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Carl
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Lonesome Dove
A Texican Epic

J. P. Bryan

Chief Executive Officer of Torch Energy Advisors,
Texas history enthusiast, direct descendant of
Moses Austin and relative of Stephen F. Austin,
and lifelong collector of Western artifacts

Carl Hertzog Lecture Series



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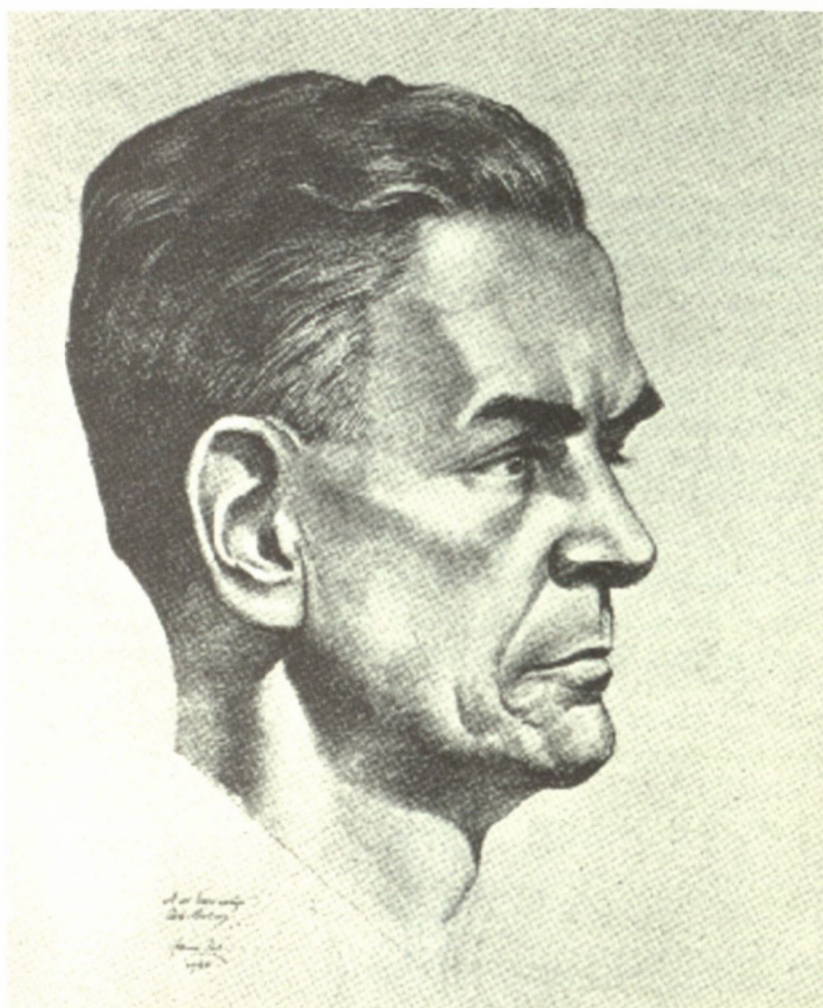
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**Texas
Western
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The University of Texas at El Paso



(Drawing by Tom Lea, 1946)

J. Carl Hertzog
1902 - 1984

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Carl Hertzog lecture series, no. 12

LONESOME DOVE

A TEXICAN EPIC

By J. P. Bryan

In the history of this nation, there are two events uniquely American—the Civil War and the Trail Drive. Both of these events were brilliantly captured by two novels, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind* and Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*. The book *Lonesome Dove* is more a *Texican* than American epic. It finds its roots in the most romanticized period of American history, the settlement of the American West. The hero of this era was the cowboy. No singular event took greater importance in shaping this image than the trail drive. During a period of more than 20 years, millions of head of cattle were moved from the deep South Texas to markets in Kansas, Nebraska, and points further East and North.¹ The cowboys in those years, mostly *Texican*, as they were called, worked cattle, fought Indians, and loved both horses and women. The cowboy has become the symbol of independence, rugged individualism, integrity, and freedom.

All of these characteristics are abundantly displayed in the personalities of the individuals who come alive on the pages of *Lonesome Dove*. Their story and its fictional re-telling in *Lonesome Dove* provide an enduring symbol of an American, but more especially *Texican*, experience.

Lonesome Dove has won a Pulitzer Prize for Literature, numerous Emmy® statuettes for its TV adaptation 20 years later; it is a worthy subject for a talk, to evaluate its enduring elements.²

You may not know that the author, Larry McMurtry, drew heavily upon Texas history and even biblical parallels for this work. But it is not the historical webbing that gives the book and the television adaptation their enduring nature. *Lonesome Dove* is foremost a story about relationships. *Gone With The Wind* has endured not because of its backdrop of the Civil War, but because first and foremost it is a love story. It may not be fair to characterize *Lonesome Dove* as a love story, but it certainly develops the relationships forged by men where deep affections are felt but rarely

expressed and an abundance of humor, verbal jousting, and sharp repartees establish the boundaries that both bind and divide.

The central heroes of *Lonesome Dove* are two ex-Texas Rangers, Captain Woodrow F. Call and Augustus McCrae. They were former Indian fighters and lawmen who spent a better part of their careers in conflict with Indians and bandits, finally settling in a desperately wicked part of Texas known as the Nueces Strip. This was a lawless no man's land that occupied a large part of Texas between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande. Call takes on many similarities to the historical figure Leander McNelly, a Texas Ranger who settled the Nueces Strip and served a brief lifetime fighting Indians and chasing bandits across the Texas frontier.³ Augustus McCrae has many similarities, from his booming voice to his philosophical pronouncements, to the famous South Texas cattleman Shanghai Pierce, who accumulated a vast South Texas ranch and was himself a famous trail driver.⁴ Although McMurtry gives us no specific dates, we know the time of this novel is 1876-77. This is confirmed by several historical suggestions. First, the Indian Wars in South Texas were all but over. The Comanche had been defeated at the battle of Plum Creek in 1840 and what remained for the next 30 years were modest skirmishes with occasional bands of Apaches or Kiowa.⁵ Furthermore, McNelly had pacified the Nueces Strip by 1876 and driven most of the Mexicans and bandits across the river. On a trip to San Antonio to get a cook for their trail drive, Gus tells Call they would have been famous if they had just been killed by a bunch of Comanches.

He says, "If a thousand Comanches had cornered us in some gully and wiped us out, like the Sioux just done Custer, they'd write songs about us for a hundred years." (p. 326) Custer was killed at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.⁶

At the time our novel begins, Gus and Woodrow have given up rangering and taken up ranching. Gus has named the enterprise Hat Creek Cattle Company and Livery Emporium. They are actually making their living rustling cattle from the Mexican side of the border, stealing from the very persons that they had fought in Texas and doing what they had spent a lifetime preventing. They are rustling both horses and cattle, and the principal recipient of

their rustling endeavors is a fictional Pedro Flores. Walter Prescott Webb, in his book *Texas Rangers*, describes the cattle rustling wars with Mexican bandits and the killing of Juan Flores, who had a large cattle operation in Mexico. He is certainly the famed historical figure that McMurtry uses in *Lonesome Dove* and, incidentally, it was none other than Leander McNelly who killed Flores.

