

1-1-1998

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### Recommended Citation

. "In Passing: Calvin P. Horn." *New Mexico Historical Review* 73, 1 (1998).  
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmhr/vol73/iss1/6>

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# In Passing: Calvin P. Horn

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DAVID V. HOLTBY

“I have come amongst you with two objects in view: namely, to employ my time honorably to myself, and usefully to the people of the Territory.” With these words New Mexico’s second territorial governor, William Carr Lane (1852–53), introduced himself in his inaugural address. Lane’s statement, recorded in Calvin Horn’s 1963 study, *New Mexico’s Troubled Years: The Story of the Early Territorial Governors*, also serves as a summary of Calvin’s life: he spent his time in honorable pursuits and in service to his state. He died in Albuquerque on 18 December 1996. Throughout his life he distinguished himself as a businessman, public servant, publisher, author, and philanthropist.<sup>1</sup>

Born on 30 October 1918 in Kentucky, Calvin Horn came with his family to New Mexico at the age of three in the hope that his mother would recover from tuberculosis. By the time Calvin was fifteen, both of his parents had died. He never dwelt on his childhood hardships; instead, he and his older brother H. B. pooled their money from work as *Albuquerque Journal* paperboys and, in Calvin’s senior year at the University of New Mexico in 1939, founded Horn Oil Company. Building on his accomplishments, during World War II Calvin rose to the rank of Captain while serving in photo intelligence assignments with the Eighth Air Force in England.

Following the war, both Calvin and H. B. steadily expanded their oil business in New Mexico to twenty-six filling stations before leasing them to Plateau, Inc. in the mid-1970s. In addition, the Horns anticipated Albuquerque’s growth on the East Mesa. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, they purchased and later developed large tracts of land as the Northeast Heights grew toward the Sandía Mountains.

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Mr. and Mrs. Calvin P. Horn, ca. 1979–80. Photograph courtesy of University Archives, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

Calvin Horn's public service began when he entered New Mexico politics in the late 1940s, serving six years in the state House of Representatives, including one term as speaker in 1951, and four years in the state Senate. In May 1960, Calvin ran unsuccessfully in the primary

for the statewide congressional seat held by a first-term incumbent Democrat. He also ran third in a field of five Democrats in the August 1968 gubernatorial primary, garnering just 282 fewer votes than second-place finisher Bruce King.

In the fall of 1970, Governor-elect Bruce King appointed Horn to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico (UNM). Horn served as president of the Board his entire first term (1971-77) and was secretary-treasurer for much of his second term (1977-82). While still a regent, Horn self-published *University in Turmoil and Transition: Crisis Decades at the University of New Mexico*, his account of UNM under presidents Tom Popejoy, Ferrel Heady, and William E. "Bud" Davis.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to his service as a politician and university regent, Calvin also served on the boards of two banks as well as the boards of civic groups, charitable organizations, and private schools. From the late 1970s until his death, Calvin devoted much of his time and talents to establishing and permanently endowing Noon Day Ministry, a nationally recognized multi-service facility aiding the homeless in Albuquerque. In 1993, Calvin and his brother H.B. were awarded the New Mexico Outstanding Philanthropist Award.

As a publisher and writer, Calvin focused on New Mexico and Southwestern history. In 1959, he and his friend William S. Wallace, the librarian at New Mexico Highlands University, became co-principals in Horn & Wallace Publishers. Both men were active in and officers of the Historical Society of New Mexico during much of the time they were publishers. Among the fifty-plus books Horn & Wallace issued were reprints of such classics of Southwestern history as the abridged two-volume reissue of Ralph Emerson Twitchell's 1914 *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, 5 vols. (1963), a facsimile of the 1889 edition of Hubert Howe Bancroft's *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (1962), and George Sánchez's classic 1940 study of the Chicano experience, *Forgotten People* (1967). Original titles also appeared on their list, including Calvin's own *New Mexico's Troubled Years* (1963), the eighth title in the Horn & Wallace imprint. The chapters of this book first appeared in *New Mexico Magazine* between June 1957 and October 1963. The magazine's long-time editor, George Fitzpatrick, also collected popular articles into an anthology (*This is New Mexico* [1962]) and the first book-length photographic study of New Mexico landscapes in color (*Profile of a State: New Mexico* [1965]). Evidence of the lasting appeal of some of the books is found in the University of New Mexico Press' reissue of several Horn & Wallace reprints: including, the Sánchez volume (1996) and Lydia Spencer Lane's *I Married a Soldier* (1987). Following Wallace's death, Calvin issued books briefly under his own imprint.<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 1982 Professor Richard Etulain of UNM's history department suggested that I ask Calvin to support a lecture series in Western history. About the same time, however, Calvin was deeply involved in stewardship to Noon Day Ministry, so he asked that we postpone the discussion for a year or two. Early in 1984 Calvin was again ready to talk about our idea for a lecture series. He, Richard Etulain, and I sealed the agreement with nothing more than the classic western gesture—a handshake. Calvin set up a ten-year financial structure for the lecture series and the books that would result, but he stepped back from its management. That was a considerable act of forbearance on his part since no sooner had we created the Calvin P. Horn Lectures in Western history and culture than the field of Western history underwent a so-called revisionist revolution. The very type of history Calvin most valued—a powerful narrative of frontier times—was deemed passé. But Calvin took genuine pride that academic historians recognized his series as the premier lectureship in Western history, that five of the nine books since published have won awards, and that all the titles published have been widely read by students.

Calvin's love of history was matched by a desire to share its appeal. Indeed, the material collected in *New Mexico's Troubled Years* had its origins in his search for captivating stories to tell at public and civic gatherings and in his community college courses. And the proceeds from the sales of the book endowed a fellowship in history at UNM that has benefited graduate students for over thirty years, including one graduate who returned to deliver the 1987 Horn Lectures in Western History and Culture: Professor David J. Weber of Southern Methodist University.

In spite of Calvin Horn's tremendous public service to the people of New Mexico, what mattered most to him was family and faith, and his love for sharing stories about both. An accomplished raconteur, Calvin could recall just the right detail and mimic both voice and mannerism. For all of his own accomplishments and his interest in the past, Calvin focused his conversations and attention almost solely on the present and future. New Mexico is the better for his life.

### NOTES

1. Calvin P. Horn, *New Mexico's Troubled Years: The Story of the Early Territorial Governors* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Horn & Wallace, 1963).

2. Calvin P. Horn, *University in Turmoil and Transition: Crisis Decades at the University of New Mexico* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Rocky Mountain Publishing Company, 1981).

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3. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The Leading Facts of New Mexico History*, 5 vols. (1889; Albuquerque, New Mexico: Horn & Wallace, 1963); Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Arizona and New Mexico* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Horn & Wallace, 1962); George Sánchez, *Forgotten People* (1940; Albuquerque, New Mexico: Calvin Horn Publishers, 1967); George Fitzpatrick, *This Is New Mexico* (1948; Santa Fe, New Mexico: Rydal Press, 1962); George Fitzpatrick, *Profile of a State: New Mexico* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: Horn & Wallace, 1964), and Lydia Spencer Lane, *I Married a Soldier* (1893; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

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