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The Edge of Texas - Program 0006, Murderin' Dan McNulty

Alex Apostolides
KTEP Radio

Patti Walker
KTEP Radio

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DESERT LANDSCAPE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY
A GIFT FROM THE STATE NATIONAL BANK.

WELCOME TO DESERT LANDSCAPE: THE EDGE OF
TEXAS. I AM ALEX APOSTOLIDES --

-- and I am Patty Walker.

Theme music up and under

Music up and under

A It's blow-sand country, greasewood and
prickly-thorn mesquite, out by Bishop's Cap,
just a short jaunt north from El Paso.

P And, like almost anywhere you care to look
around here, it has its tales of treasures
lost, and here's another one to add to
the scrapbook . . . Bishop's Cap and
Murderin' Dan McNulty --

Music up and under

A Bishop's Cap is at the south end of the
Organ Mountains. Most of that land is
off-limits army country now, but was a time
when the gap running in from Bishop's Cap,
a hoot 'n' holler from Las Cruces, was
practically a highway east and west . . .

P Up on the north-facing slopes of the twisted
hills, mine tailings and rutted old dirt
tracks tell of men with more muscles than
sense who worked the dirt for Mother Lode.
If any of them made more than beans-and-bacon
money, we've not heard about it.

A Bones of the great ground sloth were found under Bishop's Cap more than 50 years ago, and traces of Early Man . . . people lived in this area thousands of years ago, when the climate saw more rain and there were lakes and swampland where the desert stretches now.

P On the north side of the gap, it's all volcanic, the rock that's known as TUFF (tough). This was spewed out from a volcano, once upon a time, a thick and powdery gas that settled on the ground, building layers that grew to become mountains.

A There are caves in this volcanic tuff, with fire-sign of oldtime Indian camps, and ancient pictures painted on the blackened walls.

P There's also sign from later times, when men passing through, some of them in a hurry, stopped and made a hasty camp before disappearing into the Rio Grande valley -- or the bolson on the other side -- just steps ahead of vengeful posses.

A Murdering Dan McNulty was known to hang around the gap. This was in the 1890s, and McNulty was not his real name, but it'll do for now.

P He'd waylay travelers, anyone he could reach with his thieving hands, and they'd not be seen again.

A A man we'll call Curly -- he was skinhead bald -- was traveling through the gap one day. Saw a campfire in a cave high up the slope. He tried to ride on quietly by -- no telling who or what you'd run into, in the gap, those days -- but was pulled up by a hello-yell from the camper in the cave.

A 'Oh, lord, this ~~is~~ just ^{aint} ~~not~~ my day,' Curly told himself as he recognised Murdering Dan McNulty.

A 'Git on down and set a spell,' called the bandit. 'Got coffee on the fahr, and it'd be a shame to waste it, friend.'

Q Murdering Dan seemed friendly enough, both hands in plain view and no gun in sight, so the traveler swung his leg down, hunkered by the fire, drank from the battered tin cup Murdering Dan handed him.

A Now, Murdering Dan might have been a bad S-O-B, but he sure could make a decent cup of coffee, and Curly thought 'Well, he can't be as bad as all the stories make him out to be.'

Q What helped, also, was that friend Curly was dirt-poor, his boots run-down, his saddle rig better left undescribed. The hat he wore would have gagged a goat -- and Curley himself didn't look or smell like any bed of roses. But then -- neither did Murdering Dan McNulty.

A 'How're things goin', stranger?' Curly asked.
P Better if Murdering Dan didn't know he'd been identified. Just to be on the safe side, you know.

P

'Oh, 'bout the same.' Murdering Dan squinted at his guest. 'Aint I seen you down in Cruces? Or Mésillá-way? You from around here, aint you?'

'Naw. I come and go, you know how it is. You look a mite familiar, too, but I caint rightly place you, either, friend.'

'Mah name's John Smith,' said Murdering Dan, whose imagination was not among the most sparkling of his talents.

'Ahuh. Glad to meet you, Mister Smith. Jones is my name, John Jones,' said Curley, whose real name was something close to Harschenferger.

