



AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

ARIZONA COWBOY POETS GATHERING NEWSLETTER



In this issue:

- Welcome
- Suggestions and Articles
- Spotlight Performer
- 2024 Poster Artist
- IWMA Awards
- 2023 Gathering Pictures

WELCOME TO THE ACPG NEWSLETTER

Tell the story, spread the word.

The **November 2023** Newsletter is dedicated to our wonderful committee members and volunteers. You all make the Arizona



Bob Burson, Newsletter Editor

Cowboy Poets Gathering happen every year! We can't thank you enough for your hard work and contributions that make the Arizona Cowboy Poets Gathering one of the best in the nation.

We have some great stuff in this newsletter edition. Our new roving reporter, Donna Gallaher, has interviewed an outstanding young man, Jack George who exemplifies the future of cowboy poetry, and I think her article is pretty special. Jack is a hard person to track down and Donna is very persistent. Donna also rounded up Jack's favorite poem which I think you will enjoy. Steve Atkinson, our 2024 Poster Artist is a wonderful, world renowned Artist whose paintings tell a story of cowboys in the west. The 2024 Poster painting, **A Good Way To Get Shot Down**, is one of his most intriguing and memorable. Also, rounding out the finish, don't miss the IWMA Awards and the 2023 Gathering Pictures!

SUGGESTIONS AND ARTICLES

We welcome suggestions for new articles and are looking for some volunteers that can contribute to the newsletter. If you have suggestions or would like to submit an article, please contact Bob Burson.

Email: acpgwebmaster@gmail.com

SPOTLIGHT PERFORMER

Jack George, The Making of A Cowboy Poet

By: Donna Gallaher

I first saw young Jack George perform in Prescott when he was 14 years old. He stood right up to the mic, looking great in his hat and neck scarf, full of confidence, and laid in to a poem like a veteran! He had poise, inflection, appreciation of the story being told, and lots of charm. Quite frankly I was impressed! He has returned to Prescott several times, and tries to make other gatherings, like Durango, Alpine, Sierra Vista, Albuquerque and similar places within driving distance of his home in Quemado, New Mexico.



Continued on next page >>

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

Jack(cont.)

But I was curious, how did this young man get started in this field? He lives with his school teacher mother and his stepdad, who is a policeman, and will sometimes go out with his father, who is an outfitter. But he has worked many jobs around his home town and hangs out with some older cowboys who would sit around telling poems and stories. Jack said he did his first declamation in Kindergarten! He said his mother helped him with the recitations and different voices and performance.



Jack George
Quemado, NM

Just 15 years old, Jack day works on many local ranches. Named after his horse trader grandfather, Jack was recently awarded the Buck Ramsey Award by the Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Jack recited his first cowboy poem in kindergarten and hasn't looked back since.

But obviously he has a natural gift for this. He plays basketball in High School and his friends there don't really get this "poetry" thing, but his parents and Cowboy buddies are very encouraging. I asked if he has any favorites of the old poets and he enjoys doing a lot of Sunny Hancock. He's not writing his own material yet but I wouldn't be surprised if that comes along, further down the road for him. As we're losing some of our really special poets as the years take their toll I wondered if Jack could see himself doing this in the future. He said he would like to think about continuing into his older years! It makes me happy to know this Cowboy Poetry tradition is being carried on by such capable hands!

Jack's Favorite Poem ~

The Bear Tale

By Sunny Hancock 2002

I was up in the Sycan Black Hills Camp
Workin' for old Z-Cross,
This was my own piece of country,
I was cook and crew and boss.

The afternoon of that year was comin' on as I recall,
Meanin' summer'd hit the cap rock and slid right
Down into fall.

The days was warm and pleasant, though the nights were kinda sharp.
I had a nice snug little cabin to keep the cold wind off my tarp.
Aspen leaves was turnin' yellow, bees was buzzin round the hive,
And it was just one of them there days
When it was great to be alive.

So I'm a-ridin' along that mornin' lookin' out beneath my hat.
I thought I'd make a little circe down through Silver Dollar Flat.
And maybe brand some big slick yearlin'
With the address of this farm,
Because I sure did need to limber up
My old stiff ropin' arm.

I'd been just kinda travelin' down this little open draw
When I came around a corner and I's amazed at what I saw.
I pulled my horse up, sat there a-gawkin' and my eyes went plumb agog.
'Cuz there's a big old brindle he-bear diggin' ants out of a log.

My old heart commenced to poundin' and I couldn't get 'nough air.
I knew I'd never have a better chance to rope myself a bear
I was trying to jerk my rope down, my old horse began to dance
Hell, old Bruin hadn't seen me, he's still busy diggin' ants.

I had my rope tied hard and solid so I said a little prayer,
Then I let out a cowboy war whoop and I built right to that bear.
The old beast heard me comin' and he beat it for the trees.

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

The Bear Tale (Cont.)

They weren't no moss a-growin' on him and he sure did split the breeze
 But I pulled right in behind him and like that bible story told,
 I cast my bread upon the water, and it came back a thousand fold.

Well, I pitched the slack right at him and I turned my pony neat,
 And I heard him grunt as he hit the ground as I jerked him off his feet.
 Then I towed him toward the timber just the way it should be done
 Hell, there wasn't nothin' to it; ropin' bears is lots of fun.

In the timber I got busy dodgin' limbs and brush and such,
 And I ain't had time to check up on my cargo very much.
 I'm gonna start by breakin' him to lead
 Or at least that's what I hope.

Then I looked back and here that bear come.
 Hand over hand right up my rope.
 Well things sure started lookin' different so I tells him, "OK Bruin,
 I'll start payin' more attention to this little job I'm doin'."

I'll just zig and zag and circle some, now you just follow me
 'Cuz you're about to meet your maker on some big old Jack Pine tree."
 Well, I zigged and zagged and circled but it seemed to no avail
 And next time I checked, old Teddy's right behind my horse's tail.

About that time, why, my old pony made a funny little jump,
 And that old bear he started climbin' up my rope, across his rump.
 I yelled and squalled and hollered and I slapped him with my hat.
 But that old bear was plumb determined; he's comin' right up where I'm
 at.

You know, I've knowed a lot of people in the hills and on the plains,
 And nobody ever told me I was over blessed with brains.
 But it didn't take no Einstein with no special high IQ
 Nor no call from God to tell me what that bear was gonna do.

I know a coward's way out's a bad one in most anybody's book,
 But that's the only route left open now so that's the one I took.
 I just bailed off and checked it to him, but a big rock broke my fall.
 Old boy, I said, it looks to me like you just bought it all.

As they went crashin' through the timber, why, I realized of course
 That I'd just lost a damn good saddle and the company'd lost a horse.
 And how's a man supposed to tell it with the boss astandin' there
 You took a plumb good horse and saddle and just gave 'em to a bear?

These thoughts and lots more like 'em kept a-runnin' through my mind
 As I went limpin' down that cow trail trying to leave that wreck behind.
 My clothes was sorta tattered and I'd lost some chunks of hide,
 But my body wasn't hurtin' near as much as was my pride.

Then I heard a noise behind me and the sound began to swell,
 Back the way that I'd just come from and I wondered what the hell?
 Then I seen my horse a-comin', steppin' lively down the slope That old
 bear's up in my saddle, got a loop built, swingin' my rope!

2024 POSTER ARTIST

Steve Atkinson

Steve is a world famous cowboy artist.

At my very core, I'm a storyteller and I strive to infuse my paintings with those stories that excite me. Stories of the American west are always front and center. Cowboys, cattle, action scenes and moments of quiet contemplation are what I love. The authenticity of historical scenes or telling the story of today's working cowboy is where my passion lies. It's really all about what the painting has to say that makes it personal and unique to me. Most days I can be found in painting in my studio, but I also love to paint on location, a practice I've been enthusiastic about since I started painting. . These days I make my home in Prescott, Arizona, in the very heart of the subject matter that fills my soul.



Continued. on next page >>>

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

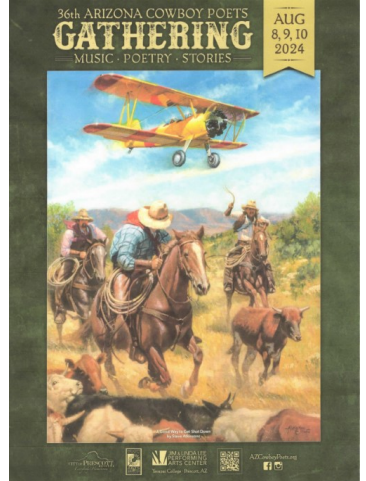
Steve Atkinson (Cont.)

A Good Way To Get Shot Down ~

Even though this barnstormer thought it'd be "fun" to buzz these cowboys and their cattle, he might just discover that these cowboys don't take kindly to this kind of prank. They might just take shot at him if they get a chance... then they'll go gather their scattered cattle.

Based on a true story told to me by a World War II pilot on how he was a pilot in training outside of Tucson. They would be flying and get bored, so they took any chance to break the monotony. Buzzing cattle was a favorite thing he liked to do.

When I first started, I was often asked why I paint cowboys. I believe I'm not only painting a way of life that is almost gone, but also a mythology that represents America at it's very essence. The cowboy code is based on a set of ethics that reflects the best of not only who the cowboy is, but who we are as a country. Things like, "do what has to be done", "ride for the brand" and "live each day with courage" has helped to weave the cowboy into the very fabric of this great nation. It's how I strive to live my life, and it's what I aim to have shine through in the stories I tell.



2023 IWMA AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE 2023 IWMA AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS!

Another Awards Show was enjoyed by all! It opened with a special performance by the new band, GONE WITH THE WEST, featuring Mary Kaye Holt, Micki Fuhrman, Merna Lewis, and Tecia McKenna. Here's all the winners in the order they were announced. Join us next year!



- Male Poet of The Year - **Floyd Beard**
- Female Poet of The Year - **Valerie Beard**
- Cowboy Poetry CD of The Year - No Better Life - **Valerie Beard**
- Cowboy Poetry Book of The Year - Windmills on the Prairie - **Yvonne Holtenbeck**
- Cowboy Swing Album of The Year - **Arizona Stars - Rusted Spurs West**
- Traditional Western Album of The Year - **Roll On, Cowboys - Andy Hedges**
- Working Cowboy Song of The Year - "**Never Cuss The Rain**" written by **Darrell Arnold & Tom Hiatt**
- Curly Musgrave Silver Buckle Award - **Ernie Martinez**
- Radio DJ/Radio Program of The Year - **Allen & Jill Kirkham - Circuit Rider Round Up on American Cowboy Radio**
- Poetry Contest Award Presentation - **Floyd Beard**
- Team Penning Contest Award Presentation - **Floyd Beard & Doug Figgs**
- Songwriting Contest Award-Winning Songs
- Traditional Western Song
- 1st Place: "**New Someday**" written by **Tecia McKenna & performed by Gone With The West**
- 2nd Place: "**Old Pard**" written by **John Lowell**
- Gospel Song
- 1st Place: "**What If There's A Heaven**" written and performed by **Aspen Black**
- 2nd Place: "**Cleanin' Out My Stable**" written by **Devon Dawson, Teresa Burluson & Belinda Gail**

Continued on next page>>>

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

IWMA Awards (Cont.)

- Pioneer Trail Award - **BAXTER BLACK**
- Bill Wiley Award - **Jane Leche**
- Liz Masterson Crescendo Award - A Tie!!
Jack George
Phoebe White
- Instrumentalist of The Year - **Hailey Sandoz**
- Duo of Group of The Year - **The Cowboy Way**
- Songwriter of The Year - **R. J. Vandygriff**
- Song of The Year - **"Cowboy 'Til I Die" written by Ed Meyer**
- Female Performer of The Year - **Kristyn Harris**
- Male Performer of The Year - **Jon Chandler**
- Entertainer of The Year - **Doug Figgs**

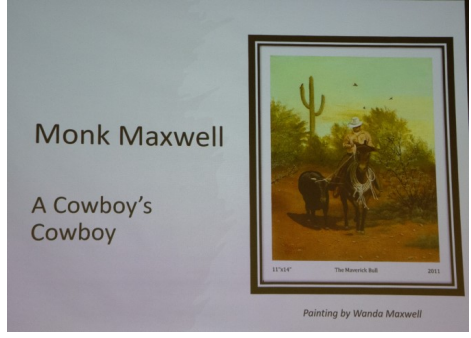
2023 GATHERING PICTURES



Continued on next page >>>

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

2023 Gathering Pictures (cont.)



NOVEMBER 2023



AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

2023 Gathering Pictures (cont.)

