



NEWSLETTER

September 2012

**DACHS Board Member
and Publicity Coordinator
Jim Eckles**



Jim Eckles grew up in Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska. He majored in psychology and English lit. A masters in literature followed at the University of Washington but he was saved from a life in academia when, in 1977, he was offered a job in the White Sands Public Affairs Office. He worked there until 2007 when he retired.

- During his time at the range —
- *he saw the Space Shuttle Columbia land,
- *he followed the Noss treasure hunters into Victorio Peak,
- *he escorted dozens of ranch families to visit their old homes,
- *he got to see lots of cool explosions and missile launches,
- *and he has probably been to Trinity Site more than any other human being.

He rides a bicycle, hikes and backpacks, plays golf, is on the White Sands Missile Range Historical Foundation board of directors and, if you'll fly him there, would love to take photos of Britain for you. His book on the history of White Sands Missile Range should be out next year. He and his wife Debbie live in Las Cruces. ■

**Our September Program
September 20, 2012**

Frank Parrish will be our speaker; he will update the status of the Billy the Kid collection that once was housed in George Griggs' Museum. Then he and Cal Traylor will tell about Cal's most recent acquisition of the hearse that carried Pat Garrett's body to his grave site.

Frank Parrish was born and raised in El Paso, Texas and the love of the desert came as early as his first memories. He grew up with an intense interest in the natural world and science in particular. He graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with degrees in zoology and geology.



Frank Parrish

He worked for Mobil Oil Company in Dallas and eventually gained work experience in the various aspects of the oil industry including exploration, research and production. After some years he returned to El Paso, obtained a teaching certificate and worked there as a teacher in the sciences for a number of years. While employed later with Texas Parks and Wildlife, he picked up a camera for the first time and began to do what he always wanted to do – “to pass on a moment, an experience, to those who love the natural world.”

See Frank on Page 2

Calendar

Thursday, September 20, 2012

Frank Parrish;

update the status of the Billy the Kid collection and Cal Traylor's most recent acquisition of the hearse that carried Pat Garrett's body to his grave site.

Thursday, October 18, 2012

Dan Aranda;

His topic will be "Death at Tres Castillos," the battle between Victorio's Apache Band and Mexican soldiers.

All meetings of the Society are normally at 7:00pm on the third Thursday of the months of Feb. - May and Sept - Nov. in the Good Samaritan Auditorium at 3011 Buena Vida Circle.

Frank continued from Page 1

He has experience as a writer in the field of science and as a writer of articles generally having to do with the natural world. Frank is also author of a popular children's book which he photo-illustrated, titled "Pancho and the Power", the story of a young boy, an old rancher and a coyote which takes place in the Mesilla Valley.

Frank is probably best known for his photographs, from the beautiful Organ Mountains, to the birds, mammals, reptiles and plants of the region. Frank's work can be seen and purchased through his website or at the Downtown Farmers and Crafts Market on Saturdays. Frank lives in Las Cruces with his wife, Priscilla, and their cats. ■

Sage Brush & Sand Dunes

An Anthology of Southern New Mexico History

The Doña Ana County Historical Society has completed publication of its first Anthology entitled "Sage Brush & Sand Dunes; An Anthology of Southern New Mexico History." It will be available to Society members at a special price of \$10.00 and to the general public for \$15.00 through Amazon. Included in the Anthology are a collection of articles published in the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* that are especially interesting. This publication was done as part of the Centennial Celebration Project. More information will be available in the next Newsletter. ■

RODEY PICNIC

June 24, 2012

A good time was had by all, including a tour of the old adobe church and the Chavez residence, formerly the church rectory. Mary Lou Chavez, our hostess, guided the tour and talked about the restoration work. It was a beautiful day, the food was delicious and the company was special.



Our Hostess, Mary Lou Chavez for the June 24th Picnic in Rodey
Photo by Bob Gamboa



Left to right - Chuck & Zita Murrell, Sara Wagner, and Marcie Palmer at the June Picnic in Rodey.

