



## Big Bend Pictures

*James Evans, Robert Draper*

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**Winner, Rounce & Coffin Club Western Books Exhibition, 2004**

**Southwest Book Award, Border Regional Library Association, 2003**

It takes a long time to get to know the Big Bend. Just to *look at* all the mountains and canyons and desert horizons can take weeks of driving and hiking. And to get acquainted with the independent, self-contained, slightly quirky people who call this place home ...well, that can take a lifetime. James Evans understands that. Recalling his decision to make the Big Bend his artistic muse and photographic subject, he says, "I moved here in 1988 to dedicate my life to the Big Bend and its people. I don't shoot pictures and leave and make a book. This work is a slow accumulation of years of being here. The mountains are familiar friends and the people my heroes. I am one of them."

In this book, James Evans records the landscapes and the people of the Big Bend in all their beauty, harshness, and character. Images such as "South Rim with Agave," "Eyes of the Chisos," and "The Road to Candelaria" capture the distances, openness, and rough loveliness that draw people to this remote part of the Texas-Mexico border. Evans's photographs of people—legendary ranchwoman Hallie Stillwell, Kickapoo girls at a ceremonial dance, national park superintendent Ross Maxwell, school boys in Boquillas, Mexico, to mention only a few—show a deeply felt, but anti-sentimental understanding of his Big Bend neighbors. Other images, such as "Snake and Jesus," "Drug Blimp," and "Rope-O-Matic" reveal the whimsical, offbeat sensibility that sets Evans apart from others who have photographed the Big Bend.

Also included are equally distinctive "Notes and Stories," in which Evans talks about how he came to photograph each particular person and each place and what they mean to him. Robert Draper's foreword pinpoints why Evans's work has such irresistible appeal. In his words, "The photographs of James Evans celebrate the unburnished beauty of Big Bend country as a way of celebrating the free spirit. I see no way out of voicing the cliché: this is a deeply life-affirming collection."

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