

US 191 & the FORGOTTEN PAST

Remember us as we pass here...

From the edge of a fast paced highway, voices still speak from the canyon walls

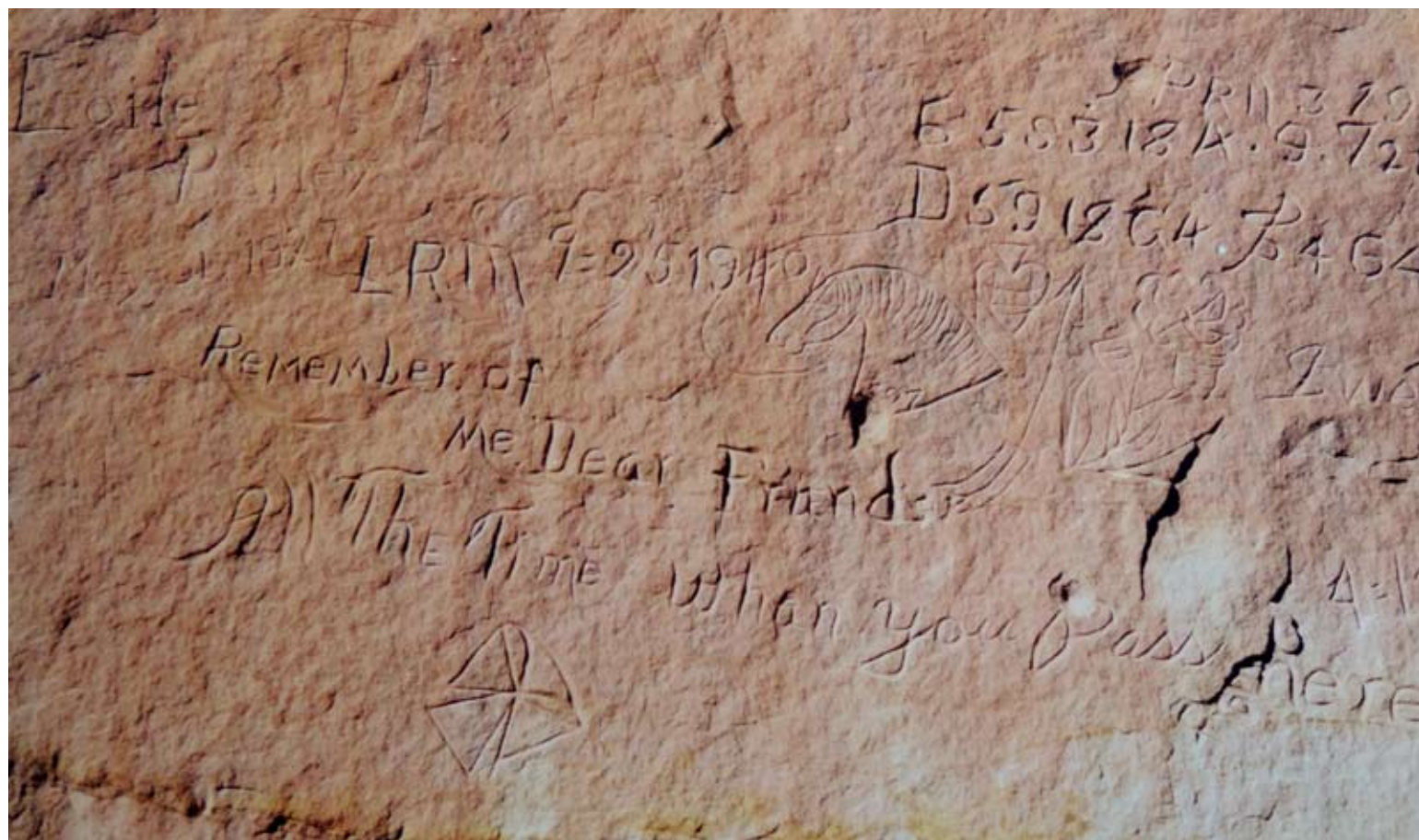
In the last few years, the traffic on US 191, between Moab and Monticello has increased dramatically. Despite efforts to improve the safety of the highway (and with millions of dollars of construction upgrades planned or proposed), the 55 mile stretch of road grows more dangerous. My own observations have caused me to cut back on my trips to Moab---exploding tourist traffic has choked the road with cars and RVs, locals, frustrated with the jams, drive more recklessly, just to get home, and commercial traffic has noticeably increased as well...truck traffic at even 2 AM is startling. Often I take the 'back way'---though it doubles my travel time, it increases my chances of surviving the trip.

