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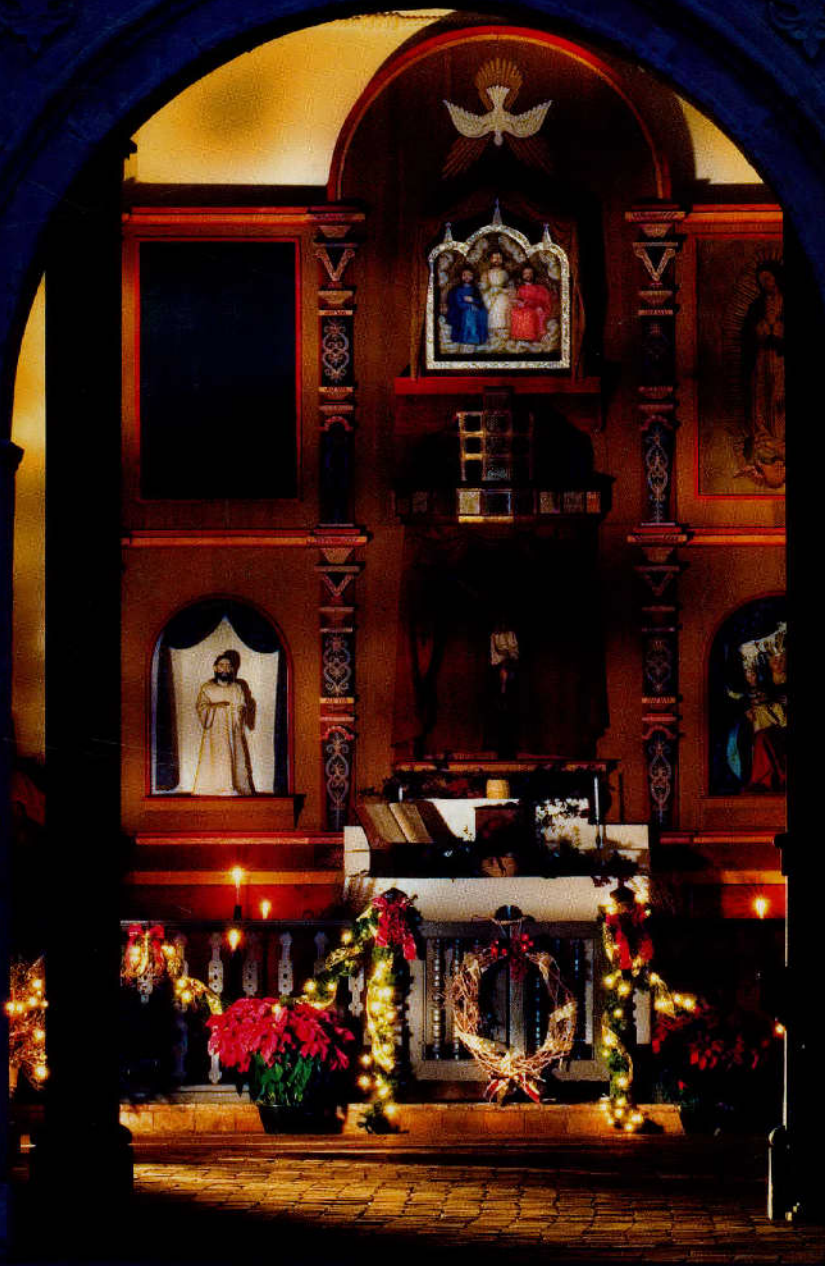
THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

# TEXAS

## HIGHWAYS

DECEMBER 2008

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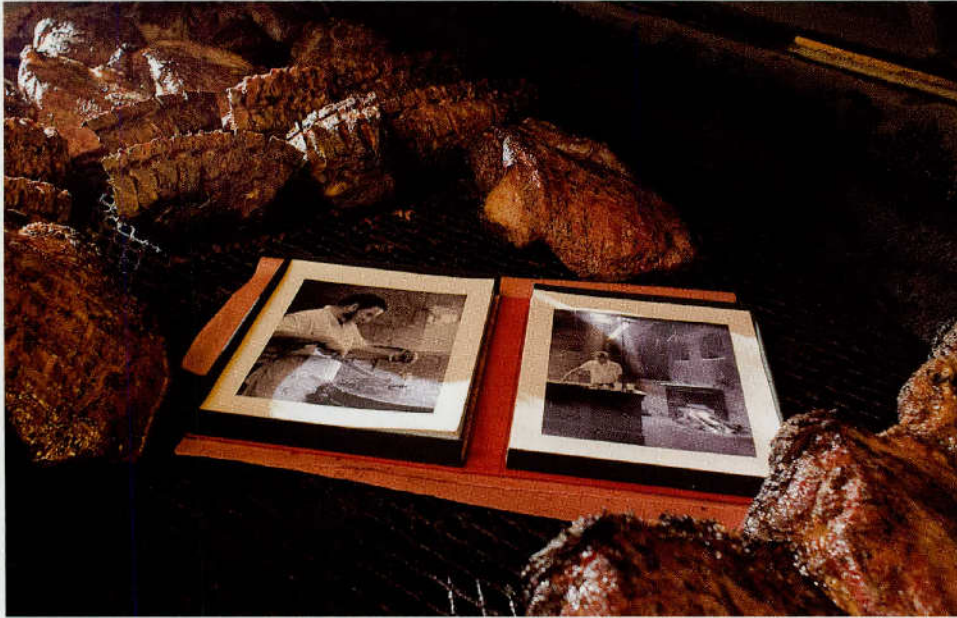


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© WYATT McSPADDEN



**Smokin':** Photographer Wyatt McSpadden "barbecues" a portfolio of photographs for his forthcoming book *Texas BBQ*, in hopes the aroma of smoking meat will entice writer Jim Harrison to contribute a foreword.

**W**HEN it's important to communicate the soul of an idea, how do you make absolutely sure that you get your point across? That's a question that haunts us in the publishing business every day. And, of course, the ultimate answer is "There are no guarantees."

Because of that constant uncertainty, though, I hold particular admiration for anyone committed to the pursuit of his or her personal best. And when I encounter valor combined with ingenuity, I am bound to acknowledge and applaud the combination. That's what leads us to the photograph above: A book-like portfolio nestled among sizzling, smoking slabs of meat.

Photographer **Wyatt McSpadden**, in cahoots with his wife, designer **Nancy McMillen**, dreamed up the book-smoking scheme as a means to cajole noted epicurean literary bon vivant screenwriter **Jim Harrison** (*Legends of the Fall*, *Wolf*, *Farmer*, and many more) to contribute the foreword to their upcoming photography book *Texas BBQ* (The book is due out from the University of Texas Press in a few months.) How could Mr. Harrison say "No," they reasoned, to a portfolio that arrived on his doorstep redolent of savory smoking succulent meat?

In the wake of the brainstorm, the dynamic duo packed up cameras and portfolio and headed to **Kreuz Market** in **Lockhart**, where proprietor **Rick Schmidt** enabled the unorthodox use of his pit. Of course, Schmidt—as well as other Kreuz stalwarts—is included in the photographs that will be reproduced in the book.

And the caper was a success. Harrison took on the project. "When I first looked at Wyatt McSpadden's photos," observes Harrison, "I fancied that someone had given the soul of **Edward Hopper** a camera and sent him off to Texas." Then he added, "The contents of McSpadden's book made me quite wild with hunger."

And *Texas Highways* readers will get a chance to take a bite themselves when we publish Wyatt's photography excerpt from *Texas BBQ* in an upcoming issue in spring 2009.

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

P.S. In the interest of full disclosure, I must point out that I've accompanied Wyatt on numerous forays to Kreuz Market. In the course of our many journeys, we have enjoyed imagining ourselves as brethren in a far-fetched cult that venerates smoked meat and the creators thereof.

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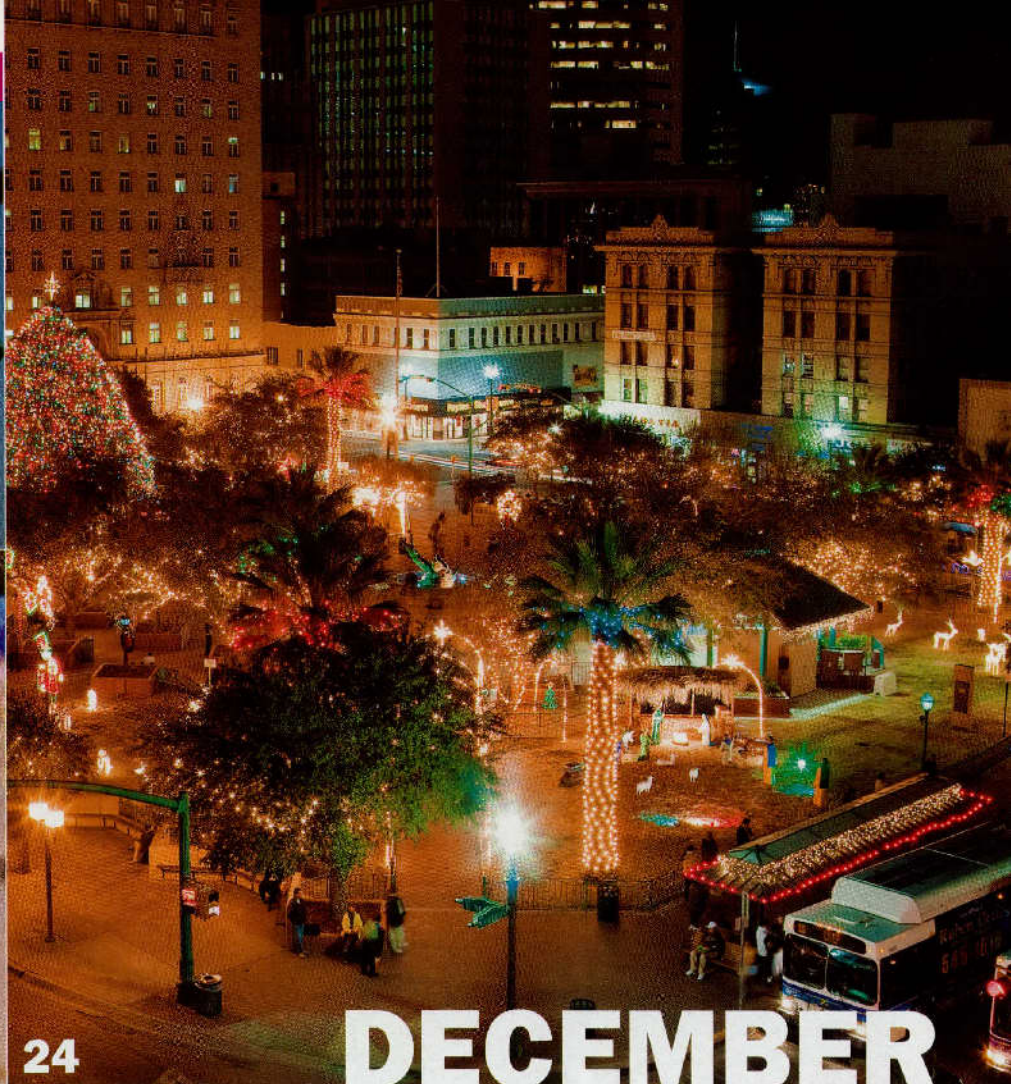




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**ABOUT OUR COVERS** FRONT: A chapel view of the reconstructed Mission Espiritu Santo, within Goliad State Park, hints at the site's Spanish Colonial background. From Thanksgiving through the end of December, the mission grounds glow with lights and luminarias. BACK: Canoes near the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon await paddlers on a pilgrimage down the Rio Grande. *Both photos by J. Griffis Smith.* (To order a print of either of these photographs, see instructions at left.)

PHOTOS FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: MICHAEL AMADOR; © AL BRADEN; J. GRIFFIS SMITH

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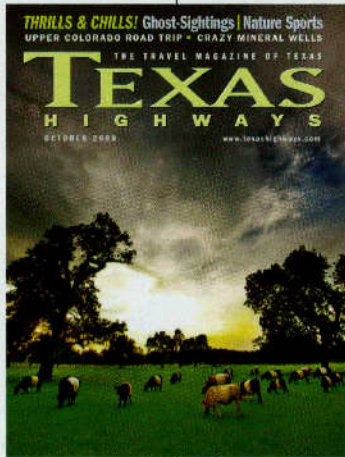
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CONGRATULATIONS TO Hill Country resident Ginger Scott, who won September's "Where in Texas Are You?" contest. Ginger's name was drawn from more than 1,400 entries with the correct answer: The Big Texan Steak Ranch in Amarillo. She is looking forward to her coastal getaway to Corpus Christi. TH sends big thanks to the Corpus Christi Convention and Visitors Bureau and Southwest Airlines for the terrific prize package!

## Cows, Cookies, and Kudos

WHAT A pleasant surprise on the October front cover. We [know of] a herd of these same cattle in a field just west of Fredericksburg on US 290. We had asked several people in the area if they knew the breed of these cattle,



and no one seemed to know. Now we do!

Once on a return trip from Fredericksburg, we had two of our grandchildren in the truck and the cattle were very close to the highway. The kids couldn't get over how the cattle were all marked so much alike. I told them that these were the cows that the people who make Oreo cookies get their milk from. I received a very skeptical look.

ART DANIEL  
Johnson City

THE OCTOBER issue is simply outstanding! You really outdid yourselves with this issue. Such beautiful photography in not

only the articles, but also on both covers.

BILL RISTER  
Houston

## Greens on the Screen

THE OCTOBER issue came just when I needed it most. Dick Holland's article on the Hill Top Cafe took our minds off of the devastation of our business caused by Hurricane Ike. Not to

mention the destruction in our yard and pasture.

We last visited the Hill Top in May, and plan on returning once we clean up the huge mess. The Greek salad was great. I still carry a picture of it on my iPhone.

GARY CLEMMONS  
Baytown

## Stamford Stampede

I COULDN'T believe my eyes when I saw Editor Charles Lohrmann's article about Stamford's Cowboy Reunion [October]! My aunt and uncle from Rule took me when Will Rogers and Wiley Post led the parades! I must have been only seven or so, and I still remember it.

BETTY BURT SMITH  
Tomball

## Icon Announcement

IN RESPONSE to Editor Charles Lohrmann's request for Texas icon nominations [Up Front, September]: Among Texas sports icons, don't forget Kern Tips, the late, great announcer who brought us the Southwest Conference Game of the Week for years. He made listening to football games a pleasure, and did he ever know his stuff!

LIZ HILL  
Benbrook

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Wallisville Lake Project (featured in October) was hit hard by Hurricane Ike. Currently, the visitors center, the project office, and the boat ramp at the Trinity River Island Recreation Area are open. Call 409/389-2285 for more information.

## Calling Fowl

GREAT PICTURE of herons in the October issue [Wallisville Lake Project, pages 52-53]. However, I don't think that they are in a heron rookery for two reasons. First, I can see no nests. They are just perched together. Secondly, there is no such thing as a heron rookery. The nesting site for herons is called a heronry. A rookery is the nesting site of the European rook (similar to our crows). Keep up your good work. (P.S. This will probably be the only letter you will receive on this subject.)

GARY TAYLOR  
Grapevine

ED. NOTE: You're right, Mr. Taylor! Yours is the only letter we received on this, and we appreciate your raising the point. We checked in with Ruth Millsaps, Park Ranger at the Wallisville Lake Project, who provided the following information. "The herons pictured here are in the rookery area that is and has been called the Trinity River Mouth Rookery for at least 30 years by the Texas Colonial Waterbirds Census, a database of rookeries along the Gulf Coast that is

compiled by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Although the nests may not be noticeable at the exact view shown, they are there, and if you come out in April to June in any year, you can see them. Twelve species of waterbirds nest and raise their young in this rookery.

"The term 'rookery' is now used in a more general sense to include breeding areas of several different species, including the rook as you had mentioned. Sea turtles, penguins, and sea lions, and many sea birds, utilize rookery sites.

and many of the stories reflect where I want to be.

H. DAVIS TUBRE  
Irving

**WRITE OR E-MAIL:** Talk to TH, Texas Highways, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax 512/486-5879; e-mail: letters.05@texashighways.com. Web site: www.texashighways.com. Though we are unable to print every letter, we just might select yours to appear in the magazine—whether you send us kudos or criticism. We reserve the right to edit letters.

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[www.cowboy-poetry.org](http://www.cowboy-poetry.org)

photos: Barbara Richardson

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<b>December 2008</b>	NEW YEAR'S EVE BALL
<b>January 2009</b>	BIG BEND LIVESTOCK SHOW
<b>February 2009</b>	TEXAS COWBOY POETRY GATHERING
<b>March 2009</b>	TRAPPING OF TEXAS
<b>June 2009</b>	FIESTA DEL SOL
<b>August 2009</b>	BIG BEND RANCH RODEO WAY OUT WEST TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL BIG BEND BALLOON BASH
<b>September 2009</b>	BULLRUN CHALLENGE

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# For THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

## Mariachi!

ON ANY GIVEN DAY IN SAN ANTONIO, you're likely to find yourself serenaded by traditional mariachi groups on the River Walk, at your favorite Mexican restaurant, or in downtown's Market Square. But from November 30 through December 6, during the 14th Annual **Mariachi Vargas Extravaganza**, the joyous sounds of mariachi seem to resonate in nearly every corner of the city.

That's because more than 1,000 mariachi musicians and vocalists from the United States and Mexico are here participating in workshops, competitions, and performances throughout San Antonio—many of which are free to the public. During the weeklong event, you can take



Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, a 12-piece group founded more than a century ago in Mexico, will perform with the UTSA Symphony Orchestra on December 6 at the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium.

part in a mariachi Mass at Mission San José, enjoy performances at the River Center Mall lagoon, and admire the mariachi-themed art at Centro Cultural Aztlán—not to mention attending the big show by the festival's honorees—Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, a 12-piece group founded in Mexico more than a century ago.

Why the enthusiasm? "I heard a gentleman once describe mariachi as a combination of opera, symphony, and Mexican folklore," says extravaganza producer Cynthia Muñoz. "When the musicians perform, it sounds like a full symphony."

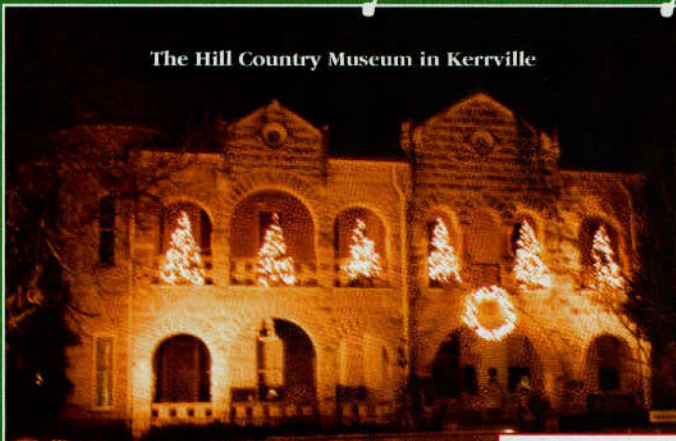
This will be especially true on December 6, when Mariachi Vargas will perform with the 70-member UTSA Symphony Orchestra at the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium. "The meeting of the classical music of Europe with the mariachi tradition of Mexico is a really beautiful acquaintance," says symphony director Gene Dowdy.

Call 210/225-3353; [www.mariachimusic.com](http://www.mariachimusic.com).

—L.M.

## Hill Country Holidays

The Hill Country Museum in Kerrville



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## ICE, ICE, BABY

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE ICEHOTEL IN Sweden, where you can bed down for the night in an artfully chiseled, modernist (and meltable) testament to architecture? If you think that sounds cool, but you can't fathom a trip to the Arctic Circle, you might be interested in a trek to the **Gaylord Texan Resort** in Grapevine, which brings its exhibit *ICE!* back for its fourth over-the-top year.



