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Yuma, Felicity to be on 'Southwest Stories' TV show

By Kevin G. Andrade, Yuma Sun staff writer Apr 11, 2015



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Steven Brown talks with Alma Sandigo at the Museum of History in Granite in Felicity.

Yuma and its environs have been an integral part of U.S. expansion westward and the subsequent consolidation of the Southwest, since its founding in the mid 19th century. That history is part of the reason that Stephen Brown, executive producer, host and writer of "Southwest Stories," decided to shine a spotlight on it.

"We have been wanting to do a story on Yuma for a long time," he said. "It is basically one of my favorite towns in the Southwest."

That story will air on Monday, April 27, at 6:30 p.m. on KVCR-PBS out of El Centro.

The episode will focus on both Yuma and Felicity, the town constructed by Jacques Istel that is the site of the Museum of History in Granite. In the segment, Brown will interview Alma Sandigo, a professor of Education at Northern Arizona University-Yuma.

"We actually discuss with her the teacher training that she does out at Felicity," said Brown.

Istel was out of the country and unavailable for comment.

The History of Granite is an attempt to record human history in a manner that will still be accessible in 5,000 years.

"As somebody with a degree in history, I find it fascinating," said Brown. "I find it very worthy of serious academic study, and I hope to see Jacques' dream fulfilled."

From there they go on to Yuma, where the show spends some time at the Garden Café with Debbie Gwynn and then interviews Charlie Flynn, executive director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area.

According to Flynn, this is some overdue attention.

"One of my frustrations is that we are doing so much good work along the river and it doesn't get recognized in the broader regional and national press," said Flynn.

For 15 years Flynn has led efforts to improve the waterfront of the city, including the establishment of West Wetlands and Gateway parks.

"These are areas that the community uses heavily," said Flynn. "We have given access to the river where there really was none 15 years ago."

"Not only is it great for the community," he continued, "but it's attracting wildlife to the river."

He also said that Yuma could serve as a model in teaching people on how to value water resources in arid land and how to manage them.

"The Colorado River is the primary source for drinking, farming, everything here," he said. "We have tended to take it for granted over the past 100 years, and it's becoming a much more precious resource.

"As water challenges become greater and greater across the Southwest," he continued. "I think Yuma can be a model and source of inspiration for bringing different groups together and finding common ground. ... If we fight over water, I think we're all doomed."

The stories in Yuma are endless in the eyes of Brown and far too many to be shown in one episode, which will reach the 5.7 million households in the KVCR station's territory.

"Our feeling is that destinations like Yuma really have a lot of good stories in them," he said. "We don't want to do a complete travel log every time we go to a place so that we can keep going back to it.

"There's plenty of material for another 10 shows," he concluded.

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