



# NEWSLETTER

May 2014

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Susan Krueger

Richard Sims, Director of the Historic Sites Division of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, presented at the DACHS's April 17th, membership meeting. He gave an update with photographs on each of the State's seven sites, noting that Fort Selden, located thirteen miles north of Las Cruces at Radium Springs, is the most endangered of the sites. At the end of his talk, Mr. Sims asked if we had any ideas on what might be done to preserve the Fort Selden ruins. This preservation task was one of the specific goals of the Historical Society when it was formed in 1963 and several, present Society members have expressed interest in revisiting this goal. Ideas that have been shared around include a field trip to Fort Selden to visit with Nathan Stone, site Manager, and to assess with him what needs the Society could address.

The Society's Board held its monthly meeting on April 11th at 10:00 a.m. at the Branigan Cultural Center. We discussed the definitions of three award categories: Hall of Fame, Heritage and Old Timer's awards, and possible candidates. The awards are given at the DACHS's annual banquet, which is held as a luncheon on the last Saturday of January of each year. Mark your calendars, the next banquet date and place is January 31, 2015, noon, at the Double Eagle on the Mesilla Plaza. We also began updating the Society's Handbook, which, when finished will be available to anyone who would like a copy.

The May membership meeting will be our last get together before the summer break; and, we saved one of our very best till last: Buddy Ritter will entertain the group with surprises from his book, "Mesilla Comes Alive: A History of Mesilla and its Valley."

We will begin meeting again on Thursday, September 18, 2014, same place and time: Good Samaritan Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. Watch for the September newsletter with a fall schedule of meeting dates and speakers. ■

## May Membership Meeting by Susan Krueger

We are scheduled to meet on Thursday, May 15, at 7 p.m., in the Good Samaritan Auditorium, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. Doña Ana County Historical Society Board member C.W. "Buddy" Ritter will be our speaker for the May meeting. We



C. W. "Buddy" Ritter  
Photo courtesy of C. W. "Buddy" Ritter

join together at our monthly meetings to catch up with friends and to learn new ideas about history and its making or to expand and enhance old ones. However, come prepared on the 15th to replace several long held beliefs. The new material will come from the extensive research Buddy has collected for his soon to be published book "Mesilla Comes Alive: A History of Mesilla and its Valley." He will share with us information that will both contradict common knowledge and could be controversial. Craig Holden, a novelist who is cur-

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## Buddy from on Page 1

rently a professor in the NMSU English Department, contributed to the book's research and will join Buddy to answer questions following the presentation. ■

### Buddy's Abbreviated Biography

Buddy is a fifth generation native of Mesilla and Las Cruces. His Grandmother's grandfather was one of the first Surgeons in Mesilla, arriving soon after the Civil War.

Buddy attended High School at New Mexico Military Institute and majored in Banking and Finance at Tulane University in New Orleans. He received his BA from New Mexico State University and entered Michigan State's graduate program becoming the first Certified Hotel Administrator in New Mexico. Buddy served with the U. S. Army Military Intelligence Group at Ft Meade, Maryland.

He has been in the hotel and restaurant business for 53 years, owning four hotels, eleven restaurants and two breweries in New Mexico and Arizona.

In 1984 and 2010 he was named Citizen of the Year of Las Cruces in recognition and appreciation for outstanding service to the community. He was inducted into the New Mexico Tourism Hall of Fame in 2003 and was selected as New Mexico's 2012 Restaurateur of the Year.

