WATERSHED NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ALTAR VALLEY

the Rainmaker

SEPTEMBER 2003 NO. 1

Monsoon Edition

Welcome to the Altar Valley,

where about a dozen families have formed an alliance to care for a 600,000 plus acre working landscape. It all started back in 1995 when a couple of cowboys chatting at the Friday cattle sale did some dreaming and scheming. Their clear vision of gathering folks in the valley to work on protecting ranch land and continuing to enhance the health of the watershed has evolved into an ambitious work plan involving many partners.



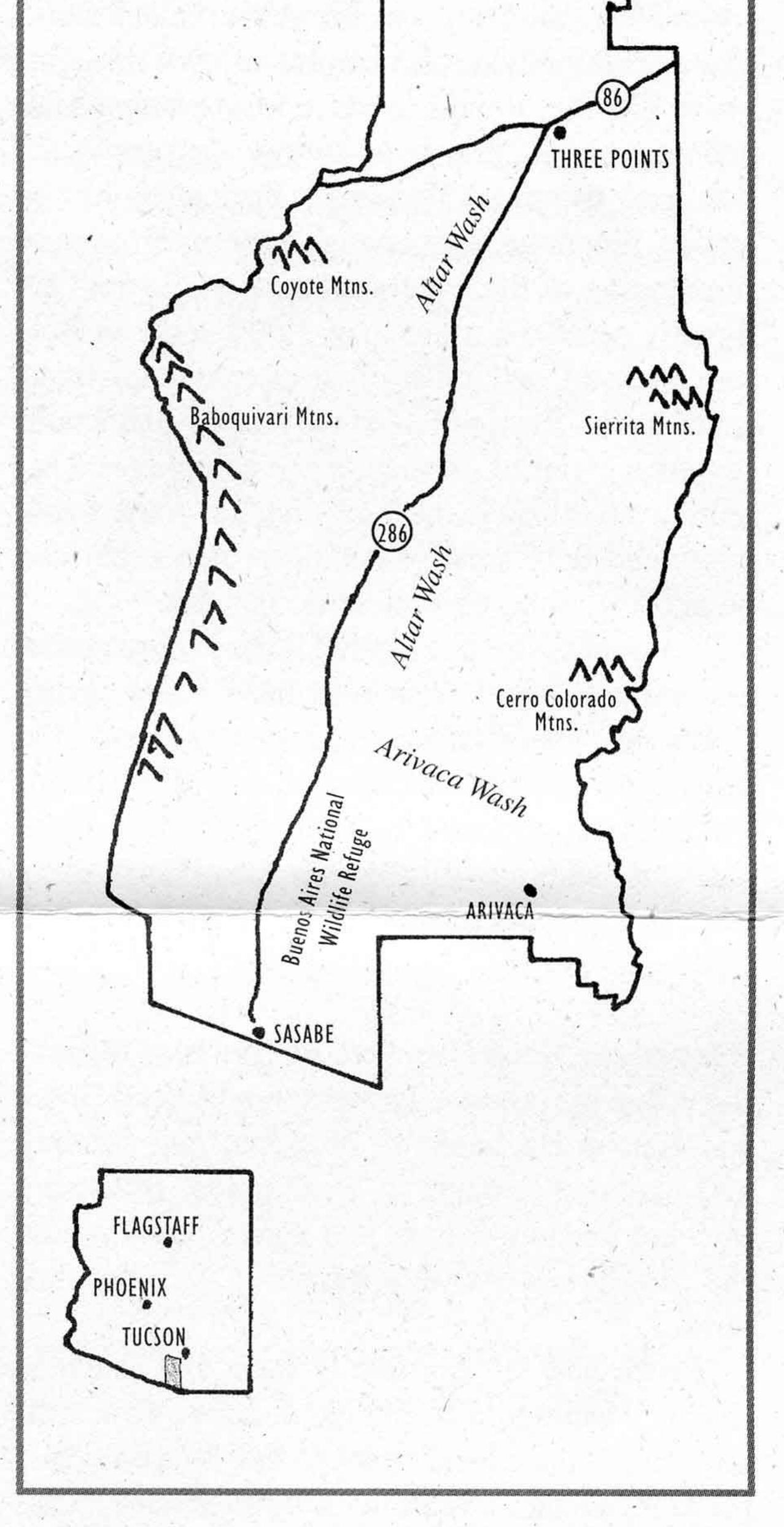
Why is ranching in the Altar Valley important? Ranches are a vital part of the conservation solution in the American West. The West and its communities of people, plants and animals, and soil and water are at risk. Urban pressures and development are fragmenting the West. Ranches keep the country open, while producing food and other products from the land and conserving habitat, wildlife and recreation opportunities. The dark skies above the valley, another product of open country, are important for internationally recognized Kitt Peak National Observatory.