## GREAT TEXAS BOOKS

LOOKING FOR HOLIDAY GIFTS? VISIT Abilene's Texas Star Trading Company, where you'll find cowboy-themed Band-Aids, a whole clothing line emblazoned with the "Fixin' To—the State Verb of Texas" slogan, Stetson-wearing rubber duckies, and a slew of other Texas-themed items you probably can't live without. Co-owner Glenn Dromgoole, who reviews books for Texas newspapers when he's not stocking the store or writing books himself, maintains a carefully edited retail book nook, and his list of "10 Great Books for Your Texas Library" makes gift-buying a cinch. "If someone were to ask me to recommend 10 Texas books, here are some I would suggest," says Dromgoole.

*The Time it Never Rained*, a novel by Elmer Kelton about the drought of the 1950s.

*The Train to Estelline*. Novelist Jane Roberts Wood takes on teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in West Texas.

*Lonesome Dove*, the Western epic often regarded as Larry McMurtry's best work.

*The Original Adventures of Hank the Cowdog*, the first of John Erickson's series, equally popular with adults and kids.

*The Longhorns* by J. Frank Dobie, a study of the Texas Longhorn, and the cowboy.

*Texas Cowboy Cooking* by Tom Perini. Cooking as a way of life.

*A Personal Country*, by A.C. Greene, a book about connecting with place.

*Goodbye to a River* by John Graves, a narrative on a Brazos canoe trip.

*Interwoven* by Sallie Reynolds Matthews, a pioneer's memoir of life on the frontier.

*Lone Star Literature* edited by Don Graham, by more than 60 Texas writers.

All books are discounted at Texas Star, at 174 Cypress St. in downtown Abilene. Call 325/672-9696; [www.texasstartrading.com](http://www.texasstartrading.com). —L.M.

Each October, 40 artisans from the city of Harbin, China, arrive in Grapevine to begin sculpting the two million pounds of ice in the walk-through display. In ICE!'s 14,000-square-foot theater, which is chilled to a teeth-chattering 9 degrees Fahrenheit, they freeze thousands of LED lights in ice, build a three-story slide of ice, craft hundreds of ice sculptures, and install dramatic lighting. By mid-November, when ICE! opens, visitors can experience a whimsical, wintry mix. (Parkas are provided at the door.)

Call 800/457-6338; [www.GrapevineTexasUSA.com](http://www.GrapevineTexasUSA.com). —L.M.

## STAY, DON'T GO

TEXANS LOVE TO ADAPT NEW WORDS. Take "Staycation," for example—the noun that showed up everywhere this past fall as hotels courted visitors with tight budgets. Why travel out of town, they argued, when you can play tourist in your own city? After all, hotel restaurants and bars offer the ambiance of a getaway without the commitment (and expense) of an overnight stay. Here's a handful of hotel bars to put you in the vacation spirit. Cheers.

**The Living Room Bar, W Hotel-Victory Park, Dallas.** Twenty-something hipsters flock to the hotel's ultra-trendy Ghostbar for techno tunes and a

stunning view of downtown Dallas, but the ground-floor Living Room Bar offers prime people-watching and an inventive drink menu without all the frenzy. Sip a tumbler of spiced rum and watch the street parade of sports fans headed to the adjacent American Airlines Center. Call 214/397-4100.

**The Lobby Lounge, Four Seasons, Austin.** Special holiday cocktails at this sumptuous downtown spot will make you smile, as will the lobby's famous Gingerbread Village. Call 512/478-4500. (See [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)—click on "Web Extra"—for six Four Seasons holiday cocktail recipes.)

**The 610 Grille and Bar, Ashton Hotel, Fort Worth.** Elegant and understated, this is the place

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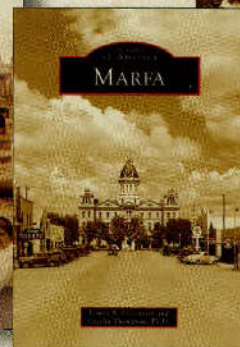
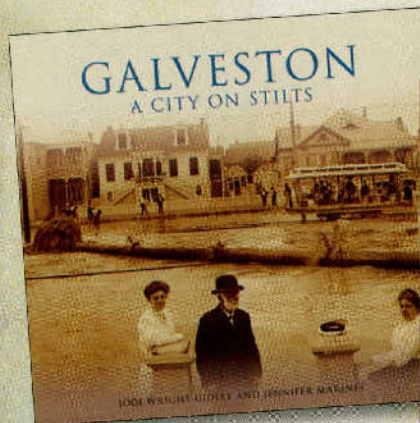
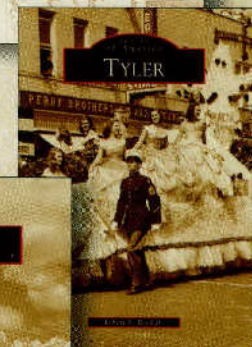
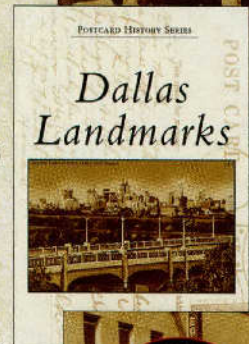
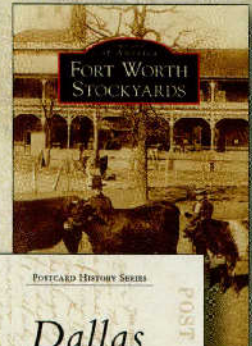
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# FOR THE ROAD

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## Piece by Piece

THIS WINTER, 17 INSTITUTIONS IN THE DALLAS-FORT WORTH **Metroplex** are highlighting the art of quilt-making in a collaborative exhibition called *Quilt Mania II*. The quilts on display cover territory you might not expect to see in this medium: For example, the **Cavanaugh Flight Museum** in Addison exhibits a collection of quilts inspired by airplanes and the physics of flight, the **Crow Collection of Asian Art** in Dallas highlights contemporary Japanese quilts, the **Mesquite Arts Center** showcases quilts made by the Kuna tribes of Panama and Columbia, and **The Women's Museum: An Institute for the Future** in Dallas features quilts that illustrate 19th- and 20th-Century political life from the perspective of patriotic American women. Exhibition dates for each museum vary; check [www.quiltmania.org](http://www.quiltmania.org). —L.M.

Before American women won full voting rights in 1920, they often voiced their political views in their crafts and artworks. Notice the bits of text sewn into this 1915-era quilt. Seventeen Dallas museums showcase quilts this winter.

# EL PASO.

## MORE THAN YOU IMAGINED.

### Brut Sun Bowl

**Fan Fiesta — Dec. 30, 2008, El Paso Convention Center**  
**Bowl Game — Dec. 31, 2008, Sun Bowl Stadium**  
Second-oldest collegiate bowl game in the U.S.

### 19th El Paso Chamber Music Festival

**January 7–February 1, 2009, various locations**  
A monthlong festival with world-class chamber music.

### Texas vs. The Nation

**January 31, 2009, Sun Bowl Stadium**  
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for a wine-fueled conversation about the delicate, jewelry-like Ranjani Shettar sculptures on view at the nearby Modern. Call 866/327-4866.

**The Dome Bar, El Camino Real, El Paso.** The authentic Tiffany-glass dome of this classic bar—just steps away from the El Paso Museum of Art—imbues customers with a warm, amber glow. Or should we credit the tequila? Call 915/534-3000.

**Bistro Bar, The Lancaster Hotel, Houston.** *Food & Wine* magazine recently ranked the Bistro Bar as one of top 10 bars in the country. Classic martinis please the post-theater crowd at this well-mannered downtown gem. Call 713/228-9500.

**Menger Bar, Menger Hotel, San Antonio.** Cherry-wood paneling and beveled-glass cabinets create an elegant atmosphere at this famous bar, built in 1887 and modeled after the House of Lords Pub in London. Call 210/223-4361.

—L.M.

## DICKENS-STYLE CHRISTMAS

NO BAH-HUMBUGS ALLOWED IN LOCKHART on December 5-6 at the annual **Dickens' Christmas in Lockhart** celebration. Since 1989, revelers have gathered here to relive one of the most enduring Christmas stories of all time: *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens' 19th-Century Victorian tale of a bitter Scrooge's reawakening of his Christmas spirit.



On Friday night, Lockhart citizens host an illuminated night parade, featuring more than 100 floats, decorated vehicles, and costumed Dickens characters. The procession begins on Market Street and meanders through downtown. The next morning, the Dr. Eugene Clark Library transforms into a scene from Christmas past with Victorian decor, choirs, clogging groups, and even a Christmas camel for children to feed.

At the event's close, festival-goers gather downtown for the lighting of the Yule Log, a traditional ceremony that signifies the beginning of the season. With the flip of a switch, downtown Lockhart radiates with Christmas lights as the community welcomes the holidays with carols. Call 512/398-2818; [www.lockhartchamber.com](http://www.lockhartchamber.com).

—LAUREN OAKLEY

### YULETIDE AT BAYOU BEND

WHEN HOUSTON PHILANTHROPIST AND collector Ima Hogg left her 14-acre estate to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 1957, the museum saw the rare opportunity to display its collection of American decorative arts and paintings in context. Today, more than 20 rooms of the mansion reveal the evolution of American style from 1620 to 1876, with each room depicting a different era. During the holidays, Bayou Bend's annual Yuletide celebration brings an extra dimension to the museum's novel interpretation of history, and this year's theme—**Celebrations!**—warrants special cheer.

"Bayou Bend can be somewhat of a formal place," says Kathleen O'Connor, curator of education. "But during the holidays, the home is filled with guests, and we've created historical vignettes based on real people and celebratory events." For this year's Yuletide, O'Connor and her docents researched such occasions as Puritan weddings in the 1700s, American Valentine's Day observances circa 1849, and Ivy League graduation parties of the 1770s to create scenes that ring authentic—down to the last detail. "In one room, we're recreating the day the Hoggs moved into the house—November 6, 1928," says O'Connor. "We ask, 'Would they have had a tablecloth or placemats?' And we learned that placemats were the 'in' thing on the breakfast table in 1928."

Special candlelight tours of the estate take place on December 5 and 12, complete with carolers and hot cider. "People come with their little girls dressed in red velvet for photos, or couples come in jeans before they go to the movies, or people arrive as a group for an after-work event," says O'Connor. "It's truly a festive time." Call 713/639-7750; [www.mfah.org/bayoubend](http://www.mfah.org/bayoubend).

—L.M.

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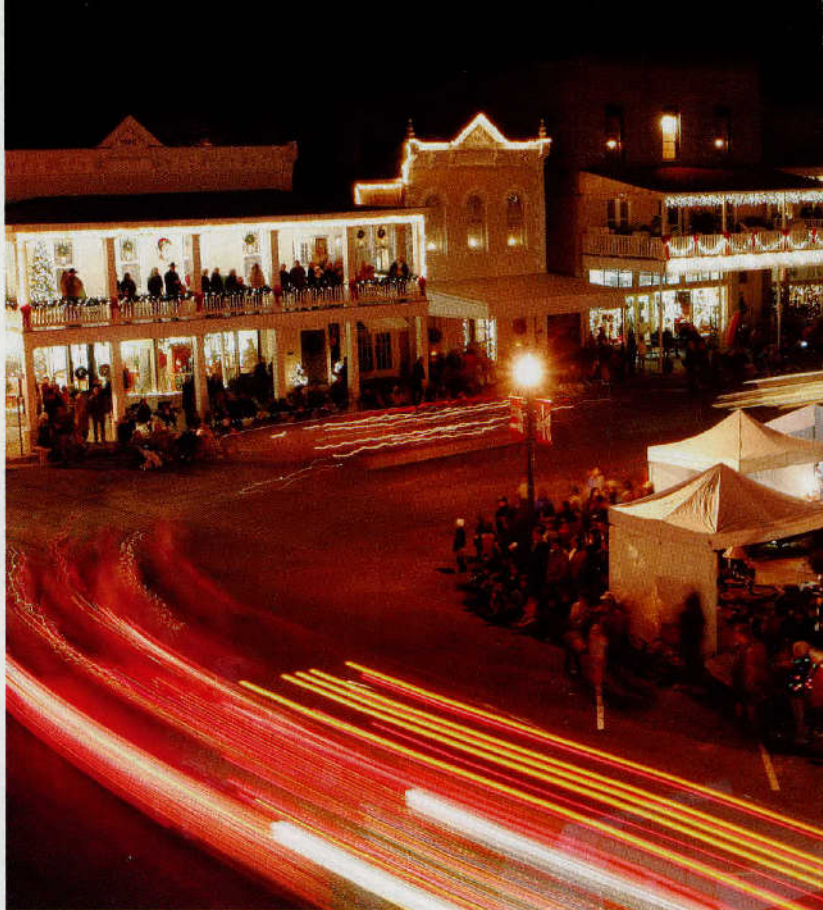
# Spotlight on CHRISTMAS IN GOLIAD

## Small-Town Season's Greetings

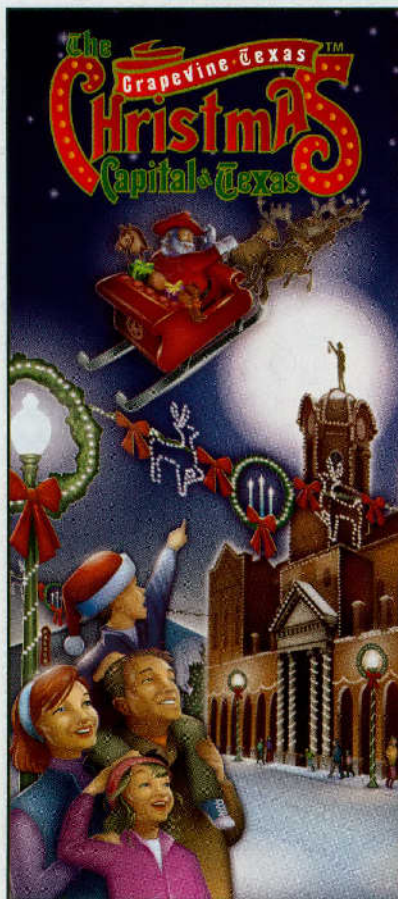
IN THE BRISK WIND OF A DARK, EARLY-DECEMBER night in **Goliad**, I look around at usually quiet streets that I often stroll with friends and family. They aren't quiet now. The storefronts and restaurants that are usually dark at this hour are brightly illuminated and welcoming. The air practically vibrates with excitement and anticipation.

The sidewalks are packed with chattering residents and visitors. Those who can't find a place to stand take a seat on the curb, either stretching their legs or cradling their knees close to their chests.

The Goliad square is now a winter wonderland. Pots of poinsettias decorate the entrances to antiques shops, and garlands hang from wooden balconies, accented by shiny, red foil bows. Strings of sparkling white lights outline the century-old brick buildings crowded around the courthouse like children around a Christmas tree.



Christmas in Goliad celebrates its 25th anniversary this year with a festive combination of holiday shopping, caroling, a dazzling parade, and the arrival of Santa Claus.



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The brilliant glow is so intense against the sky that it's one of the rare clear nights in this town when you can't see the stars.

It's Friday night during Christmas in Goliad, an annual weekend festival that for 25 years has ushered in the Yuletide season with holiday performances, shopping, and the arrival of good ole St. Nick. The crowd waits for the kickoff event, the lighted parade.

Three years ago, I wouldn't have been standing with my mom and grandmother on this sidewalk, waiting for the parade to spill out into the street in front of us. I was a senior at Goliad High School then, and I was with the marching band.

Back then, blocks away at the parade's starting point, I huddled with friends—all of us dressed in requisite white coats and navy blue pants—trying to keep warm. My friend Stephanie and I passed a roll of Scotch tape back and forth while she wound blue, pink, and green lights around her flute, and I circled a line of lights around the bell of my French horn. Exasperated when we couldn't make the tape stick to the cold metal, we expelled visible puffs of breath into the frigid air.

And tonight, here comes that familiar uniform block of navy and white, stomping down the street with their illuminated instruments and





© BOB PARVIN

me it's Christmas. Ten years ago, my grandmother and I sat in a similar booth, ours shaped like an Old West saloon, selling sweet sarsaparilla to help raise money for the Goliad County Historical Commission.

Singers, bands, and dancers from as far away as Corpus Christi provide the festive background for the day's meandering. Local children have been called in to provide entertainment, too: A group of tiny girls in red tights and tap shoes clatters into two neat rows on the street to dance to "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." Down the block, the elementary school choir enthusiastically shouts the lyrics to "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree."

Everyone's attention returns to the street when, at high noon, a jolly "Ho ho ho!" (with a slight Texas twang) echoes from around the corner. After following the same route as the lighted parade, Santa descends from "Texas," a gentle white Longhorn with reddish-brown spots and ornamented horns, and greets a group of children waiting to have their Christmas wishes heard and their pictures taken on top of Santa's "reinsteer."

In the evening, the events return to Presidio La Bahía and the neighboring Mission Espíritu Santo.

At 6:00 p.m., in La Bahía's chapel, Goliad's Zaragoza Society celebrates the Hispanic tradition of "Las Posadas," which tells the story of Mary and Joseph just before the birth of Jesus, when they searched for a place to stay but found no room at the inn. A choir performance within the reverberating walls of the Mission Espíritu Santo's chapel brings the weekend to a close.

Christmas in Goliad has come a long way from its first year in 1983. The lighted parade that was once over in minutes has grown into an hour-long occasion with more than 70 entries. More events have been added over the years, including a living Nativity scene and a "doggie

**CHRISTMAS** in Goliad takes place December 5-6. Call the Goliad County Historical Commission at 361/645-8767.



dress-up show." There is always something to do, something to see, and something to talk about.

During the first weekend in December, this tiny town of fewer than 2,000 people doubles in size with visitors from across the United States who have traveled to Goliad to partake in the food, music, and celebration. The growth in popularity of the festival even attracted the attention of the HGTV special *Small Town Christmas* in 2004.

Goliad may be a small town, but for a quarter century, the people have proven that it sure has big Christmas spirit. —CAITLIN SULLIVAN

infusing the evening with cheery holiday tunes.

The Goliad natives cheer and whistle, clapping in time with the music. The sound of the carol floats away as the parade continues on its geometric path around the courthouse.

Kids jump up and down for a better look, and adults wave to the people on floats, gliding down the street covered in blankets of Christmas lights. Even the horses in the parade can't escape the twinkling bulbs wrapping them up like unopened presents.

The next morning, just south of town, the thundering of hooves accompanies the sunlight as it creeps over the stone walls of Presidio La Bahía, the oldest standing fort west of the Mississippi. La Bahía is the first stop of an event called **Christmas Along the Corridor**, an annual reenactment of the historic Pony Express. A lone horseback rider delivers a proclamation of the Christmas season to the fort before racing off to six other counties.

Back on the downtown square, folks wander from booth to booth, savoring samples of homemade tamales and baked goods and marveling at the vast selection of handmade items for sale. Artisans from around the state show off their skills, offering paintings, leather goods, iron works, wooden furniture, stained glass, jewelry, bars of soap, and dolls.

I buy a cup of hot Mexican cocoa to fend off the cold while I stroll past the food booths, inhaling the delectable smells of spices that remind

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- ☉ "The Nutcracker", Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>
- ☉ "Making Spirits Bright", Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>

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# TOP Tables

NOTEWORTHY CULINARY JOURNEYS

BY DICK HOLLAND

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL AMADOR

## “Candy or Sherbet?”

BACK IN THE 20TH CENTURY, MOST TEXANS enjoyed four basic food groups: home-cooking, burgers, barbecue, and Mexican food. Burgers and barbecue were usually brought home, but the family typically went out for Mexican food. This is when important familial bonds formed by way of tortilla chips, red salsa, and Number 2 Dinners. After the meal, following the puffy tacos, enchiladas, and refried beans, there would be the choice of a praline or frozen concoction for dessert. As the waiter refilled the last iced tea glass, he

(or she) would inevitably ask the time-honored question: “Candy or sherbet?”

