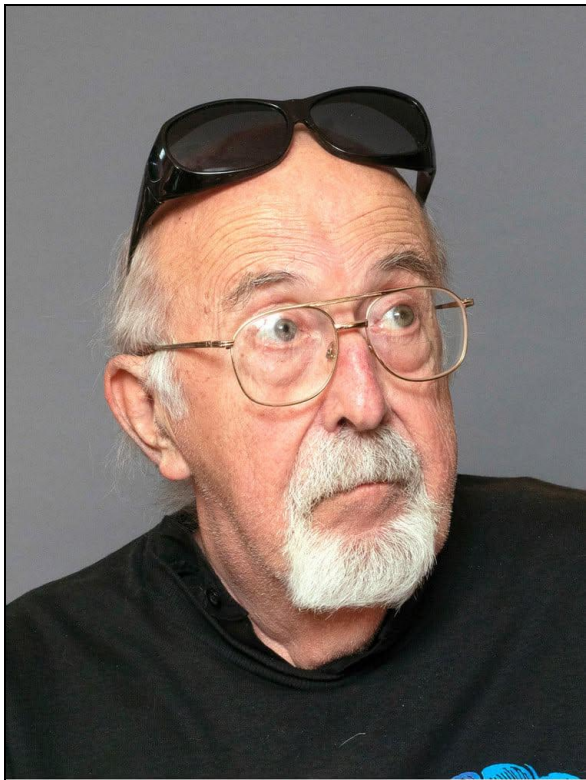


Charles Igor Loving
December 15, 1941 – August 11, 2026

Compiled by Jay Jorden

Charlie Loving, known by generations of cavers as “Old Man Wisdom” for the cartoons that featured a moustached, pipe-smoking curmudgeon and the companion cartoon books he authored, has died at Audie Murphy Veterans Hospital in Kerrville. He was 84.



Through his pen-and-ink drawings for *The Texas Caver*, Charlie chronicled the successes and failures of imagined (and real) cavers with a quirky, whimsical style. But he also produced beautiful watercolors, concert handbills, and other art while profusely illustrating [50 Years of Texas Caving](#) and his own books.

Carl Kunath, who authored *50 Years*, wrote, “Some Texas cavers are hard to categorize and are noted as much for their memorable, sometimes astonishing, personalities as for their actual accomplishments. This list would include Jon Everage, Bob Lloyd, Charlie Loving, and Tom Meador.”

Charlie was a prolific artist, creating art weekly if not daily - and early in life. For the Thanksgiving holidays in 1959, when the Texas Region caving project was at Felton Cave, he drew a cartoon of freezing cavers exploring with a snowman to recall temperatures in the 20s and struggles to rediscover the cave’s Lost Passage.

The cartoon book, “My Daddy Was a Caver,” was published in 1970 (and printed by Terry Raines on his famous school bus print shop). In 1984, Charlie produced a sequel, “My Mommy Was a Caver.” Throughout all this, Charlie continued to draw one-off comics and strips, a number of which grace the 50 Years book. One, called Texas Caver Comics, explores all the imaginative excuses why the magazine staff couldn’t produce a new edition!

In 1982, Charlie complained in a letter to *The Texas Caver* editor about older cavers’ lack of participation and failure to set a proper example at the annual Texas Cavers’ Reunion. In 1999, Charlie bade a heartfelt farewell to Gill Ediger as the Texas Speleological Association chairman prepared to move to the East Coast for a hitch with a railroad. Charlie frequently turned his pen toward memorializing the misadventures of speleopolitics in Texas, in one case depicting a “constitutional convention” of sorts, with members struggling with wording of a declaration. In another cartoon strip, Charlie devotes all the panels to a fictional caving meeting in which no action can get done - and one caver protects his cave location like Gollum with the ring!

In 1997, Charlie worked with several other cavers including Orion Knox, Robert “Rune” Burnett, and Ron Ralph to organize a TSA project at Gruta del Palmito near Bustamante, Nuevo León, Mexico. A traditional favorite of Texas cavers, Palmito had suffered from years of neglect and needed cleanup and restoration. The local ejido and other organizations also wanted to eventually commercialize the cave and thought that cavers could help with trail-building, installing lights, etc. So dozens of Texans traveled south of the border to meet Mexican cavers for a Labor Day work project that spanned multiple years. The “Amigos de la Gruta” group was honored by the city of Bustamante and state of Nuevo León for its volunteer efforts.

Carta Valley S.U.C.K.S. and other speleopolitics

James Reddell, who with William R. “Bill” Russell produced the first Texas Speleological Survey bulletins in 1961, commented about the Carta Valley Society of Underground Cavers, Karstologists, and Speleologists: “Carta Valley S.U.C.K.S. is the lightning rod of the Texas Speleological Association.” So, in one of a series of Old Man Wisdom comic strips, Charlie took on the rejection of the group’s application for official “grotto” charter status by the National Speleological Society in the early 1970s ... Rejection came despite the fact that CV S.U.C.K.S. had been one of the state’s most active caving groups - and that later, “virtual” grottos were chartered.

Another cause Charlie championed was progressive politics, with some of his comics taking aim at far right-wing politicians and organizations. It gained him more fans, but also some hate-mail. So he naturally called out people who aren’t critical thinkers.