Photo by Bob Gamboa

More photos on page 7

Book Review by: George Hackler

Editor's Note: Parts of this book review were published in serial form in past Newsletters. The society Leadership decided it would be best to publish the complete review to preserve continuity.

On April 21st of 2011 Dorthy Cave, author of "God's Warrior" the biography of Father Albert Braun, Order of Franciscan Monks (OFM), talked about Father Braun at our regular membership meeting.

This review is for the many of our membership who were not able to hear her talk or have not had a chance to read her book. The world needs more people like Father Braun, although a member of a Roman Catholic brotherhood, his embrace included the whole world he encountered during his 93 years of service to human kind. In our limited space we can only summarize the almost 600 pages it took Dorthy Cave to tell his story.

At the youthful age of 13, young impetuous Bud Braun, on a lark and dare from friend Willie went to Santa Barbara, California with Willie to enroll in Saint Anthony's seminary high school.

His first assignment upon completing his training was as missionary priest to the Mescalero Indian Reservation. His first objective was to travel the entire reservation, which he did, by mule, donkey, horse, and shanks mare, sleeping on the ground with the Indians.

When the United States joined in the first World War in Europe, Father Braun enlisted in the Army as a Chaplain. He soon was in the mist of the battle of the Argonne Forrest, the largest American action of the war and the deadliest. It was here that Father Braun, unarmed, participated in a charge against a heavily defended German position, was shot, wounded by a piece of shrapnel that tore through his jaw and was gassed to the point of searing his lungs. And these are only the things we know about from others because he would never talk about himself. His only concern was caring for the dead and dying around him.

After the armistice Father Braun stayed in the border area between Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany at the church's request to help rebuild the decimated congregations. While there he studied church architecture. It was here that he developed the idea for the mission church at Mescalero.

Nine months after the Armistice was signed, the army of occupation was sent home. The padre returned to Mescalero with a Purple Heart, a Silver Star, a rec-

ommendation for a Distinguished Service Cross and a dream. He immediately set about to arm twist an architect in New York to draw the plans for his dream of a church for his parish. Over time these plans would become Saint Joesph's Mission Church in Mescalero.

The years that followed his return were filled with his building project and ministry to his Mescalero Reservation growing congregation. The padre had too much adventure and mischief in him to let well enough alone. The years that followed the Mexican Revolution saw laws passed that first stripped the Church of all property except the church buildings themselves, this was followed by more laws that severely limited the activities of the church and finally, under the Calles government the Church was forbidden from holding any services at all. Priests that disobeyed were arrested and many were taken before firing squads and executed. Father Braun made a number of clandestine and dangerous trips into the interior of Mexico to aid and rescue Franciscan brethren who were being hunted down jailed or executed. If captured he would have been shot also.

During the great depression the government established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to create jobs for young men and at the same time build infrastructure across the west. Many of these camps sprang up across new Mexico. Father Braun volunteered, calling on his military status and experience, to serve as a Chaplain to these young men. All his pay in WWI and from this service would go to building the church and helping the people on the Reservation. It was during these years he would meet and form lasting friendships with the young men destined to form the bulk of the New Mexico National Guard.

In 1940 the dogs of war were again unleashed. Before the year was out Father Albert Braun received orders to report for active duty. Padre was also ordered to assemble a contingent of six catholic priests to go to the Philippines. All though not required, he included himself in the six and by the 25th of April, 1941 all were on their way. Several months after arriving, the first of two New Mexico battalions began to arrive. Father Albert knew many of these boys from his CCC days.

It was Sunday the 7th of December, and the chaplains were preparing for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a day of obligation and a Philippine national holiday on Monday. It was 0230 hours in Manila when the naval operators intercepted the message "AIR RAID PEARL HARBOR, THIS IS NO DRILL." By 12:35pm the next day bombs began to fall, obliterating Clark's Field as well as the neat lines of B17s and P40s awaiting orders. Amphibious troop landings soon followed. The bombardment of Corregidor started on the 29th.