Some time in the 1980s, with the appearance of cuisines from the interior of Mexico, and with a welcome proliferation of Latin American places, Mexican food in Texas diversified. These establishments have their virtues, but it is the old-school Tex-Mex restaurants that we celebrate here.

When you’re talking Tex-Mex, one of the best ways to start a good argument is to brag about how the Mexican food in your town is the best. (Some friendly advice: Don’t argue with people from San Antonio—theirs really is the best.) Every town has its favorite, from Galveston (The Original Mexican Café) to Marfa (Borunda’s Bar & Grill) and from Amarillo (Jorge’s Tacos Garcia) to San Marcos (Herbert’s Taco Hut). In the cities, the old loyalties lie with El Fenix and El Chico in Dallas, Joe T. Garcia’s in Fort Worth, Molina’s and the original Ninfa’s on Navigation in Houston, Avila’s in El Paso, and El Mirador and Mi Tierra in San Antonio.

Austin has its own scene with good food

### Austin Tex-Mex Masters

El Azteca is at 2600 E. 7th St.; 512/477-4701. Hours: Mon-Sat 11 a.m.-10 p.m.

Matt’s El Rancho is at 2613 S. Lamar Blvd.; 512/462-9333; [www.mattselrancho.com](http://www.mattselrancho.com). Hours: Mon, Wed, Thu, and Sun 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Fri-Sat 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

El Patio is at 2938 Guadalupe St.; 512/476-5955; Hours Mon-Sat 11 a.m.-9:30 p.m.



in all categories, and I recently visited three long-established, family-owned Tex-Mex restaurants to see how they were doing. I stopped in at Matt’s El Rancho on South Lamar; El Patio on Guadalupe, close to the University of Texas; and El Azteca on East 7th.

To fully appreciate the current Matt’s El Rancho, you need a little history on the early life of its founder, Matt Martinez, one of Austin’s most dynamic restaurateurs. When Martinez was a boy, he traipsed up and down Congress Avenue, pulling a wooden cart from which he sold tamales from his father’s café, El Original (the *original* El Original was in San Antonio). Later, Matt

fought his way to the championship level of featherweight boxing, and some of the restaurant’s promotional material presents a youthful Matt Martinez with the gloves on.

When Matt and his wife, Janie, opened their restaurant on East 1st Street (now Cesar Chavez) between Congress Avenue and I-35, Janie worked in the kitchen and Matt waited tables, often running out to San Jacinto Street to give samples to passers-by. Janie cooked chicken-fried steaks, black-eyed peas, collard greens, and cornbread. She added an enchilada plate to the menu, and that caught on. The restaurant’s popularity led to room-by-room expansion, and before long, the family purchased land across the street for even more growth.

“Number 2,” as the family still calls the newer place, included a separate take-out building that brought in a torrent of customers. By the early 1980s, both buildings were bulging with business. In 1983, The Southland Corporation bought the Martinez property, and Matt’s El Rancho was on the move again.

Matt’s current incarnation on South



Austin’s El Patio, a Tex-Mex landmark on Guadalupe a few blocks north of UT, still beckons diners from the same building—with neon sombrero—it has occupied for more than 50 years.

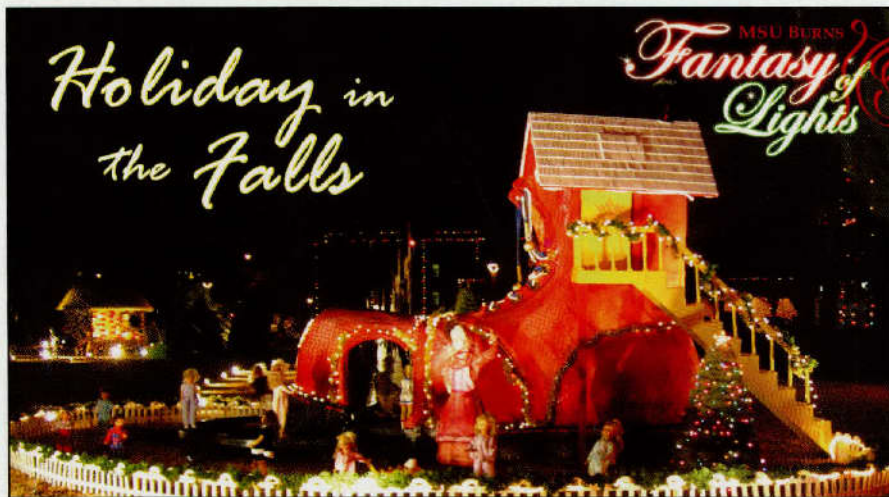




Lamar opened in 1988. The spacious building offers more than 100 tables, if you count the handsome patio in back, and on a busy weekend, you'll have to wait an hour to get one of them. But there is lots of space around the bar and interesting photographs of the old days on the wall—one shows Matt Martinez posed with the Budweiser Clydesdales on East 1st Street.

Matt's El Rancho is a happy place, full of regulars who know what to expect. They choose from the famous *chile relleno*, several popular fish and shrimp dishes, vegetarian options, and the delicious Mexican pizza. Look for the Bob Armstrong dip, a rich and delectable combination of *chile con queso* with guacamole and taco meat, named after its inventor, Austin lawyer and former Texas Land Commissioner Bob Armstrong. Just say, "We'll start with a small Bob."

In addition to Bob Armstrong, Matt's lays claim to a loyal contingent of Austin-style celebrities: politicians, football coaches, golfers, actors, writers, and musicians. Lyndon Johnson was known to enter Number 1 through the back door and shake hands with all of the cooks. As President, LBJ ordered *chiles rellenos* and combination dinners flown



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to the White House for special events. But it is the regular folks, and many generations of them, who keep the place humming.

A similar demographic mix frequents El Patio, which has occupied the same stone building on Guadalupe, with the neon sombrero in front, since 1954, when Paul and Mary Ann Joseph opened it. Mary Ann is still in charge, along with four of her six children: David, Michelle, Roseann, and Renee. A family member is always present, and all of them speak warmly of patriarch Paul Joseph, whose family immigrated to Texas from Lebanon. He was particularly attentive to children—when he saw one who was acting up or didn't want to eat, he would take the tyke back to the kitchen and instruct the cook to make a special plate with whatever the child wanted. The only catch was that the plate had to be clean at the end of the meal. Hundreds of grateful parents became regular customers.

When El Patio comes up in conversation, long-timers respond, "Oh, the place with the crackers." In his authoritative *The Tex-Mex Cookbook*, Robb Walsh says that crackers and butter were a feature of many early Mexican restaurants. Both Mary Ann and David Joseph told me that back when El Patio stayed open until 2:00 a.m., unruly UT students would start chip fights. To stop these shenanigans, Paul substituted half-sleeves of saltine crackers. The ruse was effective, and soon regulars came to expect it. El Patio now serves chips with salsa, but crackers are available by request.

El Patio presents an unchanging menu, beloved waiters, and its own set of celebrities, including Earl Campbell, Walter Cronkite, and the late Lady Bird Johnson, who brought her daughters and later, her granddaughters. The waiter everyone remembers is Benny Rodriguez, who worked at El Patio for more than 40 years, knew regulars by name, and often placed their orders by the time they took a seat.

The food at this venerable café is old-school. Beef tamales, beef-and-cheese enchiladas, the crunchy beef taco, and chile con queso. Many of the combination dinners (my favorite is the Number 3 with queso), result in a taco plate followed by a plate that features an enchilada or tamale covered with chili gravy, Proust's *madeleine* to the Tex-Mex enthusiast. (continued on page 58)

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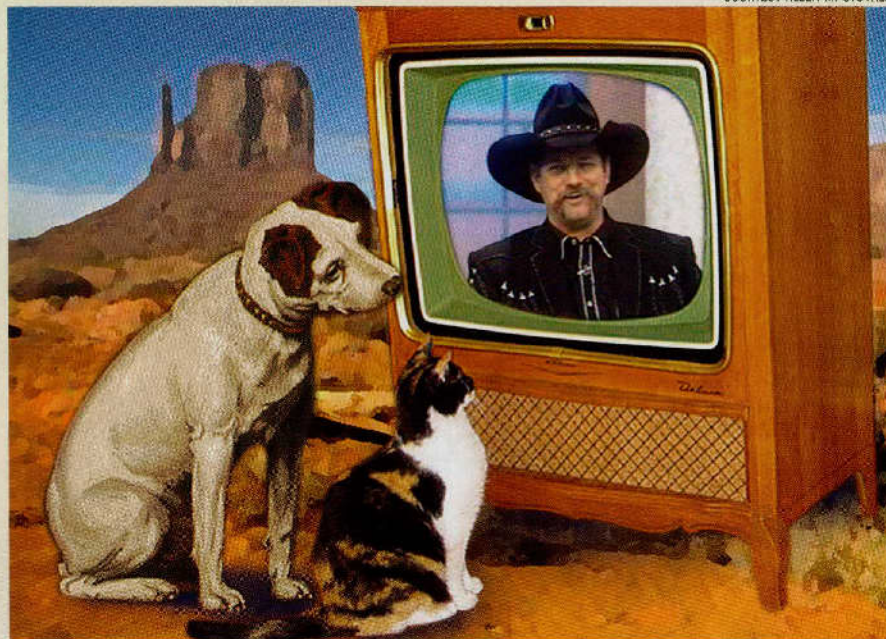
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## TYLER BEARD, TEXAN

“I want to thank my lucky stars that Mom and Dad were native Texans,” wrote the late Tyler Beard in his last book, *Lone Star Living*. “I would not want to be from anywhere else.”

COURTESY ALLEN M. STOVALL



Artist Allen Stovall created this photo montage, *Denver, Colorado TV News Interview*, circa 1993, as a gift to Tyler and Teresa Beard, who made their living collecting Western memorabilia.

Born Barry Williams Beard in Big D in 1954, he listened as a child to the old folks talk about days long gone and learned that Texas is the land where people go to reinvent themselves. “I would lie in the bunkhouse by the light of the crackling cedar fire,” wrote Tyler, “and listen in awe....”

After careers as a rock-and-roll drummer and owner of an edgy hair salon in New England, he headed back home to the Lone Star State in the 1980s. Adopting a new handle, Tyler morphed into a buckaroo bon vivant. He and his wife, Teresa, restored an 1870s stone house just off the square in Comanche, then took formal wedding vows on horseback in the front yard. Ever the frolicsome galoot, Tyler said “I do” with a noose dangled loosely around his neck.

Family members say Tyler was a natural-born trader, who even sold his

tonils to a classmate on show-and-tell day in elementary school. In Comanche, the Beards founded a Western Americana curio company, True West, which sold Texas artifacts to clients like Ralph Lauren boutiques and EuroDisney. The Beards, along with their homes and collections, appeared in dozens of magazines and books, bolstering the duo’s reputation as high-profile Western style-

meisters. Dealers and collectors found their way to the Beards’ barn in Comanche (and later to their homes and businesses in Goldthwaite and Lampasas) from Hollywood, Germany, Japan, and other hotbeds of Lone Star culture.

Authoring books like *100 Years of Western Wear*, *Art of the Boot*, and *The Cowboy Boot Book*, Tyler, sometimes dubbed the “World’s Leading

**Tyler Beard’s collection of Western memorabilia became the foundation of designer Ralph Lauren’s Western lines of the early 1990s.**

Authority on Cowboy Boots,” sparked a stampede of sagebrush fashionistas. “His love of and enthusiasm for vintage Western wear helped to get this great American artform and its creators the respect they deserve,” says Holly George-Warren, author of the 2001 book *How The West Was Worn*.

Teresa died in Lampasas in 2005. Tyler passed away in Dallas in December 2007, his health compromised by treatment for throat cancer that had been diagnosed in 1995. As Texas culture maven Joe Nick Patoski blogged, “His passing leaves a big dang hole. Thanks for inspiring us all, Tyler.”

—Gene Fowler

TYLER BEARD’s books, including *Art of the Boot*, *Cowboy Boots*, *The Cowboy Boot Book*, *100 Years of Western Wear* (all published by Gibbs-Smith), and *Lone Star Living: Texas Homes and Ranches* (Bullfinch Press), can be found in stores or through online book vendors.

Tyler and Teresa Beard’s former home in Comanche is now the

headquarters of **Brennan Vineyards** (see last month’s “Spotlight on Brownwood and Beyond”). Known as the 1879 McCrary House, the home—a Texas Historic Landmark—was scheduled to be demolished when the Beards bought it in the mid-1980s and restored it. (Their names are carved on the mantelpiece in what is now the main tasting room.) Tyler

Beard’s sister, Deb Conkling, recalls the first time she visited the couple in Comanche. “The house was still a work in progress,” says Deb. “There was no heat, only the fireplace. We made the biggest fire we could and still had to put on music and dance around the room to keep warm. The next morning, the sun came out and it was so beautiful and sparkling.”





THE VISUAL POET BEHIND MANY RICHARD LINKLATER FILMS, DALLAS-BORN CINEMATOGRAPHER **LEE DANIEL** RANKS AS ONE OF THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED FILM ARTISTS WORKING IN TEXAS.

# POETR





CINEMATOGRAPHER LEE Daniel initially earned his chops collaborating with filmmaker and fellow Austin resident Richard Linklater, first on *Slacker* (1991), and then on a string of other successful projects (*Dazed and Confused*, *Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset*, *Fast Food Nation*, and *subUrbia*). Daniel is also renowned for his camera work on environmental documentaries, such as *The Unforeseen* (2007), a film backed by Robert Redford and Texas filmmaker Terence Malick that looks at issues surrounding Central Texas water rights.

Two of Daniel's loves—the Lone Star landscape and Texas music—often surface in his documentary projects. The Austin resident shot Margaret Brown's heart-wrenching study of Townes Van Zandt, *Be Here to Love Me* (2004), as well as director Keven McAlester's compelling tribute to Roky Erickson, *You're Gonna Miss Me* (2005). Daniel has also worked on a film about the Lubbock music scene (*Lubbock Lights*), and on videos for Los Lonely Boys.

If you trace Daniel's work back to the 1980s, it's easy to see what makes his soul singing (or cringe): nature, pop culture, environmental issues, injustice. Daniel's cinematographic vision is invariably framed with the "eye" of the poet-philosopher-contrarian, making him as iconoclastic as any of his subjects. But as his friends will attest, Daniel is that rare species: the humble intellectual, the erudite artist who deflects attention from himself to his work.

# Y and Light

A luminary in the cinematography world, Lee Daniel finds the quirky Austin area a good fit for his artistic mindset. "It's a good place to reflect; it's a good place to be creative," he says.



**BASS:** Many Texans have a strong sense of place, or as some would call it, "Texas pride." What is that about?

**DANIEL:** Well, my father would always say that individuals are a product of the earth that they stand on. They're an extension of the ground, the land. I think that applies to people everywhere, but maybe particularly to Texans.

**BASS:** You've said that your parents loved to read when you and your siblings [two brothers, one sister] were growing up in Richardson. Did that shape you as an artist?

**DANIEL:** My parents weren't pushy with any of us, ever. But they both had college educations, and they liked to read, and my dad would always drop books on me. ... I remember when I was in the seventh or eighth grade, and he just dropped this book on my lap and said, "Read this, you're going to appreciate it when you get a lot older." It was John Graves' *Goodbye to a River*.

**BASS:** Speaking of history, you've got some funny memories about how Texas legend and history may have shaped your future as a filmmaker?

**DANIEL:** Yeah, one of my first memories of that sort of Texas pride was this movie with Peter Ustinov called *Viva Max*, where this kind of quasi-Santa Anna, Mexican-type dictator, played by Ustinov, comes back in modern times and takes back the Alamo. I remember as a kid saying, "He can't do that! Stop him!" We were like, "Where's Travis?! Where's Crockett?!"

**BASS:** What got you truly interested in film?

**DANIEL:** One of the formative experiences was seeing West Texas for the first time. The whole family took a vacation in our Country Squire station wagon and went to the McDonald Observatory and stayed up there at the inn [Indian Lodge] in Davis

Mountains State Park. ... And I remember looking through that telescope at the observatory and just wondering, how do those lenses magnify the stars like that? Just trying to figure out how that worked. That might've been how I got interested in photography. Plus, our next-door neighbor in Richardson was a cinematographer, so my mother kinda blames him for getting me interested in the business.

**BASS:** How did you get together with Richard Linklater, who is also a Texan and whose two seminal films—*Slacker* and *Dazed and Confused*—were set in Texas?

**DANIEL:** It was at a Super 8 club—Super 8 is small-format filmmaking—that met down on 6th Street in Austin. This was back in 1982 or '83, and Rick showed up. ... He was real quiet. He didn't bring anything. He was like, "I've never showed my films to anybody." And that made me really curious. ... Later he took me to his flat in West Campus, where he'd converted his closet into a projection booth. But the interesting thing with Rick was he was working with sound, and it's really difficult to work with sound on Super 8. (*The two became fast friends and eventually moved into the house on Nueces Street that became the birthplace of Slacker—a film born from Linklater's observation of his over-thinking, couch-surfing, punk-rocking pals.*)

**BASS:** Did you feel early on that you and Linklater might go somewhere—together?

**DANIEL:** Richard might have felt that. We came from different worlds. I wanted to be an adventurer and sail on *The Calypso* and speak French and just be a Jacques Cousteau underwater cameraman, whereas Rick was more steeped in classic Hollywood. I was in film school at UT at the time, and he taught me more about feature filmmaking and classic Hollywood films than anyone. ... From there,



we ended up forming the Austin Film Society. (Now the organization's advisory board includes filmmakers John Sayles, Quentin Tarantino, Mike Judge, Jonathan Demme, Robert Rodriguez, Steven Soderbergh, and Kevin Smith.) We moved into the same flat that Janis Joplin had lived in—behind where Les Amis Café

Holding a vintage movie camera, Daniel pauses outside Gear, an Austin film/video supply house. "All the filmmakers in Austin help each other out," he says. "You don't find that in New York ... Seattle ... Vancouver or Los Angeles. But you can find it all over Texas."





used to be. That was kind of our production headquarters during *Slacker*.

**BASS:** During those days, what made Austin a creative hotbed?

**DANIEL:** Austin in the '80s just seemed to be ripe because it was pretty bombed out after the first big real estate/savings and loan bust.

**YOU CAN TRACE** DANIEL'S WORK TO SEE WHAT MAKES HIS SOUL SING (OR CRINGE): NATURE, POP CULTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES, INJUSTICE.



A TEXAS HIGHWAYS MOMENT  
WITH **LEE DANIEL**





**“I LOVE DOING MOVIES ABOUT MUSIC, AND THREE OF MY FAVORITE MUSICIANS HAPPEN TO BE TEXANS—ROKY ERICKSON, TOWNES VAN ZANDT, AND DANIEL JOHNSTON.”**



It was a much quieter place, you could find a place to park your car, overhead was really low, rent was \$100 a month, you could have a minimum-wage job and still have money left over to drink beer and go to punk-rock shows or see movies. It was just heaven. Some of these so-called harsh economic times have really benefitted us, and *Slacker* probably would never have been made, had there been a really robust economy.

**BASS: What do you consider the most cinematic places in Texas?**

**DANIEL:** Houston’s ship channel, that’s cinematic for me. ... Also I like to shoot time-lapse in West Texas. On some of the first trips I made on my own when I was in college, I’d go hit Big Bend with my Super 8 camera—sometimes just me in my VW bus, with my hammock and the camera. I’d hit those primitive roads and not see a soul for two or three days. ... A decade later I found myself in West Texas shooting time-lapse in 35 mm for a bank commercial, and I thought, “Wow, how lucky am I?” Your camera is taking a picture every 45 seconds, and you just sit there and listen to nothing—the wind. There’s something mesmerizing and kind of therapeutic and Zen-like about watching clouds in West Texas develop in the late afternoon in summertime. They build up, and the thunderstorms come. It’s just... *(he falls silent and grins)*.