The Alliance gathers partners and ideas around this place, and the goals of keeping it healthy and open with a productive ranch economy. Our tools are sweat, science, policy, law, and most of all, the strength of our commitment to this beautiful valley where we work and live. We can't do this work without partners.

We hope The Rainmaker inspires you to be part of the storm nourishing conservation in the Altar Valley. You'll see project news, as well as on ongoing tour of watershed ranches, natural and cultural history, and issues. Most of all, thanks to all who have pitched in so far!

Eight years after that cattle sale, Altar Valley ranchers find themselves working with a diverse array of partners through the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance, a nonprofit 501(c)3 conservation organization formally established in December 2002. Here's a bird's eye view of accomplishments and current projects.

With some luck, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alliance will sign the implementing agreement in 2004. This \$182,000 project is



- A Natural Fire Management Plan was coordinated by former Arizona State Land Department fire specialist Carl Jones in the late 1990's. Endangered species concerns have stalled implementation, a situation that we hope to resolve in our proposed Habitat Conservation Plan.
- The Altar Valley Watershed Resource Assessment Project, completed in December 2000, provided a scientific foundation, as well as Geographic Information System database, to guide stewardship goals and projects. The Arizona Water Protection Fund provided approximately \$80,000 for the project, while Alliance members supplied countless hours of volunteer labor. Purchase of Palo Alto Ranch by Altar Valley ranchers Ross and Susie Humphreys in 2001 provided a bold and visionary example of ranch land protection. The Alliance accepted a perpetual conservation easement, management contract, and endowment for the Palo Alto **Ranch Pima Pineapple Cactus Conservation** Bank in December 2002. Also, the \$250,000 Palo Alto Runoff Control Project funded by the Environmental Protection Agency begins serious work on Altar Wash restoration and conservation of the Palo Alto Ranch.

supported by federal habitat conservation plan assistance funds, and includes \$63,000 of nonfederal matching funds and/or service, including a grant from the Sonoran Institute.

- Americorps volunteers spent a month in the Altar Valley in the spring of 2002 and 2003 building erosion control structures and surveying for Pima pineapple cactus.
- Altar Wash restoration was jump-started by the Sonoran Institute, through outreach to the · restoration programs of the US Army Corps of Engineers. The Army Corps of Engineers will launch a \$100,000 study in partnership with Pima County Flood Control and other partners to study restoration of the Altar Wash in the fall of 2003.

All told, the Alliance and our partners have corralled over \$600,000 worth of project work on behalf of the Altar Valley watershed. The value of labor by ranchers and conservation cooperators would push the figure over a million dollars easily. Volunteers have pushed the Alliance's work, with virtually no administrative costs. Not bad for a small ranching community and its partners!

ardship work creates lasting benefits including healthy landscapes, vibrant economies, and livable communities that embrace conservation as an integral element of their economies and quality of life.

A draft multi-species Habitat Conservation Plan for the benefit of six endangered and threatened species was completed in 2003.

The Alliance and Sonoran Institute are working together as conservation partners to conserve open spaces essential for wildlife, recreation, and livestock grazing in the Altar Valley. The Sonoran Institute, based in Tucson, Arizona, works with communities to conserve and restore important natural landscapes in Western North America, including the wildlife and cultural values of these lands. The Institute's community stew-

On Valentine's Day 2003, the Alliance and Sonoran Institute signed a Memorandum of Understanding to officially recognize their partnership and commitment to conservation of the Altar Valley working landscape. Together, the two organizations are focusing on:

- Restoration of the Altar Wash;
- A diverse base of financial support for watershed projects and the Alliance;
- Increasing public awareness through a color brochure;
- A presentation at the AZ Hydrological Society Annual Symposium in September 2003;
- Development of a Habitat Conservation Plan.

Sonoran Institute staff member Amy McCoy participates in Alliance meetings, writes funding proposals on the Alliance's behalf, and leads the Altar Wash restoration project. Amy's infectious enthusiasm, topnotch work, and respect and curiosity about Altar Valley ranching and conservation have been a valuable addition to the Alliance crew! (Sonoran Institute (520) 290-0828, www.sonoran.org)

Altar Wash restoration looks promising. Pima Natural Resources Conservation District's decades old vision for reversing Altar (formerly referred to as Brawley) Wash erosion problems has been revitalized through a promising partnership with Pima County Flood Control and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

In 1905, an arroyo in the Altar Valley flood plain developed due to a combination of drought, heavy grazing, soil disturbance from a stagecoach and wagon road, fuel wood cutting, dam construction, and torrential flooding. Formation of the arroyo fundamentally changed the hydrological functioning of the watershed as a whole and has directly removed more than 1,000 acres of bottom land soil, and indirectly impacted many thousands more. Restoration of the Altar Wash would require a series of expensive and complex soil retention structures in the main channel of the wash, combined with smaller upland projects that can be accomplished by individual ranches.

