



# **THE BUGLE CALL**

**Quarterly Newsletter of the Fort Bayard**

**Historic Preservation Society**

**October 2025**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am pleased to inform the membership that on the evening of October 9, 2025 the Director of the New Mexico General Services Administration and the New Mexico Department of Tourism hosted an information-gathering meeting at the New Deal Theater, with the theme of "The Future of Fort Bayard." The session was introduced by Lt. Governor Howie Morales, who grew up at Fort Bayard.

The meeting was well attended, and included a sizeable number of members from our organization, as well as current and former elected officials from the Grant County community. The gathering featured the consulting firm that has produced the outline of a vision plan for our beloved Fort Bayard. I am happy to share that the preservation and interpretation of the magnificent history surrounding the property was a central theme of the plan going forward.



In remarks after the presentation, Mayor Arnold Lopez of the Village of Santa Clara appealed to all in attendance to continue to partner with the Village, the State, and all other interested parties in helping realize the potential for Fort Bayard. I would like to join with the mayor in that request as well, particularly to all of you who have joined our

organization to help promote our goal of keeping the stories of Fort Bayard alive and vibrant. Much remains to be done, and the year 2026 could be a turning point in the lengthy struggle to get a long-term commitment from the State and others to secure the future of this neglected resource.

The audience was informed by the consultant team that another working session will be held for the public, probably in the month of November. As soon as we have a date, time, and place for that event, we will let you know. Capital outlay sessions will be held over the next few months, and we will be calling on our membership to contact our legislators to urge them to provide the monetary resources that will be needed to move the plan forward. This well could be our best opportunity yet to truly advance the cause of historic Fort Bayard!

*Doug Dinwiddie*  
*President, FBHPS*

## FBHPS FUNDRAISING RUMMAGE SALE TO BE HELD SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25<sup>TH</sup>

On Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, FBHPS will hold a fundraising rummage sale at the Santa Clara Armory (Hwy 180 next to Dollar General) from 8 am to 2 pm. Some of the items that will be available for sale are books, DVDs, art work, home decor, furniture, tools, small kitchen appliances and cookware, board games, Christmas decorations, and much more!



Please come out to the Armory on the 25<sup>th</sup> to support our cause, and tell your family and friends about this event. Who knows what unexpected treasures you will find?

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## DOUG DINWIDDIE TO BE RECOGNIZED DURING TAMAL FIESTA AT FORT BAYARD SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>

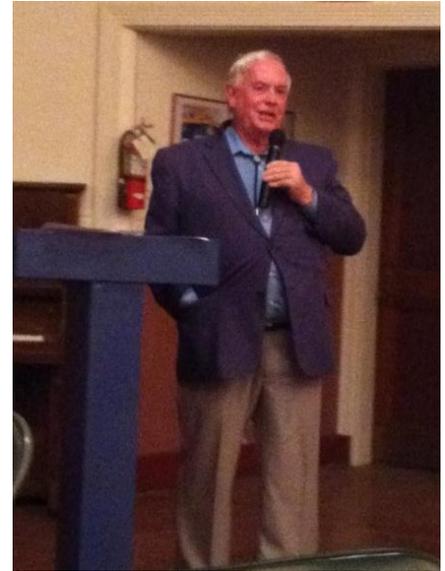
On Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, the annual Tamal Fiesta will be held on the grounds of Fort Bayard. This popular fiesta will feature booths sponsored by various charitable and civic organizations (including FBHPS), a car show, musical entertainment, a disc golf tournament, and of course, the food! But in addition to the usual festivities, the FBHPS is pleased to announce that our president, Doug Dinwiddie, will be recognized at the Tamal Fiesta for his service to Fort Bayard and the Grant County community.

Doug is a fourth-generation citizen of the Grant County area, descended from a farming and ranching family that homesteaded in the Cliff-Gila area. Doug grew up in Pinos Altos, and was an honor graduate of Silver High School. He received his B.A. and M.A. degrees in history from Western New Mexico University, graduating with high honors. He then served as the curator/director of the WNMU Museum from 1974 to 1987. He completed the Ph.D. in history and political science at Northern Arizona



University, then served as Professor of Social Science at the Carlsbad branch of New Mexico State University for twenty-two years.