Call and Gus seem as different as dawn and dusk. Gus is the irreverent humorist given to drinking, porch sitting, and philosophizing. Call is singleminded, industrious, almost humorless, but a natural leader. His word is his bond. A commitment given is commitment fulfilled. But you follow Captain Call not out of love but out of respect. The literary soul of *Lonesome Dove* is the constant repartee between these two men that at many times seems adversarial but truly masks a warm and enduring relationship. They are dependent on one another in a need to act out their natural roles in life. The real story in *Lonesome Dove* is these two men's unspoken affection and respect for one another. An example of their conversations would be as follows (p. 18) :

"It's a good thing I ain't scairt to be lazy," Gus said.

"You may think so, I don't," Call answered.

"Hell, Call, if I worked as hard as you, there'd be no thinking done at all around this outfit. You stay in a lather 15 hours a day. A man that's always in a lather can't think nothin' out."

"I'd like to see you think the roof back on that barn," Call said.

An interesting exchange between Call and Gus took place after Call heard of the death of his lifelong adversary, Pedro Flores (p. 170).

Call said "We might as well go on to Montana. The fun's over around here."

"Call, there never was no fun around here," he said. "And besides, you never had no fun in your life. You wasn't made for fun. That's my department."

When Call tells him there's a lot of work to be done, Gus replies, "I'm just trying to keep everything balanced, Woodrow. You do more work than you got to, so it's my obligation to do less." (in the film)

There is probably no better expression of Gus's humor than the sign which introduces you to the Hat Creek Cattle Company (p. 89). It reads as follows:

Hat Creek Cattle Company
and Livery Emporium

Capt. Augustus McCrae }
Capt. W. F. Call } Props.
P. E. Parker Wrangler
Deets, Joshua
For rent: Horses and rigs
For sale: Cattle and horses
Goats and donkey's neither bought nor sold
We don't rent pigs.
Uva Uvam Vivendo Varia Fit.

Augustus didn't know what the Latin said; he just thought it would look good. One day Woodrow called him out on it (p. 90-91).

"So what's it say, that Latin?' Call asked."

"It's a motto,' Augustus said. 'It just says itself.' He was determined to conceal for as long as possible the fact that he didn't know what the motto meant, which anyway was nobody's business."

"Call was quick to see the point. 'You don't know yourself. It could say anything. For all you know it invites people to rob us.' "

"Gus was quick to respond. 'The first bandit that comes along who can read Latin is welcome to rob us, as far as I'm concerned. I'd risk a few nags for the opportunity of shooting at an educated man for a change.' "

Of the two other names mentioned on the sign, one is P.E. Parker, who is called Pea Eye, and the other is Joshua Deets. Both Call and Gus are assisted in their ranching roles by these two former Ranger companions. Pea Eye is the ever loyal, rarely condemning, and slow-thinking companion. In history, he is probably a far different person, an individual by the name of One- Armed Bob Wilson whom we will discuss later. Joshua Deets, the Negro, obviously served with Call and Gus as a scout and tracker. The best Negro scouts ever were part Seminole Indians. There is a major Seminole Indian Reservation

south of Del Rio, Texas. The Mexican Government encouraged the relocation there by the Seminole after the second Seminole War of 1835-42. Black slaves went to live amongst the Seminole and their offspring were famous Indian fighters. Many joined the 9th and 10th Cavalries in Texas and, during the Indian Wars from 1865 to 1878, won four medals of honor. Deets, for all his Indian fighting and tracking skills, could well have been a Black Seminole Indian. But there is certainly evidence that many negroes went up the trail. It's further interesting to note that in Exodus the Jewish spy and scout for Moses was none other than Joshua.⁷ As a further interesting coincidence, Custer had a Black scout at Little Bighorn, with a biblical name, Isaiah Teats.⁸

Gus's and Call's lives as cattlemen are interrupted by the appearance of one Jake Spoon, a former Ranger companion and an individual who spent some time with them previously in *Lonesome Dove*. He returns to Lonesome Dove with stories about great grass country in Montana where cattlemen can get rich. With Jake's encouragement, the Hat Creek boys decide to leave for Montana. Jake has no historical counterpart, but there is a picture of a trail driver by the same name in Saunders' *Traildrivers of Texas*. Obviously, McMurtry took a liking to the name.⁹ Jake is a gambler, drifter, and the embodiment of a charming but shiftless individual. The day after Jake's arrival with stories of Montana, Captain Call decides it is time to go across to Mexico and rustle horses for the eventual trail drive to Montana. Pea Eye gives the best description of Jake's character (p. 124).

Following their successful foray into Mexico, Jake says, "Call, you're some friend. I ain't been home a whole day and you already got me stealing horses."

"Pea Eye yawned as he watched him go. 'I swear,' he said. 'Jake's just like he used to be.'"

Augustus, McMurtry tells us, "liked Jake, but felt him to be too leaky a vessel to hold so much hope. But then, all vessels leaked to some degree." (p. 157). After Jake leaves Lorie to go to San Antonio to gamble, Gus tells her, "The trouble is, Jake ain't a man to support nobody's hopes but his own." (p. 345)

The names that McMurtry has chosen for many of these individuals and places in *Lonesome Dove* are truly classic, but none is better than the

name of the town Lonesome Dove. There is certainly no more forlorn sound than the call of the mourning dove; add to that the nature of lonesomeness or separation and you have the proper characterization of the town of Lonesome Dove, a place beaten by the heat of the South Texas sun, located at a spot on the Texas Mexican border, probably near the present day town of Del Rio. The only thing to recommend the fictional Lonesome Dove is a mercantile store and the Dry Bean Saloon. The Dry Bean holds a fair assemblage of true western characters. Lippy is the piano player who wears a brown bowler hat he found on the road from San Antonio. Before departing Lonesome Dove, Gus agrees to Lippy's request to accompany him to Montana, but can't miss the opportunity to poke fun at him.

"We've got two Irishmen and a bunch of addle-brained cowboys. I guess we could always use a man who wears a chamber pot on his head." (In the film. Compare p. 213: "Well, we got two Irishmen, I guess we can always use a man with a hole in his stomach.")

In the Dry Bean there is the quintessential young whore, Lorena, called Lorie, whose only ambition in life is to go to San Francisco. At this stage of her life, she loves the man who treats her like a whore and disdains anyone who treats her like a lady. The owner of the Dry Bean Saloon is Xavier Wanz. The historical Xavier actually lived near Castroville, Texas, coming from France, as did our fictional character. In reminiscences about his life, the real Xavier established himself as a cowboy, not a saloon keeper, but did make mention of a saloon in the Texas settlement of Quihi.¹⁰ Our fictional Xavier is extremely fastidious, constantly wiping the tabletops in the Dry Bean.

