. If it stinks you're gonna hear about it.

On the communes we had no (or little) media. We entertained ourselves. We held regular readings that soon developed into outrageous cabaret performances. The Booger Event. We made our own music, Huerfano Pops, Libra & New Buffalo Birthdays gave new dimensions to the word party. Here was art that was fun, ecstatic even, an essential ingredient of our everyday lives.

Anne MacNaughton & I moved to Lama from Libre in 1979 in the wake of multiple tragedies. Janet Cannon was publishing Crow Call in Taos & had a literary radio program on KVNM FM. Roberta Meyers was doing irregular readings @ Ouray's gallery. Judith Ritter was gearing up Taos Magazine. In 1980 we produced our first reading performance @ Johnny Gilbert's joint. Tracy McCallum, Ed Sasek, Melinda Woodell, Romolo Arellano, Judith Rider, Annie & I wowed em & formed the core of an audience for performance poetry that has grown steadily for over 15 years. Luminous Animal, a poetry jazz performance ensemble was formed in 1982 with Rick Klein, Larry Audette, Raymond Blanchet, Bill Gersh, Anne MacNaughton & rabbit. This group is still going strong in a different configuration.

SOMOS was formed in 1982 to produce the first Taos Poetry Circus with Ginsberg, Orlovsky, Corso & the first ever World Heavyweight Championship Poetry Bout won by Terry Jacobus from Chicago. Since then we've had a verifiable Who's Who of American, Latin American & Native American poetry. This was the beginning of the reemergence of poetry as competition that has become the SLAM phenomenon. At least one SLAM is held weekly in most cities in this country creating a huge & unexpected audience for poetry. The whole idea of the Poetry Bout was an audience development ploy that worked beyond anybody's wildest dream. Over 2 million people have seen Lewis MacAdams Battle of the Bards, a PBS presentation of the 1989 Bout between Anne Waldman and Victor Hernandez Cruz. For a complete history of the Taos Poetry Circus and the World Heavyweight Championship...
Poetw Bout read Anne MacNaughton’s article in Poetry Flash or any of the articles written in the NY Times, LA Times, LA Weekly, Rolling Stone, etc.

The World Poety Bout Association separated from SOMOS in 1991. SOMOS thinks local, WPBA acts global. 1996 will be the 15th Annual Taos Poetry Circus and over 1500 people will see The Greatest Poetry Show On Earth. With two literary organizations this community has more literary programming than most cities with 20 times our population, summer series, winter series, Dead Poet Bouts, mentorship programs, poets in the schools, literature is flourishing at every level. It’s exciting.

— editor’s note: the idiosyncratic style of the above is Donnith’s.

MEMORIES FROM MY YOUTH: THE GASPARD HOUSE

by Sadie Ortiz Knight

While growing up in Taos, I remember short brushes with a number of the artists and Taos personalities who made Taos their home. My family’s home was located on Kit Carson Road, then known as Raton Road (presently the Milagro Bed and Breakfast). Every once in a while I would see Leon Gaspard and his wife, Evelyn, go by on their way to town astride their two beautiful horses. I never paid much attention, except to note the colorful garb Mrs. Gaspard wore. I knew they lived in the large two-story pink house about two miles down the road.

When I was in the eight grade at Taos Elementary, one of my classmates was Aithra Locher, the daughter of another colorful artist, Gisella Loeffer, who had lived for a time in a little adobe next to the Kit Carson House, directly across the street from the curio shop of Ralph Meyers. Gisella had moved away for one reason or another, and had left Aithra with the Gaspards for that school year.

Aithra and I often walked home together. She asked me to help her learn Spanish. Her sister, Nadine, had married Ernest Gutierrez, the Taos Country Extension Agent, and Aithra wanted to be able to talk with him in Spanish. We spent a great deal of time giggling and I don’t know how much she learned or how much I was able to teach her, as I myself was not that proficient in Spanish at that time.

School was out in May and in June, Aithra was still at the Gaspard’s. One afternoon, much to my surprise, Mr. and Mrs. Gaspard stopped at our house, tethered their horses and asked to speak to my mother. They were going to go to Denver for an art show, they said, and were going to leave Aithra to feed the horses, sheep, rabbits, and chickens they raised on their property. They asked my mother if she would allow me to spend the week with Aithra so that she wouldn’t be alone. Much to my amazement, my mother agreed to let me go!

The Gaspards had a small, one-room adobe located behind the big house. There was a small wood cook stove, a little table and a couple of chairs. Aithra and I would fix our meals there. I don’t remember what we cooked, but obviously we survived the week all right. At night we slept in the big house in a small trundle-style bed that had been attached to the kitchen wall and was about four feet off the floor. We would use a small ladder to climb into it. The rest of the house was locked off. I was fascinated with the Russian-style kitchen. It was enormous, I thought. The stove was huge and the cabinets and other furniture were painted in bright colors.

I would help Aithra with her chores, feeding animals, cleaning out the rabbit hutches, etc. In the afternoons we would climb up on the roof over the kitchen of the big house and play cards. It was a most interesting week of my summer vacation.