“There are a group of folks who ... wave their flags and shout out about being patriotic. But it is so shallow. My father warned me of these people. My mother saw the brainwashed masses in Germany and France” during World War II, Charlie wrote. “I heard her. Her mother was a Jew and was carted off. Mom escaped. She told me that I should beware of ‘trailer trash’ ... and not only that. There were a lot of people who thought they were right. Ignorance is rampant in our nation.”

In a conversation with author Dr. Max Stamp, with whom Charlie collaborated on comic strips, he said, “I told him I voted for (Barry) Goldwater but have never voted for a Republican since.”

Rangeroos

Charlie brought a background in creative design and writing to the caving community. At The University of Texas at Austin, where he studied history and anthropology, Charlie worked on UT Austin’s legendary humor magazine, [*The Texas Ranger*](#). A friend of 60 years, Mariann Garner-Wizard, recalled that the magazine drew her to enroll at UT in fall 1964, where she met up with Charlie, Gilbert Shelton, Joe E. Brown Jr., Lieuen Adkins, Jack Jackson, Tony Bell, Robert Burns, Dave Moriarty, and other Rangeroos.

Legendary Texas caver Bill Helmer, who originally published “*There We Was*” to highlight early days of caving in 1955, was also an editor on the Ranger staff before becoming senior editor at Playboy magazine.

“The ‘Ranger crowd’ was a seminal part of the post-beat, pre-hippie scene that defined Austin’s counterculture in that magical little window,” Mariann wrote. “Their irreverent imaginations continue to inspire younger Austinites even today, long after most have already split the mortal track.”

Recalling the Rangeroo days, Charlie wrote about his friend, Gilbert, who authored the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers and Wonder Wart-Hog comics: "He moved to France decades ago. Shelton is possibly the most famous underground comic artist on the planet along with R. Crum, who also lives in France. Gilbert was a Rangeroo, and the cavers were kin to the Ranger crowd. After every publishing of the Ranger, there was a huge drunken fiesta. I believe Shiva's Headband played for us along with the Conqueror. I had an in with Jerry Restlaff who was the Centex Lone Star Beer rep, and he liked out parties and donated kegs. We also depended on George Majweski (former Soap Creek Saloon owner), who I witnessed at the top of the last switchback to Bustamante. I guess that makes him a caver, too. I think he absconded with a few braless ladies. Part of the motivation to donate.

"I was a caver, and a Rangeroo and a meteorologist at the time. I drew many cartoons about caving and other topics for the Rag and LA Free Press. I recall one night at 902 we had a great belly button painting party. We entrapped a half dozen Tri Delts and painted their bellies. They in turn went out and kidnapped more Tri Delts and any girl on the street. Gilbert and I worked hard painting those buttons."

There's also the story of when actor Slim Pickens gave William R. (Bill) Elliott a Charlie Loving trophy at a Luckenbach competition: a cheap copper toilet float, glued to a little basket with sticks and strings and mounted on a 2x4 board to look like a hot-air balloon. Atop it was a plastic Indian chief holding a tomahawk, but missing a hand.

At UT Austin from 1964 to 1969, Charlie also contributed to the UT Speleological Society newsletter, drawing several cover illustrations. However, the UT Grotto newsletter's issue numbers were random: his joke on librarians, bureaucracy, and anything that smacked of order. As a caver luminary, Charlie was called upon to sign official C.V. S.U.C.K.S. certificates of recognition, Hall of Fame honorary inductions, and other ephemera. In fact, he was on the Caver Hall of Fame Awards Committee.

A colorful past ...

An almost-native Texan, Charlie parlayed his creativity into becoming a journalist, radio announcer, TV meteorologist, Peace Corps volunteer, tour bus employee, and cartographer (for Aardvark in 1972). Later, he became a [blogger](#) and a director for Los Catorces De Real, Inc., created in 2004. He was also a Vietnam combat soldier, surviving a fall from a medi-vac helicopter and living on a rice paddy, drinking river water for three days until his rescue. Charlie described himself as "a goofy person born in England and raised in Texas, Chicago, Shreveport, New Orleans and Ysleta." He also lived in Real de Catorce, San Luis Potosí, Mexico for five years.

Other addresses were in Austin, Leakey, Utopia, Sanderson, and Del Rio; plus Miami, Florida. He also attended the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Among interesting historical sidenotes, James Reddell told of traveling in Charlie's hearse: "... an excellent caving wagon - roomy, heavy-duty suspension, powerful engine, etc. - but it had an electrical fault where occasionally the entire electrical system would briefly fail and then spontaneously fix itself as if nothing had happened. On this occasion, it was about midnight on a foggy evening in the Hill Country and they were speeding along nicely. Just before cresting a long hill, the electrics quit and as they topped the hill, they overtook and passed an elderly couple in a battered old pickup that could not have seen them approach. James says he still

remembers the look on their faces as the darkened hearse sped by silently and vanished into the fog ahead.”

Charlie also documented that his great-uncle was [Vander Clyde Broadway](#), a drag performer from Round Rock, Texas, who toured Europe in the 1920s as an headlining acrobat with the stage name, “Barbette,” performing in Berlin, Hamburg, Barcelona, and Paris. The act was said to be stunning, with tightrope and trapeze acrobatics executed in lavish outfits and full makeup. In Paris, the aerialist found solidarity in a group of artists and writers that included Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, and Jean Cocteau. An exhibit honoring his art is at the [Williamson Museum](#) in Georgetown, Texas.