Sonoran Institute gathered Altar Valley ranchers and representatives from the County, Army Corps, and other affected agencies to launch the project in February 2003. Pima County Flood Control formally requested the Army Corps' assistance during the summer of 2003. The Army Corps plans to begin a Reconnaissance Study in the fall of 2003

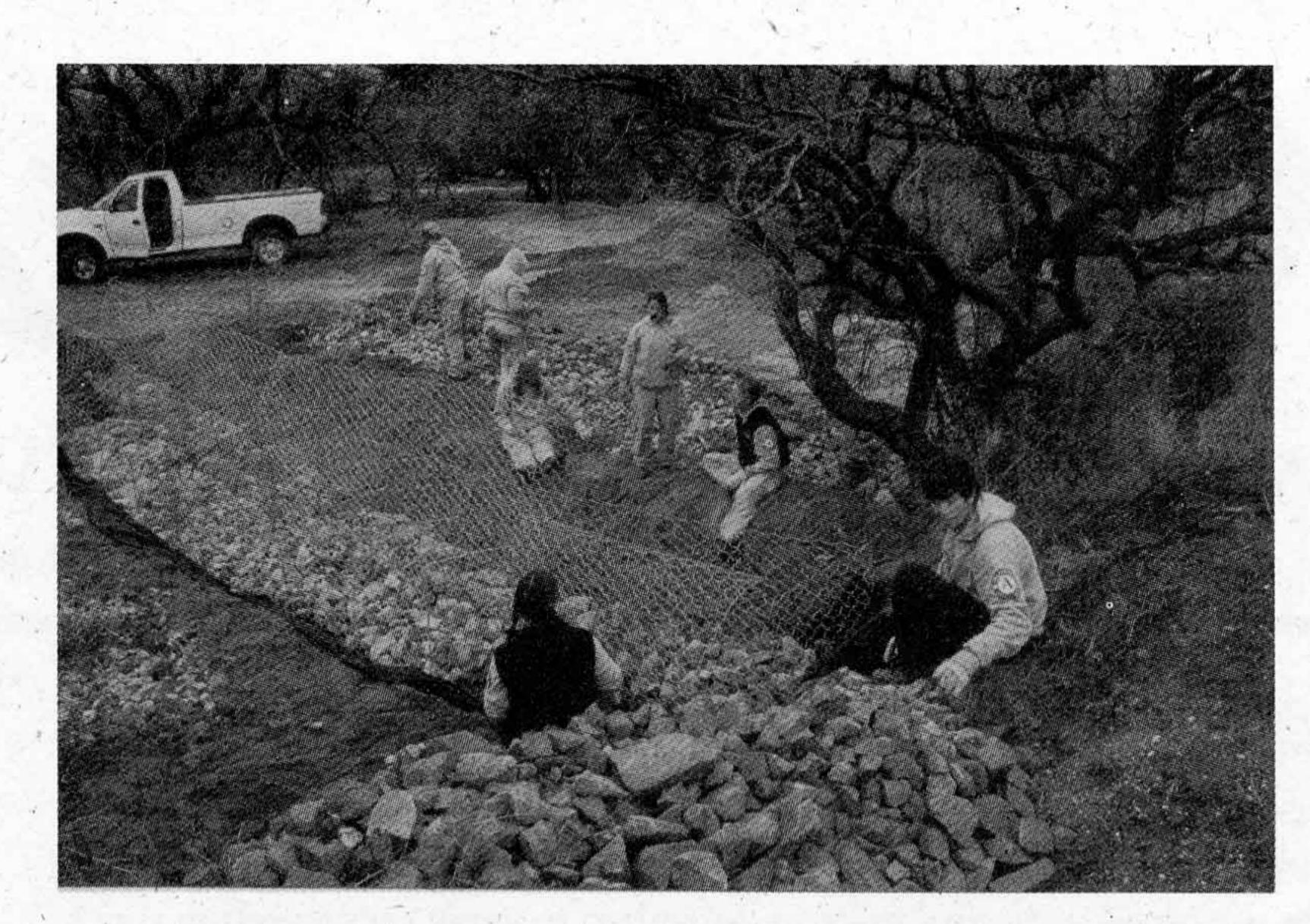
Buchanans Keep Hundred of Years of Ranching Alive in Arivaca. Urban sprawl forced Bruce and Karron Buchanan to abandon their farming and ranching heritage in Washington. But today they are keeping history and agriculture alive on the century-old Arivaca Ranch in Arivaca, Arizona

Bruce had left his family farm and ranch in Selah, Washington to pursue a career as a military, then commercial pilot. After 39 years as a pilot, 32 of those years with airlines, Bruce and Karron were back into agriculture, raising cattle, tending pear orchards and hayfields in Selah. Suddenly their family farm and ranch were surrounded. Urban sprawl had gobbled up farms and ranches in their area and the Buchanans knew that to remain in agriculture they had to leave the town where Bruce was born.