Gus expresses his irritation with Xavier's habits of wiping his table by saying, when he asks him to play cards, "Put that rag away, Wanz. Hell, the people who come in here wouldn't notice a dead skunk on the table, much less a few crumbs." (in the film)

Lorie, taken with the charming Jake Spoon, encourages him to take her up the trail, at least as far as Denver, where she can then get a ticket to San Francisco. Everyone knew that a woman going up the trail wouldn't sit well with Captain Call. It was considered bad luck, but in 1876, there was certainly historical precedence for a woman on a trail drive. Even though we can't find any from the calling of prostitution, we do know that in 1873, Margaret Borland, a Victoria, Texas rancher, was actually the trail boss of her own 2,500 head herd

which she drove to Wichita, Kansas.¹¹ In the 1870s, women were beginning to accompany their trail boss husbands up the trail. Typically, a small tent was set up for the women at night and they rode in a buggy by day. This is the treatment afforded Lorie, but unfortunately, her mentor is the unreliable Jake Spoon. He leaves her on the drive to go to Austin for a little gambling. Unprotected, she is easy prey for the notorious bad character of *Lonesome Dove*, a renegade Indian by the name of Blue Duck. Blue Duck captures her to use as trading material with renegade Kiowa still operating in small bands on the Llano Estacado area in West Texas near Palo Duro Canyon. Blue Duck's historical counterpart is no doubt the renegade Kiowa chief, Santana. Stories of his atrocities are legendary. He ranged over the same country as Blue Duck, enjoying the business of killing and torture. He ensured his death by jumping from a window in the Huntsville State Prison.¹² Blue Duck dies similarly by jumping out of a window prior to his hanging, but not before assuring Call that he will fly away as an old woman he claims had taught him to do.

Turning over Blue Duck's dead body with his boot, Call observes, "I guess that old woman didn't teach you to fly after all." (in the film)

Another interesting historical aside: it is claimed that one of Belle Starr's husbands was a renegade killer by the name of Blue Duck.¹³

It is Gus who leaves the trail to retrieve Lorie from Blue Duck and her captors, killing all six of Blue Duck's companions, but missing Blue Duck himself. Unfortunately though, he arrives too late to prevent the brutalizing of Lorie by her captors. Bringing her back to the herd, he camps at Adobe Walls. Lorie has not yet been able to talk, and Gus carries on constant monologues calling her, "Lorie, darling." (in the film)

He says at one point, "It wasn't two years ago that they had that big fight here, and now look at it. It looks like it's been empty fifty years." (p. 468) Historically, Gus was speaking of the famous battle of Adobe Walls that occurred on June 27, 1874, at a buffalo hunter's camp there. About 700 Kiowa, Cheyenne, and Comanche, under the leadership of Quanah Parker and Lone Wolf, attacked 28 buffalo hunters and one woman at Adobe Walls. A furious battle ensued, with four of the hunters killed and numerous Indians either killed or wounded. On the second day, Will "Billy" Dixon made one of the most famous shots in the West. It wasn't necessarily a shot heard

around the world, but it was felt by a Cheyenne Indian chief who was sitting on his horse some three quarters of a mile away.¹⁴ His wound brought a quick interruption to the Indians' plans for another full fledged assault. After that refusal to attack, the last great Indian uprising in Texas dwindled away.

Another important character to make the trail is Call's son Newt, who goes by the name Newt Dobbs. There is no readily available historical precedent for the existence of Newt. Call was the father of Newt by a prostitute named Maggie who preceded Lorie to Lonesome Dove. He was unable to admit publicly his affection for Maggie and thereby acknowledge that Newt was in fact his son. According to Gus, she died of a broken heart. Newt's central role in *Lonesome Dove* is not to reenact a historical character but to be a central figure in one of the most touching relationships in the entire book. It is that chasm between father and son that spoken affections have such difficulty crossing.

It is interesting to note that, as our trail drive starts in the spring of 1876, time is beginning to run out on the western frontier. Indian wars are drawing to a close. Barbed wire was invented in 1874 and will bring about the fencing of the West. The southern buffalo herds had all but been eliminated. Only the northern herd in Wyoming and Montana remains. Also, time is running out on both our heroes, Call and Gus. Whereas McMurtry does not mention their ages, these men have obviously exhausted their youth and are rapidly passing the primes of their lives. But with Captain Call's dogged commitment to see a new country, they are inspired to find fresh adventure in Montana. In that respect the trail drive has a bit of the same qualities as the Jewish search for the promised land: a long trek through a wilderness country full of hardship. Call is Moses, leading not just people, but cattle, some 2,500 head of which Gus says more than nine tenths were rustled from Mexico. They take the western or Texas trail, crossing first the Nueces River, and come face to face with one of the more controversial incidents of the book. A young Irish boy falls into a ball of water moccasins and is bitten to death. This story supposedly is recounted in several trail drive adventures, one being Teddy Blue's *We Pointed Them North*.¹⁵ McMurtry was challenged by a number of naturalists who said that there was no evidence that water

moccasins ever balled up. His response was that he simply took this from a trail driving narrative.

Not long after crossing the Nueces River, the herd is struck by lightning. The eyes and horns take on a mystical blue cast. This is similarly recounted in trail driving stories where lightning strikes a herd, killing the animals and sending electricity sparking off the animals' horns and hooves. The fictional trail drive encountered all the tough going on similar historical treks, such as dust storms, rain, swollen creeks and rivers, and droughts. The 80 mile drive of cattle without water parallels author J. Evetts Haley's description of Charles Goodnight's first cattle drive from Texas to the Pecos River. It is here Gus and Woodrow shed the images of Pierce and McNelly and take on the trappings of Oliver Loving and Charles Goodnight, two of Texas' most famous cattlemen, for whom the Goodnight-Loving Trail was named.¹⁶

The Western Trail which the Hat Creek boys followed went through Ogallala, Nebraska. Throughout the early stages of the book, Gus makes frequent reference to Clara, who was a sweetheart he had several times proposed to, but she had always declined his invitations for marriage. It was in a small grove near San Antonio that their romance got its first spark. As they draw near the town of Ogallala, where Clara now lives, Gus knows that he is going to have what may be his last encounter with his lifelong love. Clara, whose husband is in a coma, having been kicked in the head by a horse, epitomizes the spirit of the pioneer woman. There is no doubt many women fit her profile and could sympathize with the statement that she makes when describing to a young sheriff that she feels certain his wife doesn't care either for him or his baby that she had left behind. She said, "I used to be ladylike, but Nebraska's made me blunt." (p. 637)

Clara is obviously a woman of enormous courage and talent. She runs the entire ranch and has made it a successful enterprise despite her husband's absence from the effort. She has lost three boys to a fever and has only her two girls as family companions. She apparently longs for Gus and relishes his memory. That she has dealt with the twin challenges of unhappiness and loneliness and understood their pain is well expressed when one of her girls asks why the young sheriff is crying over having lost his wife (p. 615).

"Why's he crying?" Betsey asked."

“‘He’s just unnerved – he’s come along a long way and I imagine he had stopped expecting to make it,’ Clara said.”