Charlie had received care at the Kerrville Veterans Administration Hospital and at the Audie Murphy Veterans Hospital in San Antonio, where he had been a patient in recent months. He was under care for cardiac and neuro-ophthalmologic issues and had received a pacemaker and MRI.

He was preceded in death by his son, John Charles Loving, who was a cancer victim in 2021. Survivors include Charlie’s wife, Rae Ellen Freeman, of Camp Wood; a daughter, Alicia J. Loving; Evan Briggs, a stepson; stepdaughter Dea Briggs; and Jeannie Burke Loving. We are diminished.

Contributors: Mariann Garner-Wizard, text, and Ave Bonar, photo

Blog: [More on Charlie and Catorce](#)

A Celebration of Life will be scheduled at a later date.

Tributes

“RIP Texas caver cartoonist Charlie Loving, a Vietnam combat vet who used to send me strips based on the raccoon that lived in my attic. ...Charlie had fun with the bout of vertigo I suffered back in the day.” - *Frank Binney*

[please see Beanie and Raccoon examples below]

Binney also wrote, “I read Charlie’s caving classic ‘My Daddy Was A Caver’ while a Missouri high school caver—immediately became a big fan!”

“ ... And ‘My Mommy was a Caver.’ RIP.” - *Janet Fitzsimmons*

“Big love to the Austin Original. Viva, Charlie!” - *Joe Nick Patoski (writer, historian)*

“Whoa! A talented and unique man. ❤️” - *Kerry Awn (cartoonist, actor, poster artist)*

“That is sad news. Charlie was a good friend of mine.🙏” - *Spencer Malcolm Perskin (former Shiva’s Headband fiddler)*

“He advised me to draw or paint something every day, which I do believe he did himself.” - *Fontaine Maverick*

"I am sorry to inform you ... that our old friend, Charlie Loving, passed this morning (August 11, 2026) at the Audie Murphy VA Hospital in Kerrville." - *Bob Simmons*

"So sorry to hear this news. I have long taken delight in his irreverent humor and cartoons. All his wonderful works and sardonic personality will be cherished and remembered by friends and fans." - *Janet B. Palmer*

"He inspired generations of cavers through his art and cartoons!!!" - *Andy Gluesenkamp*

"Charlie will be missed! I can't wait to see Charlie's cartoons from the hereafter. ... TCMA has been the proud recipient of several of Charlie's donations to the auction." - *Linda Palit*

"His drawings were always coveted! They were 'us'!" - *Carol Schumacher*

"Oh, that's sad. A couple of my craziest international adventures were Charlie Loving adventures. Great artist, great sense of humor, pretty much unflappable when things went sideways." - *Chris Vreeland*

"I will miss his stories. His commentary on Acuña.
<http://theragblog.blogspot.com/.../charlie-loving-ciudad...>
... OG Austin caver cartoonist counter-culture." - *Martha Connell*

"Aw, man! I'm glad that I got some of his art while I could." - *Jim "Crash" Kennedy*

"This hit me hard." - *Wavy Caver (aka Don Cooper)*

"Oh no! That is very sad news. 😞💔" - *Susan Chelf*

"Aw ... Igor! (Think I've got an early cartoon stashed away in a closet.)" - *Nancy Corey*

"Prayers as we remember Charlie." - *Dan-Karen Evans*

"Dammit Charlie, go get' em, wild man. RIP." - *Dave "Cave" McClung*

"I have several treasured paintings, and I think of him when I look at them! Rest in peace, Charlie." - *Kara Dittmer Savvas*

"Another big loss." - *Patricia Kambesis*

"A truly unique individual. We share the same birthday, but not the same year. .." - *Ted Samsel*

"Whatever the afterlife may be, it just got a lot more amusing with his arrival. Glad to have known you, you old rascal." - *Ramsey Wiggins*

"We bought a property out in Roaring Springs where Charlie and Rae resided, but we are Austinites. He came into Austin a few years back, and I invited him to see a friend play Cuban music at the Whip Inn. He ended up knowing the bartender, whom he met at a gay bar, I believe in Mexico. He ended up with free drinks that night and stayed the night at my house - we fetched his car the next morning. He regaled me with stories of Real De Catorce (where my maternal grandfather was born in 1882) and his activism with the McAllen fellow that passed a few years back. We also were owners of property at Roaring Springs Ranch where he lived and where I met him. I loved his voiceovers for high school football games in Central Texas. No one like Charlie." - *Glenn Glover*

"He was a genuine hero of the underground. So sad to hear he has moved on to whatever happens after life." - *Frieda Werden*

"Ranger days were wonderful daze. Miss you, Charlie." - *Beverly Baker*

"Charlie was the kind of guy that made all of Austin special, and a very fine experience for all of us!" - *Jim Lyons*

"Post-beat, pre-hippie is the perfect description of Charlie I got to see an exhibit of Charlie's, set up in somebody's house in East Austin several years ago. I love all the paintings and cartoons that he posted to Facebook. While I did not know him well, my friends from the John Clay and Lost Austin Band did. Most of them are also gone." - *Christy Palumbo Foster*

