



Reflecting Back

Taos photographer Bill Curry applies a fashion model's sensitivity to a mature set of motives

From the moment he was plucked from obscurity to become the face of runway shows, ad campaigns, TV commercials, and magazine covers, West Virginia native Bill Curry has kept his gaze on the other side of the lens. He bought a Canon AE-1 camera on his first trip to Europe as a model for Nino Cerruti in the late 1970s. After the day's shoot, he would wander the streets and take snapshots in family restaurants, a habit that continued over his 25-year modeling career. Curry learned from the photographers he worked with, who included Richard Avedon, Irving Penn, Arthur Elgort, Horst P. Horst, Victor Skrebneski, Steven Meisel, and Jean Pagliuso. Arriving in New York at the fashion world's zenith, he enjoyed the social benefits of representing Armani, Versace, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, and Donna Karan by keeping company with Andy Warhol at The Factory, and Cher and Muhammed Ali at Studio 54.

Meanwhile, Curry was exploring his own interests off the set. After a trip to Morocco, where he mingled with Berber tribesmen and Hawaiian hula dancers, Curry attended a Lakota sweat lodge ceremony that proved to be a turning point. Karuk elder Charlie Red Hawk Thom would be a spiritual mentor to him over the next 20 years. The stark contrasts between Curry's hyperactive modern existence and the authenticity of tribal life brought home to him the importance of sincerity on both sides of the lens. More than most, he saw how a photograph could be no more than a paper image unless it reflected a deeper relationship of trust. A lifelong admirer of National Geographic, Curry aspired to the same insider approach, spending hours and days in a community before attempting his first shot. His charisma, lively curiosity, and

natural ease inevitably won his subjects' trust. He likes to quote the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson: "One has to feel oneself involved in what he frames . . . It is putting one's head, eyes, and heart on the same axis."

In Taos, where he has lived since 1990, Curry found a magical light and harmonious balance between three rich cultural traditions, anchored by the centuries-old heritage of Taos Pueblo. "Immediately, seeing the characters and the land and the culture, there was no doubt that this is the place I had to be for the rest of my life," he recalls. As he met and mingled with the town's residents, Curry found opportunities to photograph Taos Pueblo governor Tony Reyna, painter Agnes Martin (he simply knocked on her door), *curandera* Margarita Mascareñas (at age 100), not to mention Roxanne Swentzell and Robert Mirabal. The Grammy Award-winning musician had Curry shoot his concert at Carnegie Hall and a commercial for his winery as well as intimate portraits at home with his daughters. "Whether it's cowboys, Indians, poets, painters, or musicians, it's access," Curry explains. "The best reality for any portrait photographer is to have access to someone, and comfort and ease. That's when you get your very best portrait."

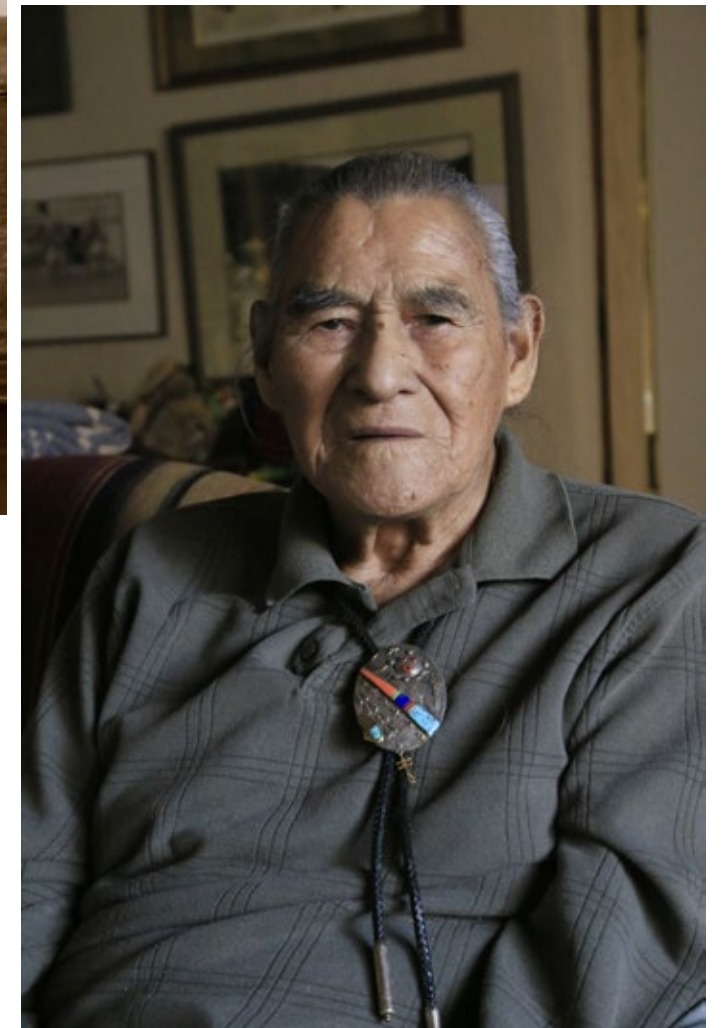
For *Trend*, Bill Curry presents the diverse faces of Taos through a lens that recognizes the inner quality that makes for more than just a pretty face or nice photo. "The other incarnations of my life certainly led to me traveling the world and picking up a camera and understanding light," Curry says, looking back at his two-decade career on this side of the lens. "But at the end of the day, it's really New Mexico itself that has made me a much better photographer." ❀