**BASS: Continuing with things Texan: What’s your favorite Texas critter?**

**DANIEL:** It’s gotta be the armadillo, right? I mean, we gotta hold up the stereotype of the venerable vermin.

**BASS: You do a lot of Texas-based films; tell me about some of them.**

**DANIEL:** Linklater and I have only done two films that are set in Texas really, but I love doing movies about music, and three of my favorite musicians happen to be Texans—Roky Erickson, Townes Van Zandt, and Daniel Johnston. I’ve worked on documentaries about all of them, which is really a blessing. ... It’s true Austin is “the velvet rut.” You get stuck here, but you’re so comfortable. It’s a good place to reflect, it’s a good place to be creative. All the filmmakers in Austin help each other out. You don’t find that in New York. You don’t find that in Seattle. You don’t find that in Vancouver or Los Angeles. But you can find it all over Texas.

**BASS: You’re an outdoorsman and an angler. Where would you say are your favorite fishing holes in Texas?**

**DANIEL:** Well *(Daniel laughs, reluctant to reveal his prized spots)*. ... we grew up camping and fishing our whole lives, and we made a lot of trips down to Falcon Lake and Lake Texoma, Lake Tawakoni, Lake Ray Hubbard.

**BASS: For beauty, what’s your favorite lake?**

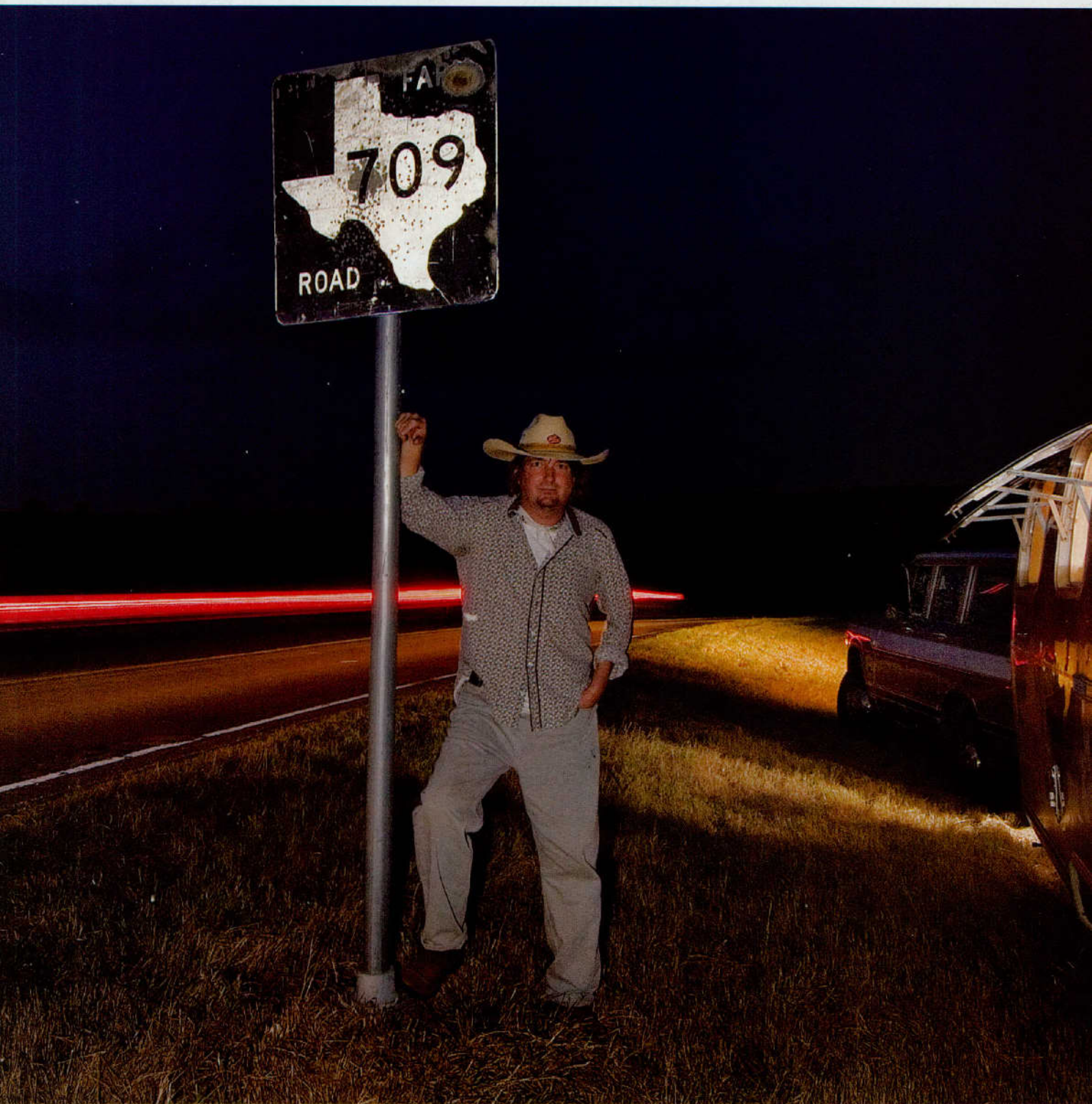
**DANIEL:** Aw, I like Falcon Lake. I think it’s weird there’s a whole town under there that got covered up—a little Mexican town that got flooded when they built the reservoir in 1953. The ruins of this town, Guerrero, are still underneath there. It’s right there on the Rio Grande.

**BASS: You love both East and West Texas—compare them for me.**

**DANIEL:** You know the Balcones Fault lies right between ’em, right? That’s the dividing line. That’s what makes these Central Texas people, these Austin people, a little schizophrenic like they are. Because of that

Daniel relaxes at The Oaks, a live-music venue and bar off FM 973 and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. in Austin. He also frequents Pendleton Pump, a roadhouse near Temple.





**TWO OF DANIEL'S LOVES** — THE LONE STAR LANDSCAPE AND TEXAS MUSIC — OFTEN SURFACE IN HIS DOCUMENTARY PROJECTS.





Daniel suggested the location and even brought along a couple of props for his photo shoot—a bullet-riddled sign (this image was actually shot along FM 973, south of Austin) and a vintage Airstream trailer.

fault line. (*Playful smile.*) There's seismic activity along the Balcones Fault, actually little mini-earthquakes, you know. Seriously.

**BASS: You're an art lover. What do you think are the best Texas museums?**

**DANIEL:** In Texas, Fort Worth rules as far as art goes. That kind-of-new museum, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, is great. ... Fort Worth is probably my favorite city in Texas. I used to love to go to Caravan of Dreams, which I thought was way, way ahead of its time, and see people like Ornette Coleman play. I like to visit San Antonio, too. I like the vibe there—it kinda reminds me of the way Austin used to be.

**BASS: What's your favorite roadhouse or hole-in-the-wall dive?**

**DANIEL:** I like Pendleton Pump, up near Temple, west of I-35. It's an old service station turned into a bar, and all the farmers go there, and it's real racially mixed. They have cheap beer, and they have live music sometimes. Sometimes you've got a secret place, and you'd like to keep it one. But not Pendleton Pump—they welcome everyone. It's very cool.

**BASS: Favorite Texas writers?**

**DANIEL:** My dad turned me on to a lot of these writers, like J. Frank Dobie, John Henry Faulk, and George Sessions Perry. Perry wrote a book called *Hold Autumn in Your Hand*. Just basically guys with three names. And I guess Katherine Anne Porter would have to be in there; she has three names. ... Cormac McCarthy [who's not from Texas but writes about it] is not too shabby. And then my favorite artists are probably Robert Rauschenberg—he was a Beaumont/Port Arthur boy—and Terrence Malick, who grew up just outside of Waco.

**BASS: What about theme parks? Do you have a favorite in Texas?**

**DANIEL:** (*He asks if the State Fair would apply. The answer is yes.*) I went last year, and that was the first year they'd reinstated the gondolas. I took a ride on one just by my-

self. All my friends had left, and I lingered around almost until the park closed, and took a solemn ride on a gondola. It was a really calm, kind of meditative moment, just looking down—and you know, as a kid I remember it seemed like you were 300 feet in the air. And you're barely 30 feet up!

**BASS: Do you have a favorite Texas saying?**

**DANIEL:** "You got to dance with them what brung ya." Molly Ivins used that one a lot. In fact, that's the title of one of her books. And I like the word "dang." Nobody says "dang" but us.

**BASS: During your career, you've met lots of larger-than-life Texans, politicians. Tell me your most memorable encounter with a political figure?**

**DANIEL:** Lady Bird I really admired. I worked on a documentary about her, her 80th birthday, for the LBJ Library. ... And the crew all stayed out at the ranch, and one time she took us up and down the runway where LBJ's pilot used to land his plane, driving in the same Continental they had when he was President! That was one of the greatest moments of my life—filming Lady Bird in her Continental going up and down the airstrip at that ranch. ...

**Bass: So she's a Texan you admire deeply. What, if anything, did you find surprising about her during that project?**

**DANIEL:** I expected her to be a bit more guarded and her people more guarding of her, and it wasn't that way at all. She invited us to dinner every night and to stay there at the ranch instead of in town at Johnson City. When we'd wrap up, she'd say, 'Stay for supper!' And you don't turn down the First Lady. ★

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Austin writer SHERMAKAYE BASS and Lee Daniel are longtime acquaintances, but she'd never had the chance to interview him until they met up recently at Gene's Po' Boys in East Austin. Over their po' boy powwow, she learned that he'd once had dinner at the LBJ Ranch for several nights in a row. Staff photographer KEVIN STILLMAN enjoyed having a cinematographer's input on this shoot.





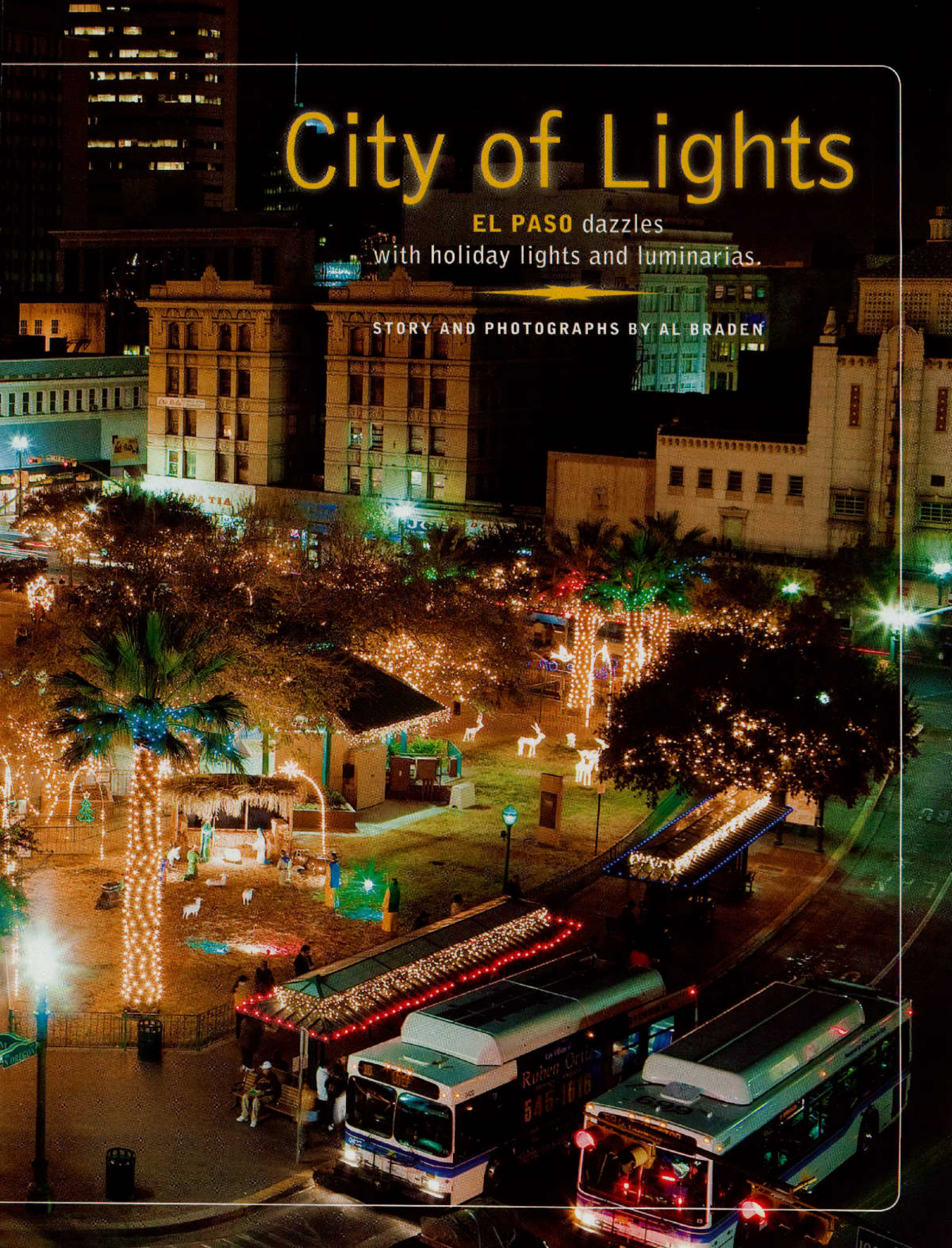
SAN JACINTO PLAZA, DOWNTOWN EL PASO



# City of Lights

**EL PASO** dazzles  
with holiday lights and luminarias.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY AL BRADEN





**RIM** RD  
900

**STOP**



VIEW OF EL PASO AND JUÁREZ, MEXICO, FROM RIM ROAD

**WHEN I WAS GROWING UP IN EL PASO,** three things characterized the city:





## Mount Franklin, football mania, and the skyline at night.

The city's topography and relative lack of vegetation make the night lights extraordinary. And at Christmas, El Pasoans go all out. Every neighborhood decorates; everyone celebrates the season. There's the exuberance of the East-ridge neighborhood, the brilliant luminarias surrounding Pennsylvania Circle, the city's own Christmas tree at San Jacinto Plaza, the decorated homes of Rim Road, and—of course—the huge star on Mount Franklin.









PENNSYLVANIA CIRCLE NEIGHBORHOOD

El Paso Electric Company employees erected the city's famous "Star on the Mountain" on the face of Mount Franklin in 1940. The original star, which stood 50 feet wide, was destroyed by storms in its first season, but rebuilt in 1946 to its present 459-by-278-foot size.

My sister, Elaine, and I remember sitting in the back of Dad's pickup parked on Cotton Street in the 1950s, bundled up and excited about watching the annual star-lighting. This event always kicked off our family's celebration of the season. Although the star was originally lit only for the Christmas holidays, in 1993, it became a year-round symbol of the city. For Elaine and many of the locals, it will always be the "Christmas Star."

### **EL PASO'S HEART, San Jacinto Plaza, is the center**

of the local holiday spectacle. The plaza shines in a spellbinding display of some 5,000 lights capping a 55-foot tree. Following the tree-lighting, traditionally held on the first Saturday of December (December 6 this year), El Paso's Holiday Light Parade winds its way around the plaza and along downtown streets to the delight of more than 60,000 residents and visitors.

If you're fortunate enough to be in El Paso on Christmas Eve, make your way to the historic Austin Terrace area and find Pennsylvania Circle and the surrounding Cumberland Circle. The round park, lined with fine older homes (some of which date to the early 1900s), is easy to miss, but what a gem! Residents here have been making Christmas Eve special for generations. On this night, glowing luminarias line all of the sidewalks, driveways, and curbs—completing the circle and making this a place to linger.





SANTA DRIVES A 1960 CADILLAC AT THE HOME OF DR. MIKE AND BLANCA VELASQUEZ

Also take a drive up to Rim Road, just north of downtown, a neighborhood of elegantly decorated homes with a great view of the city. The home of Dr. Mike Velasquez and his wife, Blanca, features their classic 1960 Cadillac, outlined with white lights and flanked by an inflatable Santa. Rim Road takes you directly to Scenic Drive, which affords an overview of the entire El Paso del Norte Valley, including both El Paso and Juárez, Mexico. Another eye-popping sight is the techno-industrial display at Western Refining on Trowbridge Drive, where the oil refinery twinkles for the holidays in red, green, and blue lights.

**\*webextra**  
See [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com) for illuminating Q&As with Eastridge and Rim Road residents.

### ON THE EAST SIDE OF TOWN, Eastridge-area residents

go crazy with Christmas lights. What began as a decorating contest between two neighbors in the early 1960s has turned into a neighborhood-wide passion. Most of the neighbors have been building and adding to their decorations for years, and they produce a wild display of colors and themes.

Ed and Pat Hazelton are among the many who take part in the annual Eastridge festivities. “There are 104 homes in the area, and all but a few have lights,” Ed says. He borrows a hydraulic lift to put lights on the top of his towering yucca plants and then helps neighbors with their high decorations. The scene is amazing: those dazzling yuccas, rows and rows of houses fully outlined in lights, yard decorations of every description—some sacred, some patriotic, some Texana-themed, some celebrating the owners’ brand of school spirit—and Santas everywhere!















Luminarias become part of the scene on Christmas Eve. Thousands of glowing candles—lining yards, drives, and sidewalks—grace the area, adding a spiritual calm. Traffic moves slower, and many neighbors and visitors walk quietly, enjoying the decorations up close.

### **SOME 15 MILES** southeast of downtown, **El Paso's**

active, historic missions are always a must for me when I'm home for the holidays. Luminarias trace the outline of San Elizario Mission, where Mass (in English and Spanish) is celebrated on Christmas Eve. The Las Posadas event is held two weeks earlier; luminarias fill the streets and the adjoining plaza for the evening as celebrants re-create Joseph and Mary's search for an inn.

At Socorro Mission, which recently underwent a major restoration using adobe bricks handmade by members of the community, the Christmas Eve Children's Mass and the Midnight Mass are held at the church hall to accommodate the large number of people. But the historic chapel is decorated and open for visitors.

And at Ysleta del Sur Mission, founded in 1682 to serve the people of Tigua Pueblo, decorations in the sanctuary include a manger filled with the symbols of faith of both the Tigua Pueblo and the Catholic Church. Christmas Eve Masses are held next door at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, but the historic mission remains open. At midnight, members of the Tigua Pueblo hold a traditional dance in the mission courtyard, blending their Native American and Catholic traditions as they have for more than 300 years.

Long may these traditions continue—and long may El Paso glow. ★

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Austin-based photographer AL BRADEN enjoyed spending Christmas in El Paso last year. "I felt at peace, as I hope *Texas Highways*' readers will, when they visit this special, exquisite city of lights."

### essentials SHINE ON

**EL PASO** Parks and Recreation Dept. decorates **San Jacinto Plaza**. The 2008 Tree Lighting ceremony will be Sat., Dec. 6, from 4:30-6 p.m., followed by the Holiday Light Parade from 6-7. The "Sounds of the Holidays" will feature different musical groups at the Plaza from 5-6 p.m., Mon-Fri, during the weeks of Dec. 8 and 15. For details, call 915/544-5436; [www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/parks](http://www.ci.el-paso.tx.us/parks). For more on El Paso, contact the **El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau**, One Civic Center Plaza, at 915/534-0600 or 800/351-6024; [www.visitelpaso.com](http://www.visitelpaso.com).

The **Eastridge** neighborhood is east of McRae Blvd. and just south of Eastwood High School. Light displays are up from early Dec. through the end of the year. Luminarias are featured only on Christmas Eve.

**Pennsylvania Circle's** entrance can be reached from the 4600 block of Hastings Dr., just across from St. Anthony's Seminary, or from Trowbridge Dr., one block east of Radford St. Don't miss the luminarias on Christmas Eve.

