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Voices from the Wild Horse Desert: The Vaquero Families of the King and Kenedy Ranches

Jane Clements Monday, Betty Bailey Colley

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Founded before the Civil War, the King and Kenedy Ranches have become legendary for their size, their wealth, and their endless herds of cattle. A major factor in the longevity of these ranches has always been the loyal workforce of vaqueros (Mexican and Mexican American cowboys) and their families. Some of the vaquero families have worked on the ranches through five or six generations. In this book, Jane Clements Monday and Betty Bailey Colley bring together the voices of these men and women who make ranching possible in the Wild Horse Desert. From 1989 to 1995, the authors interviewed more than sixty members of vaquero families, ranging in age from 20 to 93. Their words provide a panoramic view of ranch work and life that spans most of the twentieth century. The vaqueros and their families describe all aspects of life on the ranches, from working cattle and doing many kinds of ranch maintenance to the home chores of raising children, cooking, and cleaning. The elders recall a life of endless manual labor that nonetheless afforded the satisfaction of jobs done with skill and pride. The younger people describe how modernization has affected the ranches and changed the lifeways of the people who work there.

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