

# Photographer revisits back roads in search of small-town life

*Collaborator on "Santa Fe Style" savors New Mexico culture*

BY JOAN FENICLE

**R**enowned for his elegant book photography, Jack Parsons has just released "Dark Beauty: Photographs of New Mexico," featuring more than 100 rarely published photos culled from shots he has taken over the last 35 years.

He has produced 15 books, some of which are lifestyle books like "Santa Fe Style" and others which are pure labors of love, like "Low 'n Slow: Lowriding in New Mexico." Although Parsons has come to live in New Mexico the long way around – via New York, Europe and Colorado, after graduating from film school in London and completing his BA and MA in English Literature at the University of Colorado – now, like many of us, he can't imagine living anywhere else.

***abqARTS:* As a successful filmmaker, documentarian, and photographer - financial considerations aside - what do you prefer to be doing?**

I prefer to take photographs. In the past when I made documentary films, the bulk of the time was spent raising money and after a while (15 or so films later) you just get burnt out. With photography, it's pretty much just you and your camera discovering what is meaningful to you and you can always return when the light is right without worrying about a crew and the money you'll be spending. Besides, I like that in photography you can really spend time with an image.

***abqARTS:* New Mexico has changed considerably in the 35 years you have been shooting here. Is it still possible to discover little known places and people?**

There are always new places to discover and explore and we're fortunate in New Mexico because of the traditional cultures here that change comes more slowly than in other places. Besides, you can always go back to many of the same locations because your eye and your interests change and you can see many of the same things in different ways and photograph them differently.

***abqARTS:* What is your favorite location here for filmmaking or photography?**

I'm particularly attracted to northern New Mexico because I've spent most of my time here. I'm always drawn to the small villages like Chimayo, Trampas, Guadalupita. Also, I like to go northeast to Wagon Mound and Roy and Gladstone, smaller out-of-the-way towns out in the plains.

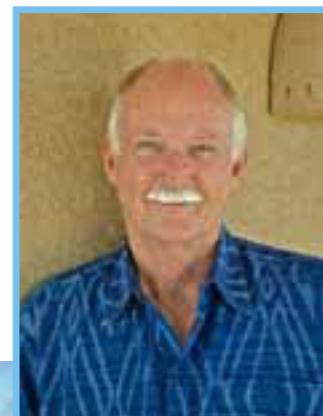
***abqARTS:* Please share your favorite image in the book and the story behind it.**

I don't have a favorite image in the book, but I very much like this photo of the Doberman on Gonzales Lane in Santa Fe. I've often thought it would make a great poster—"New Mexico, Love it or Leave it." In fact, the dog lived up the street from us and was a wonderful, playful and gentle female named Sienna. I used to see her every day for a couple of years until she was, unfortunately, hit by a car. I often thought that this photo illustrated the deceptive quality of much of New Mexico. Too many newcomers shy away from environments they don't understand because they look poor or different or even menacing when they're actually safe, welcoming, and a relief from the world of gated communities and insulated lifestyles.

***abqARTS:* With all of the advances in technology, what kind of creative work do you see yourself doing a decade from now?**

If I should live so long, I'll still be doing books but they may be all online by then or on demand. As computer screens continue to improve and old computers continue to be replaced, then photos will look better and better on our computers. But having said that, there's still no substitute for holding a beautiful art book in your hands and savoring every image.

– Joan Fenicle is photo editor for *abqARTS*.



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