For schedules of Mass and Christmas celebrations at the missions, contact the following churches: **Ysleta Mission**, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, 131 South Zaragosa Rd., 915/859-9848; [www.ysletamission.org](http://www.ysletamission.org). **Socorro Mission**, 10041 Socorro Rd., 915/859-7718. **San Elizario Mission**, 1556 San Elizario Rd. (in San Elizario), 915/851-2333. For more on the **El Paso Mission Trail**, call the **El Paso Mission Trail Assn.** at 915/851-9997 or 915/851-8339; [www.themissiontrail.net](http://www.themissiontrail.net).







A photograph of a building at dusk. The sky is a mix of deep blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise. The building is mostly in silhouette, but some windows are lit up, and there are small, warm lights visible in the distance. A bright starburst icon is positioned to the left of the main text.

# Merry Christoval & Happy New Braunfels!

A dozen dynamically diverse December destinations



By Marty Lange

Photographs by J. Griffis Smith

**T**HE TWELVE DAYS of Christmas are celebrated in widely diverse ways throughout the world, and in most cases, are actually the 12 days *from* Christmas to the Epiphany in January. In the spirit of a winter's dozen here, we've selected a sampling of holiday fun and adventure, with the hope that you may have an epiphany of your own along the way. Join photographer Griff Smith as he showcases special seasonal events and attractions from Lubbock to San Antonio.

As our title suggests, the little West Texas town of **Christoval** holds its annual **Christmas in the Park** festivities on December 6, and the city of **New Braunfels** offers a variety of December highlights from **Schlitterbahn's Hill Country Christmas** (November 28-January 4) to a **Jingle Bell 5K Run/Walk** at Landa Park on December 13.


Here are 12 more promising places to fulfill your wish list. Potential trip itineraries abound during the whole month, with infinite points of interest to investigate. Want more? See the rest of this issue, the quarterly statewide *Texas Events Calendar*, and [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com). 254 counties. More than 268,000 square miles. Overwhelming? You bet. But for now, sit back, relax, and savor this splendid selection of inspirational images. Peace, prosperity, and happy trails in 2009!

### Goliad (cover)

Discover an important crossroads in Texas history, and celebrate the holidays at this impressive historic Spanish Colonial mission. The Beeville Community Chorus will perform at an evening concert on the first Saturday of the month, and a *History in Lights* exhibit (a holiday lighting display) will be in place on the mission grounds from Nov. 27-Jan. 3.

**Christmas Concert**, Dec. 6, Mission Espiritu Santo, Goliad State Park; 361/645-3405; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us).


### Lubbock (opening spread)

Cowboy up! Capture the spirit of a pioneer Christmas and experience yuletide celebrations that took place in pioneer days more than a century ago. Lumina-rias light the pathways throughout the center's extensive collection of historic buildings, and ranch host volunteers recreate holiday scenes of tree trimming with homemade decorations, traditional music, and a campfire gathering. Warm up with a cup of hot cider and fresh popcorn, and two-step during a ranch dance at the famous 6666 barn.

**Candlelight at the Ranch**, Dec. 12-13, National Ranching Heritage Center; 806/742-0498; [www.nrhc.ttu.edu](http://www.nrhc.ttu.edu).

■ To order a print of the opening spread photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit [www.texashighwaysprints.com](http://www.texashighwaysprints.com).

### Galveston

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! The Galveson Historic Foundation once again recreates the Victorian London of author Charles Dickens within the city's Strand District. Hurricane Ike has inconvenienced, but not crushed, the islanders' holiday hopes and dreams. A Dickens Feast, English country breakfasts, live entertainment, historic characters, parades, handbell concerts, and strolling carolers are only a fraction of what's in store at this perennial favorite. For more information on Galveston Island, call 888/425-4753; [www.galveston.com](http://www.galveston.com).

**Dickens on the Strand**, Dec. 5-7; 409/765-7834 or 877/772-5425; [www.dickensonthestrand.org](http://www.dickensonthestrand.org).

For Galveston **cruise ship** information and departure dates, call 800/593-8678; [www.galvestoncruises.com](http://www.galvestoncruises.com). Bon voyage!













## Jefferson

You can't go wrong with a visit to this distinctive northeast Texas town, and December offers a full roster of special events.

**Holiday Trail of Lights**, from late Nov-Dec, presents an extensive schedule of activities—Marshall & Kilgore participate, too; 888/467-3529; [www.holidaytrailoflights.com](http://www.holidaytrailoflights.com).

**Rail of Lights Christmas Train** departs from the Jefferson & Cypress Bayou Train Depot; Nov. 27-30, Dec. 4-7, 11-14, 18-21, 31, 903/665-6400; [www.jeffersonrailway.com](http://www.jeffersonrailway.com).

**Citywide Christmas Lighting Ceremony**, Nov. 28; 888/467-3529; [www.jefferson-texas.com](http://www.jefferson-texas.com).

**Enchanted Forest**, Nov. 28-Dec. 31, Lions Park; 903/665-7064.

**Old-Fashioned Christmas Parade**, Dec. 1, downtown; 903/665-2672.

**Christmas Concert**, Dec. 4-6, 11-13, Cumberland Presbyterian Church; 903/665-7064.

**Big Cypress Bayou Riverboat Ride**, Dec. 4-6, 11-13; 903/665-2222; [www.jefferson-texas.com](http://www.jefferson-texas.com).

**A Christmas Story**, Dec. 5-6, 11-13. Stage comedy at the Jefferson Playhouse; 903/665-2513; [www.theexcelsiorhouse.com/ruth.htm](http://www.theexcelsiorhouse.com/ruth.htm).

**Christmas Candlelight Tour of Homes**, Dec. 4-6, 11-13; 903/665-7064; [www.historicjeffersonfoundation.com](http://www.historicjeffersonfoundation.com).



## Marshall

One of the Lone Star State's most impressive holiday lighting displays offers an amazing amount of December dazzle with bus tours of the city's neighborhoods dressed in their Christmas finest, horse-drawn carriage tours, outdoor ice skating, Santa's Toy Workshop, and much more.

**Wonderland of Lights**, Nov. 26-Dec. 31; 903/935-7868 or 800/953-7868; [www.marshall-chamber.com](http://www.marshall-chamber.com).



## Clifton/Cranfills Gap

*Velkommen* to the Norwegian capital of Texas! Tap into your inner Svend or Heidi with a parade; tour of historic homes, churches, museum, and conservatory; Heritage Village at the Armory in City Park; a Civic Center luncheon; and a popular lutefisk dinner.

**Lighted Christmas Parade**, Clifton, Dec. 5.

**Norwegian Country Christmas Tour**, Clifton, Dec. 6; 254/675-3720 or 800/344-3720; [www.clifontexas.org](http://www.clifontexas.org).

**Norwegian Lutefisk Dinner**, Cranfills Gap, Dec. 6; 254/597-2505 or 254/597-2756.







## Big Bend/ Terlingua

Experience the adventure and thrill of a lifetime. Take a guided, interpretive half-day, one day, or multi-day **canoe or raft trip** down the Rio Grande.

Guided Jeep and ATV tours are also available. December is a good month to visit Big Bend. Daytime temperatures average 60-70 degrees, with nights around 40 degrees. **Far Flung Outdoor Center**, Big Bend National Park, Terlingua; 800/839-7238; [www.ffoc.net](http://www.ffoc.net).



**\*webextra** See [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com) for a video of Griff Smith's Big Bend holiday photo-shoot adventure.

## San Antonio

Get in the spirit at this favorite destination for Texas, national, and world travelers. The Alamo City and its many attractions are unquestionably stunning in scope. For more details, call the San Antonio CVB at 800/447-3372; [www.visitsanantonio.com](http://www.visitsanantonio.com).

**Ford Holiday River Parade & Lighting Ceremony**, Nov. 28; 210/227-4262; [www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com](http://www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com).

**Ford Holiday Boat Caroling**, Nov. 29-Dec. 21; 210/227-



4262; [www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com](http://www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com). ARTS San Antonio presents *The Nutcracker* Dec. 5-7, 12-14, performed by Ballet San Antonio at Lila Cockrell

Theatre; 210/226-2891; [www.artssanantonio.com](http://www.artssanantonio.com).

**Ford Fiesta de las Luminarias**, Dec. 5-7, 12-14, 19-21; 210/227-4262; [www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com](http://www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com).

Handel's *Messiah*, Dec. 12-13, performed by The San Antonio Symphony & Mastersingers at the Majestic Theatre; 210/

224-9600; [www.majesticempire.com](http://www.majesticempire.com).

**San Antonio Symphony Holiday Pops Concert**, Dec. 19-21, Majestic Theatre; 210/224-9600; [www.sasymphony.org](http://www.sasymphony.org).

**Valero Alamo Bowl**, Dec. 29; 210/224-9600 or 210/226-BOWL; [www.valeroalamobowl.com](http://www.valeroalamobowl.com).









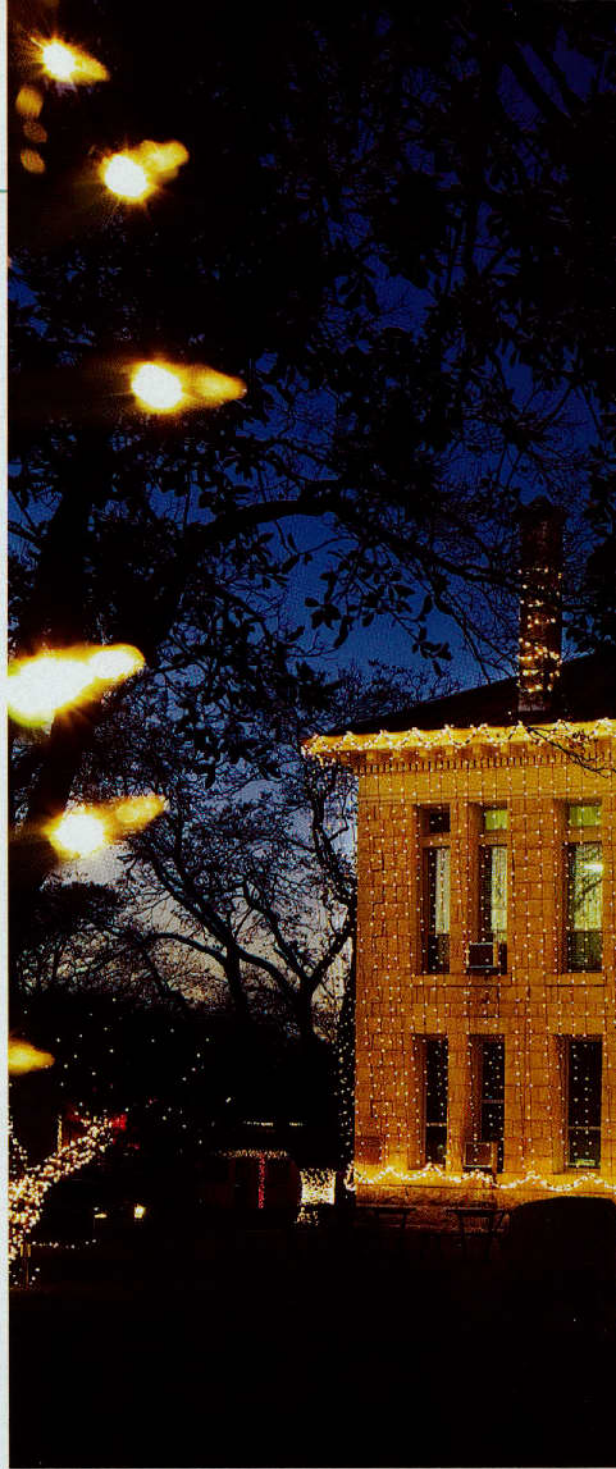
## Hill Country

Got a hankerin' to take a Cen-Tex road trip loop of holiday lights and experience a variety of community events? The following annual trail is just the ticket.

**Texas Hill Country Regional Christmas Lighting Trail**, Nov. 23, 2008-Jan. 1, 2009, Fredericksburg, Boerne, Burnet, Dripping Springs, Goldthwaite, Johnson City, Llano, Marble Falls, New Braunfels, Round Mountain, and Wimberley; 830/997-8515 or 866/839-3378; [www.tex-fest.com](http://www.tex-fest.com).

**Christmas Lights at LBJ Ranch**, Dec. 21, Johnson City; 830/644-2420; [www.nps.gov/lyjo](http://www.nps.gov/lyjo).

**39th Annual Tree Lighting at LBJ State Park & Historic Site**, Dec. 21, Stonewall; 830/644-2252; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us).



## San Angelo

Enjoy a West Texas tradition at this frontier National Historic Site. Twenty-four buildings on 40 acres compose this post-Civil War complex. Native American culture; parade ground camps of Buffalo Soldiers, infantry, and cavalry; scouts and explorers; live period music; and hourly 1870s artillery blasts are among the highlights.



**Christmas at Old Fort Concho**, Dec. 5-7; 325/481-2646 or 657-4441; [www.fortconcho.com](http://www.fortconcho.com).





## South Texas/Rio Grande Valley

Warm up to a subtropical tip o' Texas border getaway. Stay at one of South Padre Island's many excellent accommodations, or try Port Isabel's historic Yacht Club or Queen Isabel Inn.

**Zoo Nights & Lights at Gladys Porter Zoo,**  
Dec. 5-7, Brownsville; 956/546-2177;  
[www.gpz.org](http://www.gpz.org).

**Christmas Lighted Boat Parade,** Dec. 6, Port  
Isabel, Laguna Madre Bay; 956/943-2262  
or 800/527-6102; [www.portisabel.org](http://www.portisabel.org).

**Christmas Parade,** Dec. 8, Brownsville,  
Elizabeth St.; 956/542-4245;  
[www.brownsville.org](http://www.brownsville.org).

**Christmas Parade,** Dec. 12,  
South Padre Island; 956/772-1974;  
<http://sopadre.com>.











## Washington

Celebrate the season and visit a quintessential historical setting at the home of Dr. Anson Jones, the last President of the Republic of Texas. Enjoy caroling around an open fire; festive food; cider; molasses taffy; wagon rides (sleigh bells jingling) through the park; luminarias and lantern light; live music, and more.

**An Old-Fashioned Christmas**, Dec. 13, Barrington Living History Farm, Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site; 936/878-2213; [www.birthplaceoftexas.com](http://www.birthplaceoftexas.com).



## Galveston

The colorfully lit pyramids at the island's Moody Gardens complex is an artistic triumph and a glorious sight to behold. More than a million lights here will surely transport you to a most pleasant holiday fantasy.

**Moody Gardens Festival of Lights**, Nov. 15, 2008-Jan. 3, 2009; 409/744-4673 or 800/582-4673; [www.moodygardens.com](http://www.moodygardens.com).



Associate editor MARTY LANGE loves December for all the college basketball in Texas, from Beaumont to El Paso.

Photographer GRIFF SMITH drove well over 2,000 miles for this assignment. He had a blast on the Rio Grande in Big Bend.





# Grande Shopping Along the Rio







Custom cowboy boots, antiques from around the world, and folk art from Mexico await the savvy shopper **BY TRAVIS M. WHITEHEAD** **PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH**





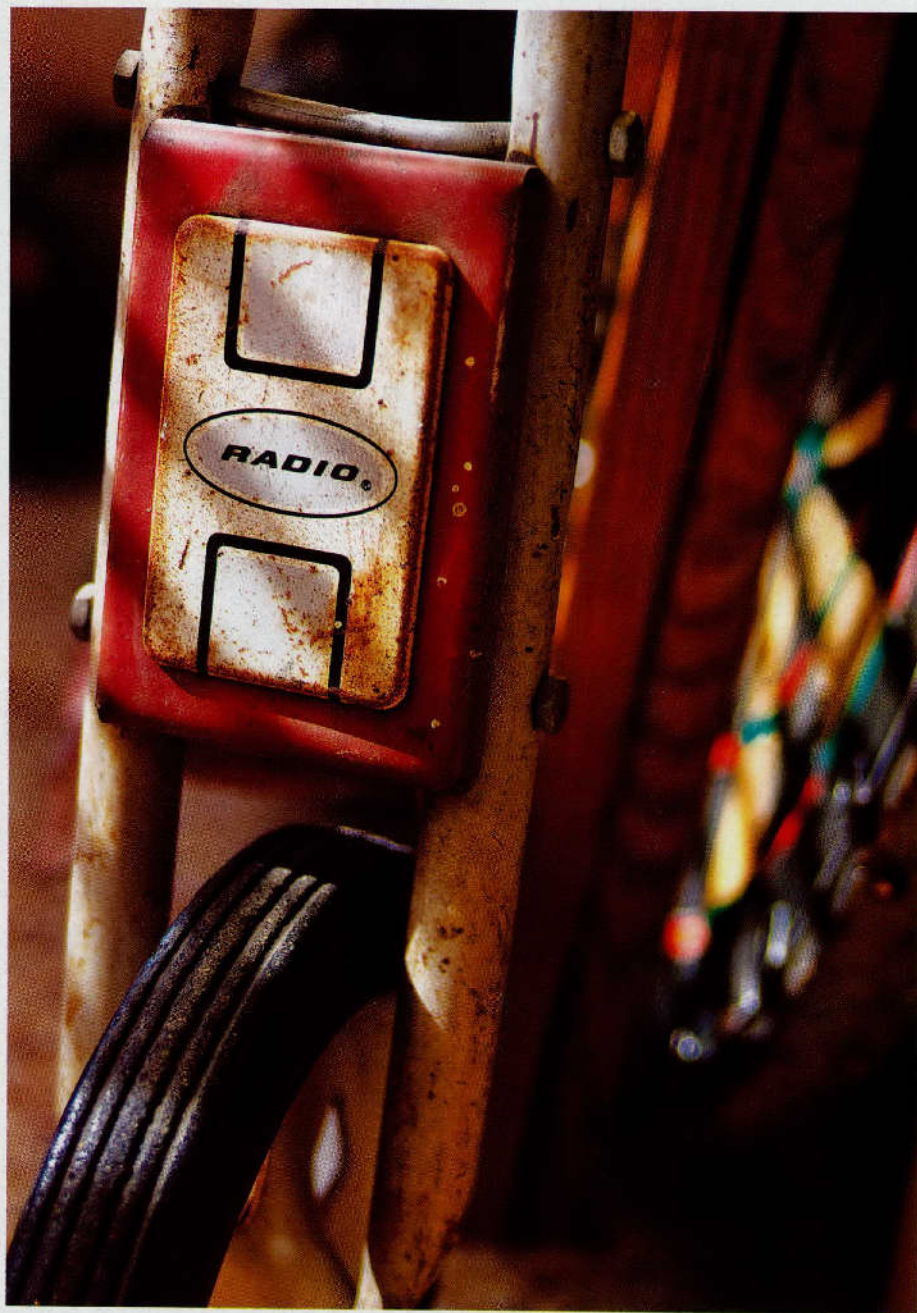
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# Rio Grande

**Valley**, with its plentiful populations of green jays, black-bellied whistling ducks, greater kiskadees, and other birds, has a well-established reputation for ecotourism. But nature isn't the only big draw here; tourists have long used the Valley as a base for **shopping expeditions** into Mexico.



PREVIOUS SPREAD: Just miles from the U.S.-Mexico border, the town of Weslaco offers eclectic shopping opportunities. LEFT AND ABOVE: Along with Mexican arts and crafts, the shops in the Valley offer antiques, vintage clothing, and trinkets of infinite variety. A place called Mimi's Attic houses nearly 30 vendors, who sell everything from Radio Flyer wagons to antique clothing irons.





**Rios of Mercedes has for decades** made custom boots for hardworking cowboys, along with such hardworking celebrities as Lyle Lovett and Dwight Yoakam.



Now, thanks in large part to the new Rio Grande Valley Premium Outlets in Mercedes, the Mid-Valley region (loosely defined as the swath from McAllen to Harlingen) is a shopper's paradise. No disrespect to Nike and Banana Republic, but if you venture away from the crowds to explore the one-of-a-kind shops in Mercedes, Weslaco, and tiny Progreso Lakes, you'll discover a wealth of surprises. In fact, it's possible to find antique American butter churns and Depression-era glass, Mexican pottery crafted by renowned artisans, Russian jewelry, ostrich-skin boots, and hand-cranked phonographs.