Murdering Dan grinned. 'If that don't beat all! Smith an' Jones. You looked like you was in a bit of a hurry there when I hailed you, amigo.'

'Well, Mister Smith, y'all know how it goes. They's a whole bunch of folks over Tularosa way I aint exactly anxious to meet up with. They was all a-yellin' an' a-hollerin' at me when I rode out of town.'

'I know the feelin' well, friend. I know the feelin'. Where y'all headed now?'

'Oh, down the slope and into Cruces, just to get myself a stake, and then I thought I might just take me a ride on farther west, see what's happenin' up around Globe and places like that there.'

'You're welcome to stay the night.'

'I better not, amigo. You understand.'

'I know. Well, friend, safe journeys to you, hear?'

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And the traveler got aboard his horse, waved goodbye to Murdering Dan and went on his way. But the skin was all a-crinkle between his shoulder blades until he was out of rifle range.

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'Oh, lord,' the traveler said. It flashed on him that he'd seen two horses at the camp of Murdering Dan. Two rigs -- and only the one camper. Had another man been hidden in the darkness, gun pointed at the traveler's back, waiting for Murdering Dan to decide whether or not the traveler was rich enough to bother robbing?

PA
'Oh, lord,' the traveler said, and swung down off his horse to relieve himself in the nearest sandy draw.

PA
A little weakened by the experience, he got back up in the saddle and picked his way down the night-time trail to Cruces.

P |
Friends gave him a big hello as ~~he~~ walked into the first refreshment emporium on the block.

'Well, hey! Here's ole Curly! Damn, boy, you look like you been rode hard and put up wet! We-all heard you was up Tularosa way, but you wasn't supposed to be back for a couple of days yet. And -- how did you get through?'

"Through what?"

"The gap's closed, son! Shurff's got men crawlin' all over them hills, lookin' for ole Murdering Dan and the missin' payroll man."

"What payroll man? An' I sure'n'heck never seen no sign of no Shurff out there."

P One of the faded flowers who hung around that particular refreshment emporium chimed in: "Lord, Curly, the payroll man pulled out of here two days ago, headed for Alamogordo. An' he never made it. Somebody said they seen ole Murdering Dan hanging around the vi-ci-ni-ty. An' that was enough to git the Shurff's bowels in an uproar, an' he sailed on out there yesterday with the posse, an' he said they was goin' to beat the hills till they found Murdering Dan, or the payroll man, or both."

A "Oh, lord," Curly said. "I run into Murdering Dan up in a cave at the gap, over toward this end. I never seen no sign of the Shurff or his men, though. Lord -- I had coffee with Murdering Dan. An -- they was two horses up at that cave, and two rigs, but all I seen was Dan, himself."

P Well, sir, the Sheriff's men came dragging back into town the next day. Where they'd been is anybody's guess -- wherever they had been, they'd seen no sign of Murdering Dan.

A Curly told them all his story -- that was a very popular refreshment emporium in those days -- and they all swung into their saddles once again and went a-hootin' off to the gap, hot on the trail of Murdering Dan McNulty.

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They found the cave. Found warm ashes in the fire. Found the extra saddle -- and found empty payroll bags, just inside the entrance to the cave. But of the payroll man or Murdering Dan McNulty, not a trace.

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Disgruntled and more than a little saddle sore by now, the Shurff and his posse headed back for town.

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And oh, there was high excitement when they got there. Murdering Dan McNulty had roared into town, almost before the posse's dust had settled. Got into a fight at that refreshment emporium, and been shot dead.

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And no honest citizen was going to lose a single night's sleep over that, except -- of payroll money, not a whisper. Not a clue. Somewhere between the camp and Cruces, Murdering Dan had stopped and hidden the payroll loot.

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And, somewhere around Bishop's Cap, the bones of that missing payroll man lie amouldering to this day.

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If you're walking around that blow-dune area west of Bishop's Cap and you happen to spy a tag of weathered saddle-bag leather uncovered by the wind, check it out -- you may have found old Murdering Dan's treasure, left where he buried it when he was on the run, so very many years ago . . .