"Thanks, Mariann, for a perfect eulogy for Charlie, during the post-beat, pre-hippy scene, which is what was happening when I checked in in 1962. My favorite moment with Charlie was when he gifted me this watercolor in Real de Catorce on that wonderful Thanksgiving weekend in 2003." - *Frances Morey*

"Another old Austinite crossing the 'Rainbow Bridge!' Fair sailing!!!" - *Dennis Paddie*

"A unique and very cool guy. Charlie will be missed and remembered." - *Leea C. Mechling*

"Nobody like Charlie. Barbetta was his great-uncle." - *Glenn Glover*

"Every once in a while, I pay tribute to the fellow who created my portrait, Charles Igor Loving, more commonly known as Charlie — the Picasso of Deer Corn, Texas." - *H. Andrew Edwards*

"Sorry to hear that. He was smart, kind and had a great sense of humor." - *Emma Little*

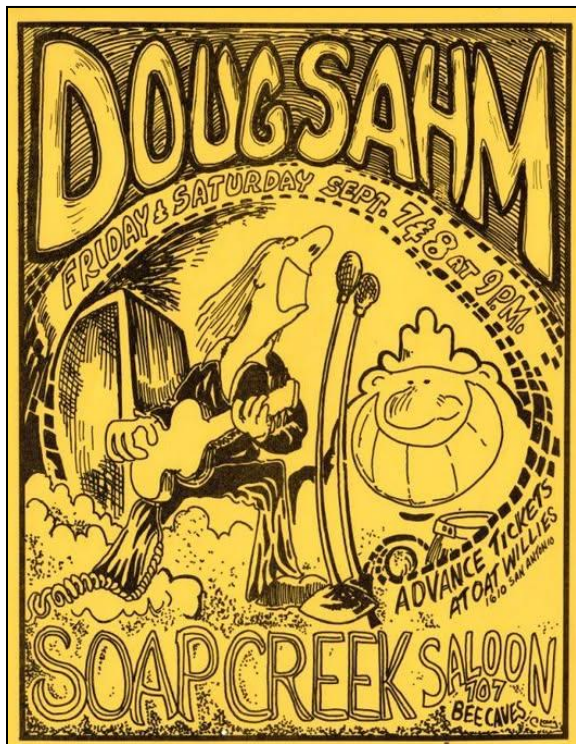
"So sorry to hear - an Austin original and one interesting man." - *Danny Garrett*

"Thought of him just the other day. ... and wondered. May his spirit soar." - *Victoria Lynn Devereaux*