Before this was shopping territory, it was ranching country. And one of South Texas' best-known bootmakers, Rios of Mercedes, has for decades made custom boots for hard-working cowboys, along with such hardworking celebrities as Lyle Lovett and Dwight Yoakam. (Yoakam orders the same boots every time, says longtime Rios employee Eric De La Rosa, "with a very pointed toe and a very slanted heel.") Today, Rios of Mercedes sells its handmade footwear to distributors nationwide, but the factory in Mercedes runs a small outlet store stocked with boots in a dizzying array of colors and styles: ostrich-skin boots in lime green, aqua, and cotton-candy pink; stingray boots in black and burgundy; elephant boots in gray, honey, and chocolate; caiman leather boots the color of peanut brittle.

Just a few blocks away, employees at Cavazos Boots carefully measure the feet of each client to ensure a perfect fit. Or, if you prefer to order by mail, you can send in your measurements, or even ship them a pair of your favorite old boots. During a visit to McAllen in 1998, former President Bill Clinton commissioned Cavazos bootmakers to create a pair of two-tone, ostrich boots adorned with images of the White House, the presidential seal, and a saxophone. Clinton's thank-

**\*webextra**

See [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com) for an interview with bootmaker Pat Moody, whose company, Rios of Mercedes, dates to the 1850s.



LEFT: Real wranglers wear pink—and red, aqua, yellow, and almost every other color you can imagine. Rios of Mercedes bootmakers can fashion a custom pair that fit your feet (and your personality) perfectly. ABOVE: Beneath that blanket of ivy resides Bugambillas Marketplace, a treasure-trove in Weslaco that houses 36 specialty shops. Owner Patti Dittburner makes frequent buying trips to Thailand.





**Venture away from the crowds** to explore the one-of-a-kind shops in Mercedes, Weslaco, and tiny Progreso Lakes, and you'll discover a wealth of surprises.

you letter hangs in the front of the store.

Down the street at Camargo's Western Boots, you'll find some of the wildest designs in the Valley. Head to Camargo's for boots embellished with images of vintage cars and motorcycles, sports emblems (bootmaker Henry Camargo likes the Dallas Cowboys), beer insignias, and other imaginative

flourishes. They're still tough enough to wear on the ranch (or on the dance floor).

**M**ore shopping fun awaits in nearby Weslaco. In the town's tidy historic downtown area, you'll find Bugambilias Marketplace, where 36 specialty shops offer every-

thing from mahogany office desks to books, children's bedroom sets, costume jewelry, and scented candles.

Bugambilias owner Patti Dittburner makes frequent buying trips to Thailand to find unusual furniture—wagon wheels turned into coffee tables, polished benches and stools, and chairs fashioned from





## EL FENIX CAFÉ

### Home-style Cooking the South Texas Way

The aromas of tacos, cheese enchiladas, beef soup, and *carne guisada* hit you like an intoxicating wave the moment you step into El Fenix Café in Mercedes, where Dalia De La O Carr has spent a lifetime perfecting her skills in the kitchen. Whether you're hungry for a breakfast of *machacado con huevo* (dried beef with eggs), pancakes from scratch, or a plate of chalupas, Dalia can whip it up in no time. Winter Texans love her hamburgers and breakfast tacos, and she makes dynamite baked beef ribs.

The dining area itself has interesting stories. Dalia's father brought the stuffed armadillo and the iguana sitting on a shelf from Monterrey, Mexico, more than 40 years ago; the vintage cash register, which Dalia remembers using until 1975, sits with the drawer open and the .05 number tab sticking up as if in mid-sale. Her brother, Victor De La O, acquired the huge Pepsi-Cola bottle cap on the wall decades ago while working for Pepsi.

Dalia's expertise extends beyond regional cooking; she can make a mean beef or pork lo mein, and she gets regular orders for chicken cordon bleu. But one of the most popular orders at El Fenix is the bean taco—hot beans prepared with bacon fat and wrapped in a chewy, homemade flour tortilla. "It's surprising how many people like to eat beans," says Dalia, smiling. "I ask them, 'Why beans?' They say, 'No one makes them the same way you do.' They just love the bean taco."

The bean taco wouldn't be possible without Dalia's mother, Ofelia, who still comes in at 6 a.m. to make tortillas, biscuits, and rice. The 82-year-old matriarch has achieved local fame for her pumpkin empanadas, made with anise, sugar, and cinnamon. If you're lucky enough to visit El Fenix when Ofelia has made a fresh batch, you'd better get them quick. "She made 65 yesterday," says Dalia. "I think we have four left."

—TRAVIS WHITEHEAD

El Fenix is at 126 N. Texas Ave., in Mercedes.  
Hours: Mon-Sat 7-4, Sun 7-2. Call 956/565-9074.

Antiques and More owner J.J. Villarreal specializes in antique furniture, old phonographs, and records.

railroad ties. She specializes in life-size, bronze statuary of children, which make their way into gardens across the Southwest. "The bronzes re-create stories about childhood, which most of us remember



In Mercedes, you can't go wrong with a meal at El Fenix Café, where owner Dalia De La O Carr makes everything from tacos to chicken cordon bleu. Her mother, Ofelia, is famous for her pumpkin empanadas.





**At Mimi's Attic, the menagerie** of curious items might include a spinning wheel, a train set, a mid-1800s foot warmer, and a vintage butter mold.

## essentials

### MID-VALLEY SHOPPING

FOR MORE DETAILS on lodging, dining, and attractions, contact the **Weslaco Chamber of Commerce** (888/968-2102; [www.weslaco.com](http://www.weslaco.com)) and the **Mercedes Chamber of Commerce** (956/565-2221; [www.mercedeschamber.com](http://www.mercedeschamber.com)).

### WESLACO

**Bugambilias Marketplace**, 259 S. Texas Blvd., 956/447-0099.

**Mimi's Attic**, 415 S. Texas Blvd., 956/968-6396.

**Antiques and Collectibles**, 501 S. Texas Blvd., 956/447-5133.

**Antiques and More**, 418 S. Texas Blvd., 956/968-9396.

### MERCEDES

**The Rio Grande Valley Premium Outlets**; 5001 E. US 83, 956/565-3900; [www.premiumoutlets.com](http://www.premiumoutlets.com).

**Camargo's Western Boots**, 710 Bus. 83, 956/565-6457; [www.camargoboos.com](http://www.camargoboos.com).

**Cavazos Boots**, 302 Bus. 83, 956/565-0753.

**Rios of Mercedes**, 1750 E. US 83, 956/565-2634.

### PROGRESO LAKES

**Gabi's**, 2540 S. International Blvd., 956/825-9557; [www.gabis.com](http://www.gabis.com).

The **Nuevo Progreso marketplace** is 7 miles south of US 83 in Mexico. From US 83, turn south onto FM 1015 (International Blvd.) and follow the signs to the Progreso International Bridge. Park on either side of the bridge for a few dollars, and walk across. Entrance into Mexico costs 25 cents; U.S. citizens must carry proof of citizenship, such as a passport or birth certificate. Learn more at [www.shop-progreso.com](http://www.shop-progreso.com).



as a wonderful time,” says Dittburner.

About two blocks south of Bugambilias, 27 vendors offer goodies from around the world at a treasure-trove called Mimi's Attic. Vendors Floyd and Patricia Stratton keep a booth at the front of the store, where their menagerie of curious items might include an antique spinning wheel, a train set, a mid-1800s foot warmer, and a vintage butter mold. Of course, inventory changes frequently, but you can count on Floyd to show off his collection of antique irons. The top of one iron, used in the 1890s, opens on hinges so you could fill the inside with coal. Then, you would ignite the fuel, close the top, and the smoke would escape through a small vent as you ironed. “We specialize in the old and the unusual,” Floyd explains. “We buy things at auctions, estate sales, and garage sales all over the country. It's the history that interests us.”





sales and auctions nationwide to find her diverse collection of vases, bowls, plates, and decanters, along with unusual sewing machines, hall trees, vanities, poster beds, and chests-of-drawers.

**M**ost people wouldn't dream of a Valley shopping trip without venturing into Mexico, and the crossing at Nuevo Progreso has long offered one of Texas' easiest and safest border-town experiences. You can park your car in one of two lots next to the Progreso International Bridge, then take a five-minute walk across the Rio Grande to Nuevo Progreso's energetic marketplace. Look for great deals on leather goods, woodcarvings, glassware, and ceramics, not to mention tart margaritas.

Don't overlook the shops on the U.S. side, though; just north of the bridge in the tiny town called Progreso Lakes, a shop called Gabii's offers a dazzling variety of high-quality housewares and folk art made by artisans throughout Mexico. From the state of Michoacán, you'll find tall clay pots produced in the village of Cocucho, pineapple-

shaped pottery from San José de Gracia, and horned clay devils (sitting in trees and eating watermelon!) made in Ocumicho. You'll also find white pottery with blue floral designs from the state of Guanajuato, and folk-art pieces crafted in the Mexican states of Jalisco, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero. Visitors can also browse hand-embellished clothing from throughout Mexico, Italy, Africa, India, and the United States.

The Mid-Valley's diverse collection of antique furniture, Mexican handi-crafts, leather goods, jewelry, and ceramics makes the area an exciting place for your holiday shopping. Treat yourself to a weekend of exploring the area's nooks and crannies, and chances are you'll find a fortune in treasures and handmade goods at bargain prices. ★

TRAVIS WHITEHEAD lives in Morelia, Mexico, where he's working on a book about the artisans of Michoacán.

Photographer J. GRIFFIS SMITH admires the brightly painted buildings and decorative ceramics found throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

Whether you're looking for a vintage spool of embroidery thread, a set of antique tableware, or a train set from the 1950s, you'll probably find it at Mimi's Attic in Weslaco.

Across the street, at Antiques and More, history also enthralls owner J.J. Villarreal. Just as Floyd Stratton likes irons, Villarreal has a thing for old phonographs, such as the 100-year-old, hand-cranked Cecilian Melophonic phonograph he picked up at an auction in San Marcos. "Finding these things gives me an adrenaline rush," he says. Villarreal specializes in antique furniture, which is good news for customers searching for French display cabinets, 1930s drop-leaf tables, hand-carved American armoires, or restored pianos.

A short walk down the street takes you to a shop called Antiques and Collectibles, where owner Mi Belia Mena offers antique American and European furniture and cut glass. Mena scours estate



BY CHARLES LOHRMANN

## Friends in Jail

WHEN you spend enough time studying and enjoying works of art, inevitably an individual painting, sculpture, or photograph will take on personal, almost totemic, significance. Over time, if you visit and venerate the work often enough, the relationship that develops is almost like a friendship. You remember and think about the art at odd times, wonder what other viewers think of the piece, share your thoughts about the experience, and plan to visit again next time you're in the neighborhood.

I have one particular group of such friends that I visit often and suggest you get to know as well. It's an attractive group of five small-scale

Impressionist paintings in the collection of The Old Jail Art Center in Albany, on US 180 northeast of Abilene. The diverse subjects represented in the group—a still life of roses, a harbor view, a landscape, a nude, and characters cavorting at a masked ball—create an imaginary visual vocabulary for life in the late 19th Century, so there's a definite romantic appeal. And the small scale—not much larger than the magazine you're reading—makes these paintings seem all the more exquisite. The larger (and more typical) Impressionist paintings you'll see in

other museum galleries are amazing and engaging in their own way, but these small paintings, particularly in this intimate setting, seem more personal.

Even though I've been thinking of these paintings as my own for several years, I decided I needed to find out a little more about them. So, on a recent visit to The Old Jail Art Center, I asked Museum Director Margaret Blagg about the collection. She explained that they were bequeathed to the museum by an Albany man named Marshall R. Young Jr., who had strayed

from his hometown to become a magazine publisher in California. She also put my mind at ease by adding that—along with another favorite, a Modigliani—this set of Impressionist paintings (aka, the masterworks) would always be on view.

If it were my personal choice, this group of paintings would always have a small room of its own—a shrine of sorts—but that's not in the cards. So I'll plan to continue my drop-in visits to the museum to see them wherever they're displayed.

After sharing a few more details about the Impressionist paintings, Blagg, as museum directors do, wanted to point out some other developments at the Old Jail Art Center. I happily followed along, wondering if I could nab the five paintings one at a time and avoid detection. (I believe the answer is “No!”)

Blagg was on to other topics, and it was surprising for me to hear that the Old Jail is a building that's proud of the bars on its windows. Turns out the museum, as part of a recent project, has just restored the jail's windows to the original look, and now the glass is inside the bars instead of



Stop by Albany's Old Jail Art Center to visit *Anvers, L'entrée du Port* (Entrance to Port of Anvers) by Eugène Boudin, one of the museum's Impressionist paintings always on view.



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Jail also has enhanced its already-appealing collection of Asian art with special selections on loan from the internationally renowned Arthur M. Sackler Collection. And, in the two rooms upstairs (the original jail cells), Blagg explains a new series of exhibits called *A Cell of One's Own*, which will feature the work of contemporary Texas artists.

But, wait a minute. I have to ask, how does a small museum in a town of 2,000 manage such a diverse collection? The answer from Blagg is: "The museum was founded by art collectors, so it had a serious art collection from the very beginning. One of the founders, Bill Bomar, was an artist himself and was a member of the noted Fort Worth Circle. He and his cousin, Reilly Nail, were the co-founders." Of course, prosperous ranching and oil interests in the area have a lot to do with the museum's ongoing operation, but the original vision is still essential to the identity of the collection.

So, now, in addition to the Impressionist paintings, I'll be planning to visit the Asian collection and make a pilgrimage upstairs to take in the current inhabitants of the *A Cell of One's Own* series.

And there's one last confession: I have a few more favorites in the Old Jail collection. I'm required to make my way back to the Sallie Reynolds Matthews Room to renew my acquaintance with a pair of beaded leather dolls created by a Tonkawa resident of the area and presented to Sallie Reynolds Matthews in 1869. Actually, this entire room of the museum is a local history collection, and it draws me in regularly. In addition to a stop in front of the now-encased beaded dolls, I proceed with a ritual viewing of pottery by Lucy Lewis, the legendary Acoma Pueblo potter; a photograph of William D. Reynolds and Charlie Goodnight made in 1928 at a Traildrivers' Reunion in San Antonio; and the Sharp's rifle purchased more than 100 years ago at the Conrad and Rath General Merchandise at Old Fort Griffin, then located 15 miles north of Albany.

After I tear myself away from the museum collection, say my goodbyes, and amble out to the car, I'm thinking, "It's great to have a lot of friends—even if they're in jail."

Even though The Old Jail Art Center's Impressionist paintings are personal favorites for *TH* Editor CHARLES LOHRMANN, he points out that the museum's Pre-Columbian Art collection also demands attention.

outside. So passersby can see the jail bars in the windows as they scrutinize the odd glyphs carved in the stones by the Scottish stonemasons documenting their work on the structure. The bars create a more authentic historic view of the 1870s, two-story building, which was the first public edifice in Shackelford County.

But the recent stage of restoration is only part of the updated museum story. The Old

**THE OLD JAIL ART CENTER's** collection of small-scale Impressionist paintings includes:

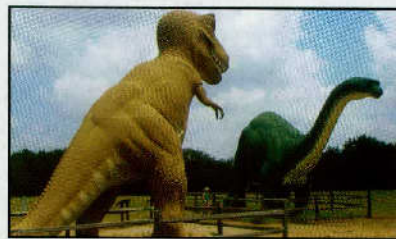


- *Nu Couché, vu de dos* (Reclining Nude from Back) by Pierre-Auguste Renoir.
- *Paysage avec Rivière* (Landscape with River), by Gustave Caillebotte.
- *Nature Morte aux Roses* (Still Life of Roses) Henri Fantin-Latour.
- *Anvers, L'entrée du Port* (Entrance to Port of Anvers) Eugene Boudin.
- *Au bal masqué—les fêtes Parisiennes—nouveaux confettis* (Masked Ball) by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

For more information on Albany's Old Jail Art Center (at 201 South Second St.), call 325/762-2269; [www.theoldjailartcenter.org](http://www.theoldjailartcenter.org).

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## “Candy or Sherbet?”

(continued from page 14)

As I finished my Number 3, the attentive waiter, right on cue, appeared to ask, “Candy or sherbet, sir?”

From the University area, the trip over to East 7th Street, where you find Jorge and Daniel Guerra’s El Azteca, might seem like a long one, and, in a sense, it is a long way both culturally and in the history of the city. Jorge Guerra grew up in Monterrey and Reynosa, Mexican cities known for distinctive cuisine that originated on the ranches of northern Mexico. Guerra was stationed at Austin’s Bergstrom Air Force Base when he married, and in 1963, he bought the stone building on East 7th.

Guerra grew up with the *norteño* style that specializes in grilled meat and frioles *a la charra*. El Azteca became known as one of the early Austin restaurants to feature *mole* dishes and one of the only that served *cabrito*, or baby goat. I asked Guerra who supplied the kid goats and he said that for several years, he raised them himself in East Austin.

As his restaurant became popular with the

UT crowd, Guerra developed a very successful group of vegetarian combination plates, a true innovation at that time. (El Azteca tweaks the longstanding “candy or sherbet” tradition, too, offering delicate, cinnamon-dusted cookies instead of pralines.) El Azteca may have the most inventive combination plates in town—my favorite features *cabrito flautas*.

Each fall, customers flock to the restaurant to pick up the next year’s El Azteca calendar. A selection of designs come from Monterrey, and many Texans wouldn’t know what day it was without these colorful reminders. Other highlights of El Azteca’s interior elaborate on the theme established by the calendar: framed portraits of Aztec figures, and side-by-side portraits of Benito Juárez and Abraham Lincoln. These artifacts, combined with bright colors and attentive service—not to mention your choice of dessert—are relics of Tex-Mex authenticity that still wait for new devotees.

DICK HOLLAND cut his teeth on crackers and hot sauce at El Chico in Fort Worth.

Photographer MICHAEL AMADOR considers himself a connoisseur of Tex-Mex, but admits that his favorite restaurant is usually the one where he ate last.

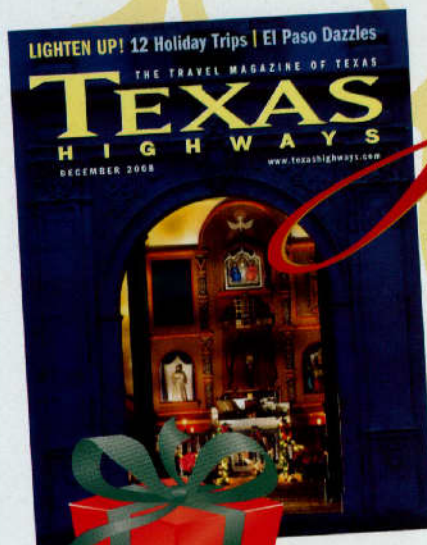
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**Harboring Good Cheer**

CORPUS CHRISTI'S DOWNTOWN SKYLINE and marina will be shining bright during the annual **Harbor Lights Festival**, Saturday, **December 6**. The "sparkling city by the sea" rings in the holiday season with a children's parade, live entertainment, a gingerbread-tree village, Santa, the Whataburger Laser Light Show, ceremonial lighting of the 75-foot Tree of Lights, and an illuminated boat parade in the harbor marina. It's a free spectacle, with the events taking place from 2-8 p.m. on Shoreline Boulevard between Lawrence and Peoples streets. Fireworks mark the finale. For more information, call 361/985-1555; [www.harborlightsfestival.com](http://www.harborlightsfestival.com).