Music up and under

9:31

(NOTE: Maybe we'll save this for an all-Villa program.....)(or-- do this and ask for tales from the audience, to make up an all-Villa show.....)

"CORRIDA VILLISTA"

MUSIC: 'La Adelita,' if we've got it; otherwise, I'll bring in some Mexican Revolution songs.....up and under

P Columbus, New Mexico lies a good two-day ride west of El Paso...if you're on a horse. The train that used to run there made it in a lot less time -- and you can do it in a couple of hours today...if you don't mind shaking your truck to pieces on the old roadbed that runs from here to there.

A

It's a quiet town, Columbus, sleeping in sun -- but there was a day when Columbus came alive and there was a roaring and a shooting in the streets that's still remembered. March 9, 1916 is the day ~~when~~ Columbus found its place in history --

THURSDAY, ~~MAR 9, 1916~~

the day that Pancho Villa came to town.

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It's been called a raid by some historians, a massacre by others. We like to think of Pancho Villa's raid upon Columbus as the first strong consumer complaint on record. And here is why --

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According to one version told us, Pancho Villa had ordered a lot of guns from a Columbus merchant. We know the merchant's name, but there are kinfolk still alive, and so he shall remain anonymous.

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The merchant took Pancho Villa's money for the guns -- and never made delivery.

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Hearing that Villa was on his way to register his complaint, the merchant hauled his tail to El Paso, where he hid out in the Hotel Dieu, ^{hospital} while Villa, in a wholly understandable fit of pique, laid waste to the border town.

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hills, mine tailings and rutted old dirt
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sense who worked the dirt for Mother Lode.
If any of them made more than beans-and-bacon
money, we've not heard about it.

Join us ^{this} Saturday evening
at 6 for J.W. Hauer
& ~~Arco~~ tanks -

Join us

~~with~~ Desert landscape
the Edge of Texas.

AND I AM PATTY WALKER.
WE'LL BE COMING TO YOU EACH
SATURDAY EVENING AT 6, LOOKING
AT OUR YESTERDAYS / TALKING
WITH PEOPLE WHO HELPED
MAKE HISTORY - AND THE
ONES WHO ARE MAKING IT
TODAY.

Desert

A Bones of the great ground sloth were found under Bishop's Cap more than 50 years ago, and traces of Early Man . . . people lived in this area thousands of years ago, when the climate saw more rain and there were lakes and swampland where the desert stretches now.

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DESERT LANDSCAPE/8sep84/8-8-8-8

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Hearing that Villa was on his way to register his complaint, the merchant hauled his tail to El Paso, where he hid out in the Hotel Dieu ^{hospital} while Villa, in a wholly understandable fit of pique, laid waste to the border town.

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Another version, coming from a usually more or less unimpeachable source, tells of Villa's buying shoes from that same merchant, hundreds of them, for his soldiers. In this case, the merchant actually made delivery -- but the shoes were all for the left foot.

X

This seems to be even stronger reason for old don Pancho to ride into Columbus and waste everyone in town. Non-delivery is one thing -- but, when the merchant takes you for a fool, to boot, well: Viva Villa, is all that we can say.

Music up and under

EL CENTAURO DEL NORTE

UY, UNDEK
OR
SIETE LEGUAS.
OR

P

Pancho Villa is a legend along this borderland. Like him or hate him, he was an historic force who changed the face of Mexico, gave shape to the quality of life along the borderland today.

A

There are as many tales about Pancho Villa, pro and con, as there are tellers. And many of the tellers were eyewitnesses to this wind that swept Mexico in the early 1900s -- or heard the tales from their parents, who lived through the hot days of the Revolution.

P

If you have a story about Pancho Villa, we'd like to hear it. When we've gathered enough of them together, we'll do an all-Pancho Villa show, look at the man in ^{depth} I hate this

A

phrase -- ^{depth} So -- got a favorite story about El Tigre del Norte, Francisco Villa? Share it with us. Write Desert Landscape, K-T-E-P, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas 79968.

SP, Centauro del Norte 3:00