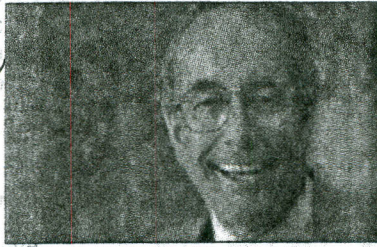


LARRY
CALLOWAY



Of the Journal

This photo
is in color
in original

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2nd Saguaro Sprouts Here

Oh, the cruel ironies of trying-to-make-a-difference-one-saguaro-at-a-time journalism.

Friends of rancher Ralph Wood sent him copies of this courageous column's reports about the giant yellow alien saguaro cactus on his spread four miles west of Gladstone.

See, it is part of our mission to explore new worlds, to go where no journalistic humanoid person has gone before and to identify invading Arizona life forms.

So what did Wood do? He took the publicity as artistic encouragement. He went and planted another steel *saguaro*, bigger than the other one. And it's green.

"It's 17 feet long. It's in the ground four feet. Near the top, the man that made it for me put a woodpecker and a hole. I have another one in the making. There's going to be three of them within 100 yards of each other," Wood told me by phone.

It was another bad day for the *contrasaguaristas*. I knew we'd have to borrow a six-pack and reorganize.

Wood for 40 years now has ranched 4,000 acres of high plains grazing land between Springer and Clayton where nothing grows but grass. He confirmed he made the first steel saguaro himself five or six years ago.

I guess it's bad form to ask an artist, "Why?" But I did.

And Wood answered, "I saw one down in Texas. A short one. I liked it. So I came home and made one out of irrigation pipe and grain augers." These materials he had on the place, but he needed some pipe elbows, which he bought in Texline.

Texline is a town with a grain elevator and a railroad yard just over the alleged state line in Texas.

Again, I asked Wood, did he do it to improve the landscape? "I don't know if it's any improvement, but I like them. I guess they're the only cactuses between Oklahoma City and Arizona. A lot of people stop and take pictures," he said.

So Wood got my clippings and he contacted Jim Bob Black of Clayton, a talented welder in the auto parts business, to do two more.

"He said they ought to be green, and he gave me enough paint for the other one," Wood said.

So, soon there will be three conforming green New Mexico dryland saguaros where there was one. This well-meaning column inspired them to multiply. Oh, the cruel irony. The only consolation is the steel saguaro site is close to Oklahoma and closer to Texas.

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Spreading the shame

Speaking of which. Cathy Folk-Williams, formerly of Santa Fe, sent a Sunday supplement from the Express-News in her new home of San Antonio, Texas. "I knew you wouldn't want to miss this," she wrote.

A full-color page of shared advertising in the pretty little issue devoted to New Mexico is tied together with the slogan, "The WARMTH and CHARM of New Mexico," and a large and lovely photo of Arizona *saguaro*s.

Ron Rose, the account manager who sold the ad, was embarrassed by the art work, which he didn't see until it was published. "My manager and I both commented that really was more representative of Arizona than New Mexico," he said.

Actually, the Sonoran Desert cactus doesn't grow in New Mexico at all (except the *ralphwoodus metallicus* variety near Clayton).

"It's not unlike New Yorkers coming to San Antonio and being surprised we don't all come to work on horses," Rose said.

Of course they don't. They drive 1955 Cadillac convertibles.

Getting territorial

A final word, perhaps the very last *cactimania* word, comes from Richard C. Rindone of Santa Fe:

"I don't want to sound like a grinch in all this *antisaguarista* lovefest that's been going on. Just because some dumb easterners misplace *saguaro* cactus into New Mexico, along with all those bandana-wearing coyote night lights and Kokopelli-blessed conditioning shampoos and body lotions, doesn't mean we should laugh at them.

"You do know that once, not too long ago, well maybe a little over 150 years ago, New Mexico had *saguaro* cactus in abundance. More, even, than Arizona, since Arizona had none."

Whoa.

"In fact," Rindone goes on, "there was no Arizona. Just New Mexico. New Mexico Territory, that is. And it had ALL the *saguaro* cactus north of the border until Arizona Territory was created. Those *antisaguaristas* might just be jealous over having lost that beautiful plant to another state."

Hmm. And maybe we have just unlocked the shameful secret of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848. The Americans stole half of Mexico's *saguaros*!