



FRACKING, SOUTH TEXAS STYLE

by Edna Leal Hinojosa

Driving down Texas Hwy U.S. 281 S. when I was young, I thought of the song, America the Beautiful, “*O beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain...*” Patches of blue sky, beautiful sage brush blooming in lush purple bouquets and different blushed birds in formations flying — brought the song back.

Hungry and thirsty, chirping and flailing wings, birds with endless energy looked for a place to rest — landing on the beautiful green mesquite trees, lining the roadside on 281 S. I recall tall green trees with yellowish bean pods that have long been used by wildlife and livestock as a food source. Native Americans relied on the mesquite pod as a dietary staple from which they made tea, syrup and a ground meal called pinole. I loved pinole. Mami would make it for snack when I got home from school. She would cook it, pour it into a pie pan let it set in the fridge and once ready, slice it, put it on my plate and add fresh strawberries, shredded coconut, or chocolate. Wow, it was so good!

For the birds, the mesquite tree served as a hotel on 281 S. The green leafy branches became a roadside stop when they were looking for shelter from the hot sun or a sudden South Texas storm. The yellowish bean pod fruits, mesquite beans, hanging from the trees become decorative chandeliers, as well as food for them. Imagine, the birds have a room beneath the long green leafy branches, with room service.

We had two giant mesquite trees in our back yard in Kingsville. As I swung on the swing, I could hear the birds singing as the sun was setting reflecting the deep blue waters from the Gulf of

Mexico. One of my favorite birds was the cenxontle, the Mexican mockingbird. My window would be open in the morning and a breeze would flow through and shuffle the soft silky curtains as if they were dancing. Opening up the stage, the cenxontle would begin the aria. There was a musical accompaniment from another bird with a funny name, tijereta, the scissor-tailed flycatcher, and, of course, the blue jay. What an opera! These beautiful yellow blue birds with red, yellow and gray speckled wings would leave their safe haven and continue their long journey further into South Texas on their way to the Rio Grande Valley. They would fill their yellow rounded bellies at shallow crisp clean creeks, feasting on meaty morsels from the carcasses of other animals that had met their demise by the roadside. With their bellies teeming with food, they continued their laborious trip, flapping their wings, up, down, once again, flowing, sailing along with the wind currents, in long semicircles as the wind propelled them, swaying, up and down, floating. Sometimes they disappeared inside the white feathery clouds and quickly dropped like rain.

All these wonderful memories disappear as I drive down 281 S. I see clouds of dust, gray smoke and trees being replaced by metal towers. What has happened? Once the trunks of the mesquite trees growing wildly were used to feed campfires... now they are being hacked, chopped into small piles like trash, burned, not as campfires, but to make way for enormous trucks and tractors.

Metal diggers are destroying all vegetation and turning the earth inside out, everywhere puffing out clouds of gray smoke filled with chemicals polluting the air. The once beautiful blue sky I remember is now gray and filled with poison, no birds swoop down from the blue sky through the white soft puffy clouds. Dry, arid, waterless, unsafe excavations, turned into chemical mud stock piles have replaced part of our terrestrial, green earthy land in this part of our Texas.

As I continue my journey, I see lines of white pickup trucks with company logos on their doors, followed by more extended traffic lines on the side of the road with vehicles carrying water

tank-like containers. You try to pass them on the long dry roads, but then, you have yet more trucks with long metal cranes, reminding me of movies with robots and Star Wars machines made of cold steel.

They are now destroying all life in my Texas, our earth. The landowners that have either sold or leased their land to these companies have the option of leaving these areas, and they do because they know poisonous air and water will soon kill all the surroundings, and them as well. No greenery left except the green paper, the mighty dollar bill, the powerful green dollar. Are we safe? Is nature happy with what's happening? No, areas south of San Antonio have been experiencing 2+ earthquakes, this in an area where tremors did not exist before.

All this heavy metal machinery is used for a process called hydro-fracking, a technique forcing a mixture of water, sand and chemicals down a gas or oil well under extremely high pressure with the goal of cracking previously impermeable rock (typically shale) to create fractures that will allow trapped oil and/or gas deposits to flow to the surface. This mixture of water and chemicals create a deadly mix of sludge that is excavated by these huge bulldozers and dumped into trucks, which then take this poisonous clay filth to pits to be dumped there and soaked up by the earth.

Yup, they are dumped on somebody's property. The company has leased and paid the owner really good green dollar bills – only green left in these areas. The use of fracking requires millions of gallons of fresh water, carried through endless miles of plastic white piping. They end up sucking the water from our lakes, creeks, rivers and man-made reservoirs. As this relatively new drilling technology has ramped up nationwide, communities have seen a corresponding increase in air emissions, water contamination, disappearing wildlife and plant vegetation, and very serious problems associated with the disposal of horizontal fracking waste chemicals. Poison mud pits. The new watering holes for creatures that will be born from these chemicals.

Next time I am driving through 281 S., if there is a road left, I might get struck by a new species of bird, a yellow-bellied metal fracker. I now hear a different song! ♦

Note: This story was previously published by Gemini Ink's Writers in Communities Program.

Bio: Edna is a native of Kingsville, TX who graduated from Our Lady of the Lake University in S.A where she was Assistant Director in the Career Services Office the last 8 years. She is the mother of three children and grew up loving the outdoors.



Photos for *Fracking, South Texas Style* are by Diana Fernández, a San Antonio photographer and videographer whose interest and work is centered on social issues. Her photo series will be on exhibit at the **FRACK-ASO!** exhibit.

EAGLE FORD SHALE: A FREE FORM FRACKING CORRIDO

by Kamala Platt (excerpt of a longer corrido for the **FRACK-ASO!** exhibit)

LET THE EARTHWORMS

RETURN TO THIS LAND

UNDO THE IMPACT OF THE TRUCKS

AND SOFTEN THE SOIL, DARKEN IT FOR THE GENTE--

TWO AND FOUR LEGGED, AND THOSE WITH FINS & WINGS

THE GENTE OF GENERATIONS WILL FOLLOW WHEN WE HEAL THEIR LANDS.



*The Corazones
de Casa de Cuentos
invite you to*

share historias, memories, coffee &
laughter on 2nd Saturdays!

NEXT CONVIVIO: Saturday, April 12th

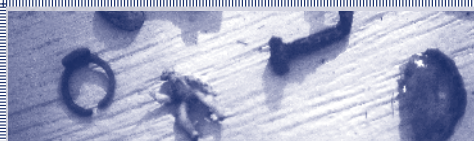
10am - 12pm @ Casa de Cuentos

816 S. Colorado (at Guadalupe St.)

For more info:

*Actos de Corazón: Honoring the Historias
of San Anto's Westside*

www.corazonesdelwestside.blogspot.com
or call Cynthia at 210.396.3688.



PASEO POR EL WESTSIDE

Saturday, May 3, 2014

@ Rinconcito de Esperanza,
816 S. Colorado



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films, photos, games, food,
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