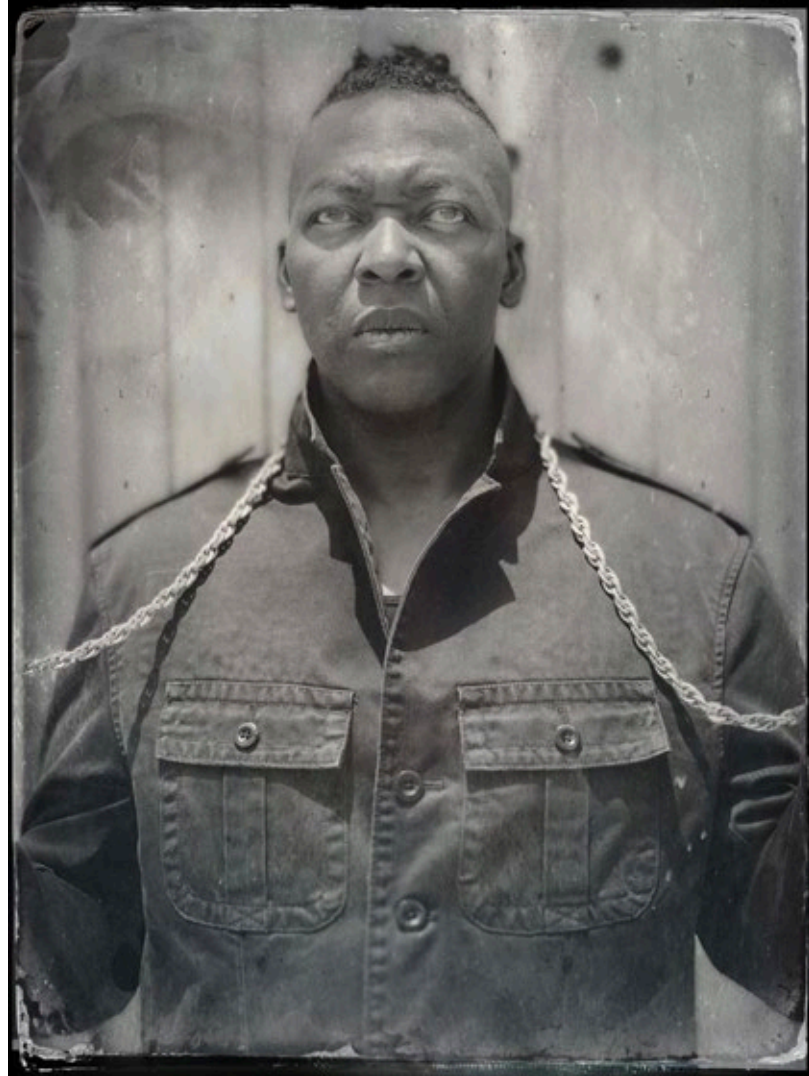


Right: Tony Reyna served twice as governor of Taos Pueblo, where his efforts at cultural preservation helped the tribe regain control of its sacred Blue Lake. A famed survivor of the Bataan Death March, he spent three and a half years as a prisoner of the Japanese. He established Tony Reyna's Indian Shop in 1950, which is now run by his son. He died in December 2016 at the age of 100.

Best known for the Fenn Treasure, a \$2 million cache of gold and jewels that he hid in the Rocky Mountains, Forrest Fenn was also a fighter pilot, adventurer, antiques dealer, author, and master storyteller. He died September 7, 2020 at the age of 90, three months after the treasure was found by a medical student from Michigan.