"We were surrounded," said Bruce. "I knew that we had no chance to expand and in today's agricultural climate, I knew we had to become bigger or very much smaller to survive."

For three years they searched for a suitable ranch. They looked in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, Texas and Arizona.

"I hadn't really wanted to get back into desert ranching and I wanted to stay away from irrigated farms, but here I am in Arizona, desert ranching



again and I am just setting up some irrigated pastures," said Bruce.

Today, they operate the 23,000-acre Arivaca Like most ranches in Arizona, the ranch is com-

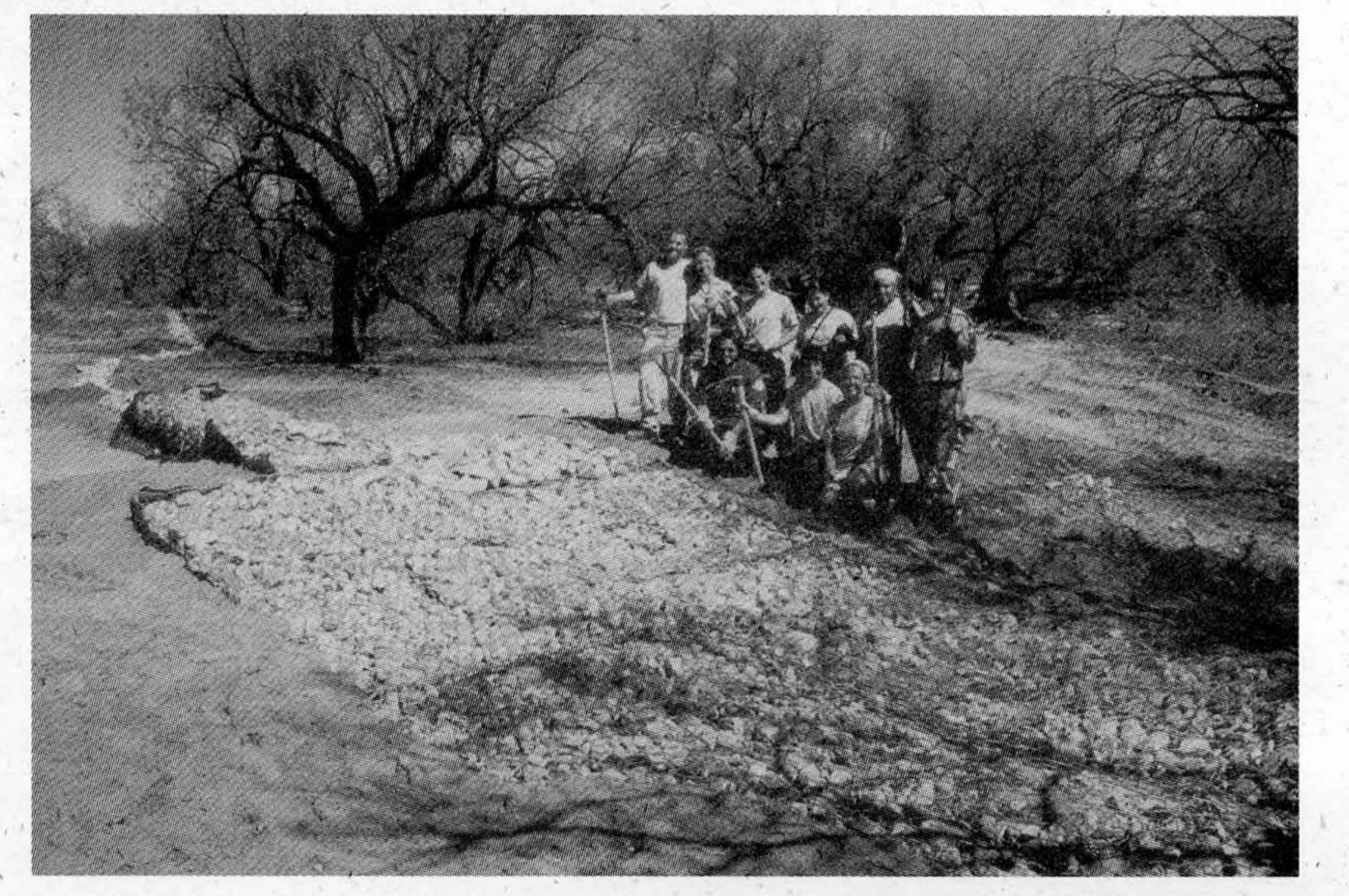
Ranch. This ranch began in the 1870's and at one time was part of the famous Chiracahua Cattle Co. that covered hundreds of thousands of acres across southern Arizona. Bruce and Karron purchased the ranch in March 1999 from longtime Arizona rancher and famous rodeo team roper, Dale Smith. prised of a patchwork quilt of land ownership. Private lands are intermingled with state and federally leased land. The Buchanans work hard to keep their Red Brangus/Charolais herd healthy and the land productive, by reducing cattle numbers during times of drought and grazing the land on a rest/rotation program.

