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TIPS: 10 RELAXING RETREATS • DOUBLE D RANCH
COUNTRY RAMBLE • A SCENIC TOUR OF DALLAS • TH GOES TO JAIL!

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TO BLOG, or not to blog? There's no question! We're thrilled to premiere the *Texas Highways Travel Blog*, at www.texashighways.com (see the link on the right-hand side of our home page). And we're also thrilled that none other than renowned Texas travel and food writer **June Naylor** is our main contributor.

A sixth-generation Texan (how many of us can say *that?*), June has written about travel and food since 1984, primarily for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, where she was assistant travel editor for 10 years. She is currently the newspaper's lead dining critic, food columnist, and a frequent contributor to its travel section, while writing regular features for other lucky publications like *TH*. She is also the author of several Texas guidebooks, such as the award-winning *Texas: Off the Beaten Path*, now in its seventh edition. Prolific devil that she is, June is coauthor (with celebrated cowboy cook Grady Spears) of a cooking and Western-historical-lifestyle book called *The Texas Cowboy Kitchen*. She also reviews restaurants for *Gayot.com*. All of this is to say that when it comes to Texas travel and food, June's been there and done that...and she's going to tell all!

So when you visit our Web site, stick around a while and share your comments on June's travels, or chime in with your own favorite haunts and jaunts....

"STICKING AROUND" seems to be an underlying theme in this issue. Longtime contributor **Howard Peacock**, who encourages us all to sit a spell in several of his favorite **Central Texas** counties (see page 50), is a self-proclaimed lingerer. In fact, he says, "When I'm on the road and the time comes to 'giddyap and get back to bidnez' [i.e., head home], I like to cheat an hour out of the return schedule. I call it 'Lingering,' spelled with a capital 'L' because it's important. It's like in high school, I'd take my date home from the dance, and at the front door she'd let me kiss her good-night, and I'd try for two more before the lights went on inside. Sometimes I'd get one more. Good Lingering.

COURTESY JENNIFER BACKOVER



It's June, and what better month to welcome June Naylor as the main poster on our new travel blog! Go to www.texashighways.com and click on the link on the right-hand side of the page.

"The idea is to pick out a place I'd enjoyed in a special way on that visit and return to it for an hour," Howard continues. "It might be a place with people, a restaurant or bench on the town square, or a place apart. One time it was a pull-off on a remote road near **Eden in Concho County**. I was watching the sun disappear behind a low range of hills when, in a single

moment, the shadows on the eastern slopes turned pitch black. The sky behind that silhouette horizon remained glowing in pure turquoise. Astounding sight.

"Wherever I go for the Lingering, I pay extra attention to details, common things I didn't much notice before. I listen for the quieter sounds. I run my hand over grains of wood in the table. I lean back in my chair. This hour helps me drive home in a safer way, calm and alert. If I'm lucky, the Lingering has yielded new stories and impressions."

MORE STORIES and impressions (and opportunities for Lingering) await elsewhere in this issue. Starting on page 30, **Melissa Gaskill**, who sent us hiking all over the state last month, suggests some great places to **get away from it all**. And we do mean all. With unsullied views and star-filled skies, there's a whole lotta nothing going on in this top 10....

AND THEN there's **Lou Ann Dean**, who lets us tag along on a leisurely canoe trip at the **Neches River Rendezvous** (page 60). And heck, even folks at **Round Rock Donuts** like to Linger in line for those ambrosial orange orbs (**Sheila Scarborough's** piece begins on page 14).

YOU MAY find yourself pausing on a mountain peak, relishing the moment at a river rendezvous, drooling while in line for donuts, curled up with the latest issue of *TH*, or blissfully lost in our blog. As Howard says, it's all about enjoying the details. And it's all good Lingering.

—Jill Lawless

You can "Talk to TH" anytime at www.texashighways.com.

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IN MEMORIAM: JACK LOWRY (1951-2006)