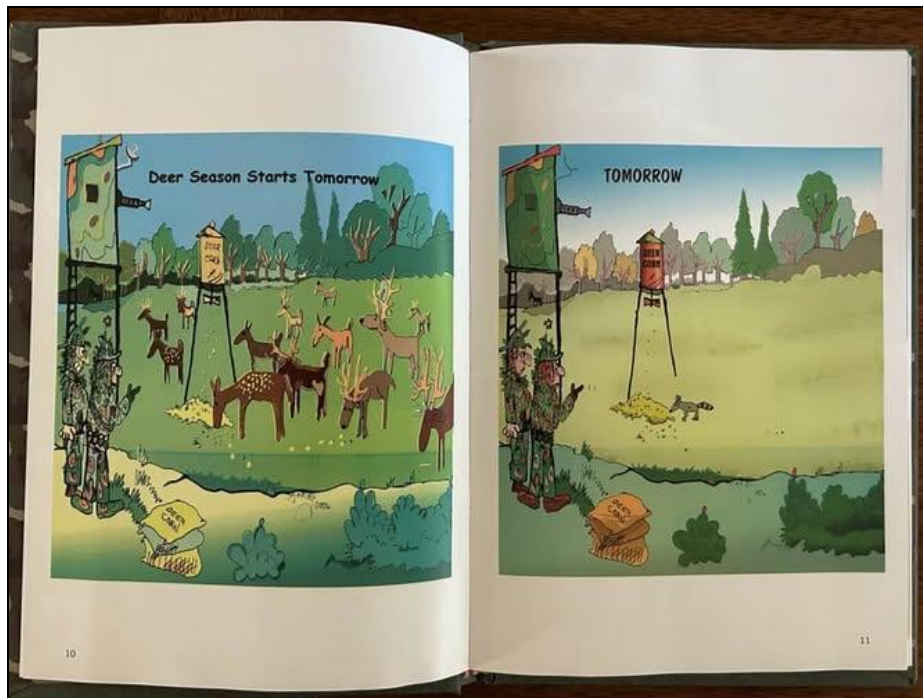
Selected Cartoons and Art



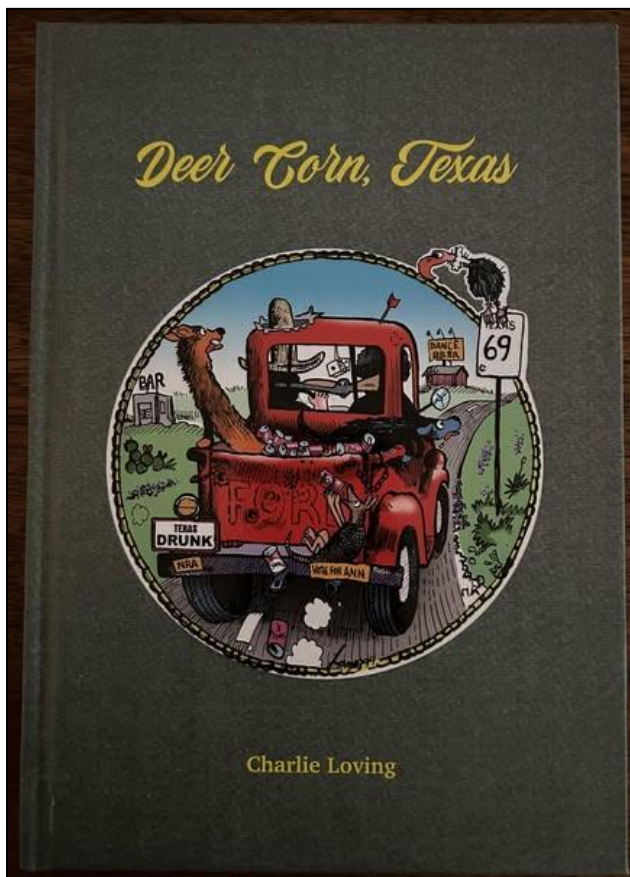
Real de Catorce, Thanksgiving 2003 - Charlie Loving watercolor shared by Frances Morey



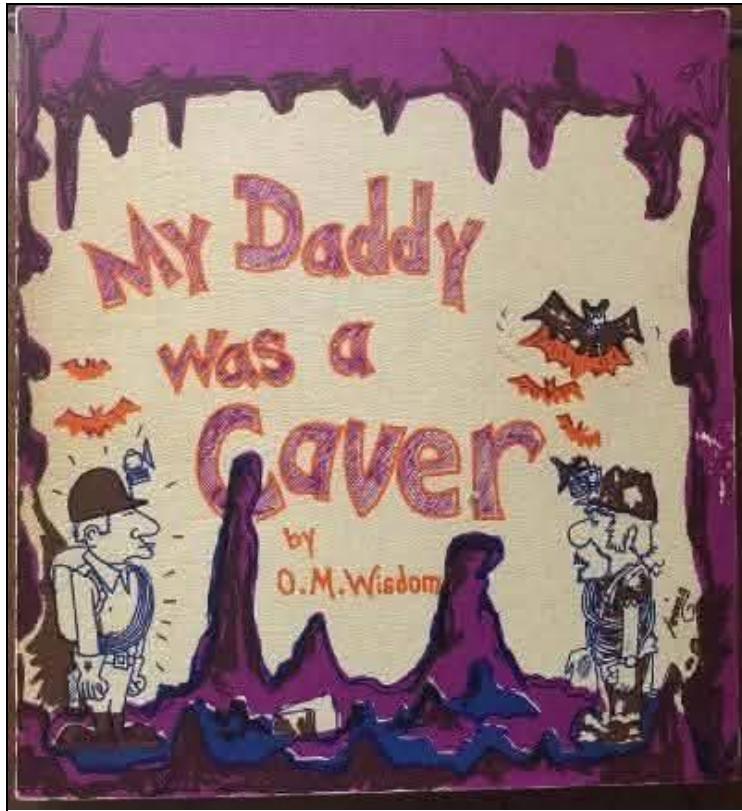
Concert handbill - shared by Ted Samsel



Day 1, deer season



Deer Corn book, 2023



Charlie's book published in 1970



Handbill



2016 cartoon



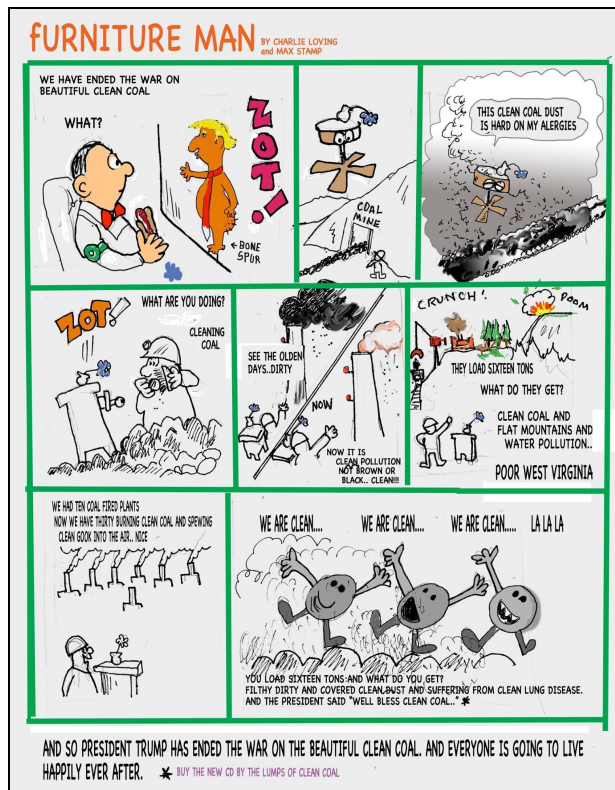
Big Bend watercolor with political commentary