Its impossible to convey the utter devastation wrought by the incessant bombing, shelling and strafing of the small island fortress of Corregidor. What must be told is that Father Albert was smack dab in the middle of the whole wreck cutting off the leg of a dead soldier to free a wounded artilleryman pinned under the concrete rubble. He raced back and forth dodging falling bombs and flying bullets, using his enormous strength to move the wounded and dying to the shelter of the concrete tunnel.

Father made many a dangerous boat trips across the narrow inlet to Bataan to support and encourage the New Mexico boys fighting there only to have to watch the fall of Bataan from Corregidor. The bombardment of the tiny island fortress increased and became more focused as the Japanese occupied the land surrounding the entrance to Manila Bay. As the Japanese began landing assault troops on the tiny island, Father Braun never stopped lifting and removing the wounded from the operating tables in the tunnel. He was the only one who could do this by himself.

The few remaining defenders including Father Braun had to surrender, only to move from one hell to another, brutal years of imprisonment. At first the Japanese pressed the captives into work crews to clean up the island and salvage what they could. Theses were to be the good times because the prisoners were given a small portion of food and freedom to keep their work production up. This would change. After three weeks of work duty the captives were herded onto ferries and moved to Manila. The chaplains remained on Corregidor with the sick and wounded until they were moved to Cabanatuan prison camp 90 miles north of Manila. This was the objective of the horrific Bataan Death March.

Cabanatuan was soon gutted with nine thousand men, racked with contagion spread by overflowing latrines, million of flies, malnutrition and brutality from harsh rules imposed by a sadistic camp commander. One such rule barred all religious activity. Father Al, in blatant defiance, would lead a rosary behind a chicken coop, say mass in a latrine or in a wooded copse while on work detail. Such furtive operations were difficult and risky. When caught he took the beating, shrugged his broad shoulders and resumed his clandestine rites.

It is late May, 1942, Father Al was in the Japanese concentration camp, Cabanatuan, northern Luzon, Philippines. Dysentery, Malaria, and Yellow Jaundice were rampant throughout the camp. Father Al was forbidden to go near the cemetery, where burial details moved in an endless parade carrying dead comrades only to lose their identity in a mass grave. In time an elaborate underground system evolved wherein agents on both sides of the fence smuggled food, medicine, other supplies into

the camp. Before long diphtheria struck. Within days it was epidemic. Then father Al was himself stricken. Father Al maintained clandestine contact with priests outside of the camp. They would smuggle medicine into him which he distributed to the most ill. If the Japs had found out they would have shot him

The POWs were organized into work details to clear and develop a 3000 acre produce farm. They were told the produce would go to feed them. In reality they only got what they could steal. Father Al became the best smuggler of all, he soon earned the nick name "Al Capone." He had Chinese coolie style hats made with tall crowns for his crew and would distract the guards when they returned to camp. He constantly covered for men who could not produce their quota or were caught smuggling and took many a beating for them.

In October the whole camp was marched to the sea side, boarded ships and moved south to the island of Mindanao. By November they arrived at the Davao Penal Colony. At first things were better because the camp commander had ask for workers and what he got was sick skeletons. Rations were increased, Red Cross packages were distributed, and priests were allowed to hold services. DAPECOL as it was called, was a work camp. Most of the convicts were moved to other camps and the POWs were used to work nearby rice paddies, chop wood, dig ditches, or repair roads. The smuggling game resumed, but here the guards were more diligent and it was nigh impossible to smuggle anything passed them wearing only a loin cloth, sandals and a coolie hat.. Father Albert bribed the Sargent of guards to allow his crew to search the the groves for coconuts by promising that if any one tried to escape, the Sargent could cut off his head. Father Al did confess that he did enjoy stealing. He located the guards cache of wine and stole some for celebrating mass. He really did have the reputation of being the most successful thief in camp.

Ten POWs from another work crew did kill a guard and successfully escape. Recrimination was hard and swift. Rations were cut, work details were canceled, services were no longer allowed, and red cross packages no longer arrived. Other escapes brought on even harsher recriminations. Opportunities to smuggle supplemental food and medicine were stopped. About this time malnutrition brought on a vicious attack of beriberi and sent Father Al to the hospital. Beriberi, caused by vitamin deficiency, damages the nerves to the legs, causes sever pain, and swelling of legs and feet.