“‘But he’s a man,’ Sally said. Their father had never cried, as far as she knew.”

“‘Men have tears in them too, same as you,’ Clara said.”

Ogallala was not a name thought up by McMurtry. It was in fact a Nebraskan version of Dodge City. It came from the Sioux Indian word meaning to scatter and was descriptive of its place on the trail as a cattle distribution point. Located on the Union Pacific Railroad, it was a hub for western shipments. The valleys of the South and the North Platte Rivers sandwiched Ogallala in a narrow strip of land, making for excellent trail routes. In 1876, when the Hat Creek boys arrived, there were a record number of cattle drives to Ogallala. More than 30,000 King Ranch cattle had been sold there that year. Activities in saloons such as Cowboys’ Rest, Tuck’s, and the Crystal Palace contributed to the community’s reputation as the churchless Gomorrah of the West. It was at this place the young boys on the drive had their introduction to prostitution, teaming up with one of the town’s finest named “Buffalo Heifer.” That was a reference to her size, not her youth.

The trail for the Hat Creek boys then takes them on past Ogallala to Miles City and the region west of the Yellowstone River. It is here that Gus has an interesting conversation with Newt, the son Call would never acknowledge (p. 744-745).

“‘Ain’t it something,” Augustus said with a grin. ‘This is rare country, this Montana. We’re a lucky bunch. There ain’t nothing better than this – though you don’t have to tell your pa I said it.’”

“... ‘Do you really know who my pa is?’ Newt asked. Mr. Gus was being so friendly, he felt he could ask.”

“‘Oh, Woodrow Call is your pa, son,’ Augustus said, as if it were a matter of casual knowledge.”

“For the first time Newt felt it might be true, although extremely puzzling. ‘Well, he never mentioned it,’ he pointed out.”

“... ‘It wouldn’t be his way, to mention it,’ Augustus said. ‘Woodrow don’t mention nothing he can keep from mentioning. You couldn’t call him a mentioner.’”

Captain Call finally selects a site for his ranch between the Missouri River and the Milk River. (p. 795-796) However, it is crossing

the Yellowstone River some two hundred miles earlier that marks one's emergence into the promised land of abundant water and lush grass. "The men began to talk of the Yellowstone River as if it were the place where the world ended – or, at least, the place where the drive would end. In their thinking it had taken on a magical quality, partly because no one really knew anything about it." (p. 747)

We're not sure where the Hat Creek boys crossed the Yellowstone River. History reveals that there was only one Texas cattle drive that ever crossed the wide Yellowstone near Miles City, Montana. For the sake of our story, we'll assume that it was our Texicans that made the crossing. One last historical footnote: it wasn't far from here that the army established an outpost in 1876. Actually, it was in Wyoming on nearby Sage Creek. Interestingly enough, it was called the Hat Creek station.¹⁷

After arriving in this promised land, Gus and Pea Eye go on a scouting expedition which develops one of the most memorable exchanges of the trail drive (p. 750). They encounter a herd of buffalo.

Gus says to Pea Eye, "Let's chase the buffalo for a while."

"Why?" Pea asked ... after a run of about two miles [he] came upon Gus sitting peacefully on a little rise. The buffalo were still running, two or three miles ahead."

"Kill any?" Pea asked."

"No, I wasn't hunting," Augustus said."

"Did you just want to run 'em off, or what?" Pea asked. As usual, Gus's behavior was a complete puzzle."

"Pea, you ain't got your grip on the point," Augustus said. "I just wanted to chase a buffalo once more. I won't have the chance much longer, and nobody else will either, because there won't be no buffalo to chase. It's a grand sport too."

"Them bulls can hook you," Pea Eye reminded him. "Remember old Barlow? A buffalo bull hooked his horse and the horse fell on Barlow and broke his hip."

"Barlow was a slow thinker," Augustus observed. "He just loped along and got hooked."

"A slow walker, too, once his hip got broke," Pea Eye said."

Gus disappears from sight only to come back with a band of Indians close on his heels and an arrow hanging from his leg. He and Pea Eye have a running fight with the Indians until they take

cover in a river bank. Then begins the most important historical reenactment of the book.

In 1868, Charles Goodnight and his partner Oliver Loving were moving cattle from Texas to Ft. Sumner, New Mexico when Loving and his scout, One-Armed Bob Wilson went ahead to Ft. Sumner and were attacked by Comanche Indians. Certainly Pea Eye and Gus in their exploits duplicate the feats of One-Armed Bob Wilson and Oliver Loving. They took refuge in a riverbank and One-Armed Bob, under the cover of darkness, floated downstream past the Indians and then went in search of Goodnight, having stripped off all his clothes and being barefoot. Loving escaped two days later and, though severely wounded, found his way to Ft. Sumner, New Mexico. Gangrene set in after the doctor failed to amputate his arm properly. Loving died, but only after he made Goodnight promise to not bury him in that foreign land and to maintain his interest in their partnership for two years so he could retire his debts. Goodnight packed him in charcoal and brought him over 1,500 miles back to Weatherford, Texas, where he buried him in the ranch cemetery. Goodnight's commitment to Loving's deathbed wish that he be buried back on the ranch in Texas helped to immortalize Goodnight.¹⁹ Woodrow Call makes the same commitment to Gus. Both of them were men of enormous courage, honest and totally committed to keeping their word.

As I said at the beginning of this talk, *Lonesome Dove* is as much about relationships as it is about history interwoven with fiction. It is really the relationships and the characters that share them that exemplify McMurtry's genius. Let's evaluate a few of these in closing. First there are Gus and Call and their friendship with Jake Spoon. Jake leaves the trail drive and moves north to pursue gambling opportunities, but unfortunately falls in with a band of outlaws led by a cold-blooded killer named Dan. Jake has no hand in the actual killing, but this band of outlaws with whom he associates killed five innocent people. One victim, before dying, escapes and encounters the Hat Creek boys. Call, Deets, Gus, and Pea Eye are immediately transformed to their former ranger roles and go in search of the horse thieves. They apprehend them after the thieves have just killed and burned two sodbusters. Jake is amongst the band. It is obvious to everybody, Jake

included, that they aren't going unpunished for their roles in killing and horse stealing (p. 571-576).

Jake tries to explain his way out of the situation saying, "I was aiming to leave them first chance I got."

Gus: "You should have made a chance a little sooner, Jake. A man that will go along with six killings is making his escape a little slow."

In questioning the outlaw leader, Gus notes, "Jake ain't normally a killer."

As Call walks away, a bandit asks where Call is going and Gus responds, "Gone to pick a tree to hang you from, son."

Jake looks despondent. Gus says, "Ride with an outlaw, die with him ... I'm sorry you crossed the line, though."

But for Dan, the guy who really instigated the killings, Gus reserves his best line. To him he says, "I'll say this for you, Suggs, you're the kind of son of a bitch it's a pleasure to hang."

Recognizing his hanging is imminent, sitting astride the horse, Jake turns to his old friends and says, "Hell, don't worry about it, boys. I'd a damn sight rather be hung by my friends than by a bunch of strangers."