"Unfortunately, we have been in a drought for the last five years," said Bruce. "We have sold off more than a third of the herd and rested a portion of the ranch for an entire year. The problem is rest without rain doesn't help that much."

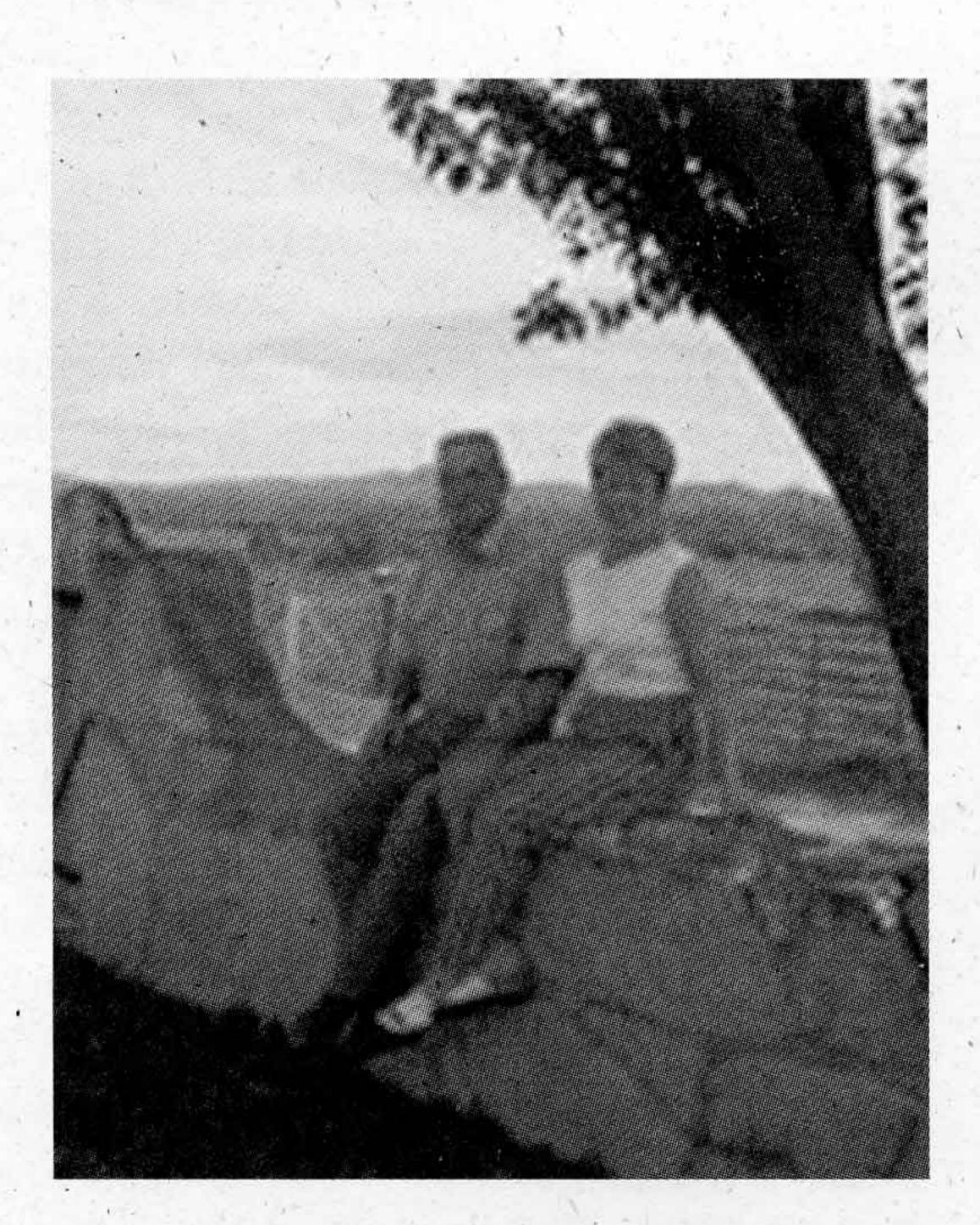
To help offset these forage problems, Bruce has just put in 30 acres of irrigated lands so he can bring cattle in to graze on the irrigated fields and give his desert pastures time to rest.

Not only do the ranch and its owners have an extraordinary agricultural history, but also the families that work for Bruce and Karron share a long history in ranching. "Caco" Elias has worked for the Arivaca Ranch for 16 years. Historic writings about southern Arizona ranching mention many Elias families that have owned and worked

Erosion control work on tributaries is already under way! Americorps volunteers guided by Dan Robinett completed gabion projects on the King Anvil Ranch in 2002 and 2003.



ranches in the area. Noah W. Bernard, one of the original owners of the Arivaca Ranch, built the house that Caco lives in around 1885. Emeterio Hernandez has worked on southern Arizona ranches and ranches in Mexico for more than 60 years. He is a living history book of the area, its ranches and owners. He has seen droughts, owners and ranches come and go — some of these ranches are now wildlife preserves and some are lost within a sea of homes.