Following retirement from higher education in New Mexico, he went on to teach another six years at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. Doug received awards for outstanding teaching at both NMSU and CSU. Returning to Grant County in 2015, Doug and Becky, his wife of 54 years, became active in the Fort Bayard Historic Preservation Society. Doug has served several years as the President of FBHPS, and remains active in education, as an instructor in the Western Institute for Lifelong Learning (WILL) at WNMU. He enjoys doing research and giving tours at historic Fort Bayard, and feels honored to be associated with the FBHPS.



**Doug Dinwiddie Speaking  
at CSU**

Please come out to Fort Bayard on November 8<sup>th</sup>, enjoy the fiesta with your friends and family, and congratulate Doug on this well-deserved recognition. And while you are there, be sure to visit the Fort Bayard Museum!

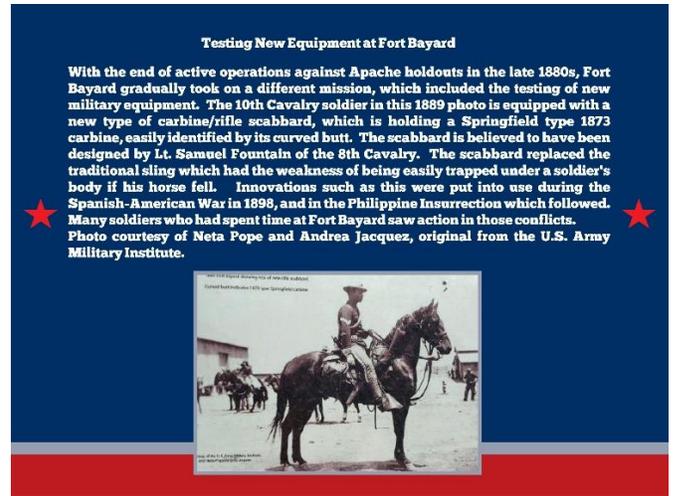
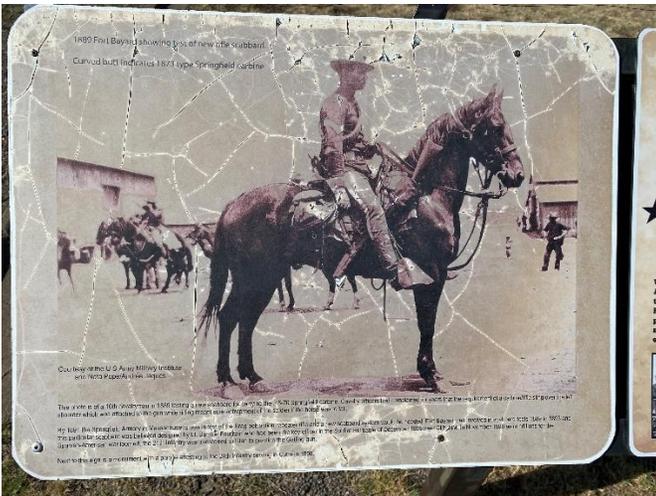
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## **FORT BAYARD'S INTERPRETIVE SIGNS: BOTH A SUCCESS AND A CHALLENGE**

One of the ways that our organization accomplishes its mission of communicating Fort Bayard's rich history to the public is through our interpretive signage on the grounds of our National Historic Landmark. We exhibit and maintain approximately 30 outdoor signs that show photographs and explanatory text to our visitors. We continue to receive very positive feedback from the public about the signs, and are happy to offer this service to our audience.

The challenge is to keep the signs in suitable condition to communicate our message. Our southwestern sun presents a hazard to the long-term health of the sign surfaces, as do bird droppings and other environmental threats. We work closely with local sign manufacturer Rudy Dominguez to find the most durable surfaces available within our budget. We also have adopted a National Park Service technique of attaching a thin strand of wire along the top of the signs, that humanely dissuades birds from perching there to "do their thing."

Even with all our efforts, sign replacement is a constant but necessary expense. If members would care to donate toward their upkeep, we welcome all contributions to that purpose, and even offer the option of an “adopt a sign” process that would designate the donations toward a particular sign. If this would be of interest, contact us via email at [info@historicfortbayard.org](mailto:info@historicfortbayard.org).



**Before and After Interpretive Sign Replacement**

## VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER

### DENISE SINGLETON

Our organization is happy to recognize Denise Singleton as this issue’s Volunteer of the Quarter. Denise has been in the Silver City community since 2014, when she relocated from northern California, where she completed a career in the medical field. She earned licensure as a Clinical Laboratory Scientist, earned a law degree, and worked in the specialized field of medical device regulatory compliance. After retirement, she was able to follow one of her lifelong passions, the study of history. Long interested in other aspects of American history, she is now working hard to learn about the colorful past of our American Southwest.



