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*Taking on Giants: Fabián Chávez Jr. and New Mexico  
Politics* (review)

Sean P. Cunningham

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Wester and Proctor do not take full advantage of the potential these accounts provide, but the book does include some interesting vignettes—especially memorable is one with a pre-fame, short-haired Willie Nelson receiving a clause in his performer's contract to allow him to "get there early and practice calf roping" (39). More of a focus on similar stories would enhance the appeal of the book.

From the peculiarities of running a business in the 1960s with a party line to an unfortunate incident involving roping a coyote (and subsequent rabies inoculations), Wester and Proctor provide a personal tale of promoting and running the Ken Lance Sports Arena. Still, for a book written by two women and focused in large measure on all-girl rodeo competitions, the issue of gender remains surprisingly elusive and the book fails to examine any of the more obviously gendered elements of rodeo culture. This omission seems even starker considering that the memoir-related sections stress a number of stories that relate directly to a business run by a married woman, female singers performing on stage, and young women competing within the masculine world of rodeos. Overall, the blend of institutional history and memoir provides for an interesting look at an underrepresented cultural phenomenon. To be sure, *Ropin' the Dream* is not an academic book—the writing is too casual and the history too anecdotal—but the authors do tell the often-overlooked story of the interconnected worlds of competitive rodeo and country music from a personal and sometimes poignant point of view.

Stephen F. Austin State University

COURT CARNEY

*Taking on Giants: Fabián Chávez Jr. and New Mexico Politics.* By David Roybal (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. Pp. 320. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9780826344366, \$27.95 cloth.)

Ambitious in both its scope and purpose, political journalist David Roybal's new book *Taking on Giants: Fabián Chávez Jr. and New Mexico Politics*, offers what is, and undoubtedly will remain for some time to come, the most comprehensive study of the life and political career of one of New Mexico's most prominent and influential Democrats, Fabián Chávez Jr.

Though Roybal treats thoroughly the narrative of Chávez's career, which included stints as Majority Leader for the New Mexico State Senate, failed campaigns for U.S. Congress and New Mexico's governorship, oversight of an expanding and evolving tourism industry in the 1970s, and an appointment as Assistant Secretary of Commerce during the Carter administration, it is when addressing Chávez's youth that Roybal is most effective. Not so much rebellious as restless and intellectually curious, Chávez, one of eleven siblings, traveled to Los Angeles, alone and without parental permission, at the age of twelve. Soon after Fabián's return to Santa Fe, his father decided to enroll the precocious youth in the Springer boys' school, which was essentially a juvenile correctional facility. Roybal's use of Springer as a framing event—one that reemerged as a political issue later in Chavez's life—stands as one of the book's best moments and structural successes.

Unfortunately, Roybal's skill in utilizing Chávez's own words to recapture the visceral power of a youthful social and political awakening is rarely applied elsewhere in the narrative, which often seems aimless, disorganized, impersonal, and inadequately contextualized. Nevertheless, some readers already familiar with Chávez and New Mexico politics will find much of interest in Roybal's account. Political scientists, for instance (or even self-identified "political junkies" for that matter), will likely find significant utility in Roybal's vivid recreation of intra-party squabbles and backroom legislative debates. For many others, however, conclusions as to the book's broader value and utility are slightly more ambiguous. Historians interested in understanding Chávez's or New Mexico's placement within an emerging Sunbelt or the transformations in partisan identification and power during the last several decades of the twentieth century will likely come away disappointed. Roybal repeatedly alludes to significant national trends or developments, out of which some comment on New Mexico's role would be quite valuable. Unfortunately, Roybal consistently brushes past these moments in favor of a more detailed and traditional political narrative. In recent decades, many historical biographers have succeeded in reshaping the goals and objectives of political biography, using main characters as lenses through which studies of political movements and cultures might be more critically assessed. Roybal's biography does not do this, though the author has clearly identified a topic and an individual out of which such an analysis might be contributed. Rather, readers are left with a reasonably well-written but ultimately myopic study of an individual whose role in shaping race, economic, and judicial policy is treated without even momentarily assessing the impact of race, economic, or judicial change on the citizens of New Mexico.

Put another way, Roybal's study of Fabián Chávez provides a comprehensive overview of vote totals, but very little information about the voters providing those totals and whose needs Fabián Chávez worked so hard to defend. That is, perhaps, an unfair criticism: After all, Roybal's clear intent was to author a biography of Fabián Chávez. In this most basic of goals, he succeeds. Perhaps Roybal's greatest success, however, is in leaving the reader with an unquenched thirst for knowing more about New Mexico politics and the role of that state in the dynamic and ever-complex world of Sunbelt politics.

*Texas Tech University*

SEAN P. CUNNINGHAM

*Twentieth-Century Texas: A Social and Cultural History*. Edited by John W. Storey and Mary L. Kelley. (Denton: University of North Texas, 2008. Pp. 486. Illustrations, notes, index. ISBN 9781574412451, \$39.95 cloth; ISBN 9781574412468, \$18.95 paper).

*Twentieth-Century Texas: A Social and Cultural History* is a recent anthology of a new generation of scholars, covering various topics concerning the historical development and progress of Texas during the last century. Major topics range from race and ethnic identity to religious diversity to sports history. The purpose of the text is to offer a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the twentieth century.