Months became another year. Rations continued to decline. The POWs noticed that the Japanese were claiming victories in battles that were occurring closer and closer to the Philippines With each victory rations

were cut. Work details were restarted after Christmas in 1943, but now they were clearing banana trees to create clear fields of fire, building trenches, fox holes and revetments. Bits and pieces of news reinforced the sense that the Allies were getting closer to the Philippines. Every one was aware that Japanese orders were clear, "no POWs were to be recovered under any circumstance." Early in June 1944 the first contingent of prisoners were herded on ships starting an evacuation to the north. To prevent any POWs from being retaken, the Japanese launched massive evacuations to Manchuria and Japan. After a brief stop over at old camp Cabanatuan the voyage to Japan continued. The hell endured aboard the ships is beyond belief. Our story records that Father Al survived and helped many others endure and survive just as he had done in the camps.

They docked on the 5th of September, 1944 and were interned on a dredged up island in Tokyo Bay at Camp Omori. Discipline was ironclad, punishment swift and merciless, inflicted for any reason or no reason at all. To all this there was added a new element of cruelty, the frigid cold in unheated buildings. The sadistic Sargent of the guard enforced a ridge rule that all prisoners passing in front of his office must stop and salute. One day Father Albert, hurrying by, failed to do so. The Padre later recalled the bitterest night of his life. He was forced the stand at attention in the parade yard, bare foot, clad only in a g string and sleeveless shirt with a cold wind blowing. After three hours the Sargent appeared with a steel tipped bamboo pole. The sadistic guard strutted back and forth practicing thrusts with his spear. He turned and made running lunge at padre's throat. Father turned his head aside and the guard went sprawling and sputtering. Before he could recover the air raid siren sounded. The guard was replaced by a more considerate man, probably saving Father's life.

Air raids became more and more frequent and devastating as incendiary bombs were used. Young Japanese soldiers were dispersed among the prisoners throughout the camp. The POWs learned that if Japan was invaded the gates were to be opened and as prisoners left they were to be shot. August came, the guards seemed jittery, something large and significant had happened. The prisoners were all gathered together to hear a broadcast they could not understand. It was the emperor announcing the surrender. The POWs were ordered to stay in their camps until they could be evacuated. Supplies were air dropped in the meantime.

On the 29th of August 1945, he started the voyage home to USA. He soon learned that fewer than half of the soldiers taken prisoner in the Philippines survived. Less than a month later Father Albert would land in San

Francisco. He checked himself out of the hospital for a quick trip to Los Angeles to see his Family. He took advantage of the leave to cross the nation to plead with the Church leaders to launch a concerted effort to rescue the priests in the Philippines. Most of the friars there are living in the centuries past, today the Order is like an old man quietly dying. He convinced William Beaumont Hospital in El Paso to take charge of his case. (He had no intention of spending his freedom in a hospital)

He was soon on his way to his other family, his Mescalero family. He arrived on the 11th of November, just in time to celebrate mass the next day. The following Sunday, Father Albert officiated a Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving for those that came through the war alive. Of seventy five Apaches that served their country, seventy four survived. Only one had not returned, Bernard Dolan. Going through his desk, he discovered that mice had destroyed all the plans for completing the church, the additions, drainage, financial records, church registers, legal documents and the architectural perspectives for the completed church were shreds. Four years of holding his temper for fear of risk to his comrades rose to the surface. The lid blow off when he learned that police had been summoned to shoot pigeons out of the rafters, ruining some 40 roof tiles resulting in about 300 dollars damage. They still tell about the time the Father erupted.

Father's eruption did not last long, it wasted time. Father Albert, ever the pragmatist, waved it all aside and looked ahead. The work on the church was restarted, visitations to every corner of the reservation were made, old friendships renewed. Tribal marriages were re-performed under the blessing of the church, along with new marriages, baptisms were caught up. All this healed his soul but not his legs.