Denise has proven to be a cornerstone of our volunteer efforts in the Fort Bayard Historic Preservation Society. She manages membership records, serves as the Secretary for our organization, volunteers at our weekly movie nights, and very importantly serves as the editor of *The Bugle Call*, which she was instrumental in getting started. When not working on our behalf,

Denise enjoys doing mosaics, reading, watching and feeding the birds in her backyard aviary, and camping with her two dogs. Thank you for all you do, Denise!

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## THE FORT BAYARD STORY

Dr. John Bell is leading a project to collect oral histories of persons who worked and/or lived at Fort Bayard during the hospital era. We will publish one of these interviews in each issue of *The Bugle Call*. (Stories are edited for space and clarity.)

### MIKE MELENDREZ

*As told to Dr. John Bell*

Mike Melendrez was born in 1928 in California. His family lived in Silver City, but his father was harvesting crops in California at the time of his birth. There were 9 children in the family, including twins that died in infancy.

Mike's mother died when he was four, so from a very young age he starting doing small odd jobs just to make enough money to eat. He worked at shining shoes, selling newspapers, delivering wood, and selling his grandmother's tamales. During these years, he lived at first with his older siblings, and then with his grandparents. He left school after eighth grade, but he was self-supporting. He worked at Howell's Drugstore for about \$14 a week, and then at Kennecott Copper even though he was only 15 or 16 at the time. WWII had started by then, and it is likely that Kennecott was not too strict about age requirements.



Mike Melendrez, age 97 (May 2025)

All of Mike's four older brothers served in WWII. In 1945, shortly before the end of the war, Mike also enlisted in the US Army. Much of the time he was stationed in Korea. (The actual Korean conflict or war was from 1950 to 1953.) In 1946, American troops were already stationed in Korea, and Mike served as a Military Policeman there. Though armed, he never used the gun.

His time working at Fort Bayard began after he returned to Grant County. He found a job at Fort Bayard Veteran's Hospital, where he started by picking up trash. But he advanced to an orderly position, and ultimately to a role as a surgical technician in the operating room. On the days when there was no surgery scheduled at Fort Bayard, he

was cross-trained to do ambulance transport, and to assist in the pharmacy and with autopsies.

Mike lived at Fort Bayard before he was married. There were several men that lived there in a house with several small rooms down the hill from the water tower. He married Leona Barela in 1950 when he worked at Fort Bayard. (She died in 2024 after seventy-four years of marriage.)

Mike thinks there were about 250 patients at Fort Bayard at that time, many of whom were there because of tuberculosis. He said that when he was involved with a patient, he always wore a mask. The patients were usually older men and there were few female patients. If a patient at Fort Bayard had a surgical issue, it was typically addressed at Fort Bayard. Interestingly, if a female did require surgery, Mike was not allowed in the operating room.



Mike as an MP in Korea

As a surgery technician, he sterilized the instruments by using the autoclave. There were no plastics that were thrown away after one use, as is the case in recent days. Everything was sterilized and reused, including syringes and needles. The needles were also sharpened after use.

The surgical procedures that he best recalls, and the most important, were thoracoplasties. This was a well-known surgical treatment for tuberculosis during that period. The time that Mike worked at Fort Bayard was before medication to treat tuberculosis was completely developed. Thoracoplasties became the standard of care for a subgroup of patients.

The mycobacteria bacillus that causes tuberculosis thrives on oxygen. Reducing the oxygen supply kills the mycobacterial germ. For the people who had one good lung and one diseased lung, it was possible to collapse or largely collapse the bad lung, thus depriving the germ of the oxygen needed to survive. Often, several ribs were partially and permanently removed. This would involve removing a small portion of each rib, taking care to remove enough rib that the entire portion of the lung involved would be permanently collapsed. Often the entire lung would be rendered nonfunctional. However, people who have only one good lung can survive even at 6000 feet elevation, but it often limits their activity.

Mike discussed at length the procedure the surgeon performed to be sure the ribs remaining in the chest would not be painful to the patient. The judgment of the surgeon was critical. If too many of the rib portions were removed, the entire chest

cavity collapsed. And the orthopedic structure of the body was affected, including the heart and blood vessels. If too little was removed, air would still move through the lungs and the mycobacteria would still proliferate. In addition to collapsing the affected lung laden with TB germs, the procedure included evacuating the lungs of mycobacteria abscesses and cellular debris.