Frank Binney-based adventures with raccoons and vertigo



Santa Elena Canyon watercolor, 2016



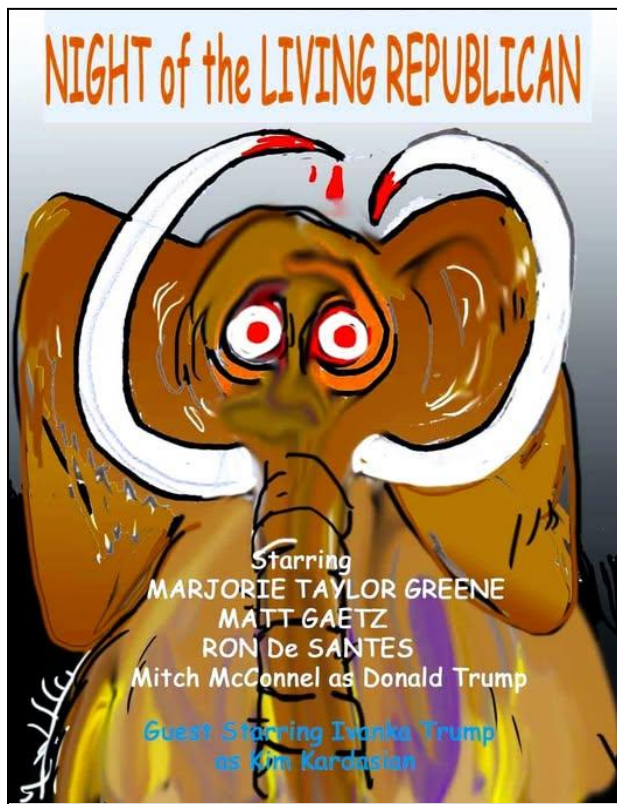
Cartoon strip produced with Dr. Max Stamp



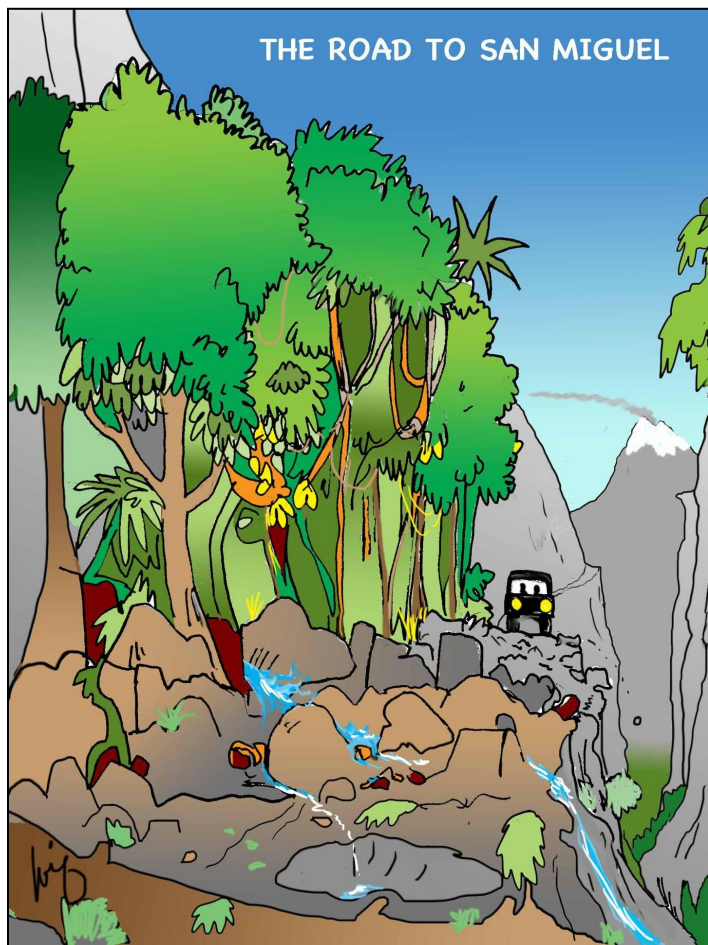
Beanie and the GPS - produced with Frank Binney



