

By Gary Nabhan

For decades, Bernard “Bunny” Fontana served as a one- man “N-GEN” coordinating dozens of Sonoran Desert researchers in the social and environmental sciences and arts as a living bridge across the border. While primarily known as an ethnohistorian, Bunny has also worked as a historic archaeologist, cultural ecologist, folklorist, writer, activist, teacher, museum exhibit curator and catalyst of cross-cultural exchanges. He not only lived more than half his life among the Tohono O’odham at Mission San Xavier, but he became a reliable member of their larger community. In addition to his own half-dozen award-winning books, Bunny mentored the likes of Sandy Lanham, Doug Peacock, Tom Sheridan, Charles Bowden, Bill Doelle, Bill Broyles, Beatriz Braniff, Fillman Bell and many other scholars, writers and activists of Northwest Mexico too numerous to name. In doing so, he made them feel part of a long and distinguished tradition of scholars going back to Eusebio Kino, Ignaz Pfeffercorn, W.J. McGee, William Hornaday, Lawrence Clark Powell, Emil Haury, Ruth Underhill, Ned Spicer, Julian Hayden and the entire Kroeber family. Bunny is alive and well in Tucson, still thinking, writing, connecting and informing his many friends on all things regarding the Sonoran Desert. As one of Bunny’s former misfit students, I am proud to call him a lifelong mentor.--- Gary Nabhan