**More from TH Traveler—**

**BIG BEND COUNTRY**

**ALPINE: Mountain Country Christmas** December 5-6. Civic Center. 432/837-2659

**EL PASO: Moscow Ballet's Great Russian Nutcracker** December 26. Plaza Theatre. <http://theplazatheater.org> 915/544-8444

**EL PASO: 75th Brut Sun Bowl** December 31. Postseason college football game. UTEP Sun Bowl Stadium. [www.sunbowl.org](http://www.sunbowl.org) 915/533-4416 or 800/915-BOWL

**FORT DAVIS: Frontier Christmas Celebration** December 5-6. [www.fortdavis.com](http://www.fortdavis.com) 432/426-3015

**MARATHON: Fiesta de Noche Buena** December 6. Main Street, downtown. [www.mararhontexas.net](http://www.mararhontexas.net) 432/386-4249

**MIDLAND: Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale Holiday Pops: Sounds of the Season** December 6. Commemorative Air Force Hangar, Midland International Airport. [www.mosc.org](http://www.mosc.org) 432/563-0921

**MONAHANS: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 1. Downtown. [www.monahans.org](http://www.monahans.org) 432/943-2187

**PRESIDIO: Posada at the Fort** December 18. Fort Leaton State Historic Site. 432/229-3613

**GULF COAST**

**ARANSAS PASS: Holiday on the Harbor** December 5-6. Conn Brown Harbor. [www.aransaspass.org](http://www.aransaspass.org) 361/758-2750 or 800/633-3028

**BEAUMONT: Christmas Holiday Festival & Parade** December 3-7. [www.beaumontcvb.com](http://www.beaumontcvb.com) 800/392-4401

**CLEAR LAKE AREA: Clear Lake Christmas Lane Boat Parade** December 13. View along the shoreline

in Seabrook and from the Kemah Boardwalk. 281/488-7676

**CLUTE: Elizabethan Madrigal Feast** December 4-7, 12-13. Center for the Arts & Sciences. [www.bcfas.org](http://www.bcfas.org) 979/265-7661

**CORPUS CHRISTI: The Nutcracker** December 13-14, 20-21. Corpus Christi Ballet, American Bank Center, Selena Auditorium. [www.americanbankcenter.com](http://www.americanbankcenter.com) 361/881-8499

**FREESPORT: Holiday on the Brazos** December 4. Municipal Park. 979/233-6061

**HOUSTON: Fiesta Navidad** December 4. Mariachi Los Camperos de Nati Cano performs at Jones Hall. [www.spahouston.org](http://www.spahouston.org) 713/227-4SPA

**HOUSTON: White Christmas** December 4-21. [www.tuts.com](http://www.tuts.com) 713/558-TUTS or 888/558-3882

**HOUSTON: Houston Heights Holiday Homes Tour** December 5-6. [www.houstonheights.org](http://www.houstonheights.org) 713/861-4002

**HOUSTON: Candlelight Tour** December 12-13. Sam Houston Park. [www.heritagesociety.org](http://www.heritagesociety.org) 713/655-1912

**HOUSTON: Texas Bowl** December 30. Postseason college football game at Reliant Stadium. [www.texasbowl.org](http://www.texasbowl.org) 832/667-2390

**LA PORTE: Yuletide Texas** December 1-31. Battleship Texas State Historic Site. [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us) 281/479-2431

**MISSOURI CITY: Snowfest Parade & Festival** December 13. Parade on Cartwright Road. Festival at Community Park. [www.missouricitytx.gov](http://www.missouricitytx.gov) 281/403-8500

**NASSAU BAY: Clear Lake Symphony** December 5-6. Christmas pops gala at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church Auditorium. [www.clearlakesymphony.org](http://www.clearlakesymphony.org) 281/488-0066

**ORANGE: Christmas Parade** December 5. [www.orangetexas.org](http://www.orangetexas.org) 409/883-3536

**ORANGE: W.H. Stark House Christmas Traditions** December 9-January 3. 409/883-0871



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**PEARLAND: Cowboy Christmas Lighted Parade** December 6. [www.pearlandparks.com](http://www.pearlandparks.com) 281/652-1673

**PORT ARANSAS: Carolers Afloat & Lighted Boat Parade** December 6. Roberts Point Park. [www.portaransas.org](http://www.portaransas.org) 800/452-6278

**PORT ARTHUR: Lighted Parade** December 11. Downtown. 409/963-1107

**RICHMOND: Campfire Christmas** December 5-20. George Ranch Historical Park. [www.georgeranch.org](http://www.georgeranch.org) 281/343-0218

**ROCKPORT: Tropical Christmas Festival** December 6. Live entertainment, parade, and fireworks. 361/729-6445

**ROCKPORT/FULTON: Historic Homes Tour** December 12-13. 361/729-6445 or 361/729-2133

**ROSENBERG: Christmas in Rosenberg** December 6. Historic Downtown District. [www.visitrosenberg.com](http://www.visitrosenberg.com) 832/595-3525

**SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: New Year's Eve Fireworks** December 31. Fireworks over Laguna Madre Bay. [www.sopadre.com](http://www.sopadre.com) 956/761-6433 or 800/SO-PADRE

**VICTORIA: The Nutcracker** December 11-14. Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts. [www.victoriaballet.org](http://www.victoriaballet.org) 361/575-2313

**WEST COLUMBIA: Light Up the First Capitol** December 5. Parade, arts & crafts, food, Santa, storytelling, train rides, snow and caroling. Downtown. [www.westcolumbiachamber.com](http://www.westcolumbiachamber.com) 979/345-3921

## HILL COUNTRY

**AUSTIN: The Arc Angels** December 5-6. [www.anton.es.net](http://www.anton.es.net) 888/512-7469

**AUSTIN: Pinocchio** December 6. The irresistible puppet comes to life in an American Family Theatre production. One World Theatre. [www.oneworldtheatre.org](http://www.oneworldtheatre.org) 512/329-6753

**AUSTIN: Manuel Barrueco** December 6. Classical guitar master performs at Northwest Hills United Methodist Church. [www.AustinClassicalGuitar.org](http://www.AustinClassicalGuitar.org) 512/300-2247

**AUSTIN: Christmas at the Carillon** December 7-10. [www.conspirare.org](http://www.conspirare.org) 512/476-5775

**BOERNE: Dickens on Main** December 5-6, 12-13, 19-20. Downtown, Main Street. [www.BoerneDickensOnMain.com](http://www.BoerneDickensOnMain.com) 830/249-2766

**BUDA: Budafest** December 6-7. Greenbelt and City Park. [www.budafest.org](http://www.budafest.org) 512/694-3413

**BURNET: Main Street Bethlehem** December 5-7, 12-14. Live nativity at First Baptist Church. [www.fbcburnet.org](http://www.fbcburnet.org) 512/756-4481

**CANYON LAKE: North Pole Village** December 11-13, 18-20. CRRC Recreation Center, 125 Mabel Jones Drive. [www.crrccofcanyonlake.org](http://www.crrccofcanyonlake.org) 830/964-2324

**CASTROVILLE: Old-Fashioned Christmas** December 6. Houston Square. [www.castroville.com](http://www.castroville.com) 830/538-3142

**FREDERICKSBURG: Fredericksburg Chorale Christmas Concert** December 5-6. St. Joseph's Hall. [www.fredericksburgchorale.com](http://www.fredericksburgchorale.com) 830/997-6869

**FREDERICKSBURG: Weihnachten** December 5-7. Parade, Christmas market, festival, and Christmas Tree Forest. [www.tex-fest.com](http://www.tex-fest.com) 830/997-6523 or 888/997-3600

**GRUENE: Jerry Jeff Walker** December 12-13. Gruene Hall. [www.gruenehall.com](http://www.gruenehall.com) 830/629-5077

**GRUENE: Kelly Willis & Bruce Robison** December 19-20. Gruene Hall. [www.gruenehall.com](http://www.gruenehall.com) 830/629-5077

**GRUENE: Robert Earl Keen** December 31. Gruene Hall. [www.gruenehall.com](http://www.gruenehall.com) 830/629-5077

**KERRVILLE: Symphony of the Hills** December 4. Cailloux Performing Arts Center. [www.symphonyofthehills.com](http://www.symphonyofthehills.com) 830/792-7469

**KERRVILLE: Schreiner University Holiday Choir Concert** December 7. First Presbyterian Church. [www.schreiner.edu](http://www.schreiner.edu) 830/792-7417

**LAMPASAS: Carol of Lights** December 5. 512/556-2760

**SAN MARCOS: Sights & Sounds of Christmas** December 4-6. Nearly 600,000 lights illuminate the banks of the San Marcos River. [www.toursanmarcos.com](http://www.toursanmarcos.com) 512/353-1258 or 888/200-5620

## PANHANDLE PLAINS

**ABILENE: Abilene Community Band Christmas Concert** December 4. Paramount Theatre. 325/437-8009

**ALBANY: Community Holiday Party** December 18. Old Jail Art Center. [www.oldjailartcenter.org](http://www.oldjailartcenter.org) 325/762-2269

**AMARILLO: Electric Light Parade** December 5. [www.centercity.org](http://www.centercity.org) 806/372-6744

**AMARILLO: The Nutcracker** December 12-14. The Lone Star Ballet in partnership with the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra. Civic Center Auditorium. [www.lonestarballet.org](http://www.lonestarballet.org) 806/372-2463

**BROWNWOOD: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 5. Downtown. 325/643-9956

**CHILDRESS: Festival of Lights** December 1-31. Fair Park. [www.childresstexas.net](http://www.childresstexas.net) 940/937-2567

**CISCO: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 2. 254/442-2537

**COLEMAN: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 4. [www.colemantexas.org](http://www.colemantexas.org) 325/625-2163

**LUBBOCK: Ballet Lubbock Presents The Nutcracker** December 11-14. Lubbock Memorial Civic Center Theatre. [www.balletlubbock.org](http://www.balletlubbock.org) 806/785-3090 or 800/735-1288

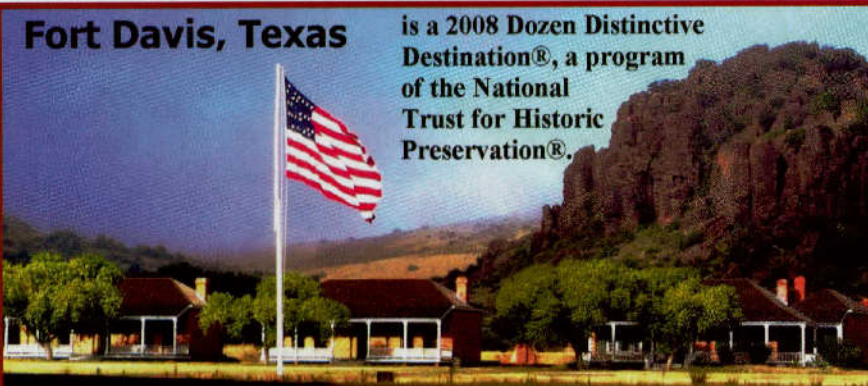
**QUANAH: Cowboy Christmas Ball** December 6. Three Rivers Ballroom. 940/839-7332

**QUANAH: Lighted Christmas Parade & Festival** December 6. Downtown. [www.quanahnet.com](http://www.quanahnet.com) 940/663-2222

**RANGER: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 5. Downtown, Main Street. 254/647-5353

**SAN ANGELO: The Nutcracker** December 6-8. San Angelo Civic Ballet. Civic Auditorium. [www.sanangelociviballet.org](http://www.sanangelociviballet.org) 325/653-8877

**WICHITA FALLS: Midwestern State University—Burns Fantasy of Lights** December 5-January 1. Truly dazzling sight with a host of storybook characters, including Cinderella, Dumbo, Flipper, Humpty Dumpty, Peter Pan, Raggedy Ann, Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs, Three Little Pigs, and more. MSU campus. [www.mwsu.edu/fantasy](http://www.mwsu.edu/fantasy) 940/397-4352



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## PINEY WOODS

**CONROE: Christmas Around the World** December 9. [www.conroesyphony.org](http://www.conroesyphony.org) 936/760-2144

**LIBERTY: New Year's Eve Show** December 31. Liberty Opry. [www.libertyopry.com](http://www.libertyopry.com) 877/729-9103

**MONTGOMERY: Christmas in Historic Montgomery** December 13. [www.historicmontgomerytexas.com](http://www.historicmontgomerytexas.com) 936/449-4960

**NACOGDOCHES: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 6. [www.visitnacogdoches.org](http://www.visitnacogdoches.org) 888/653-3788

**TEXARKANA: Christmas with Handel** December 21. Texarkana Symphony Orchestra. First United Methodist Church. [www.texarkanasymphony.org](http://www.texarkanasymphony.org) 870/773-3401

## PRAIRIES AND LAKES

**ARLINGTON: Holiday Lights Parade** December 6. Main Street. [www.arlington.org](http://www.arlington.org) 817/533-3425

**ATHENS: Parade & Christmas Celebration** December 6. Town Square. 903/675-5181

**BOWIE: Fantasy of Lights Christmas Festival** December 6. Downtown. [www.cityofbowietx.com](http://www.cityofbowietx.com) 940/872-6246

**CLARKSVILLE: Christmas Parade & Lighting of the Square** December 1. Parade, Christmas lights, and Santa on the square. Chili supper at First Presbyterian Church. [www.red-river.net](http://www.red-river.net) 903/427-2645

**CLEBURNE: Candlewalk Tour of Homes** December 6. [www.cleburnechamber.com](http://www.cleburnechamber.com) 817/645-2455

**DALLAS: The Stories of Christmas** December 11-16, 18-21. The Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Chorus, and Children's Choir present its annual Christmas concert. Meyerson Symphony Center. [www.dallassymphony.com](http://www.dallassymphony.com) 214/692-0203

**DALLAS: White Rock Marathon** December 14. White Rock Lake and Greenbelt Park. [www.runtherock.com](http://www.runtherock.com) 214/670-8281

**DALLAS: The Nutcracker** December 23-28. Texas Ballet Theater. Fair Park Music Hall. [www.texasballettheater.org](http://www.texasballettheater.org) 877/828-9200

**DENISON: Holiday Tour of Lights** December 1-27. Loy Lake Park. [www.denisontexas.us](http://www.denisontexas.us) 903/465-1551

**DENISON: Christmas Parade** December 4. Main Street, downtown. [www.denisontexas.us](http://www.denisontexas.us) 903/465-1551

**DENTON: Holiday Lighting Festival** December 4. Downtown square. [www.dentonlive.com](http://www.dentonlive.com) 940/349-8529

**ENNIS: Festival of Lights Parade** December 4. Downtown. [www.visitennis.org](http://www.visitennis.org) 972/878-4748

**FARMERS BRANCH: Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony** December 6. Farmers Branch Historical Park. [www.farmersbranch.info](http://www.farmersbranch.info) 972/919-2620

**FORT HOOD: Nature in Lights** December 1-January 4. Belton Lake Outdoor Recreation Area. [www.hoodmwr.com](http://www.hoodmwr.com) 254/287-2523

**FORT WORTH: The Nutcracker** December 5-21. Texas Ballet Theater. Bass Performance Hall. [www.texasballettheater.org](http://www.texasballettheater.org) 877/828-9200

**FORT WORTH: Handel's Messiah** December 9. Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. Bass Performance Hall. [www.fwsymphony.org](http://www.fwsymphony.org) 817/665-6000

**FORT WORTH: Robert Earl Keen** December 30. Bass Performance Hall. [www.basshall.com](http://www.basshall.com) 817/212-4280 or 877/212-4280

**FORT WORTH: Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl** December 31. Postseason college football game at TCU's Amon Carter Stadium. [www.armedforcesbowl.com](http://www.armedforcesbowl.com) 817/810-0012

**GONZALES: Stars over Gonzales** December 5-6, 12-13. Pioneer Village Living History Center. 830/672-2157

**GRAPEVINE: Carol of Lights** December 1. Downtown. [www.grapevintexasusa.com](http://www.grapevintexasusa.com) 817/410-3185 or 800/457-6338

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- 6 Pony Express Arrival
- 6-7 Heritage Tour of Homes
- 7 Yulefest Arts & Crafts Sale
- Mid Texas Symphony Concert
- 12-13 Christmas Under the Stars
- 14 Las Posadas
- 20-21 Country Christmas



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**GRAPEVINE: Lone Star Christmas** December 1-January 3. Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center on Lake Grapevine. www.gaylordtexas.com 817/778-1000

**GRAPEVINE: Parade of Lights** December 4. Downtown. www.grapevinetexasusa.com 817/410-3185 or 800/457-6338

**GRAPEVINE: North Pole Express** December 5-7, 12-14, 19-21. Grapevine Vintage Railroad ride complete with carols, stories, and Santa. Cotton Belt Depot. www.gvrr.com 817/410-3185 or 800/457-6338

**HICO: Christmas Market & Light Parade** December 6. Texas 6 and Pecan Street Esplanade. www.hico-tx.com 800/361-HICO

**HICO: Christmas Tour of Homes** December 6. www.hico-tx.com 800/361-HICO

**HONEY GROVE: Christmas on the Square** December 6. Christmas bazaar at Civic Center and parade. www.honeygrovechamber.com 903/378-7211

**MCKINNEY: Heritage Guild Holiday Tour of Homes** December 6-7. Chestnut Square Historic Village. www.chestnutsquare.org 972/562-8790

**MOUNT VERNON: Downtown Christmas Festival** December 6. Christmas parade and holiday events. www.mtvernon-tx.com 903/537-4365

**NAVASOTA: Christmas Parade** December 6. www.navasotagrimeschamber.com 936/825-6600

**RICHARDSON: An Old English Christmas** December 6. Richardson Symphony Orchestra. Eisemann Center for the Performing Arts. www.richardsonsymphony.org 972/234-4195

**ROUND TOP: Beethoven's Birthday Celebration** December 14. International Festival-Institute at Round Top. 979/249-3129

**ROUND TOP: New Year's Eve Gala** December 31. International Festival-Institute at Round Top. www.festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

**SALADO: A Christmas Carol** December 5-6, 12-13. Tablerock Festival of Salado. www.tablerock.org 254/947-9205

**SHERMAN: Snowflake Parade & Festival** December 5-6. Downtown Square, 100 N. Travis. www.shermantx.org 903/957-0310

**SHINER: Christmas in the Park** December 4. Welhausen Park. www.shinertx.com 361/594-4180

**SULPHUR SPRINGS: Christmas Festival on Heritage Square** December 5-6. 888/300-6623

**WAXAHACHIE: Bethlehem Revisited** December 5-7, 12-14. Central Presbyterian Church. www.waxahachiechamber.com 972/937-2390



**WAXAHACHIE: Candlelight Christmas Homes Tour**  
December 6-7, 13-14. [www.waxahachiechamber.com](http://www.waxahachiechamber.com)  
972/937-2390

**WAXAHACHIE: Downtown Victorian Christmas Festival**  
December 6-7, 13-14. [www.waxahachiechamber.com](http://www.waxahachiechamber.com)  
972/937-2390

## SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

**COTULLA: Country Christmas** December 6. A.B. Alexander Convention Center. [www.cotulla-chamber.com](http://www.cotulla-chamber.com)  
830/879-2326 or 800/256-2326

**HELOTES: Robert Earl Keen** December 19-20. Special Christmas show at John T. Floore's Country Store. [www.liveatfloores.com](http://www.liveatfloores.com) 210/695-8827 or 866/255-2223

**HIDALGO: Festival of Lights—A Magical Christmas** December 1-January 1. Begins at City Hall Plaza, 704 E. Texano. [www.hidalgotexas.com](http://www.hidalgotexas.com)  
956/843-2286

**SAN ANTONIO: Die Deutsche Weihnachtsfeier: A Traditional German Christmas Celebration**  
December 14. Margarite B. Parker Chapel, Trinity University. 210/826-0255 or 210/534-4481

**SAN ANTONIO: CATS** December 23-28. Hit Broadway musical comes to the Majestic Theatre. [www.majesticempire.com](http://www.majesticempire.com) 210/224-9600

**SAN ANTONIO: Valero Alamo Bowl** December 29. Postseason college football game at the Alamodome. [www.valeroalamobowl.com](http://www.valeroalamobowl.com) 210/226-BOWL or 210/224-9600

**SAN ANTONIO: Celebrate San Antonio** December 31. New Year's Eve celebration with fireworks, live music, food, family activities, and more. Downtown, Alamo Street. [www.saparksfoundation.org](http://www.saparksfoundation.org)  
210/212-8423

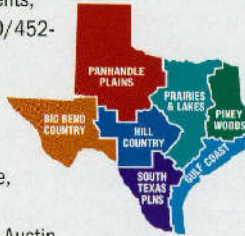
**WESLACO: Lighted Christmas Parade** December 5. Texas Boulevard, between Pike and 6th Street. [www.weslaco.com](http://www.weslaco.com) 956/968-2102

## Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com).

