

## **The Chronicles of Shalam**

(as further explained in the Tucumcari Tapestry)

by John Farrow

**T**he fabled, long lost Chronicles of Shalam were recently discovered when a secret compartment in the wheel well of a 1956 Chevy low-rider inadvertently popped open while hopping the curb of a Taco Bell in Española, New Mexico. Thought to have been written by various Penitente scribes with help along the way from assorted aliens, both illegal and extraterrestrial, the Chronicles were last seen being used by Shirley McLaine to make out her grocery list at a gallery opening in Santa Fe.

Somewhere along the line, the Chronicles were further expounded upon by the Tucumcari Tapestry, discovered in an outhouse along Route 66 under a stack of dusty Sears Roebuck catalogs. Together these two documents provide the single most accurate history of the formative years of the Southwest and what would become known as New Mexico.

In the beginning, the Chronicles tell us that once God finished creating such an unimaginable hell in Texas that even He couldn't stand it, He thought it high time to move further west to try again. Unfortunately, He hadn't counted on the fact that anything that works elsewhere fails to work at all in New Mexico. Even He soon retreated and sent in the Faithists.

The Faithists were led by a New Yorker running from creditors who established Shalam Colony on the banks of the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico and wrote the *Book of Oahspe* in his spare time. This book was their version of the Bible and defined an idyllic way of life in the "fair land of flowers and flowery land of the fair." But these folks

were as clueless as their prose was turgid. If the locals hadn't showed

them how to cook beans, they would have been toast long before their divinely appointed time.

Everyone in New Mexico seemed to be running from something or other and long distance running just came about naturally. In 1680, the Pueblo Revolt saw teams of runners fanning out from Taos Pueblo in what could be called the area's first ultra, albeit in attacks against Spanish colonizers. The result was a huge victory for the home team.

Not long afterward, settlers were again making their way northward up the Rio Grande past a spot in central New Mexico where the hindquarters of a gigantic mastodon were buried and that became known as the Elephant's Butt. The name has since evolved in polite society to Elephant Butte.

In the northern part of the state, many claimed to be bothered by the Taos Hum which generally could be heard only by Santa Fe channelers who said it sounded like "Ommmmmm," or meditating hashers who swore that it sounded like "On-On." Whatever. Others, mostly those of the canine persuasion, could hear the Taos Whistle.

Another runner – this one running from the law and known as Billy the Kid -- became the leader of a pack of desperados who appeared to be linked to each other by virtue of a common middle name. Billy is thought to have been related to Willie the Weasel, late of the Lower East Side.

Buddy Holly was not a New Mexican but he at least made a point of recording his music in Clovis – the Clovis Point, as it were. He was no runner, though. When invited to the Duke City Marathon, he is said to have replied, “That’ll be the day,” a thought he later took with him into the recording studio. Waylon Jennings, an early Holly band member with a fortuitous aversion to flying in small airplanes, was still working on the Clovis Counter-Point at the time of his death.

All of this pales in light of events near Roswell in 1947 -- cattle mutilations multiplied resulting in cows gone mad, the Virgin began appearing on tortillas at the dinner table and the chattering classes gave up *carne adovada* in favor of tofu tacos. And the Faithists themselves came full circle -- selling salvation on the Internet.

Even though things are not always as they seem, the more they change, the more they stay the same. You can’t run from it.

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