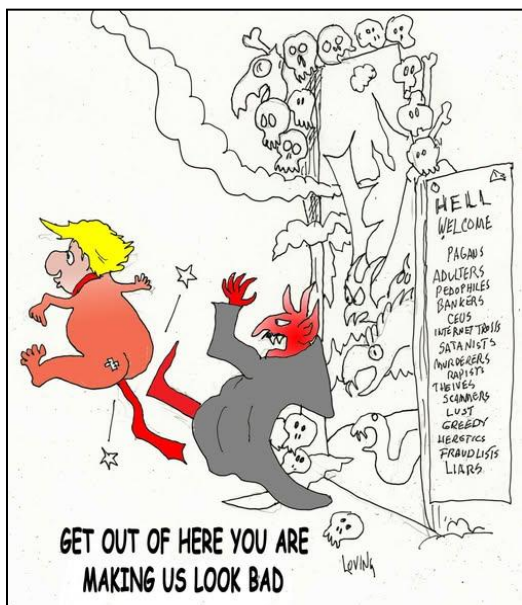
Blue cave watercolor



Political cartoon



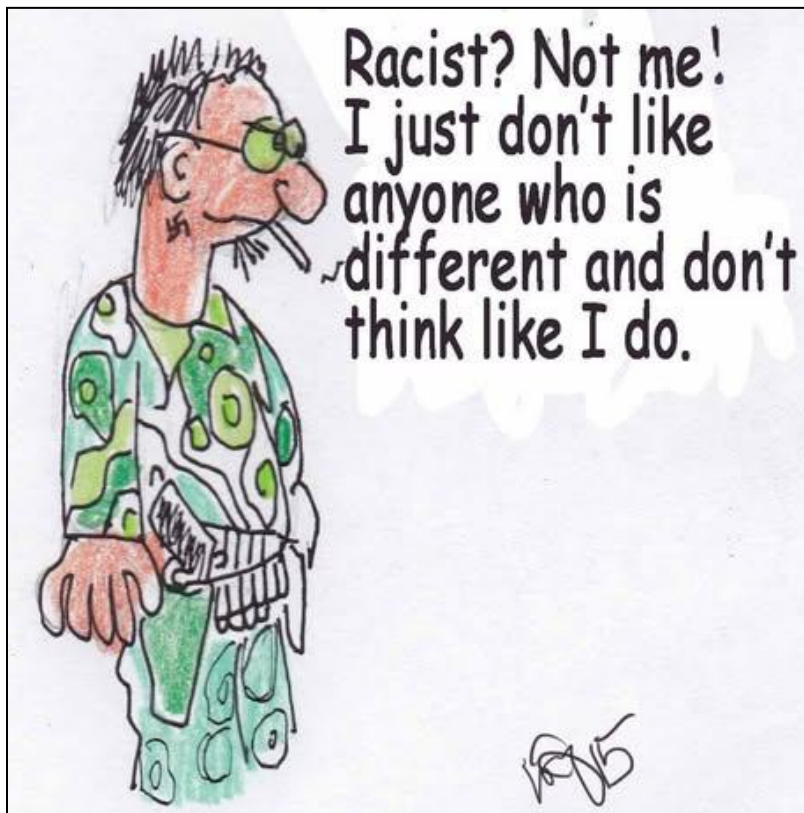
Road to San Miguel



Trump in hell



Golondrinas cartoon about trip to famous Mexican bird pit



Racist parody, 2015



NRA parody, 2016

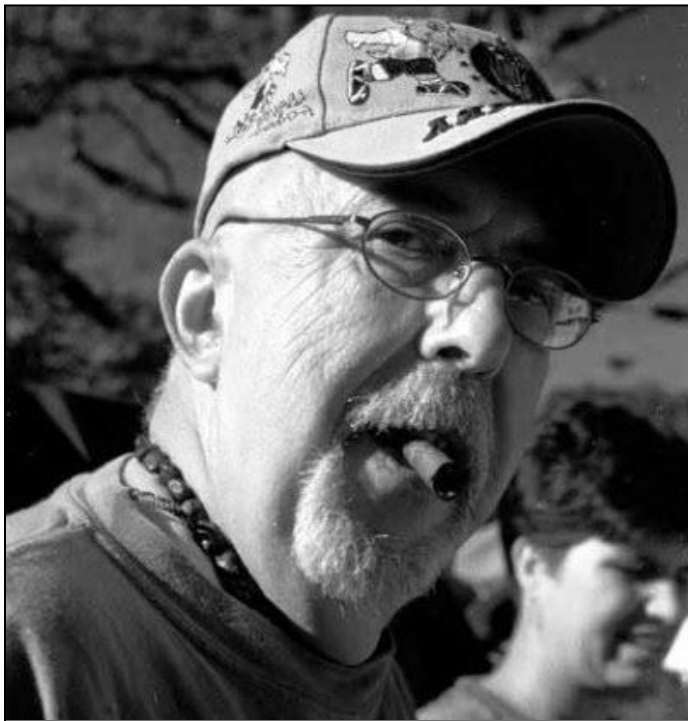


Watercolor posted by author, 2011

Selected Photos



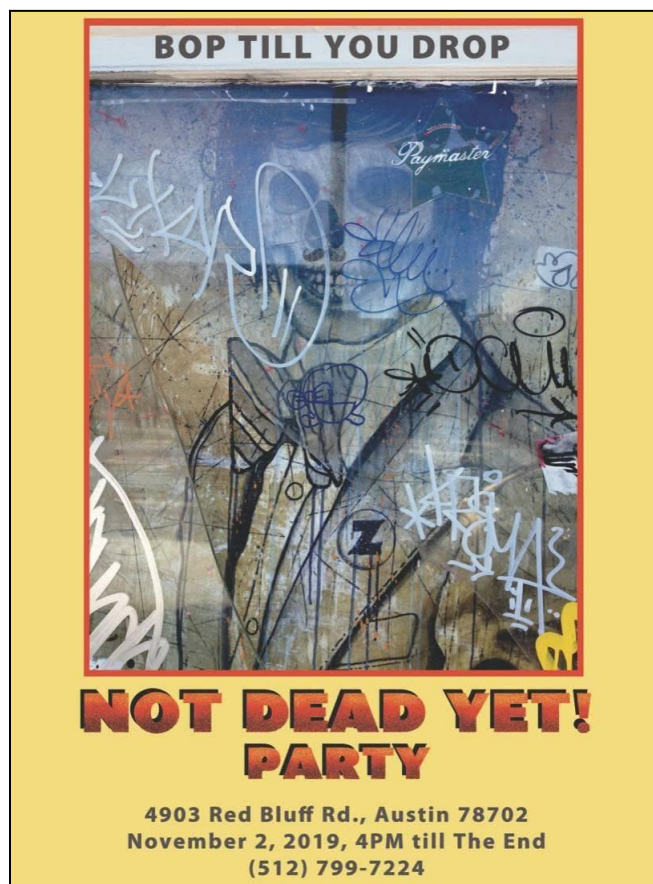
Charlie with the Kinkster, Kinky Friedman (who died in 2024)