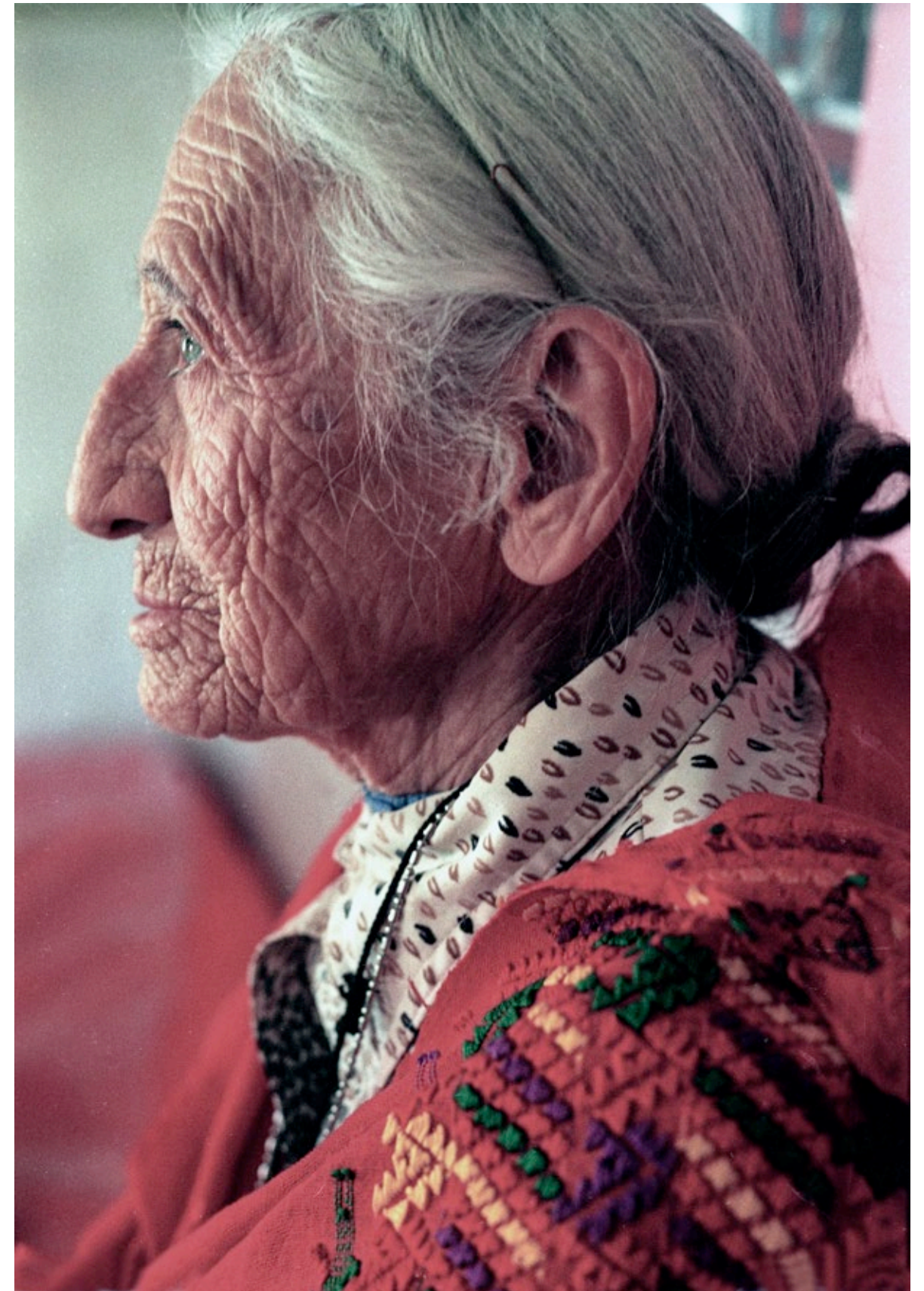
Opposite: Traditional drummer Benito Concha performs in concert. Born into a drumming family at Taos Pueblo, Concha is a master of the Hoop Dance and Eagle Dance and often performs with other members of his family. He is also a massage therapist and natural healer.





Issa Williams of Nigeria is a handbag designer and leather craftsman.

