

REFLECTIONS ON RANCHO CASI DE LOS CHISOS

As this past November was the 25th anniversary of Rancho CASI de los Chisos, I was asked to write a short article about my term as Alcalde. I very much enjoyed my 3 years as mayor of the ranch, although I told Hut Brown that to be politically correct, I should be called the Alcaldesa. During my term, I remember sending out the certificates to new Old 320 members, writing an article to clarify what the rules and privileges were for Old 320 members, and of course, marking all the spots in the arena on the Wednesday before the cookoff. I had a great team helping me find all the markers and painting the lines. Sometimes it was hard finding the markers because the weather had buried some of them during the year. But to be honest, some of the things I remember best about the early years at the Ranch are other events besides the TICC Cookoff.

Jim, our kids, and I were out there that June 1990 when Bucky Seelig was marking off the old 320 spots in the arena. In the mornings and late afternoon when it was cool, we helped hammer in the markers and also helped clear out some of the weeds and cactus in the arena and campsites. There were several other chili cooks out there, so Bucky had a good crew. When it was too hot, we would go sightseeing or relax in the shade playing a game of Tonk.

For many years, a group of chili cooks from all over Texas and out of state would gather at the ranch for Easter. There were lots of sightseeing trips, a wonderful potluck Easter dinner, and enjoyable evenings around the campfires. One special memory that we video recorded was when everyone got up and danced to YMCA. The guys put on a good show, especially Jim, Mel FitzHenry, Guy Smith and Everett Crawford. Another thing that I remember about our Easter weekend was on Sunday when Bucky and Carolyn (they gave up chocolate for Lent) got their chocolate bunnies out and bit off the heads!

A group of us also went out to the ranch to watch the Hale Bopp and Hayakutake comets. The skies out there are wonderful when you don't have all the lights from the cookoff. You can see the Milky Way, the Pleiades, other constellations and shooting stars. Lyn Hejtmancik and several others brought their telescopes out to share. There were also some great stories told around the campfires when Tex and Larry Schofield were there.



Another special event at the rancho was New Year's Eve 2000. The judging area was strung with lights, tables were decorated, and a lot of very good food was provided by everyone. All our chili friends were dressed up for the occasion and we had plenty of hats and noise-makers too! Jim, our son Will, and our friend Curtis Heinen provide the music for dancing the evening away. At midnight we weren't concerned about what was happening in other places around the world, because we were with family and special friends in a very special place.

I hope everyone realizes that the Rancho CASI de los Chisos is a very wonderful place to go to, not just in November, but year round. The Terlingua area has so much to offer, and you can have a great experience there anytime!

Shirley Stateczny