Bruce and Karron Buchanan at the Arivaca Ranch headquarters.

A7F NN XHQ 24 H & 3N Conserving the Altar Valley for future generations A7F NN XHQ 24 H & 3N

A short history of Altar Valley ranching: An overview of the upper reaches to 1890.

To cattle growers, the Altar Valley seems a natural place to raise cattle. largest operation, his desert homestead being in the Altar Valley, but until Particularly at the upper or southern end of the valley, relatively flat unduthe land grant was settled, no one could actually own land in the Arivaca lating hills and mesas extend toward north-south ranging mountains on valley. Aguirre organized the Arivac Land and Cattle Company in the early either side. Covered with grass, browse, and mesquite trees, the grassland 1880s, attempting to gain control of the original land grant. Not until is ideal for grazing. In the late 1600s Father Eusebio Francisco Kino came 1902, when the Supreme Court determined that it was invalid, did the land through southern Arizona looking for existing villages, with the goal of on the grant become available. Aguirre decided to homestead in the Altar Christianizing the native O'Odham. On a 1695 map he located a visita at Valley, despite its lack of water, and began to construct water sources, on Arivaca and noted villages in the vicinity, but not many. He brought cattle which he filed for legal water rights. Aguirre and his daughter Beatriz and horses into the area, along with seeds, and located suitable routes for received patents on the land in the Altar Valley in the early 1890s. traveling between the settlements along the Altar Valley in Sonora and the Beginning in the 1880s, Dr. A.H. Noon and his sons Alonzo and Arthur Gila River in what is now Arizona. Arizona's Altar Valley had few water began running cattle on Arivaca valley's upper watershed in the Oro Blanco sources, so instead of traveling the length of the valley, trails extend through hills and Cobre Ridge. Noon homesteaded at Oro Blanco, seven miles south the rougher, but spring-rich mountains that border the upper Altar Valley of Arivaca. Other area ranchers in this time period included Bernardo on the east. After the advent of the Spanish into the area, with their ac-Cabiglia, Reuben Wilbur and John Bartlett. companying diseases, the native population declined and relocated. Over By this time, Tucson was developing and the mercantile operation of

the decades of the 1700s, little is known of settlement in the area, but when the Ortiz family came into ownership of the Aribac land grant at Arivaca in the early 1800s, as well as the one at Canoa, cattle again spread across the landscape. What limited settlement primarily was the lack of water sources. Arivaca Creek, the San Luis wash, Fresnal Canyon and Las Guijas Wash, the major tributaries on the southeast side of the Altar Valley, all provided water so that cattle could range out and back from the springs, at least during rainy periods.

The Ortiz family sold their Aribac Land Grant to Charles Poston and the Sonora Exploring and Mining Company in 1856. The Company ran cattle to provide meat for their miners. Although this operation centered in Arivaca, it is likely that cattle ranged out into the Altar Valley since it was open range. There was a short hiatus

Ranching, **Endangered Species**, and Urbanization in the Southwest Species of Capital

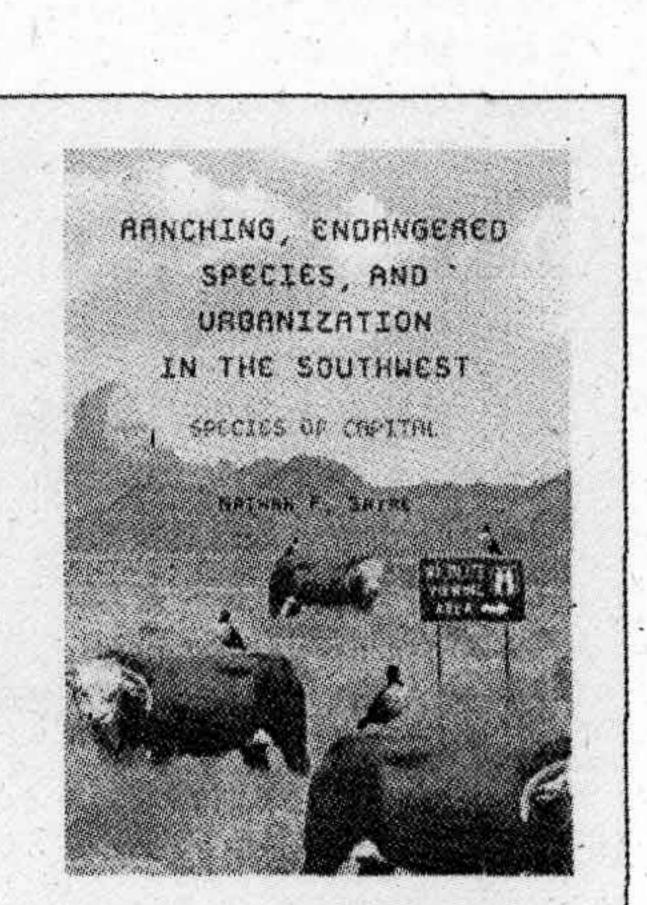
NATHAN F. SAYRE la d'artes "As the reader will discover, strange bedfellows sometimes come to live together in the real world of human interaction with landscape and wildlife. This is a refreshing book, full of insight-a genuinely new kind of ranch history that every student of the subject needs to read." -Southwest Book Views \$48.00