Thoracoplasty Patient

The thoracoplasty was the last of the surgical procedures used to “starve” the tuberculosis germ of oxygen. Mike said the patients “looked funny” after the procedure. Indeed, they did. The good remaining lung hyperexpanded and the collapsed lung contracted. Thus, the patient tilted toward the collapsed lung, most notably when the patient walked. The patient lost the normal swing of the arm on the affected side when they walked. The patient’s face on the affected side also became different. But when the procedure resulted in the tuberculosis being arrested, the patients lived for many years.

Medication to treat tuberculosis was developed during Mike’s time at Fort Bayard Medical Center. Streptomycin was available by 1946. Para-amino salicylate (PAS) became available in 1948, and Isoniazid became available by 1953. Although all of them can have serious toxic side effects, these 3 drugs sounded the death knell of tuberculosis. (This statement is not totally true, but almost.) Mike remembers providing some of these medicines, particularly streptomycin. This would be easy to remember, because patients received about 5 painful shots of this medication per day.

Mike decided to leave his employment at Fort Bayard after a few years because of its uncertain future. But in fact, Fort Bayard lasted as a veteran’s hospital for another decade thanks to the efforts of many people, including state representative Tom Foy.

After leaving Fort Bayard, Mike transferred to the veteran’s hospital in Tucson in 1954, where he worked and was also a patient. He began to experience some problems with weight loss, weakness, and several episodes of lower extremity paralysis. When he was hospitalized at the Tucson veteran’s hospital Mike thought then, and still thinks, that the hospital doctors and personnel thought that he was malingering and/or had a psychiatric issue.

It took a return to Silver City on a short leave of absence to obtain the correct diagnosis. He saw a physician at Wyatt’s Clinic in Silver City where he was immediately diagnosed with Grave’s disease with severe hyperthyroidism, which can rarely cause periodic paralysis. Mike said he was much improved in only a few days after treatment began.

When Mike had his next medical consultation in Tucson, the visit began with the doctors and other personnel making derogatory remarks. Mike verbally lashed at them, and they were somewhat humbled. He eventually had a thyroidectomy at a veteran's hospital in California.

Mike left the veteran's facility in Tucson in 1961 and returned to Grant County. He operated Mike's Phillips 66 service station here in Grant County for 35 years. He worked long hours at the station, opening at 7 am and closing at 6 pm. His wife Leona and sons also worked with him. He sold gas on credit to all who could not pay and gave bubble gum to all the children. This was long before "pay at the pump" that we are all familiar with today. All of Mike's customers received personalized windshield cleaning and various other services.

Despite some serious health challenges over the years, as he celebrates his 97<sup>th</sup> birthday he remains cheerful, optimistic, very alert, and exercises to the best of his ability. This summer, he was awarded a "Quilt of Valor" by the Southwest NM Quilt Guild in recognition of his military service.

Thank you, Mike Melendrez, for your assistance in the fight to eradicate tuberculosis. Mike, thank you and your four older brothers for service in WWII. And finally, thank you, Mike and Leona (now deceased), for becoming outstanding citizens after starting from such humble beginnings and for raising your wonderful family here in Grant County. The Fort Bayard Historic Preservation Society salutes you!

I also thank Mike's grandson Esteban for his assistance in obtaining this information and for the tender care he gives Mike every day that makes Mike's life so much easier.

--John Bell



Mike and Family at Quilt of Valor Presentation

## HISTORIC CHARACTERS OF OLD FORT BAYARD

### JOHN J. PERSHING: FORT BAYARD'S MOST FAMOUS RESIDENT

When he last set foot on Fort Bayard soil in September 1922, General John J. Pershing was arguably the most famous, and perhaps most admired, American alive at that moment. The occasion that brought him back to the site of the first military post to which he was ever assigned, was to preside over the dedication of the new building to house the *Sojourner's Club* on the grounds of Veterans Hospital No. 55. As a member of the Masonic Order, the General had long been active in the military component of that organization, which was represented on military bases by Sojourners Clubs. In the autumn of 1886, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant John J. Pershing, fresh out the United States Military Academy at West Point, arrived to take up his duties as a junior officer in the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at Fort Bayard. His first assignment was to take charge of the installation of additional heliograph signaling stations in southwestern New Mexico Territory. Although Apache leader Geronimo had surrendered a couple of months previously, effectively ending the Apache Wars, neither the Army nor the public could be sure that the shaky peace would be permanent. For that reason, the Army felt it prudent to expand its ability to communicate quickly among its scattered forts in the region. In his time at Fort Bayard, according to his autobiography, he also learned he had a knack for the game of poker, but found himself becoming too addicted to the game, so he disciplined himself to give it up.



