

## NEW MEXICO



Photographs by PAUL ROSS For The Times

**HOWDY, PARDNERS:** Gov. Bill Richardson, second from left, and reporter Judith Fein, second from right, get ready to head out for a ride on Bonanza Creek Ranch in New Mexico.

# You're on his turf now

A ride-along with the New Mexico governor requires horse-riding skills. There's a lot to see, so saddle up — and no lollygagging.

JUDITH FEIN  
REPORTING FROM SANTA FE, N.M.

The sun beat down on the weathered wooden buildings of the deserted western town. Four cowboys circled on their mounts, anticipation flashing in their eyes as they looked out toward a long, dusty road.

Then he appeared: 6 feet 2 inches tall, black cowboy hat pulled low over his eyes, chaps covering his legs. He strode past the saloon, the telegraph office and the freight depot and called for Toby, his horse. Then he rode out into the desert scrub, as the rest of the cowboys trailed after him.

It was almost a movie moment. In fact, this was a movie set at Bonanza Creek Ranch, about 20 minutes from Santa Fe, where "Lonesome Dove," "Into the West" and "Silverado" were shot. The star of the show this day was New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, former U.N. ambassador, candidate for the presidency, negotiator for the release of hostages.

The First Cowboy took time out of his schedule to show me his New Mexico, the 47th state admitted to the union a little more than 97 years ago. With its sweeping vistas, wide-open spaces and collision of cultures, it's a visual and cultural buffet that captivates the governor, who makes the Energizer Bunny look like a slacker.

So here we were, hanging out. It was his job to show me some of his favorite places. It was my job to try to keep up with him. Richardson, 61, who has spent a couple of decades in the saddle, had Toby plus his trainer with him, and he was clearly comfortable and in control. I was jelly-legged with fear as my steed and I tried to keep up.

"This is what I do for fun and relaxation and to get away from work, staff, BlackBerry and the relentless pressure," Richardson said as I clutched the reins. "I go riding once a week. I love the savage beauty of the landscape and the rhythm of the horse. It's like being on a boat on the ocean with the wind, the air, the peace. It's a dialogue between me and my horse."

He paused and glanced at me in an avuncular way, sensing my conversation with my horse wasn't going all that well: "Keep your heels down, sit up straight, don't hold the reins too tight."

Richardson looked out over the seemingly endless expanse of high desert in his adopted home. It may be his upbringing that makes him especially suited to govern this state. His father, an American, met his mother while working in Mexico City, but before their son was born in 1947, she traveled to Pasadena to ensure the child would be unquestionably an American citizen.

He spent the next 13 years in Mexico, then went to prep school in Concord, Mass., on his way to Tufts and then to Washington, D.C. He moved to New Mexico in 1978 and won a seat in the House in 1982. After his U.N. ambassadorship and a stint as President Clinton's Energy secretary, he returned to New Mexico in 2002 and was elected governor the same year. He explored a presidential bid in 2008 but ultimately chose the land of real horses over Washington horse trading.



**NATIVE TREASURES:** Richardson, visiting the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe, says he loves art, particularly pottery.

## latimes.com New Mexico Land of Enchantment

For photos of Gov. Richardson hanging with Val Kilmer, and rustic New Mexico, visit our website.

We rode from the movie set out through the scrub, sand and shrubs of the surrounding landscape, and then looped back to the western movie town. After we dismounted, I joined R.C. Brown, the governor's driver, as he drove Richardson by car to the top of Museum Hill in Santa Fe.

"I'm a pottery man, and this is my favorite museum," Richardson said, as I followed him into the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture. "I like Indian art the best, and Barbara [his wife] and I own a Fritz Scholder painting and a T.C. Cannon."

Shelby Tisdale, the director of the museum, greeted us and applauded Richardson's good taste. "Scholder and Cannon were the beginning of the modern movement, away from traditional works on paper," she explained. Scholder, who's considered the first Native American artist to portray the "real Indian," produced paintings, lithographs, photographs and sculptures and influenced a generation of contemporary native artists.