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in the early 1860s when the area was abandoned due to the Civil War, and side of the valley, near the Mexican border. Fernando Ortiz, who may or mining resumed in 1864. Tenuous at best while the Apache still roamed, many not be related to the Ortiz brothers of Arivaca, built a ranch house the mining business continued off and on, and with it, cattle grazing. and outbuildings on the side, as listed on an 1886 survey. In 1889 he sold it to Col. William S. Sturges of Chicago. Sturges expanded what was by Pedro Aguirre and his brothers came into the Altar Valley in the 1860s, then an extensive hacienda with servants' quarters and gardens. A large reservoir up the canyon provided water. Sturges also homesteaded several miles down the valley as Las Moras Ranch, which was not proved up until 1909. A Post Office was established at La Osa in 1890.

developing the existing trails south to Altar, Sonora for their freighting business. Pedro realized the value of the Altar Valley as cattle country and began a ranch, which he called Buenos Ayres. After losing his brother Epifanio to an Indian attack in 1869, Arivaca seemed a safer place for his family and he built a home in the village. Epifanio's widow, Mamie Bernard Aguirre, later reported that the Arivaca valley was known in those days as "Hijovajilla," or child of the big (Altar) valley.

In the late 1870s, ownership of the Arivaca valley was in question, Ranching, endangered species, and urbanization in the Southwest: since Poston had left the area. Settlers, many of whom could be called species of capital, by Nathan F. Sayre. squatters, began arriving and some acquired cattle of their own. By the An unpublished history of La Osa Ranch, by Veronica and Richard Schultz. mid-1870s there were folks living up and down the Arivaca valley, the A history of the cattle industry in Southern Arizona, by J.J. Wagoner. Guijas Valley and the San Luis Wash, anywhere where there were mining Arizona Place Names, by Byrd Howell Granger. operations. Mining also began in the Baboquivaris. Every natural water Tucson newspapers. source was claimed, for milling operations and for cattle. Aguirre had the The Connection (Arivaca, AZ) articles.



Lord and Williams took an interest in grazing cattle in order to provide meat for the numerous mining operations in the southern part of the state. They ran cattle and sheep in Arivaca, pastured by Aguirre who also had sheep thousands of them. In the late 1870s Noah W. Bernard (Mamie's brother) and John Bogan began a cattle operation called Bogan and Bernard, which centered upstream of the village of Arivaca, on the creek, and later became known as the Arivaca Land and Cattle Company, or Arivaca Ranch. Bernard opened a store and became the first Postmaster. They would become one of the largest operations in the area.

Meanwhile, settlers were moving into the hills near Sasabe Flat. La Osa ranch was named for a silver-tipped bear and her cub and were roped and killed there by a Mexican cowboy. Rancho de la Osa is on the southwest

To be continued — Mary Noon Kasulaitis

References:

The pioneer edition of *The Rainmaker* was made possible through the generosity of Elkhorn Ranch guests, who remind us that the wild open ranch lands of the West are both a national treasure and a keystone for conservation of our country's resources and heritage.

ELKHORN RANCH



Special thanks to the organizations and individuals who have expressed hope for the Altar Valley through contributions and service to the Alliance thus far! Your faith in the Alliance during these early years is especially appreciated!