Years later, when both the Gaspards had died and the house was opened as a gallery for a time, I asked my mother if she would like to go see the house. We wandered through the different rooms looking at the art and the beautiful Russian clothes that were hanging on the walls. I asked the owner, Dora Kaminsky, Gaspard’s second wife who married “Paco” Blackman after being widowed, for permission to go into the kitchen. I told her my story and she told me the bed was still there. It was there, just as I remembered and seeing it brought back a rush of memories for me of a fun week in the most fascinating of places.
BOOK REVIEWS

The Place Names of New Mexico
by Robert Julyan
University of New Mexico Press, 1996
$39.95 cloth
$19.95 paper

This fascinating book should be in everyone’s library. The perfect travel companion for those who delight in traveling the highways and byways of the Land of Enchantment. The author gives historical references to many place names and historical facts concerning the place named. A location is cited well. For example:

TAOS: (Taos Settlement, county seat on U.S. 64 and N.M. 68, at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. P.O. as Fernandez de Taos 1852-1885 - present) Town not settled in that location prior to 1700’s. By mid 1600’s a few Spanish colonists...settled not far from the pueblo...prominent settler Don Fernando de Chavez...Family slain during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680...When Cristobal de la Serna...petitioned for land grant in the area, he referred to Don Fernando...early community known as Don Fernando de Taos...etc.

A separate listing is made for Taos County, Taos Pueblo, Ranchos de Taos and Taos Cone, 12,227 ft. range east of Wheeler Peak...etc., etc., Perfect gift for newcomers to the area or to use as an argument setter. Be prepared to get your own copy at once, and don’t loan it to anyone.

- Fayne Lutz

A History of Having a Great Many Times Not Continued to be Friends:
The Correspondence between Mabel Dodge and Gertrude Stein, 1911-1934
edited by Patricia R. Everett
University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1996
Pp. 320, 46 halftones
$29.95 cloth

This lively correspondence had gathered dust in the Yale archives until Patricia Everett dusted them off and edited them, bringing them to the light of 1996. Everett is a clinical psychologist in Amherst, Mass., and Keene, N.H., who writes about the arts. Presented are 134 letters between Mabel Dodge Luhans and the Parisianne Stein. Both wrote of their literary salons and meetings with the beautiful people of their time. Nicely illustrated and annotated by the editor. This is a nice little volume for folks who like reading other people’s mail. Plentiful references to Taos. You’ll want to re-read Lois Rudnick’s volume, New Woman, New World, on Mabel to check your knowledge of her life. Fun to browse among the lionesses.

- Fayne Lutz

To the Royal Crown Restored:
The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1692-94
edited by John L. Kessell, Rick Hendricks and Meredith D. Dodge
University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1985
$32.50, cloth

Here is another gem, the third in the six volume series being prepared by the Vargas Project at the University of New Mexico. The series is based on the documentary record of Vargas’s administration as governor and captain general of New Mexico (1691-7 and 1703-1704) and the intervening record of don Pedro Rodriguez Cubero (1697-1703).

After the Spanish crown’s loss of the kingdom and provinces in 1680, there was a standoff until 1691 when don Diego de Vargas Zapata Lujan Ponce de Leon took over the colony of exiles at El Paso. The second volume of the series, By Force of Arms: The Journals of don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico 1691-93, covers his mostly ceremonial retaking of the New Mexico pueblos.

This volume covers the period beginning in late 1692 when don Diego returned to El Paso from his reconquest of New Mexico and began the process of organizing the reconolization. It ends with the royal banner flying over the pueblo which had been constructed over the ruins of the old governor’s palace at Santa Fe. The pueblo was sorely needed to provide food and shelter for the 70 families, the soldiers and their allies who had survived the long journey, the winter weather and the bloody battle to take it.

Carefully edited translations of the original documents bring this story to life. Detailed notes provide interesting particulars about many of the people mentioned, which is what this volume is principally about - the people who took part in the reconolization. Readers will recognize the name of many prominent New
Mexican families. Examples of what is included:

- The 1692 personal inspection and census of the 110 households in the El Paso settlements.
- Vargas’ letter to the king of Spain detailing his reconquest of New Mexico.
- Lists of colonists recruited from the Valley of Mexico.
- Lists of Mexican Indians living with the colonists in the El Paso settlements.
- Correspondence detailing Vargas’ attempts to obtain financial aid and supplies for the colonists.
- Accounts of the three-month struggle to reach Santa Fe with the 1000 colonists, soldiers and allies.

The editors chose to modernize the names of all Spanish persons and places, and the volume does not include the Spanish text of the documents. The Vargas Project does, however, have available on microfiche a transcription, alphabetical key-word and text reference list and summary vocabulary for those wishing to check the original sources without trying to read the old penmanship.

Altogether, this is a wonderful reference, and an interesting read.

- Andy Lindquist

Sabino’s Map, Life in Chimayo’s Old Plaza
By Don J. Usner
Museum of New Mexico Press, Santa Fe; 1995
Pp. 264, illus., notes, index
$29.95 hard cover

Usner has written a very interesting story of the old plaza in the area known as El Portero in Chimayo. Raised in the Chimayo valley and wandering the hills and arroyos as a young boy, the author’s family roots reach back to the early occupants of the Plaza del Cerro.