One of his best-known students was Cannon, who helped expand the boundaries of Indian art by painting Native American themes and people in a bold, contemporary, vividly colored, highly decorative style. Cannon was killed in a car accident in 1978.

"I also collect R.C. Gorman," Richardson said of the Native American lithographer and master of unique, fluid, contemporary American Indian portraits whose accessible style makes them immediately identifiable.

"He was a personal friend. He did fund-raisers for me," Richardson said of Gorman. "We'd raffle off some of his prints when I was a nobody running for Congress in 1982."

### Native artworks

The museum exhibits about 12,000 works of Native American history, has world-class historic and contemporary collections and is integral to the story of New Mexico native art.

Richardson was like an excited kid as he pointed out some of his favorite pieces. "Look at this Maria," he said, referring to an elegant black-on-black pot adorned with a bird motif, made by world-renowned Maria and her



Sources: ESRI, TeleAtlas, USGS  
LORRAINE WANG Los Angeles Times

husband, Julian Martinez of San Ildefonso Pueblo. She is credited with reviving the ancient art of traditional Pueblo pottery as it teetered on the edge of extinction. Today, her works sell for thousands of dollars and have inspired new generations of native potters.

"I love the blackness and the traditional shape of the pot," he said. "It's so black, so perfect."

I trailed Richardson as he entered an exhibit room called "A River Apart." The name, he said, referred to the Santo Domingo and Cochiti pueblos, separated by the Rio Grande. They are among 19 Indian pueblos or communities spread throughout the state. (Many welcome tourists, except on certain ceremonial days.)

"These two pueblos are very special to me," he said. "The first bill I passed in Congress in 1983 was to return land to Cochiti that was improperly taken by the federal government. Both pueblos are close personal and political allies of mine."

Besides collecting Indian art, the governor also loves attending Catholic feast days at the pueblos. "And I almost always go to Acoma for Christmas," he said of the pueblo built atop the 367-foot butte about 50 miles southwest of Albuquerque.

Richardson's face lighted up in front of a case that displayed clay "storyteller dolls," dating from the 1880s to the 1920s, that depict the oral, tale-telling tradition of native people and honor the storytellers. The smallest ones are a few inches high and the largest can be close to a foot tall. "They tell a story about life, culture, nature, and they do it vividly," he said. "They don't have to shout it or write it down — just look at the storytellers, their eyes, their mouths. You can guess at the thousand things they are doing and thinking."

He paused for a moment, reflecting on his childhood in Mexico City. "My mother and grandmother told me religious tales about the saints and Mary

### If you go

#### HEART AND SOLE

The guy buys his boots in Santa Fe at Lucchese Boot Co., 203 W. Water St., (505) 820-1883, [www.lucchese.com](http://www.lucchese.com); and Back at the Ranch, 209 E. Marcy St., (505) 989-8110, [www.backattheranch.com](http://www.backattheranch.com)

#### RANCH TOURS

There are two-hour tours of Bonanza Creek Ranch for \$15 per person; tours with a chuck wagon and barbecue lunch are \$36 for adults, \$28 for children age 8 and up. Call (505) 471-4248 for information

#### TRAIL RIDES

Santa Fe Western Adventures leads trail rides in the Bonanza Creek area for \$45 an hour or \$65 for two hours. (505) 473-9384, [www.santafewest.com](http://www.santafewest.com)

#### FOR A BITE

Tesque Village Market, open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. (505) 988-8848

#### IN YOUR SIGHTS

Skeet and trap shooting at Bishop's Lodge Ranch Resort & Spa, Bishop's Lodge Ranch, Santa Fe; \$42 per person per round. (505) 819-4020, [www.bishopsloodge.com](http://www.bishopsloodge.com)

#### BILL'S DIGGS

Complimentary docent-led tours of the governor's mansion and Richardson's art collection take place from 1 to 3 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. Next tours are Oct. 13 and 27. Reservations requested. (505) 476-2800

Magdalene and mythical stories in Spanish," he said. "They were good storytellers. My grandmother was very religious and made me go to church almost every day and to confession. I'd say to her, 'Grandmother, give me some time to sin!'"

As we headed to the jewelry exhibit, I noticed his simple silver bracelet, an elegant piece made of three rings. "I wear a bracelet every day," he said. "Usually leather and turquoise. And I'm also wearing this," he added, showing the silver Navajo cross with turquoise inlay hanging from his neck.

He pointed at a huge, stamped silver concha belt from the 1970s. "It shows their character, their religion, their strength, their beautiful skills, their silversmithing, their elegance and sense of aesthetic," he said of the craftsmen. Concha or concho belts were originally made by the Navajo, but today other tribes make them as well. These often-exquisite belts showcase fine Native silversmithing and often are decorated with turquoise or other stones.

Glancing at his watch, he realized it was time to take off for Tesque Village Market, where a friend was meeting him for lunch. Somewhere on the 20-minute trip to this low-key deli/grocery/restaurant north of Santa Fe in the village of Tesque, he put on a creamy off-white shirt that he wore, loose and unbuttoned, over his blue T-shirt.

The friend turned out to be Val Kilmer, the Julliard-educated actor whose film credits include "Batman Forever," "Top Gun" and "The Doors." His local credits include a paternal grandfather who was a prospector in New Mexico. New Mexico's First Lady Barbara Flavin Richardson also joined us.

Kilmer, an avid wildlife enthusiast, owns a ranch in Pecos about 25 miles

east of Santa Fe. He laughingly described his 60,000-acre spread as covering the distance from Century City to the Santa Monica Pier.

Our lunch was surprisingly laid-back for a funny, smart, literate, self-effacing, conceptual artist, writer and blond movie star and a bearded, mustached man, a five-time Nobel Prize nominee. The duo shares an interest in and passion for films and the film business. Kilmer has helped promote the film industry in New Mexico, and Richardson is said to have helped generate \$3 billion in film-related revenue and has had 135 films shot in the state during his tenure.

"He came to Hollywood with promises that were kept, and he was able to speak their language," Kilmer said of Richardson.

Richardson returned the compliment.

"Val starred in one of my favorite movies, 'The Doors,' and he did his own singing," Richardson said.

Tesque Village Market is also one of Richardson's favorite things. He said: "I used to live in Tesque, and I come here all the time."

"I love Tesque — it's the old Santa Fe that changes very little. There are no big homes, very traditional families and wonderful trees. People are close to the land here. Water is very important. Conflicts are still resolved here with your word and a handshake, rather than a legal agreement."

### Bang-bang play

After lunch, Brown whisked us to the skeet and trap range at Bishop's Lodge Ranch Resort & Spa, where we met instructor Dave West. He handed us pink earplugs.

"I do this every Saturday," the governor said. "I enjoy the camaraderie of Dave and the others who shoot here — cowboy types, CEOs, state employees. We don't discuss work. It's a friendly competition and a traditional sport in New Mexico. It's like horseback riding — peaceful, away from the pressure of my job. You have to be patient, concentrate on the target. I like to shoot. I'm a decent hunter. ... I have a 12-gauge gun and a concealed weapon permit. I collect revolvers. Old cowboy Colts."

To hear him better, I yanked the plugs from my ears just as Richardson hoisted his rifle to shoot. West motioned me to stick them back in, just in time. Bam! Bam! Bam! The man who occupies the governor's mansion has a pretty good eye.

We moved on to trap shooting, and the governor handed me his rifle. It was so heavy I could barely hold it aloft, and of course I missed. But he wowed his audience with his speed and accuracy at random shooting. He mentioned that Shirley MacLaine, who lives over the hill and whom he likes, opposes skeet shooting because she thinks it's violent.

Then he invited me back to the governor's mansion for a coda to our day together; he wanted to show me some of his Indian art collection.

The mansion, on Santa Fe's north side, overlooks manicured gardens and the mountains surrounding the city. Once inside, the governor proudly held up a guitar that was signed by the Eagles and presented to him at one of their concerts. Then he pointed out a painting by T.C. Cannon.

"I like it because it's from his early days, when he was pure," he said. "I like the simple lines and color," he said.

Like New Mexico itself.