Then Jake spurs his horse, saving his friends from finalizing his death. Gus's eulogy is, "He died fine."

Sometime later, discussing Jake with Dish (p. 619), Gus says, "He wasn't a killer. Jake liked a joke and didn't like to work. I've got exactly the same failings. It's lucky I ain't been hung."

The principal is that their commitment to justice was stronger than friendship.¹⁸

After the Hat Creek crowd crosses the Powder River, Joshua Deets, loyal scout and companion for more than 30 years, goes with Call and Gus to retrieve some horses that had been stolen by a band of Indians. Approaching the Indian camp, it becomes obvious that this was a small starving band and they were only taking the horses for food. A shot is fired to scare away the Indians and a small Indian boy who was blind falls to the ground, unable to locate his mother. Deets runs to his rescue, picking the young boy up to show to Gus and Woodrow, when a young brave runs from the brush with a large spear and before Call and Gus can fire a shot, he drives a spear through Deets' heart. Call later assumes the blame (p. 718).

“I guess it’s our fault, we should have shot sooner.”

Gus says, “I don’t want to start thinking about all the things we should have done for this man.”

In a rare public expression of gratitude, Woodrow carves Deets’ grave marker, which says (p. 723):

Joshua Deets

Served with me 30 years. Fought in 21 engagements
with the Comanche and Kiowa. Cheerful in all
weathers, never sherked a task. Splendid behaviour.

Charles Goodnight put the following headstone on the grave of Bose Ikard, a trusted friend and fine Black cowboy and scout: “Served with me four years on Goodnight-Loving Trail. Never shirked a duty or disobeyed an order. Rode with me in many stampedes. Participated in 3 engagements with Comanches. Splendid behavior. C. Goodnight.”¹⁹

When Gus dies in Miles City, he breaks the hearts of two women, his long time sweetheart Clara, and the former prostitute Lorie. For Lorie it is the loss of a hero. His early affections for her in her professional relationship extend to his willingness to go over 1,000 miles of desolate West Texas and recover her from the brutal ravaging she received by renegade Kiowa. He kills six men in her defense. He then returns her to the cattle herd and helps her regain her dignity, lovingly nurturing her to mental health. He touches her with the tenderness of a raindrop on a prairie flower and makes her feel very much like a lady, calling her “Lorie, darling” (in the film). In a final act of affection when he arrives in Ogallala, he delivers Lorie to the home of his former sweetheart, Clara. Lorie sees the very finest of Gus’s nature, courage, honor, sensitivity, and isn’t put off by his restlessness or lack of interest in business enterprise. Clara, who feels no less deeply for Gus, is nevertheless a far more demanding person. Gus comes back to Ogallala clearly with the intent of marrying Clara or at least making one last proposition. Clara asks him if he would stay if it meant destroying Lorie, and he says yes. Then he asks her for a kiss. She laughs and then gives him a simple peck on the cheek (p. 695-696).

Gus says, “You beat any woman I ever saw for taking the starch out of a man.”

“Still think you’d have been up to being married to me?”

Gus says, “I don’t know.”

She says, “I don’t have enough respect for men. I’ve found very few who are honest, and you ain’t one of the few.”

Gus says, “I’m about half honest.”

After Gus leaves to continue up the trail to his eventual death, Clara explains their entire relationship with this perception (p. 826). “He wanted what I wouldn’t give. I wanted what he didn’t have.”

Then there are Newt and Woodrow Call. Call watches with interest as the trail drive brings Newt from a young boy to manhood. You can see the affection and pride occasionally flick across his face as his son performs tasks in many ways reminiscent of Call in his youth.

Recognizing he needs to leave Montana and take Gus’s body to Texas, Call counsels with Newt (p. 820-823). There is a sense that this may be their final meeting.

“I have to take Gus back,” he said. “I guess I’ll be gone a year. You’ll have to be the range boss.”

He tells Newt to bring his saddle and put it on his horse, Hell Bitch. This is the horse Call has ridden all the way from Texas, an animal he holds in highest esteem. Her name says it all; she was as mean and as intelligent as any horse that he had ever owned. Then he gives Newt his Henry rifle. Later, he hands him his father’s watch and tells him, “It was my pa’s.”

His lips begin to move, but he can’t say the word “son.”²⁰

As Call leaves for Texas, Pea Eye says, “Dern, Newt, he gave you his horse and his gun and that watch. He acts like you’re his kin.”

Newt says, “No, I ain’t kin to nobody in this world. I don’t want to be. I won’t be,” and heads off to be alone, much in the manner of Captain Call. Call then rides off to Miles City, where he retrieves Gus’s body, which had been packed in salt, and loads it for the trip to Texas. Gus had asked two favors of Woodrow on his deathbed, one was to deliver two letters he wrote, one to Lorie and one to Clara, and the other was to bury him in a little grove near San Antonio where he and Clara began their romance.

In fulfilling the first part of his obligation, Captain Woodrow Call delivers the two letters to Lorie and Clara in Ogallala and is confronted by Clara (p. 831). She says she has despised him all her life; the 30 years that Gus had given to Call she wanted. She goes on

further to say, "I tell you no promise is worth leaving that boy up there, as you have. Does he know he's your son?"

"I suppose he does – I give him my horse," Call said.

"Your horse but not your name?" Clara said. "You haven't even given him your name?"

Call's response is classic. He says, "I put more value on the horse."

Here was a man who has given every material thing he has to give to his son—his horse, his Henry's rifle, his father's watch, and the ranch he sacrificed so much to found. But he can't extend himself to give that last important thing he had to give—his name.

Last there is the relationship between Gus and Woodrow. For 30 years these men, who seem to be totally opposite, have struggled against the elements of a harsh country. They fought bandits, drove the Indians from the southern parts of Texas, chased down and hung cattle rustlers and horse thieves. They protected men and honored women. They had many personality differences, but they rode through life bound by the same principles. Woodrow Call was a natural leader and Augustus was a natural follower. In every other way, they were equal partners, but Gus says on his deathbed (p. 781-786), "You don't boss me, Woodrow."

Call never needed to boss him because Augustus was always going to follow his lead; not necessarily when it involved work or business enterprise, but when it involved adventure, righting wrong, and the pursuit of justice. It was a relationship that it took death to do apart. It transcended people and personalities.

Sitting by his deathbed, Call says, "You're one of a kind, Gus. We'll all miss you."

Gus says, "Even you, Woodrow?"

"Yes, me," Call said. "Why not me?"

Among Gus's final words are, "Woodrow, quite a party."

Woodrow Call delivers the body 3,000 miles from Montana to that little grove in Texas. As Call buries Gus, he sheds tears. Embarrassed by his emotion, he says, "This will teach me to be more careful about what I promise." (p. 840)

Then he puts Gus's head marker in place. It is the Latin phrase off the Hat Creek Ranch sign that Gus had carried all the way to Montana. The Latin phrase said *Uva Uvam Vivendo Varia Fit*. The best translation I can make of that phrase is "A cluster of grapes

growing inward begets but one grape.” To me that is descriptive of all the parts that compose the total legend of the western settlement of the western frontier. Also, it took all the various personalities branded on its pages to make that one great epic story, *Lonesome Dove*.

When Lorie is hanging on Gus’s coffin as he is being brought back to Texas, she thinks, “They’ll all forget you – they got their doings. But I won’t, Gus. Whenever it comes morning or night, I’ll think of you. You come and got me away from him. She can forget and they can forget, but I won’t, never, Gus.” (p. 830)

I would say that we should never forget the historical heritage these fictional characters forged and the relationships that they fashioned on this frontier part of America that we so fondly know as Texas. They left a great historical trail littered with honor, justice, integrity, and freedom for us to follow.

At the close of *Lonesome Dove*, Call is interviewed by a young newspaper man who says, “They say you’re a man of vision.” (p. 838)

With a flashback through his mind (in the film) of the deaths of Deets, of Gus, of Jake Spoon, of Lorie’s tragedy, and of his failed communication with Newt, he says, “Yes, hell of a vision.”

FOOTNOTES

Page references are taken from the hardcover edition published by Simon & Schuster, 1985. The film version refers to the Motown Production directed by Simon Wincer, screenplay by Bill Witliff.

¹ The cattle herd in Texas exploded in population during the Civil War. Quickly recognized as a source of needed revenues to restore Texas from the economic destruction of the war, more than 10 million cows and 1.2 million horses went to markets north and east, infusing more than \$120 million in capital from 1868 to 1890 into the Texas economy. Cattle first went over the Goodnight-Loving Trail to Ft. Sumner, New Mexico, the Shawnee Trail to Kansas City or Sedalia, Missouri, and later the famous Chisholm Trail, and finally the Western Trail to Dodge City and Ogallala, Nebraska. The men who drove these cattle, mostly Texans, became the heroes of the American Western adventure.

² Strangely, Larry McMurtry chose not to do the T.V. adaptation for *Lonesome Dove*. The effort was left to the capable genius of Bill Witliff, author, publisher, film writer and producer. He did a masterful job of transferring to the screen the characters and story of *Lonesome Dove* while losing none of the brilliant storytelling of McMurtry. Sadly, McMurtry has never acknowledged Witliff's achievement.

³ Leander McNelly was only 26 years of age when named a Ranger Captain with the assignment to raise a company of men and clear the Nueces Strip of outlaws and cattle thieves working out of Mexico under Juan Cortinas and Jose Flores. McNelly put Cortinas out of the cattle rustling by killing his best cowboys and then with only 30 Rangers invaded Mexico and attacked Juan Flores' headquarters at Las Cuevas, the stronghold of Mexican bandits and cattle thieves. In the ensuing battle against a force of 300 Mexicans, McNelly and his men killed Flores and many of his men, forced a surrender, and returned a herd of stolen cattle. Sick with tuberculosis, McNelly was discharged from the service a year later and died broke in Burton, Texas, September 4, 1877. Richard King placed a monument in his memory but with no mention of his service in the Rangers. See Walter P. Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, and *Taming the Nueces Strip* by George Durham. Modern day revisionist historians have not dealt well with McNelly, ignoring his heroics and courage in settling one of the most lawless parts of Texas, preferring to side with those criticizing his tactics as harsh and abusive of the thieves' and bandits' civil rights.

⁴ One of the greatest of the trail drivers, Abel Head "Shanghai" Pierce accumulated a ranching empire around Wharton, Texas. He sent or drove more cattle up the trail than any man of his time. Colorful, shrewd, 6 ft., 5 in. tall, funny, with a booming voice, he figured prominently in the development of the modern cattle business. Truly a larger than life figure. See *Shanghai Pierce, A Fair Likeness* by Chris Emmett.

⁵ The Battle of Plum Creek followed a Comanche raid by some 1,000 braves from the high plains all the way to the coast of Texas. They were enraged by a killing of 55 Indians and all the chiefs present at what was to be council in San Antonio in 1840. The battle of Plum Creek, led by Col. Edward Burleson, resulted in a devastating defeat for the Comanche with more than 100 braves killed in the battle. That was the last effort of the Comanche to fight in the southern parts of Texas.

⁶ George Custer was defeated at the Battle of Little Big Horn by the Sioux and Cheyenne under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. He and 15 officers of the 7th Cavalry and 242 troopers died. Every soldier in Custer's detachment was killed. Though a stunning victory, it was short lived. In less than a year the Indians were subdued. Custer's Last Stand was theirs as well.

⁷ Joshua, born a slave, was a pre-eminent military leader as evident in his conquest of Canaan. He was called the servant of Moses and was sent with 11 others to search the land of Canaan, and only he and Caleb returned with a faithful report. It was he, not Moses, who led the Jews into the Promised Land.

⁸ Actually his name was Isaiah Dorman, but amongst the Sioux he was described as a large "black white man" and known as Azinpi or Teat meaning nipple, which in the Sioux language sounds like Isaiah. He settled after the Civil War in the Dakotas, was known for his size and strength, and could speak the Sioux language. Custer issued Special Order No. 2 request, "Teats" be assigned to him as an interpreter. He was killed and his body mutilated at Little Big Horn.

⁹ See pg 187 of *The Trail Drives of Texas*. Published by George W. Saunders. Picture of Jake Spoon.

¹⁰ "Medina County Pioneer" Xavier Wanz of Castroville, Texas, a brief sketch of his life —*The Trail Drives of Texas* Published by George W. Saunders. See pg. 719.

¹¹ Margaret Borland was married three times. Her last husband, Alexander Borland, was a Victoria, Texas rancher. He died in 1867 and left her to run the ranch. By 1873 she owned more than 10,000 head of cattle. She took her two sons and daughter and granddaughter up the trail. She reached Wichita, Kansas but died of "trail fever" on January 5, 1873. She was returned to Texas and buried in the Victoria Cemetery. She is the only woman to have taken her own herd up the trail, though there are many women who actually accompanied their husbands and even had children on the trail. See *Trailing the Longhorns* by Sue Flanagan, pgs. 80, 83 and 84.

¹² Santana one of the last great Kiowa war chiefs, sometimes called the orator of the plains, for his impassioned plea for Indians right to retain and roam free over the

prairies. He was feared for his merciless forays against exposed settlements once killing a small baby by smashing it against a tree. He was tried with Big Tree in 1871, the first war crimes trial in history. Both were sentenced to death, but it was commuted to life by Gov. Edmund Davis. He killed himself in 1874 jumping from the Huntsville Prison Hospital. See *Santana* by Clarence Wharton, published 1935. It is a fair account of Santana's life but with numerous omissions and mistakes.

¹³ This is mainly the often reported fiction of pulp writers and dime novelists claiming she was either the mistress or wife of the notorious outlaw Bluford "Blue" Duck. In fact, she met him briefly in Ft. Smith, Arkansas on May 23, 1886 and had her picture taken with him at the request of Blue Duck's attorney, who thought it would help his appeal of a death sentence. This was the only time they were together. See article *Wild West Magazine*, March 18, 2006, "Bandit Queen Belle Starr."

¹⁴ There has been some debate about the distance and effect of Billy Dixon's shot. He himself said it was about $\frac{1}{2}$ of a mile with a .50 caliber Sharps. The Indian Co-Lay-Yah explained the chief was not killed as often suggested, only knocked off his horse, stunned. It did, however, signal the end to the battle and the last attempt by the Indians to respond to the slaughter of the Southern buffalo herd.

¹⁵ I can find no reference to this event, though it is often mentioned by writers.

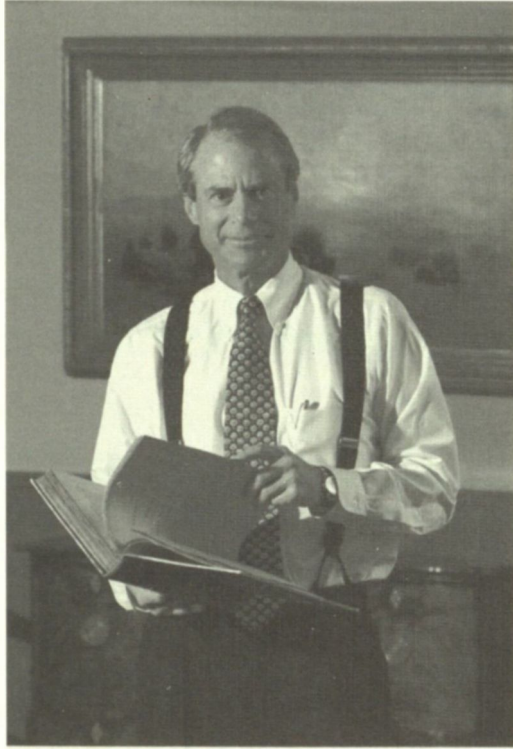
¹⁶ The Goodnight-Loving Trail, named for the two men who first trailed cattle across it, was one of the foundation cattle trails going from Ft. Billings to Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos River and then up to Ft. Sumner and later to Denver and on to Cheyenne, Wyoming. Later it traveled to the South Platte River and then in 1875 to Granada on the Arkansas River.

¹⁷ In 1875 the Army opened Fort Hat Creek in Wyoming on Sage Creek. It was mistakenly placed there much to the blessing of the trail drivers. It should have been in Missouri. It became a trail stop and stage stop and afforded protection from the Sioux to those determined to establish their ranches in Montana. It is interesting that was Gus's name for the ranch in *Lonesome Dove*, The Hat Creek Cattle and Livery Emporium.

¹⁸ Hanging of cattle rustlers and horse thieves was fairly common justice in those days. Many times, as in *Lonesome Dove*, a placard was attached to individuals describing their particular crimes.

¹⁹ See *Handbook of Texas*, page 817, for an excellent summary of the life of this truly remarkable man.

²⁰ It is nothing more than my speculation, but I wonder if Newt, in his search for a father's recognition, is not possibly McMurtry himself.



J. P. Bryan

Chief Executive Officer of Torch Energy Advisors,
Texas history enthusiast, direct descendant of
Moses Austin and relative of
Stephen F. Austin and lifelong collector of Western artifacts

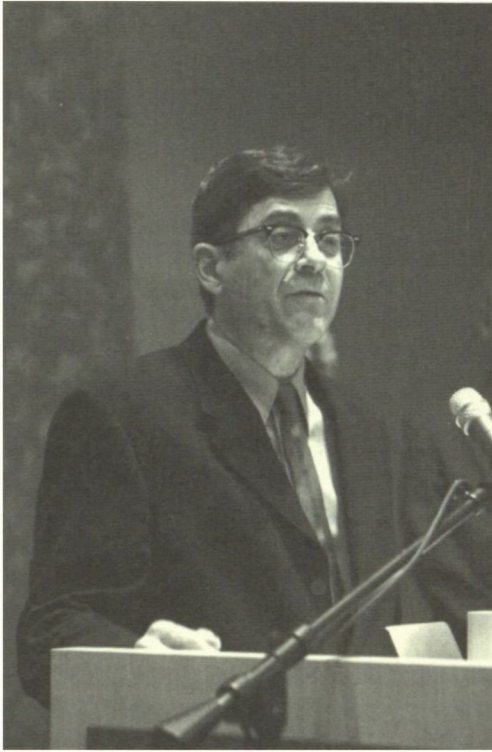
J. P. Bryan

BIOGRAPHY

J. P. Bryan is the founder, Chairman and CEO of Torch Energy Advisors. Mr. Bryan has been actively engaged in the energy business for over 20 years and previously served as CEO and President of Gulf Canada Resources Limited, Chair and CEO of Nuevo Energy Company, CEO of Bellwether Exploration, First Vice President and Director of investment banking-Southwest region for E.F. Hutton & Company, President and CEO of The Mortgage Banque, Executive Vice-President and Director of Dominick & Dominick, Inc., and Vice President of Morgan Guaranty Trust Company.

He has extensive preservation experience. He has served on the advisory board for the Brazoria County Historical Museum, as Chairman of the Board for the Institute of Texan Cultures, as President for both the Texas Historical Foundation and Texas State Historical Association, and as a Commissioner for the Texas Historical Commission. He has written numerous articles and given speeches on various subjects, mainly pertaining to Texas history and its preservation, and collects Texana. Among his numerous business awards are Texas Entrepreneur of the Year Award in 1994 and Canadian Oil Producer of the Year in 1995.

A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, Mr. Bryan earned a law degree from the University of Texas at Austin Law School, and a degree from the American Institute of Foreign Trade.



Gaylord Schanilec

**2005-2006 Recipient of the Carl Hertzog Award
for Excellence in Book Design**

Title: Mayflies of the Driftless Region

Author: Clarke Garry

Publisher: Midnight Paper Sales, 2005

Printer: Midnight Paper Sales

Remarks by Gaylord Schanilec at the Carl Hertzog Lecture, February 4, 2006:

Brenda and I are both very happy to be here in El Paso. This a welcome break from the Wisconsin winter. I would like to thank the University of Texas El Paso and President Natalicio, Robert Stakes, Claudia Rivers, and of course the late Carl Hertzog.

The fact that this award recognizes book design and fine printing is especially gratifying to me, as I have had no formal training in either. I have always, however, had people I could go to with questions. The person who first showed me the difference between fine printing and everything I had done up until that point, was none other than Gerald Lange, the first recipient of this award. I'm thrilled to be in his company, along with the rest of the previous winners of this award.

This book began as an excuse to spend more time fishing, and for the first two years, I spent a lot of time fishing. By the third year, however, it was mayflies that I was after. On the fourth year I didn't even bother with a fishing license, mayflies had so completely taken me over. This was due in large part to the enthusiasm of Dr. Clarke Garry, my collaborator in the project. His love of mayflies was infectious.

