

# Cenizo Journal Contributors

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**Cole Altom.** Writer. Editor. Canine Enthusiast. The mammal, not the tooth. Wood respecter. Native West Texan. One-time Trinitonian. Current Marathonian. Mostly wrong. Never in doubt. Passably literate. Send pitches to [editor@cenizojournal.com](mailto:editor@cenizojournal.com)

**Billie Farrington Birnie** Billie Birnie has been writing most of her life, starting with bad poems about her good teachers in elementary school (in Balmorhea, Texas), continuing as editor of her college newspaper (in Alpine, Texas) and society editor of the Pecos Enterprise, improving during a long career in education (in Austin, Texas, and Miami, Florida), and now free-lancing in retirement (in Alpine and San Angelo, Texas). Her published writing ranges from memoir and poetry to articles and books on teaching and learning.

**Rod D'Amico** is a freelance writer and podcast producer living in Shafter who serves on the board for the Friends of the Ruidosa church. Recently, he has contributed to Texas Monthly, the Texas Observer and the Big Bend Sentinel. *Email: damicoustin@gmail.com*

**Judy Eron** splits her time between the ocean in Washington state and the remote mountain desert outside Big Bend National Park in Texas, where she and her partner Charlie enjoy off-the-grid living in a house she helped to build. Summers, Judy is rhythm guitarist and songwriter for country band Double J and the Boys. She is the author of *What Goes Up: Surviving the Manic Episode of a Loved One*. *Email: judyeron@yahoo.com*

**Jeremy Gonzalez** is a former managing editor and staff reporter for The Fort Stockton Pioneer. He currently works full time for Digital Carpenters, a bitcoin mining facility in Fort Stockton, and dabbles in freelance journalism to scratch his creative itch. *Email: tigerwithcoffee@gmail.com*

**Will Hawkins** is a proud Texan who graduated from Southwest Texas State University and now leads a family-owned oilfield service company. A family trip to Big Bend several years ago fostered a deep appreciation for the rugged beauty of West Texas. Will takes pride in being a dedicated father, self-taught artist and friend to some remarkably funny people.

**Shannon King** is a native Texan, writer and equestrian who, in 2014, discovered our beautiful Chihuahuan Desert and knew immediately this is where she was meant to be. She is now proud to call the Big Bend region home. A horse lover, Shannon has slowly built a following by riding and camping the southwest, while telling her stories as a woman traveling alone. Her articles have been published in *Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine*, *Horse Trails of America*, *Where the Trails Are*, and many other online equestrian resources. Read more of Shannon's work on Facebook or Instagram under the handle Confessions of a Saddle Tramp, or at [www.confessionsofasaddletramp.com](http://www.confessionsofasaddletramp.com).

**Mary Beth Schaefer** is a technical writer and editor for a health care consulting company. Before that, she was an editor and researcher for the Texas legislature. She lives in Marathon, Texas, with her husband and four dogs, and has been on the Marathon Public Library Board of Directors since spring 2023.



## ON THE COVER:

**Refresh** by Vicki LeBlanc

*I'm a 5th generation Texan, I have been involved with horses most of my life as an owner, competitor and breeder. In 2009, I turned my passion of photography into a business where most of my clients were of the equine sort. In the early 80's I traveled extensively to Europe and Southern Africa. My photography was developing and I was learning to truly see with my eyes. Learning how to capture the beauty, took time. The folks at Nikon have helped me achieve the ability to photograph beautiful moments such as "Refresh" as seen on the cover. Photo captured with a Nikon Z9, lens Nikon 70-200mm v2 with adapter.*

*Since 2011, I travel to Alpine and Fort Davis twice a year for my workshop, Shooting West Texas. I spend a lot of time at the Kokernot o6 Ranch capturing its beauty with the different seasons. I never tire of traveling through this ranch land photographing its different landscapes, wildlife, ranching and the people. I love capturing western heritage to preserve a piece of the Texas history. My home is in Hempstead, Texas but this part of Texas feels like my 2nd home now.*

*Thank you City of Alpine Photo Contest for showcasing my photographs and many other amazing photographers works. Thank you Cenizo Journal for featuring "Refresh" and the dog is a poodle cross which happens to be an amazing cow dog owned by Brent Charlesworth.*

*My photography artwork prints are available online along with an upcoming Far West Texas Heritage book.*

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### SUBMISSION

We'd like to feature your work in the *Cenizo Journal*.  
Contact Cole Altom at [editor@cenizojournal.com](mailto:editor@cenizojournal.com)  
for submission information.

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## CatchLight Art Gallery

### Holiday Show

SHOW ends on Jan. 8, 2024

### "Art in the Southwest"

January 10 - February 26, 2024

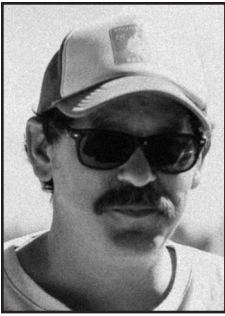
Group show by CatchLight Artists

### New Work by CAROL H. FAIRLIE

FEBRUARY 28 - APRIL 15, 2024

Check our website for show and reception updates!

117 W. Holland Ave, Alpine 432-837-9422 [www.catchlightartgallery.com](http://www.catchlightartgallery.com)



# Cenizo Notes

by Cole Altom, Editor

A new year is a upon us, which for some signifies a blank slate, a chance to commit to a resolution that, let's face it, will have probably died on the vine come springtime. For others, January 1 is a day like any other, one possibly spent hungover, marking little more than the moment at which they must remember new dates when they write checks for the next 12 months. Either way, the new is always a welcome guest.

But a recent experience reminded me of the steady comfort of the old. As I write this, my wife and I just returned from a long overdue trip – a honeymoon, I suppose, though it wasn't originally billed as such. We elected to go to Puerto Rico, a decision informed in equal parts by a sincere curiosity of this not-quite-a-state and my forgetting to renew a passport. In a word, it was delightful. We stayed in Old San Juan, the architecture of which is nothing short of otherworldly, its cobblestone streets a thing out of time. We hiked tropical rainforests and relaxed on hidden beaches. We took in indigenous art and walked colonial

battlements. Nearly everything we ate and drank was delicious, and the little that wasn't we consumed in large enough quantities to achieve the desired result. I have nothing but good things to say about that island and the people who live there.

When the time came, however, I was ready – even eager – to leave. For me, a good vacation is like a good story: It needs to end – and end well – because dragging it out cheapens the experience.

Travel is essential, of course, and anyone with the means to do it should. It's a fundamentally enriching experience in which we absorb, without even trying, the customs and traditions of the other people we share this dumb world with. What we tend to forget is that traveling similarly makes us learn more about where we're from. We don't so much remember the eccentricities or familiarities of our homes as pick up on the things that were always there but that we never really articulated to ourselves. Maybe it's the pleasance of the climate, the expectation of the routine, the reassurance of the mundane, the simple fitment of its constituent parts, the importance of place. Who knows. I reckon it's different for everyone. But if you like where you're from, you come to miss it.

And just like that, I realized, for the first time, I missed Marathon.

So as 2023 turns to 2024, feel free to celebrate the new. But let's give a little love to the old while we're at it.

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*Dedicated to chronicling the history and people of Far West Texas through the work of writers, artists, poets and photographers*