He could not put off the Army for ever, he was called to Beaumont Hospital off and on for the many tests required on POWs. Between tests he went to Las Cruces to visit an old friend, Father Kirgan. Mexican Brothers were using the old Loretta Academy facilities. Father Kirgan was helping the Franciscans, giving them work to earn money to ease their drain on the Bishop's purse. The new year saw Father Al still under the supervision of Beaumont. The staff pointed out that as long as he was theirs he would continue to draw his army pay. No small bribe because father used his pay for all his projects and none for his own benefit. His left leg was bothering him. He could not stand through the second mass. He could get a pension, he said "I don't think it a good thing for us Friars to get too interested in pensions." He was finally released from the Army in August 1946.

The pain and weakness in his legs caused father and

his superiors to reach the realization that he could not remain in Mescalero.

One option remained, by extending his military active duty he could receive medical attention while serving as a Chaplain. Ordered to report for duty July 31st at Brooke General Hospital, Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. A somber mood and depression begin to invade his normal optimistic outlook. His boss took notice and sent him to Hawaii. Rest and light duty work refreshed him enough to awake his old nemesis, intolerance for idleness in himself or others.. A special temporary assignment came up on a lonely atoll, Eniwetok just what he needed. Father Al set up a chapel and served as a Chaplain/Hriest to the large force of military, civilian and scientists. There was tension caused by conflict with USSR over the occupation of Europe. Tension at the test site because of the awful destructive power that was being prepared for release. There was much for a priest to do. He would witness an Atomic bomb explosion. He was retired from active duty, 5 October 1949, 14 years of active duty, 17 years inactive duty

“ I had suffered enough heat , sickness and death as a prisoner in the Philippines. So where did they send me? To a hospital in Phoenix.” Father Albert was assigned to Saint Mary’s Parish. Saint Joesph’s Hospital was founded by The Sisters of Mercy who depended on the Parish to supply chaplains for the hospital. The hospital duty was intended to be light duty for Father Al. However he never did any thing “light.” Soon his legs became so painful he requested an Army medical evaluation. The Army decided that he needed surgery to cut certain nerves to control the pain in his legs. After the surgery he returned to a Phoenix that was growing rapidly in the post war world. Saint Mary’s Parish was growing even wore rapidly than Phoenix.

The Bracero program had brought in migrant workers from Mexico to work the fields while Americans were away fighting the war. After the war these people stayed and were living in hovels, without medical services, poor food, no clothing. They had no sewage, gas, electricity or running water. Many of the children had never been baptized, and were growing up with out any instruction. At first Father Al was isolated from this by his duties at Saint Mary’s. However as other priest from out side the Phoenix area became aware of the plight of these people they started a ministry program. One of these priest was an old friend of Father Albert from his days at Mescalero, Father “Phil” Baldonado.

Al Braun was a shepherd without a flock, a soldier

without an army, a missionary with out a mission. Father Phil had followed his old mentor’s career and knew about his restlessness. He had the perfect job for him. From the first day they loved this down-to-earth priest. He didn’t go around blessing people. He gave hearty hugs (abrasos), and firm hand shakes. He was not a holy holy. Full of life, he loved working with people. Using Dorthy Cave’s words “He did not worry much about the rules and regulations, the Japanese or the Vaticans. He took his orders from God.”

Father Albert, a living legend at 63, who had been on light duty to protect his fragile legs, set a demanding pace, that kept every one around him panting to to keep up. He fought to get the city council to extend services into the barrios without much success until one councilor called him aside after a meeting and ask Father Al for more information. That councilor was Barry Goldwater and they soon became fast friends and improvements started happening in the barrios. Before too long Father Albert Braun was planning a large church, school, and convent for what was being called the 8000 member Saint Mark’s Parish. He would build the complex at Saint Mark’s much as he had Saint Joseph,s in Mescalero. Brick by brick by brick utilizing the many talented craftsmen and tradesmen in the congregation. He gained support from higher by pointing out that in addition to the 8000 Catholics they had 13 thousand Okies, Arkies, and Negroes for whom we must give an account to God.