After living for several years in Los Alamos, he returned to the plaza, near his grandmother’s home. He spends hours interviewing “Los viejitos,” the residents of the old plaza. Usner recovers stories of life as it was in the beginning of this century. One by one they speak of their childhood memories and the placid, though sometimes extremely poor, existence of the people in the close-knit circle that comprised their world.

As modern influences came to the valley, people began to drift away, some to seek employment and a better life. Eventually, many of the home in the old plaza were abandoned and have since fallen into ruin. There is now renewed interest in the old historic plaza, said to be the most “intact defensive Spanish Colonial plazas in New Mexico.” The newly formed Chimayo Cultural Preservation Association is promoting restoration of the old buildings and recently completed renovation of the Oratorio that was central to the plaza’s activities.

The book contains many photographs of the people and the Chimayo valley, making it a delightful addition to anyone’s library, especially those of us who are addicted to Southwestern literature.

On a personal note, I had a special interest in this book because I, too, have roots in Chimayo. My grandfather, Jacinto Ortiz, the first postmaster of Chimayo, and my uncle Ursulo Ortiz, who owned a general store and was a wholesale dealer of the well-known Chimayo blankets, are briefly mentioned in the book.

- Sadie Ortiz Knight

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Melody:
I’ve been sitting on issue 20, Winter 1995 of Ayer y Hoy wondering whether I should write this or not. Obviously the decision is yes, since I’m doing it.

I am very disappointed in “The Legend Behind Taos Ski Valley.” I realize that it was written by a high school girl, but I also feel that Ayer should be as factual as possible and this article is not only not well written it is not factual. “Twining Valley” (which it is not) is not west of Arroyo Hondo. Ernie’s vision was not the Hondo Lodge, which was started by others, but a ski area for his family. And Valdez was not a “point start” (whatever that may be) for him. Bud Crary (note spelling of last name) did not bulldoze the “first roads that opened the entrance to the valley.” The Forest Service had done that years before, and before that locals going after fire wood. Jean Mayer us an innovator, but that is not why Ernie “hooked up with him” and he never was the manager of the ski school. The Poma Lift was actually the third lift at TSV. “Rubezabl” is spelled with an “h” not “b”. How did lodgers question Ernie’s mind? Or what does that even mean? “Innsbrook” is spelled “Innsbrook,” as in Innsbrook Lodge, etc., etc.

A good idea badly executed, I feel.

Best,
Chilton Anderson
MILESTONES

Mary Gutierrez Cabot, 1924 — 1996. Cabot was born in Dawson, grew up in Cimarron and moved to Taos as a young adult. She worked part time for Doughbelly Price and the Welfare Department of Social Services, but eventually became owner of El Crepusculo newspaper, while she was director of Taos Valley Boys Club, where she instituted what would be considered a mentorship program for boys. She and her sister, Carolyn Parr, also owned La Cocina on the Plaza, and what is now Cabot Plaza on Kit Carson Road.

Henry A. Sauerwein, 1918—1996. Long-time resident of Cañon, Sauerwein passed away March 15 at Plaza de Retiro, after a three-year battle with cancer. He was director of the Helene Wurlitzer Foundation since 1954 and lived in an adobe house in Cañon for most of his time in Taos. The house sustained much damage in a 1993 fire. Known for his sense of humor and grace. He did not have any close relatives, but was considered a friend and mentor for many.

Saki Karavas, 1922—1996. Proprietor of La Fonda Hotel on Taos Plaza, died April 16, 1995 at his home. Karavas was the son of James A. and Noula Karavas. Saki was raised in Taos and helped his father build La Fonda, completing it in 1937. After a tour of duty with the Marine Corps during World War II, Karavas returned to Taos and continued to manage the hotel until his death. Karavas was known for acts of generosity throughout his life.

SUMMER FIELD TRIPS SET FOR 1996

June 8 — Tour of E.J. Couse home and studio. Hosted by Ernie and Virginia Leavitt. Meet at the Town parking lot at Kit Carson and Quesnel streets at 10:00 a.m.

July 6 — Trip to Tierra Amarilla, Los Ojos area. We will have a tour of the Lodge at Chama and various historic sites. Robert Torrez, State Historian, will accompany us. Car pool departs the County Courthouse parking lot at 8:30 a.m.

August 3 — Trolley car tour of Taos sites. Guided by Corina Santisteven. There will be a charge for the trolley ride and reservation are required as seating is limited.

September 7 — Trip to Pecos, San Miguel del Vado, Ribera and Villanueva. Santa Fe Trail sites, Hispanic villages, ruins of Cicuye, largest New Mexico pueblo at the time of Coronado's visit, and more.

October 5 — Valle Vidal and Ring Ranch. We visited this area the year before last and those in attendance said we ought to visit every year to view the gorgeous aspen displays.

TAOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 2447
TAOS, NEW MEXICO 87571

TO: