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Local News

Leo the Lion of Cochise launches firm 'to publish local work, local authors'

By Ted Morris

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Herald/Review

WHETSTONE — Leonard Sadorf is an artist, a philosopher, a Renaissance man and so much more.

In his day job, Leonard facilitates educators in Santa Cruz County. But in his spare minutes, the Whetstone resident is always cooking up some new creation — whether it's a book, a photo Weblog or maybe a prickly pear salad to accompany the feasts he loves to cook for his wife, Christine; their children Jacob, Joshua, Nathan, Hannah, Rachel and Samuel; and any lucky guests.

Recently Leonard has started up a publishing firm, Sonoran Wind, whose mission is “to publish local work, local authors.”

Leonard — or “Leo the Lion of Cochise,” as a friend has dubbed him — is a God-fearing man, but he's no pharisee. Instead he looks inward and freely admits his own human weaknesses and is tolerant of others. He loves to explore cosmic and theological subjects in conversation, whether face to face, on his cell phone or on either of a couple of blogs that he maintains.

“I'm a collector,” says the 47-year-old. “My mind is a steely trap, but unfortunately sometimes it gets rusty and things get stuck there that should not.”

He loves the weekend swap meets on Highway 92 South. While driving to places such as the ghost town Gleeson, it is normal for him to provide in-depth lectures to uninformed Midwestern newcomers about the flora and fauna of the region.

Leo himself is a transplant from Wisconsin. He came here in June 1987, but his parents, Bob and Marilyn Sadorf, had already moved here in 1978, “so it was an easy transition.”

Leo's father was the reading teacher at Village Meadows, then the principal at Carmichael, and



Leonard Sadorf, probably the only man in a thousand square miles who was wearing an Amish hat that day, is judged in a whiskers contest at the last Helldorado Days in Tombstone. (Ted morris-Rerald/Review)

then served as the curriculum director of Sierra Vista School District. He is retired.

Leo is following his father's footsteps in the education world. He works for the Sonoita Elementary School District. His job title "depends on the day," he says with a chuckle, and then thoughtfully describes the position, including his partner Keith Arnett. Leo is the senior member of the Elgin School's buildings and facilities management team.

The duties are broad in nature. He's in charge of the school's computers and their networks, the sound system and other technological elements. He installs new roofs and works on electrical and water systems, but Keith is "the water meister."

Leo is occasionally summoned to deal with a rattlesnake that wanders onto the school grounds. The call comes over the PA system, but to avoid alarming the children, it is usually disguised by saying: "Leo, bring a shovel!"

"I never kill 'em. I catch 'em and release 'em," said Leo, who continually evinces a deep reverence for all of God's creatures.

He also points out that he does not use a shovel, but rather two rakes working as a pincer — "very long rakes."

The beautiful creation of the Southwest and the people who live there are subjects of Leo's photography that he posts on his Weblog, *Away with Words*. On one pre-dawn drive to work, he might grab a shot of the moon rising over the Whetstone Mountains. Or maybe it will be a gnarled fence post and a grassy meadow beyond.

More than 50 of those images are in his book "Elgin Road," which he has just published through *Sonoran Wind*.

His partner, pro photographer Larry Widen, author of "Milwaukee Movie Palaces" and other books, had this say of Leonard's work: "As a photographer, Leonard's always been a street-shooter. He's much more interested in documenting what's happening around him as opposed to going into a studio and setting up a perfect picture. It's very satisfying to point your camera at a subject over which you have little or no control and come away with a great shot. I think that's something Leonard has always excelled at. He's got a really good eye for the street."

Widen and Sadorf plan to collaborate in March on a photographic book project in Mexico.

Leo developed his artistic and technical skills early in life, when he composed advertisements that were published in the *Milwaukee Sentinel and Journal*.

"Here's my green card," he quips, proudly pulling a decrepit, laminated, green-colored photo ID card from his wallet. The photo reflects Leo's halcyon days of youth — an unruly beard, an impish smile. He and Widen, longtime aficionados of "On the Road" author Jack Kerouac, used to beat the streets of Milwaukee in those days, the 1970s, and oh the laughs they shared. One product of their merriment is their recently published book "Lar & Len: A Long, Strange Trip." One merely needs to Google "lar and len," and the iconoclastic work holds positions 1-4 out of 520,000 results on the search engine.

Leo chuckles as he recalls how he once he used his *Journal/Sentinel* employment ID as a press credential to gain access to a Jethro Tull concert.

Leo still takes risks and doesn't often sweat it.

To him, it's an improvisation theme.

He likes the Miles Davis approach, and he paraphrases the legendary jazz trumpeter: "Let's play it first and talk about it later."

On the Web:

Away with Words:

<http://digitalgreyscale.blogspot.com/>

Sonoran Wind:

<http://sonoranwind.com/>

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