But in the rush, there is history all along the road. Few, if any, notice.

A few years ago, I began to explore the roadsides of US 191 and found the reminders of a quieter time. For the next few issues, we'll share some of these artifacts

#1... 'L.R. MAESTAS'

At several locations near US 191 in San Juan County, I came to notice a familiar name. This was rangeland decades ago---still is to a lesser degree---and the men who watched over their herds (or flocks--some of these 'cowboys' were shearers) spent a lot of time out in the country. They must have had a lot of time on their hands, for there's an amazing concentration of cowboy inscriptions and relief carvings along the sandstone walls. Most prolific was 'L.R. Maestas.' He was apparently from Durango, Colorado and I wish I knew more about him.



Maestas often left more than his name, and one suspects he got lonesome out there with nobody for company but his stock. One day, apparently thinking of a faraway love, he carved a message into the canyon wall. he wrote:

*"Sweet Hozey dear,
kiss me."*

Who was 'Hozey?' His wife or a girlfriend waiting for him back in Durango? Or just the memory of a long-lost love?

On another part of the same sandstone panel, Maestas must have felt so lonely that he wondered if he still existed in the hearts and minds of those he cared most for.

Maestas wrote:

*"Remember of
Me Dear Friends
All The Time when you
pass here."*

Maestas carved images of his horse, an inverted 'spade' (as in a card game), an arrow, and even a flower in bloom. And there are sequences of numbers that I have been unable so far to decipher. They deserve further study and analysis.

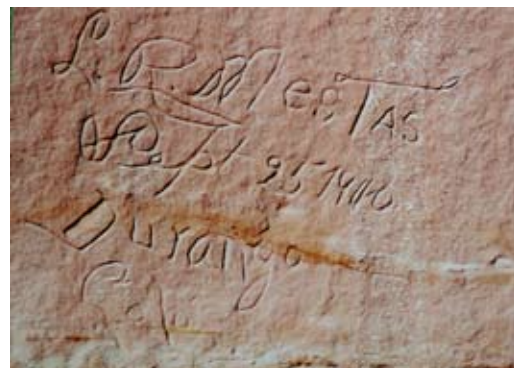
His most eloquent signature, in time consuming script reads:

*L.R. Maestas
Sept 25 1940
Durango, Colo.*



Who was Mr. Maestas?

NOTE: If anyone has any knowledge of L.R. Maestas, please contact me via The Zephyr:

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NEXT TIME: More art from the canyon walls

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Top 10 Things to Expect from a Trump Presidency

10. Trump's hair will catch fire when he attempts to fire congress and SCOTUS justices
9. No more illegal immigrants - except for janitors in Trump Towers
8. First time a US First Lady will be available for sale as a nude pinup *
7. President Trump will also be his own Chief of Staff and cabinet
6. A GOP government shutdown would be a welcome relief for both parties
5. George W. Bush will no longer be the top of the list of worst Presidents
4. Egomaniac will become an official, capitalized title with six-digit salary
3. Every news channel (including Fox) will be a nightly comedy show
2. Mexico and Canada will build border fences to keep Americans out
1. "Money" by Pink Floyd replaces "Hail to the Chief" as the presidential anthem.

* Seriously - no, wait, seriously?