The Padres legs grow steadily worse. His superiors knew Al needed to slow down. For awhile they assigned him to teach young candidates about the realities of priesthood and then gave him temporary fill-in duties all around southern Arizona. As the years passed the gross insult to his body suffered at the hands of the Japanese, made the pain not only in his legs worse but general arthritis set in. Eventually he was confined to the Sacred Heart nursing home in Phoenix. He would say mass for the nuns every day from a wheel chair. By his 84th birthday In 1974 Father Al could hardly walk and bladder cancer was making life even more complicated. Through all this, his disdain for idleness remained and he continued to conduct services where ever needed and taught classes and ministered to the people of south Phoenix. His last years were spent in the nursing home in Phoenix. These years might be called his quite ministry period, however his attitude was always the same. He cared for those around him whether in a hail of bullets or a hail of pain. Father Albert Braun died on the 6th March 1983, at age 93. He was buried in the Church he built in Mescalero. ■

PEOPLE AWARDS

If you know someone who might fit into one of the following award categories, please let me know-- Susan Krueger 525-0654—and I will take your suggestion to the Board for review.

Hall of Fame Award: This award is designed to recognize an individual, living or deceased, who is known for a substantial and enduring contribution(s) to the preservation of the history and culture of the Mesilla Valley.

The Heritage Award: This award is given to a person whose actions or deeds have contributed to the historical or cultural heritage of Dona Ana County and who is not a vocational or professional historian.

The Pasajero del Camino Real Award: This award is given to the author or authors of a significant historical publication about events, persons, places or issues in Dona Ana County.

The Gemoets Prize: This award recognizes an individual who either made a contribution to the development and continuance of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review or who wrote the outstanding article in the current issue of the Review as determined by the Editor.

The Katherine B. Stoes Prize: This award recognizes outstanding writing and historical editing in the current issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review.

The Hiram Hadley Prize: This award recognizes the best article on pioneer history in the current issue of the Southern New Mexico Historical Review. ■



Cal Traylor standing by the sign outside the old Church in Rodey

Photo by Bob Gamboa



Society Members enjoying good company and some snacks at the 24 June picnic

Photo by Bob Gamboa

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Doña Ana County Historical Society, P. O. Box 16045, Las Cruces, NM 88004-6045

DACHS Membership Form

Please renew/enroll my/our membership in the Doña Ana County Historical Society. Memberships are active for the calendar year of enrollment and fees are deductible within legal limits for Federal and State income tax purposes. If you are unsure of your status or have questions regarding membership, please contact the Treasurer, Xandy Church, at 575-526-9774 (May-Sept. 575-536-9728) or the President, Marcie Palmer, at 575-496-4736.

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Eric Liefeld (right) and Greg Smith speaking at our May meeting

MESILLA VALLEY PRESERVATION INC.

Our last program before we broke for the summer, was in May and the presenters were Eric Liefeld, President of Mesilla Valley Preservation Inc., (MVP), and Greg Smith, Vice President and currently a Las Cruces City Councilor. MVP is dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy of the Mesilla Valley in Southern NM and its mission is preservation, education and outreach. The MVP's successful efforts include the Rio Grande Theater, the Nestor Armijo House and the Seed House; among their losses is the "Pink House," once located on University Ave. and now gone.

As part of their advocacy work, they are actively seeking other preservation organizations with whom to collaborate. Suggested collabo-

ration activities include to identify structures that are good candidates for preservation, to update the City's historic building inventory, and to improve appreciation for history and historic architecture.

Our mission is to encourage a greater appreciation and knowledge of Doña Ana County's historical and cultural heritage by emphasizing research, education and preservation. The two mission statements complement each other as does some of our work. For example, the DACHS's "Endangered Historic Property" award is intended to identify candidates for preservation. Perhaps a place to begin is to email our monthly program to the MVP board members and to invite them to our Board meetings. Tell me what you think about potential collaboration activities: Susan Krueger 525-0654. ■

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