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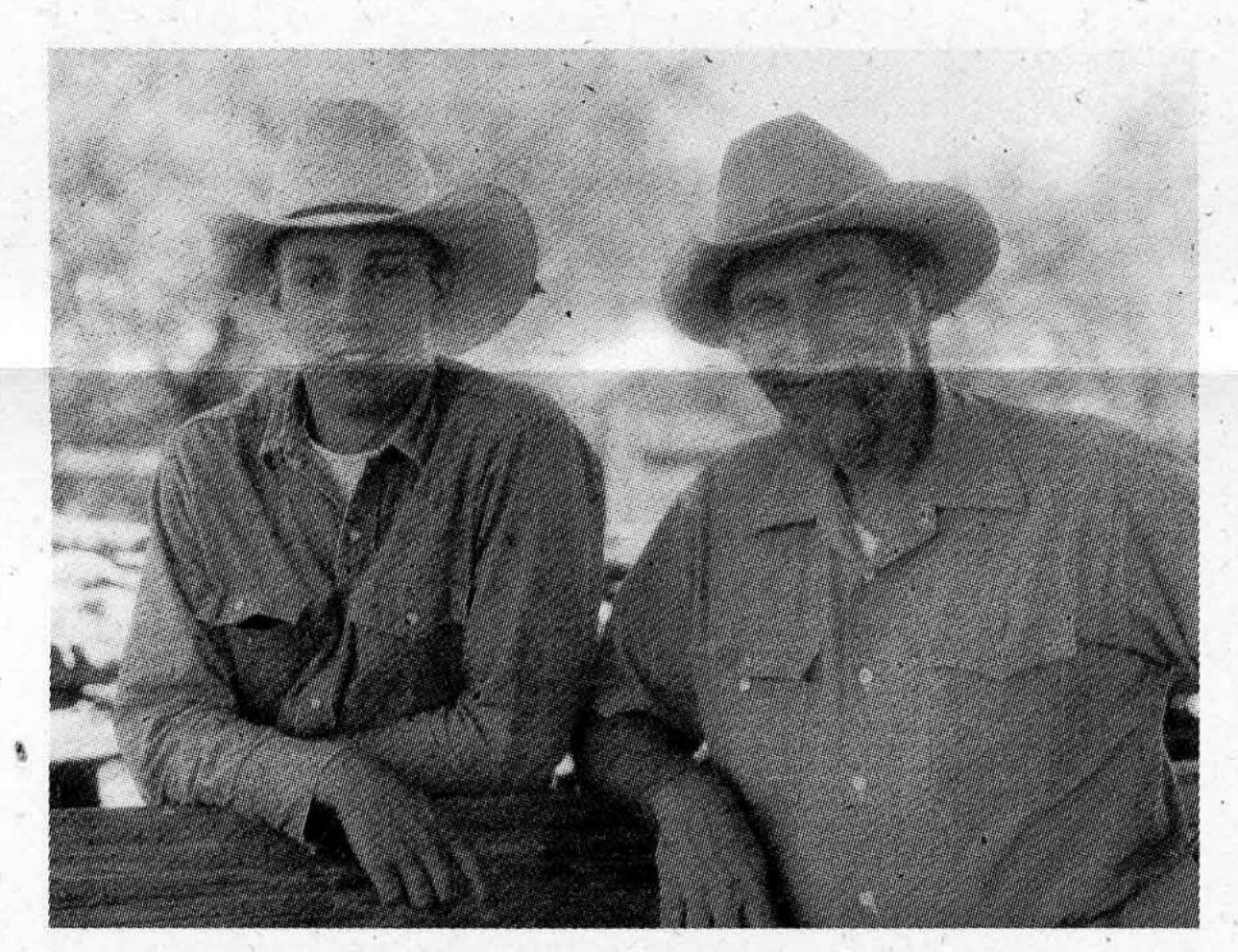
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Ranch Round Up Arivaca Ranch Baboquivari Peak Ranch and Palo Alto Ranch Carrow Cattle Co. Chilton Ranch - Arivaca and Diamond Bell Ranch Elkhorn Ranch

This first issue of *The Rainmaker* is dedicated to the memory of John (JD) Cathcart, who helped form the Alliance and served as the first Community Representative on the Board of Directors. JD's presence and editorial urged consideration of the nation here at home while making the community a better part of the nation. He was a community patriot.

JD, the press is rolling here in the Altar Valley!



Jarillas Ranch Kasulaitis Family King Anvil Ranch Los Encinos Ranch McGee Ranch Rancho El Mirador Santa Margarita Ranch, Inc,

Advisors Bill Boyd, Legal Counsel Bill Lehman, Endangered Species Walt Meyers, Range Management and Monitoring Dan Robinett, Range Management and Monitoring

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Brochure, Susan Humphreys
Habitat Conservation Plan, Ross Humphreys
Palo Alto Runoff Control Project, Donna Matthews *The Rdinmaker*, Peggy Rowley and Mary Miller,

JD Cathcart and his son Jason, who cowboys for the Anvil and Elkhorn Ranches and caretakes at the Palo Alto.

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The Rainmaker editors Peggy Rowley and Mary Miller greatly appreciate contributions from Mary Kasulaitis, Pat King, Amy McCoy, and Ross Humphreys. The Rainmaker is published by the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance twice per year. Articles may be freely reprinted for nonprofit purposes, provided that credit is given to the author and the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance.

Please contact the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance for a complimentary copy of *The Rainmaker*. Copies of *The Rainmaker* will be distributed to all Alliance partners and supporters. Please contact the Alliance with questions, ideas, concerns, or address changes at: Altar Valley Conservation Alliance, c/o King Anvil Ranch, HC 1 Box 97E, Tucson, AZ 85736.

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Please share your ideas and questions with us!

The Altar Valley Conservation Alliance needs your ideas and support! Please contact any of the Executive Committee by phone or by mail at:

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