Stogie-chewing Charlie (Karst Walker/Terry Holsinger photo)



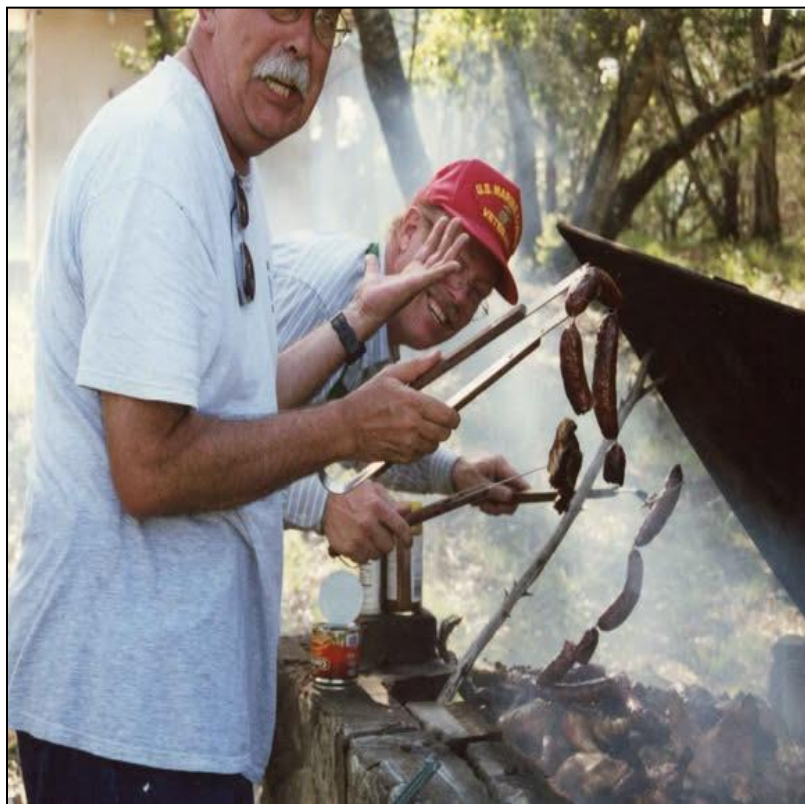
Charlie at Not-Dead-Yet Party with Rangeroos and groupies, ATX, 2019 (Dave McClung on left)



Party handbill, 2019



At ICE protest



Cooking with Ronnie Fieseler



Charlie with Bill Bell



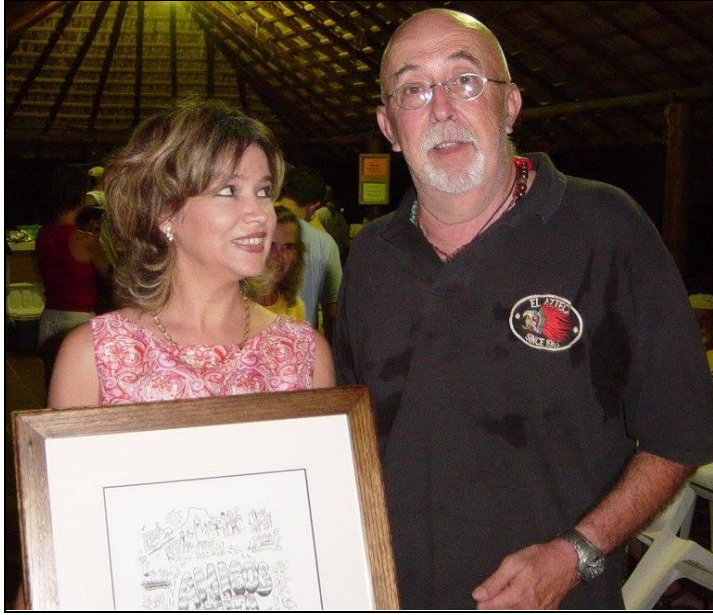
Charlie with bevy of beauties



Charlie (L) with Bill Bell, Frank Binney, Terry Plemons, Tom Byrd, and Blake Harrison



Charlie in San Juan, Puerto Rico on Bacardi rum distillery tour



Charlie with mayor of Bustamante, N.L., Mexico during "Amigos de la Gruta"



William R. "Bill" Elliott (L) receives Charlie Loving-designed prize from actor Slim Pickens, 1975 (Frank X. Tolbert, Dallas Morning News columnist and Luckenbach World's Fair judge, on right)



Charlie on the long rappel