People often ask how long it takes. This book took four years, but I can't get any more specific than that. One of the first decisions that I made when I began making books was that time would not be a factor: that I would do whatever it took to make the best book possible. I don't keep track of time. That's a great luxury, and I think the essential element in this kind of work.

Another essential element is limitation. If I run out of lower case "e"s in a particular size of a particular typeface, for instance, I'm forced to improvise, based on what I have available. Limitation tends to lead us in unique directions.

One of the first things I noticed about mayflies was that each individual is unique, like a snowflake, or a fingerprint. This took a little of the pressure off in terms of how accurately I might be with my engravings: it left some wiggle room. Still, I was doing all I could to please science.

One of the first insects that Dr. Garry identified was *Ephemerella inermis*. Near the end of our correspondence, he noted that *Ephemerella inermis* had been changed to *Ephemerella excrucians*. Taxonomy is fluid. It's constantly changing. It really does reflect nature in that regard. I came to the conclusion that artists and scientists are basically doing the same thing: we're observing nature, and recording our observations as best we can. Brenda came up with the phrase "playful science" to describe what it is I'm up to, and I think it's a very good description.

We live near the Mississippi River between Minneapolis and La Crosse. Each year, in late November, or early December, the river freezes over. Soon little colonies of ice fishing houses begin to spring up on the ice near either shore. Around the New Year, a road is established across the river and the pick up trucks begin traveling back and forth. Then, in mid March, an icebreaker makes its way up the river, and soon all of the ice breaks up, and the barges once again move up and down the river.

That didn't happen this year. It's been open all year. That's never happened before, that I know of. There's an explorer named Will Steger. He's been going up to the Arctic Circle and asking the natives if they've noticed any indications of climate change. He asked one man, the man pointed to two crows feeding on the carcass of a dead fish. "We've never been here before", he said.

I don't know what's going on. Perhaps the planet's in trouble, perhaps it's not. I'm 50 years old. Chances are I won't be personally affected by any climatic catastrophes in my lifetime, but I have a 13-year-old daughter. I've seen enough to be concerned. I plan to continue working in this playfully scientific vein, but probably with more serious intent.

Thank you very much.

BIOGRAPHY

Gaylord Schanilec

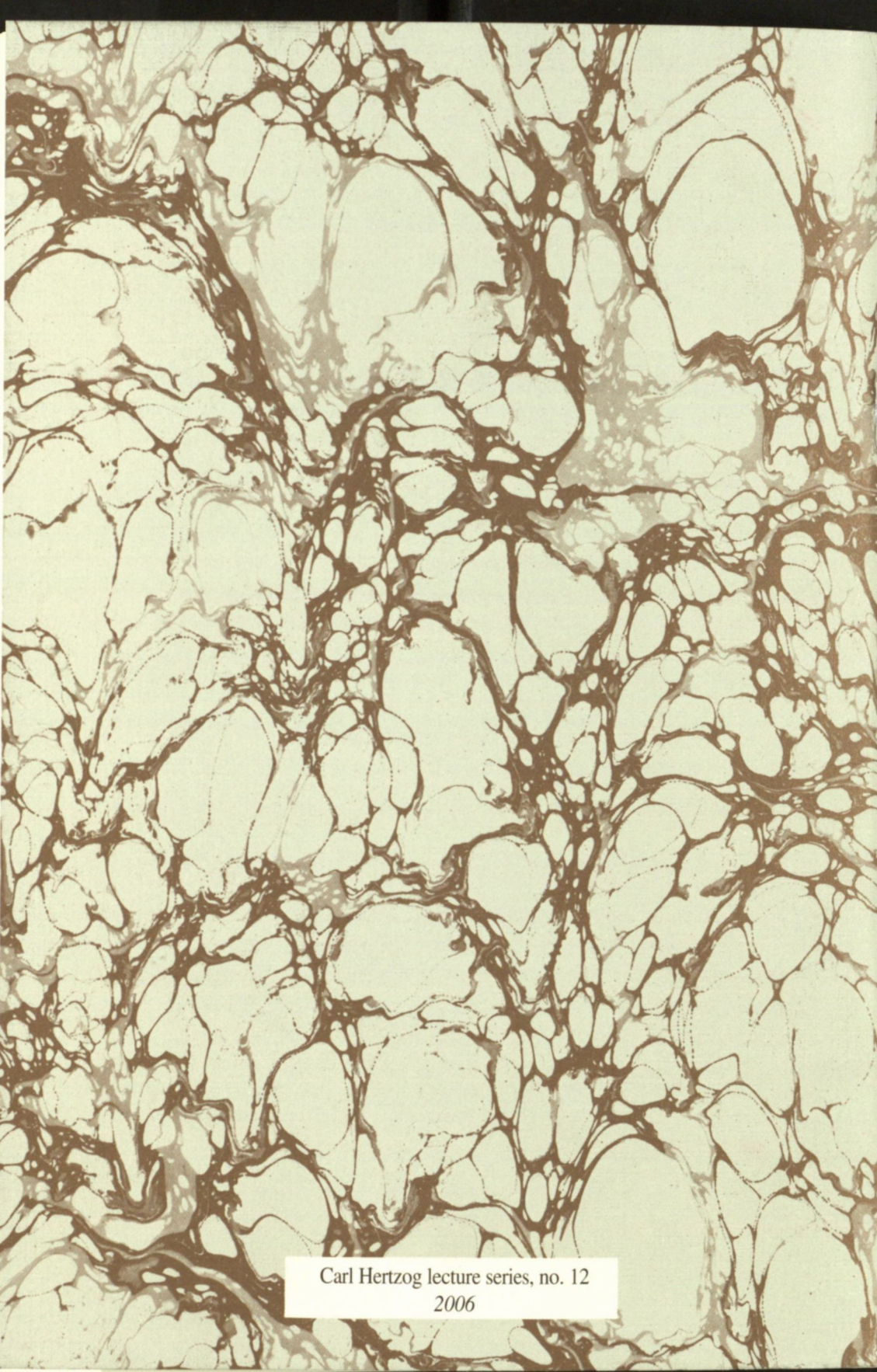
Gaylord Schanilec received his bachelor's degree in visual arts from the University of North Dakota in 1977. In 1981, he established Midnight Paper Sales, a fine printing and publishing house that specializes in letterpress and wood engraving.

You can find his work in the collections of most major special collection libraries including the New York Public Library, Yale and Harvard, the Getty Museum, The British Library, The Bodleian Library, and the University of Minnesota, which holds his archives.

Mr. Schanilec's many awards include two Jerome Book Arts Fellowships, the Minnesota Book Award for Fine Press Books, and the American Institute of Graphic Arts Award of Excellence. He has a long list of credits as speaker, teacher, and artist in residence.

Mr. Schanilec has been honored as "the foremost contemporary artist in colored wood engraving" by the Grolier Club of New York. For years, a rumor has floated around the book community that he made a pact with the Devil to achieve the mastery of wood engraving.
www.midnightpapersales.com.

Today he operates Midnight Paper Sales Press from his home and studio in the coulee country outside Stockholm, Wisconsin.



Carl Hertzog lecture series, no. 12
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