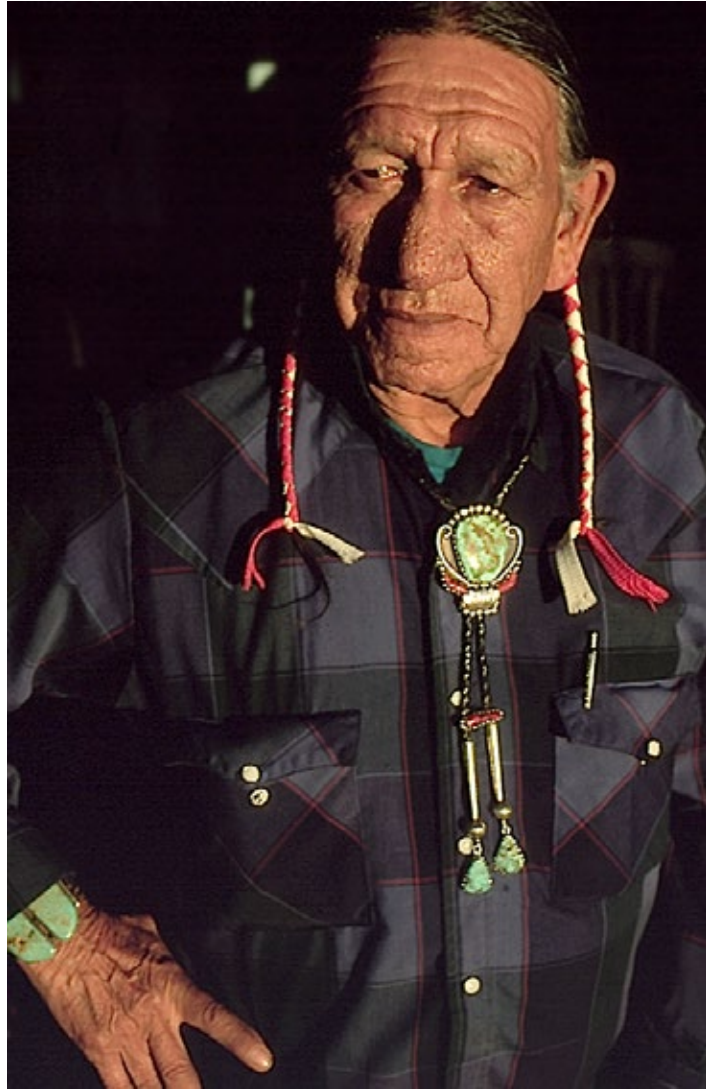
Right: Longtime Santa Fe blacksmith Frank Turley, shown with wife Juanita, helped power the resurgence of blacksmithing in the United States. At his Turley Forge Blacksmithing School, he insisted on making his own tools and using a coal-fired forge instead of gas. He was also known for his mastery of Tai Chi and the traditional pow-wow Straight Dance, although he was white. Fashion designer Patricia Michaels is among his stepdaughters. Turley was buried in full pow-wow regalia after dying of COVID-19 in November.



Maritza "Maggie" Mascareñas was a well-known *curandera* (healer) and *sobadora* (body worker) who worked for many years out of Cañon. She died in Taos past the age of 100.



Grammy Award-winning Native musician Robert Mirabal with Kona Sunrise, one of his three daughters. One of Taos' foremost celebrities, Mirabal is also a poet, farmer, silversmith, wine maker, and actor. Kona, who has performed with her father on stage, including at Carnegie Hall, since she was young, is an herbologist who is getting a degree in holistic medicine. Mirabal's youngest daughter, Masa Rain, (opposite) is also a singer.



Silversmith Bobby Lujan, in 1996. Known for the massive stones used in his jewelry, Lujan (nephew of Tony and Mabel Dodge Luhan) began making jewelry in the 1960s, one of the first to do so from Taos Pueblo, and continued until his death in 2012. He was also a ceremonial hoop dancer.

Right: Rose B. Simpson, daughter of sculptor Roxanne Swentzell, with her daughter, Cedar Rain. Like her mother, Simpson is a renowned Native artist, and she works in a variety of media, including ceramics, metal, paint, fashion, music, performance, and installation.



Roxanne Swentzell with her granddaughter, Cedar Rain. The Santa Clara Tewa artist is known for her female portraits in clay and bronze, which have been exhibited at the White House and in international museums.



David Manzanares' family, originally from Mexico, has been in New Mexico in the Abiquiu valley for 16 generations. He is a musician with the acclaimed group Manzanares and is also an accomplished actor with many films to his credit. During his 30-year film career, Manzanares has worked on over 50 films, from small independent projects to large studio blockbusters, including *Bless Me Ultima* and *The Magnificent Seven*.

Opposite: María Benítez is a dancer, choreographer, and director in Spanish dance and flamenco. Benítez is best known for her work with the company she and her husband, Cecilio, founded and directed, Teatro Flamenco, which has toured Santa Fe and the world for more than 60 years.





Painter Ed Sandoval is known for his colorful appearance in the Taos Plaza dressed as Zorro, riding his Arabian horse, Patron. A well-known painter of New Mexico landscapes, he was born in Nambe and lived in Tesuque and Truchas before settling in Taos, where he can often be seen painting in front of the Ed Sandoval Gallery.

Right: Antonio Kelvin Mondragon, a Gulf War veteran, served as lieutenant governor of Taos Pueblo in 2019 and 2020.

Opposite: Robert Mirabal's daughter Masa Rain, skipping over rocks in Taos.