Over the next three-plus decades, Pershing's career reached a pinnacle enjoyed by few men. During the Spanish-American war in Cuba, he led troops of the famed Buffalo Soldiers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, alongside future President Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders. It was that experience that earned Pershing the nickname of "Blackjack." Rapidly promoted afterward, in 1916 he was placed in command of the Punitive Expedition to pursue Pancho Villa across northern Mexico, following the Mexican guerrilla leader's attack on Columbus, NM. Although Villa was never apprehended, Pershing impressed his superiors sufficiently to be named the commander of the American Expeditionary Force, which was sent to France after the U.S. declared war on Germany in April of 1917.

General Pershing, while cooperating with the other Allied powers, insisted on keeping the AEF consolidated under American command, and was given credit for providing the

deciding force that ended in Allied victory in November 1918. While historians still debate how much of the credit for the Allied success should be given to Pershing, at the time he was idolized by much of the world, and basked in the glory of the victors. As a result, when he agreed to return to Fort Bayard for the Sojourners Club event, the entire state of New Mexico, and especially Grant County, were thrilled to host the great general in his homecoming. We can only wonder what must have gone through Pershing's mind when he returned to the place where his career had begun.

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## ARTIFACTS OF THE ISSUE

### Collection of Food Containers

In this edition of *The Bugle Call*, we are featuring a collection of metal and wooden food containers, which are currently on display in the pantry exhibit of the museum at Fort Bayard. During the early years of the occupation of the Commanding Doctor's home, the residents were able to keep a supply of groceries on hand near the kitchen, by utilizing the adjacent pantry. Among the items that could have been available were crackers, oats, shredded wheat, and cheese. In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, metal and wood boxes were introduced to provide a more sanitary way of transporting and storing food items. Previously, many commodities were shipped in and sold from large open barrels. Many of the changes were made during World War I, when massive amounts of food had to be transported across the oceans to supply the huge armies. By the middle decades of the century, paper and cardboard containers began to supplant the metal and wood, mostly due to the cheaper costs involved.



## FALL MOVIE SERIES CONTINUES

Our popular movie series resumed in September. This fall, the theme is "Classic 'Whodunits' from the Golden Age of Movies, 1941-1971." All movies are FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. Concessions (popcorn, candy, beverages) are available at a nominal price. Donations are always welcome.



If you have ever wanted to see a classic movie that you may have missed out on before, or want to enjoy a favorite film again, please join us at the Santa Clara Armory on Thursday evenings! Doors open at 6:00 pm; the movie starts at 6:30 pm.

October 16	Bad Day at Black Rock (Spencer Tracy, Ernest Borgnine)
October 23	North by Northwest (Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint)
October 30	Cape Fear (Gregory Peck, Robert Mitchum)
November 6	Wait Until Dark (Audrey Hepburn)
November 13	Bullitt (Steve McQueen)
November 20	Duel (Dennis Weaver)

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## MUSEUM WINTER HOURS NOW IN EFFECT

With the arrival of cooler weather, the Fort Bayard Museum has reduced its hours of operation to Saturdays only, from 10 am to 2 pm.



New artifacts have been added to our growing collection, so please be sure to stop by our museum any weekend and bring your family, friends, and out-of-town guests. Admission is always free, although donations are gratefully accepted. And remember, members who present their membership card will receive a 10% discount on all gift shop purchases.

## MONTHLY MEETING AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The FBHPS meets the second Wednesday of every month from 10 am-12 pm at the Santa Clara Armory. Please join us! We welcome ideas from all members.

You can also actively engage in our operation by volunteering your time as a tour guide, collections curator, living history performer, building and grounds worker, or records keeper and researcher. Training will be provided as needed.

### **FBHPS Officers:**

Dr. Doug Dinwiddie, President  
Cecilia Bell, Vice President  
Becky Dinwiddie, Treasurer

Denise Singleton, Secretary  
Dr. John O. Bell, Village of Santa Clara  
Liaison

Website: <https://www.historicfortbayard.org/>

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