His office is located in the 164 year old historic Double Eagle and Peppers on the Mesilla Plaza, which was his grandmother's, grandfather's Doctors office. Buddy married Margaret Bonnell, a fourth generation New Mexican, who attended the University of New Mexico and received her BA from New Mexico State University. They have three children; John, Elizabeth and Win. ■

## Southern New Mexico Historical Review

If you have not received your copy of the 2014 Historical Review, please contact Susan Krueger at 575-525-0654 or e-mail at [skrueger575@msn.com](mailto:skrueger575@msn.com). You may also access the 2014 Historical Review at the society's web website at URL <http://www.donaanacountyhistsoc.org/>. Scroll down to the "Special Publications" where you will see links to editions from 1994 thru 1999 and 2007 through 2014. Some of these may not work with all Browsers that have not implemented the full link capability of Adobe's "pdf" documents. More recent versions of Microsoft Internet Explorer work well. ■

## Tour of historic Radium Springs Inn

By Mary Kay Shannon

The Radium Springs Inn was originally built in 1928-31 by the Santa Fe Railroad, some say as a Harvey House. Radium Springs Inn boasts over 9,000 square feet of facilities. At one time it had 15 guest rooms but several have been combined to form a couple of lavish suites. It includes 4,500-square-foot bathhouse, which contains five of the original soaking tubs where guests could enjoy the naturally 112-degree water from a well. Atop a hill sits a meditation gazebo, built in the 1920s, set back in the rock formations, offering resplendent views of the surrounding desert and the Rio Grande.

The springs here have an interesting and varied history, and are supposed to be the strongest radium springs in the world. American Indian tribes are said to have made pilgrimages to the spot.

In 1912, the Fort Selden Hot Springs Resort, National Spa and Improvement Co. was formed to develop the springs. Cabins were added, a road was built and in 1928, once access was guaranteed, the construction of the first hotel began. Along with that, the town's name changed from Selden Springs to Radium Springs, and a post office was opened. The little postal facility was located just off the lobby of the hotel.

There have been several different owners over the years including Thomas Fortune Ryan III, a former co-owner of Lockheed Aircraft Co. and founder of Mid-Continent Airlines. In 1979, the facility was leased to the New Mexico Criminal Justice Department for use as a minimum-security women's prison. The agreement lasted for four years, and was not renewed by the state when it came due in 1983.

The once-booming resort sank to its lowest ebb until its purchase by Jeff Goacher and David Steen in 1995. When they arrived the roof was caved in, cows roamed through the building, and the complex was in a nearly complete state of ruin from weather, vandalism and lack of maintenance. The partners spent over 12 years renovating and working with officials for a business license. After Steen died in July 2007, work eventually stopped and once again the Inn was all but abandoned.

The current owner Paz Dhody, of Austin Texas, has stated that he feels like he is a steward of the property and that its history and preservation is important for future generations. In a welcoming letter Dhody states "we are unsure about our plans for the future of the property. Certainly we intend to focus on health and healing, relaxation and rejuvenation and offer all sorts of health and healing practices."

General Manager, James "Scott" Boyd, met our group at the entrance to the Inn. Scott provided a guid-

**Tour From Page 2**



Scott Boyd  
Photo courtesy of  
Mary Kay Shannon

ed tour of the renovations in progress. A lot of work has been done, a lot more still remains. Boyd has deep roots to the area; his great grandfather was Dr. Nathan Boyd, dam builder, real estate investor/developer and owner of Dripping Springs Resort and Sanitorium.



Most of our group having our picnic lunch in the courtyard west of the main dining room. Photo courtesy of Mary Kay Shannon

(special thanks not just to Scott but to Bob Gamboa for making the suggestion and providing the connections for the tour)



View from the Gazebo looking north. Note the Rio Grande is still dry, water not yet released from Elephant Butte. Photo courtesy of Mary Kay Shannon.

View from the Gazebo looking south. The Inn is on the left and the bath house in the right foreground by the courtyard. Photo courtesy of Mary Kay Shannon.



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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, Rebecca Slaughter at 575-523-1845 (during business hours) or the President, Susan Krueger at 575-525-0654.

**Annual Membership/Sponsorship Rates**

Individual \$20  Family \$25  Student \$8  Contributor \$40  Benefactor \$150  Life \$300   
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How would you like to receive your copy of the *Southern New Mexico Historical Review* (SNMHR)?  
 Printed Version  Society Website Version  PDF on CD Version





Richard Sims (right) talking with two audience members after his presentation at the April 17 membership meeting.

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