

# 'Damn fool,' horse hit trail in bid to help save rain forests

By **BOB QUICK**  
The New Mexican Staff

Not far from Havasu City, Ariz., a motorist came upon Lucian Spataro and his horse Willy and asked him what they were doing out in the middle of the desert with the temperature at 117 degrees.

Spataro told him he was riding across the country to benefit the world's rain forests, and the motorist said, "You're a damn fool" before driving away.

Spataro, a Tucson engineer, just looked at the car's dust and nodded his head. "Yeah, you're right," he said.

That's just one of the tales of the trail Spataro, 31, tells after riding 1,000 miles from California to Albuquerque on his way to New York.

He left Los Angeles May 19 and expects to arrive on the East Coast some time in September, in the process raising people's consciousness about the state of the world's rain forests and raising \$1 million to help save them.

The funds are for the Rainforest Action Network, a non-profit corporation based in San Francisco.

The rain forests, which circle the earth at the equator, are being destroyed at the rate of an acre a second, Spataro said. Since 1950, they have been reduced from 14 percent to 7 percent of the earth's flora.

The rain forests are important, he said, because they contain 50 percent of the varieties of all the world's plants and animals.

Willy, an 8-year-old gelding, is from Tucson's Al-Marah Arabian Ranch. Eight companies, including Eazy Boots of Santa Fe, makers of a rubber horse boot, are providing the tack and gear for the transcontinental trek.

Spataro and Willy arrived Saturday by truck and trailer in the Santa Fe area for some rest at the home of Rutgers and Leslie Barclay near Rabbit Junction south of town.

Today, horse and rider will drive back to I-40 east of Albuquerque and resume their journey.

So far, both man and horse, with the exception of Willy's sunburned nose, are doing fine.

"We've covered 1,000 miles," Spataro said. "We've got some credibility. People are not asking any more if we're going to make it, they're asking what date we're going to arrive."

The beginning in California was the hardest part of the journey. "Getting out of Los Angeles was difficult," Spataro said.

From there, the pair moved across California into Arizona, following I-40 into Gallup and on across western New Mexico. They try to cover 22 miles per day. And avoid the empty soft-drink bottles.

"The hardest part is the trash on the road," Spataro said. "Some times it's as high as the



Leslie Tallant/The New Mexican

*Lucian Spataro and his horse Willy take a break in Santa Fe*

horse's chest. We've ridden 1,000 miles through trash. We smash a Coke bottle every 15 minutes."

When Spataro and Willy finish their trip, they will also enter the Guinness Book of World Records.

"It's never been done before with one horse and one rider," Spataro said.

set by Ulisse Santicchi seem necessarily vast, especially when two fingers only were on stage and so The opening scene, silhouetting

## SF murder unsolved

By **STEVE TERRELL**  
The New Mexican Staff

Victoria Griego, a young wife of the state Motor Vehicle Division, had been in an argument with her boyfriend at a time she had decided to walk home alone.

Five days later, her body was found beneath a tree in an area off Cerrillos Road and Pueblo Drive-In. She was raped and strangled with a belt.

The crime occurred 11 days ago this month. Griego's body has never been found.

Her body, which was found by a resident of the nearby Apartments, was significantly decomposed, police said at the time.

It was about two miles from her home in a mobile home on Lynch Road, not far from where her body was found.

Interviewed shortly after her body was found, Police Chief Lucero — chief of detectives for Santa Fe Police at the time — said that someone in the Pueblo Apartments heard a woman screaming the night of the killing.

However, the person who screamed was nothing worse than a scream with, Lucero said.