FOR A FREE PRINTED COPY of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to **Texas Events Calendar**, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

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MAY						
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29	30	31				

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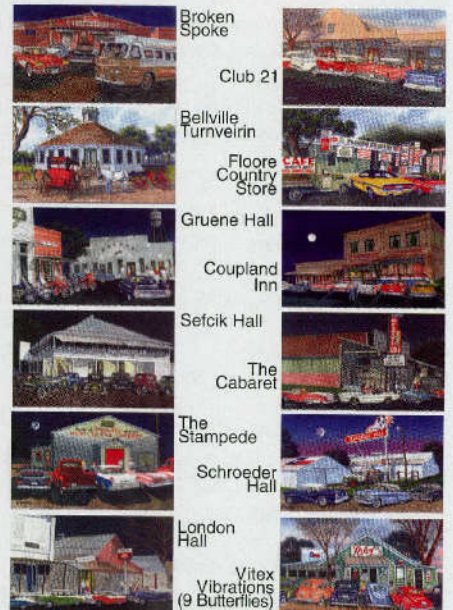
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- Big Thicket**, Seven Wonders, Sep, 32
- Bonham**, "Red River Ramble," Nov, 30
- Brownwood**, town features/highlights, Nov, 12
- Bryan**, town features/highlights, Jul, 50

**C**

- Caddo Lake**, Seven Wonders, Sep, 44
- Cat Spring**, Nov, 46
- Carl's Corner**, Willie's Place, Sep, 8
- Chapels**, photographic feature, Aug, 40
- Chinati Hot Springs**, resort, Jun, 26
- Clayton, Nicholas Joseph**, architect, Feb, 32
- Clint**, town highlights, photographic feature, Mar, 18
- College Station**, town features/highlights, Jul, 50

- Columbus**, town features/highlights, Nov, 46
- Christmas**  
El Paso's holiday lights, Dec, 24  
12 holiday getaways (including Big Bend/Terlingua, Clifton/Cranfills Gap, Galveston, Goliad, Hill Country, Jefferson, Lubbock, Marshall, San Angelo, San Antonio, South Texas/Rio Grande Valley, Washington), Dec, 34

**D**

- Dallas**  
Family fun (The Dallas World Aquarium, Dallas Zoo, Museum of Nature & Science), Jun, 44  
Old Red Museum, Dallas County Courthouse, Mar, 64
- Daniel, Lee**, cinematographer, Dec, 16
- Denison**, arts district, Mar, 42
- Devil's Sinkhole**, Rocksprings, virtual tour, Aug, 10
- Drag racing** (Houston Raceway Park, Baytown; Texas Motorplex, Ennis), Mar, 50
- Dripping Springs**, town features/highlights, Mar, 14

**E**

- Edom**, The Shed Cafe, Jul, 20
- El Camino Real/Royal Road**  
Bryan to New Braunfels, road trip, Jan, 36  
San Antonio to the Rio Grande, road trip, Feb, 18
- El Campo**, Greek Bros. Oyster Bar & Grill, Apr, 18
- El Paso**  
H&H Car Wash and Coffee Shop, Jul, 20  
Holiday lights, Dec, 24
- Ely, Joe**, musician, Jun, 18
- Enchanted Rock**, Seven Wonders, Sep, 30

**F**

- Fall grasses**, photographic feature, Nov, 36
- Fannin County**, "Red River Ramble," Nov, 30
- Farmers markets**, Austin, May, 14
- Festivals**, small-town fall celebrations, Sep, 54
- Flato, Malou**, artist, Apr, 14

- Food** (also see Restaurants)  
Austin's Farmers Markets, May, 14  
Biscuits, Feb, 26
- Fort Boggy State Park**, near Centerville, May, 64
- Fort Davis**, Cueva De Leon restaurant, Jul, 25
- Fort Griffin**, Nov, 62
- Fredericksburg**  
Town features/highlights, Feb, 10  
Hill Top Cafe, Oct, 14

**G**

- Galveston**  
Architecture by Nicholas Joseph Clayton, Feb, 32  
Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark, May, 46
- Georgetown**, Monument Cafe, Jul, 20
- Graham**, Wildcatter Ranch, Oct, 12
- Grasslands photo feature**, Nov, 36
- Groesbeck**, town highlights/photographic feature, Jan, 14
- Guadalupe Mountains National Park**  
Hiking, Jun, 36  
Seven Wonders, Sep, 20
- Guayaberas**, Penner's Men's Store, San Antonio, Jun, 64
- Gulf Coast**  
Artificial Reefs, diving, fishing, May, 36  
"Hello High Island," Bolivar Peninsula, Feb, 44  
Port Mansfield, town features/highlights, Feb, 58  
"Unknown Coast" (see Unknown Coast for individual listings), May, 22

**H**

- Hico**, Koffee Kup Family Restaurant, Mar, 16
- Hidden chapels**, photographic feature, Aug, 40
- High Island**, town features/highlights, Feb, 44
- Hiking**  
Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Jun, 36  
Texas trails, Sep, 48
- Houston Theater District**, Aug, 24

**I**

- Ingram**, shopping Old Ingram Loop, Jan, 10
- Ivanhoe**, Homestead Vineyard & Winery, North Texas Wineries, Aug, 14

**J**

- Jasper's restaurant**, Austin, Plano, The Woodlands, Jan, 12
- Jefferson**, haunted places, Oct, 28
- Johnson City**, Silver K Café, Feb, 12
- Johnson**  
Lady Bird, "5 Ways to Honor Lady Bird," Apr, 43  
Lyndon B. LBJ's 100th birthday, Aug, 54

**K**

- Kelton, Elmer**, writer, May, 18
- Kilgore**  
Country Tavern, Jun, 14  
Town features/highlights, Jun, 52

**L**

- The Laurel Tree**, Utopia, Aug, 12

**M**

- Matagorda**, Spoonbill's Restaurant, Sep, 16
- Mavericks**, "A Collection of Texas-size Characters," Jan, 44
- Microbreweries**, Jul, 44
- Mineral Wells**, town features/highlights, Oct, 46
- Muleshoe**, town highlights, photographic feature, Mar, 34
- Museums**  
Museum of Nature and Science, Dallas, Jun, 44  
Old Red Museum, Dallas County Courthouse, Mar, 64
- Music/Musicians**  
Allen, Terry, Feb, 14  
Ely, Joe, Jun, 18  
Texas Uke Fest, San Antonio, Apr, 68

**N**

- Nacogdoches**, SFASU Gardens, Mar, 26
- Nassau Bay**, Sartin's Seafood, Jul, 20
- New Braunfels**, Schlitterbahn Waterpark Resort, May, 46
- North Texas wineries** (Brushy Creek Vineyards, Alvord; Homestead Vineyard & Winery, Ivanhoe; Wichita Falls Vineyards & Winery), Aug, 14

**O**

- Old Ingram Loop**, Ingram, shopping, Jan, 10
- Old Red Museum**, Dallas, Mar, 64

**P**

- Padre Island National Seashore**, Seven Wonders, Sep, 40
- Palo Duro Canyon**, Seven Wonders, Sep, 36
- Pecos River Canyon**, boat trip, Jul, 64
- Photographic features**  
"Canyon Quest," Guadalupe Mountains National Park, hike, Jun, 36  
"City of Lights," El Paso holiday displays, Dec, 24  
"Clint: In a Special Light," Mar, 18  
"Dance of the Wildflowers," Lady Bird's Legacy, Apr, 30  
"Days of Heaven," hidden chapels, Aug, 40  
"Galveston Grandeur," Nicholas Joseph Clayton, Feb, 32  
"Greetings from Groesbeck," Jan, 14



- "High Plains Montage," Muleshoe, Mar, 34
- "Lighter Than Air," hot air balloons, Aug, 32
- "Merry Christoval and Happy New Braunfels," 12 holiday getaways, Dec, 34
- "Splendor in the Grass," fall grasses, Nov, 36
- "Wonder-ful Texas," Seven Wonders, Sep, 18

**Plants**

- Piney Woods Native Plant Center, Mar, 26
- SFASU gardens, Nacogdoches, Mar, 26
- Wildflowers, Lady Bird's legacy, photographic feature, Apr, 30

**Port Mansfield**, town features/highlights, Feb, 58

**Profiles**

- Allen, Terry, musician, Feb, 14
- Clayton, Nicholas Joseph, architect, Feb, 32
- Daniel, Lee, cinematographer, Dec, 16
- Ely, Joe, musician, Jun, 18
- Johnson, Lady Bird's Legacy, Apr, 30
- Johnson, Lyndon B., LBJ's 100th, Aug, 54
- Kelton, Elmer, writer, May, 18
- Mavericks, "A Collection of Texas-Size Characters," Jan, 44
- Tuhabonye, Gilbert, runner, Apr, 58

**R**

"Red River Ramble," Fannin County, Nov, 30

Reimers Ranch, park, Oct, 36

**Restaurants**

- Amarillo restaurants (see Amarillo for individual listings), Aug, 46
- Boot Hill Saloon & Grill, Vega, Aug, 46
- Cap'n Roys, South Padre Island, Nov, 14
- Country Tavern, Kilgore, Jun, 14
- El Fenix Café, Mercedes, Dec, 53
- Fonda San Miguel, Austin, Jul, 16
- Greek Bros. Oyster Bar & Grill, El Campo, Apr, 18
- Hill Top Cafe, Fredericksburg, Oct, 14



Our April story on the Gulf Coast town of Wharton featured local characters like musician/rancher/humorist Doc Blakely.

- Jasper's (Austin, Plano, The Woodlands), Jan, 12
  - Koffee Kup Family Restaurant, Hico, Mar, 16
  - The Laurel Tree, Utopia, Aug, 12
  - Legendary Cafés, (Allen's Family-Style Meals, Sweetwater; Cueva De Leon, Fort Davis; H&H Car Wash and Coffee Shop, El Paso; Monument Cafe, Georgetown; Sartin's Seafood, Nassau Bay; The Shed Cafe, Edom), Jul, 20
  - Seafood restaurants, (including Bakery Cafe, Aransas Pass; Clary's Seafood Restaurant, Galveston; Charlotte Plummer's Seafare Restaurant, Fulton; The Outrigger Restaurant, Palacios; Red Snapper Inn, Surfside Beach; Venetian Hot Plate, Beach & Station Street Grill, and Castaways, Port Aransas), May, 30
  - Silver K Café, Johnson City, Feb, 12
  - Spoonbill's Restaurant, Matagorda, Sep, 16
  - Tex-Mex restaurants, Austin (including El Azteca, Matt's El Rancho, El Patio), Dec, 12
- Rio Grande Valley shopping** (in Mercedes, Progreso Lakes, Nuevo Progreso, Weslaco), Dec, 46

**Rock climbing**, Travis County, Jul, 14

**Rodeo**, Stamford Cowboy Reunion, Oct, 64

**S**

- Sabinal Canyon**, Utopia area, Nov, 20
- San Antonio**
  - Guayaberas, Penner's Men's Store, Jun, 64
  - Texas Uke Fest, ukulele festival, Apr, 68
- San Ygnacio**, Treviño fort, Jan, 52
- Santa Elena Canyon**, Seven Wonders, Sep, 26
- Schlitterbahn**, New Braunfels, South Padre Island, Galveston, May, 46
- Schools**, early Texas schools, Jun, 12
- Seven Wonders of Texas** (includes Big Thicket, Caddo Lake, Enchanted Rock, Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Padre Island National Seashore, Palo Duro Canyon, Santa Elena Canyon), special feature, Sep, 18
- South Padre Island**, Cap'n Roys, restaurant, Nov, 14
- Schlitterbahn**, May, 46
- Stamford Cowboy Reunion**, rodeo, Oct, 64
- Steamboat era on the Rio Grande** (including South Padre Island, Port Isabel, Brownsville, Rio Grande City), Jul, 28

- Stillwell Ranch, Hallie's Country, Big Bend, Jan, 24
- Sweetwater, Allen's Family-Style Meals, Jul, 22

**T**

- Texas Uke Fest, ukulele festival, Apr, 68
- Trinity River, Wallisville Lake Project, Oct, 52

**U**

- Ukulele festival, San Antonio, Apr, 68
- Unknown coast (including Galveston, Matagorda, Palacios, Port O' Connor, St. Charles Bay, Surfside), May, 22
- Upper Colorado River, road trip (includes Ballinger, Bend, Bronte, Colorado City, Goldthwaite), Oct, 18

**Utopia**

- The Laurel Tree, Aug, 12
- Sabinal Canyon, Nov, 20

**V**

- Vega, Boot Hill Saloon & Grill, Aug, 52
- Victoria, Greek Bros. Steakhouse & Oyster Bar, Apr, 18
- Vintage baseball, Apr, 48

**W**

- Wallisville Lake Project, Lower Trinity River, Oct, 52
- Water parks, Schlitterbahn (Galveston, New Braunfels, South Padre Island), May, 46
- Wharton, town features/highlights, Apr, 22
- Wichita Falls Vineyards and Winery, North Texas wineries, Aug, 14
- Wildcatter Ranch, near Graham, Oct, 12
- Wildflowers, Lady Bird's Legacy, photographic feature, Apr, 30
- Willie's Place at Carl's Corner, Carl's Corner, Sep, 8
- Wimberley Zipline Adventures, Sep, 64
- Wineries, North Texas, Aug, 14
- The Woodlands, town features/highlights, May, 10

**Z**

Ziplining, Wimberley, Sep, 64

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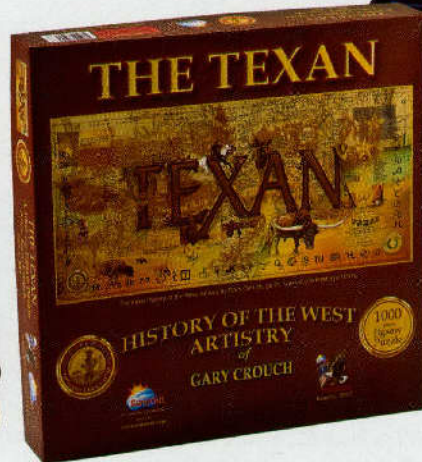
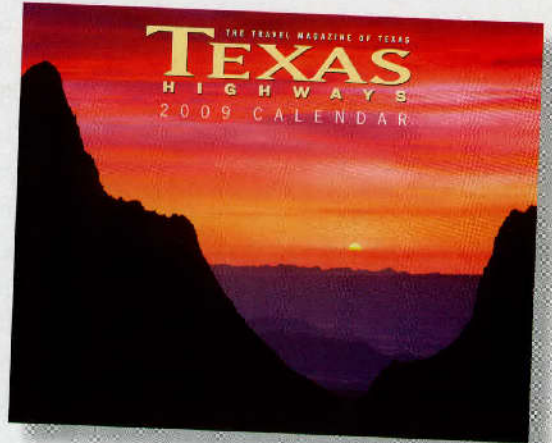
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# Readers RECOMMEND...

TIPS FROM OUR READERS

KEVIN VANDIVIER

SEVERAL WEEKS ago we ate lunch at **The Texas Pie Company** in Kyle. What a treat! Their special of the day was meatloaf, and it was better than what my mother used to make. The pies were outstanding! They were still baking when we arrived so that we were able to eat warm pies there, as well as take some home. The crust was the best I've eaten in a restaurant. I took home two, both warm: peach and lemon chess. Wow!

MARGIE SCHWEND, *Georgetown*

*The Texas Pie Company is at 202 W. Center St.; 512/268-5885; www.texaspiecompany.com.*

THE CHEF POINT CAFE in Watauga has five-star food in a gas station. You can get things like rack of lamb, stuffed New York strip, escargot, and shrimp scampi. Not your typical gas-station food! Check their Web site for a video about the chef, Franson Nwaeze. He has had no formal training but makes some of the best food you will ever eat. Don't have to get dressed up and pay extra for this one!

P. MERRELL, *Arlington*

*Chef Point Cafe is at 5901 Watauga Rd. (at the Conoco gas station); 817/656-0080; www.chefpointcafe.org.*

ONE THING I love about living in Texas is the "hidden treasure" restaurant. We found one on US 281 in Bulverde—**My Place Bar and Grille**. Great, and I mean great, food. A delicious steak cooked just right, the best queso I've ever had, wonderful grilled salmon, and terrific service. The wait staff and owner David Lozano couldn't have been nicer.

LESLIE ANDERSON, *Spring Branch*

*My Place Bar and Grille is at 29094 US 281 N.; 830/980-3663; www.myplacetx.com.*

I HEARTILY recommend the **Stanley-Fisher House Bed and Breakfast in Matagorda**.

Matagorda is one of those small coastal towns that retains the flavor of Texas in the 1950s. The Stanley-Fisher B&B is quite

the historical spot. It is said that Stephen F. Austin, the "Father of Texas," slept here, as well as Sam Houston. The hospitality is second to none. You can enjoy breakfast in the main dining room or on the screened-in porch, or have it delivered to your room. They have a pear tree out front that produces enough fruit to make many jars of preserves. I remarked to owners Rik and Peggy Stanley that surely they must have the best job in the world. They agreed wholeheartedly.

CHARLIE WILSON, *Houston*

*The Stanley-Fisher House Bed and Breakfast is at 107 St. Mary's St.; 979/863-2920; www.stanley-fisher.com. Fortunately, the B&B and Matagorda were spared from the ravages of Hurricane Ike.*



Rik and Peggy Stanley own the 1832 Stanley-Fisher House Bed and Breakfast in Matagorda. Some of the rooms have views of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

I LOVE the burgers at **Butcher Boys** in Nacogdoches. It's an honest-to-goodness meat market, and owner Billy Huddleston is really entertaining. I'll put his onion rings up against any in Texas. The food is cheap, plentiful, and good.

JOHN PAUL PLEMONS

*Butcher Boys Smokehouse and Deli is at 603 North St.; 936/560-1137; www.butcherboysnac.com.*

WE WERE in the Meridian area and ate at **Zur Autobahn**, a great German restaurant. The food was good, especially the red cabbage, and the prices were very reasonable. The area is pretty and makes for a nice drive.

LUCILLE KEITH, *Fort Worth*

*Zur Autobahn is at 10668 Texas 22; 254/597-2500; www.zurautobahn.com.*

**IF YOU KNOW OF A NOTEWORTHY LONE STAR ATTRACTION, RESTAURANT, EVENT, OR PRODUCT, WRITE OR E-MAIL:** Readers Recommend, Texas Highways, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. E-mail: letters05@texashighways.com. Space constraints prevent us from publishing every suggestion we receive. We reserve the right to edit items. Because we're unable to check out every item, and because hours vary and details can change, please call ahead for more information.

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2008

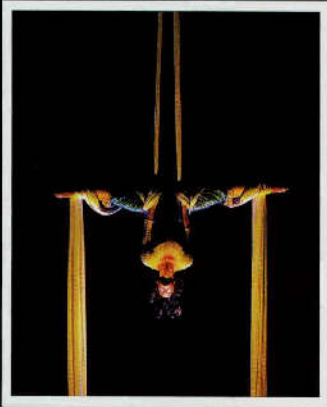


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