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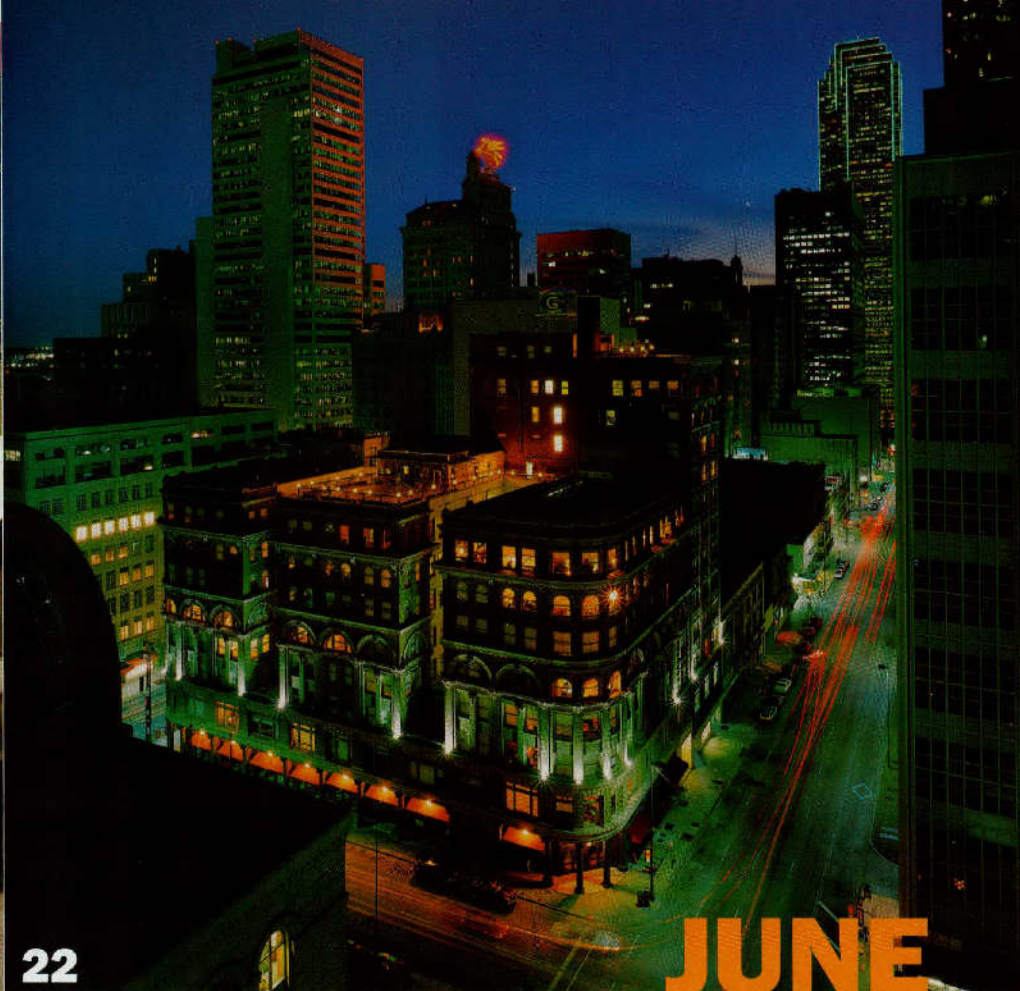




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ABOUT OUR COVERS FRONT: The lovely Laguna Madre, shown here at sunset, lies next to Padre Island National Seashore, one of our Top 10 picks for the best places to get away from it all. For more amazing vistas, turn to page 30. BACK: Quiet scenes like this one await at South Llano River State Park, near Junction. For more Hill Country images, turn to page 50. Both photos © Laurence Parent.

PHOTOS FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: © LANCE VARNEILL; © CAROLYN BROWN; COURTESY DOUBLE D RANCH

FEATURES

- 16 A TEXAS HIGHWAYS MOMENT WITH MARCIA BALL** Known for her stylish piano-playing and effervescent fusion of blues, rock, R&B, Mardi Gras anthems, and more, Louisiana-reared Marcia Ball has called Austin home since 1970. BY JOHN T. DAVIS
- 22 DREAM. IN BIG D** From panoramic skylines to Art Deco details, photographer Carolyn Brown presents images of her adopted city, taken over the last 36 years. Who knew Dallas was this stunning? INTRODUCTION AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLYN BROWN
- 30 TEN GREAT PLACES TO (REALLY) GET AWAY FROM IT ALL** There's nothing like a little solitude in a beautiful locale to help you lose your troubles, and maybe find yourself. Here's where to find blessed isolation, from Padre Island to Big Bend. BY MELISSA GASKILL, PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURENCE PARENT
- 38 YOAKUM'S DESIGNING WOMEN: DOUBLE D RANCH** This family-run company may be based in a small town in southeast Texas, but there's nothing small-time about its impact on the fashion world: Double D's annual sales have topped \$10 million. BY KATHRYN JONES, PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOEL SALCIDO
- 44 REFORMED JAILHOUSES** Towns from San Elizario to Wharton offer unlikely attractions in former slammers. Housed in historic buildings with plenty of tales to tell, these old jailhouses still rock. BY JOAN UPTON HALL
- 50 A HILL COUNTRY SOJOURN** A storyteller extraordinaire explores the northwest-ern edge of the Hill Country, discovering great tacos, winning wines, a country music museum, and characters and sights worth writing home about. BY HOWARD PEACOCK

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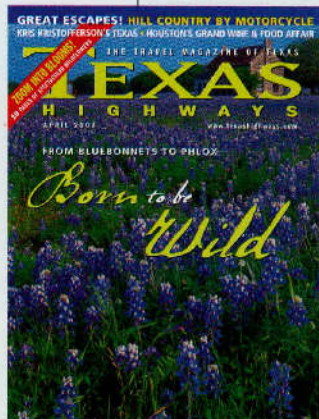
Home Is Where the Wildflowers Are

WE'VE BEEN gone from Texas for 22 years, and *TH* is one of the things that has kept us connected to the state during all that time. We especially look forward to the April issue when we can enjoy the beauty of the wildflowers in bloom.

I did find one mistake in that issue, in the Spotlight on photographer Russell Lee, as noted in the comment about [a photo of] Ralph Yarborough campaigning in 1954. As all Grayson County natives know, the county courthouse is in Sherman, not Denison.

Thanks for your continued excellence and for helping to keep us connected to Texas!

PHILIP AND SHELLYN POOLE
Hoover, Alabama



ED. NOTE: *We're glad you enjoyed our annual wildflowers photo feature. As for the Grayson County Courthouse being in Sherman, you're absolutely right; however, we didn't identify the building as the county courthouse. Based on a caption provided by Lee, we wrote, "Texas gubernatorial hopeful...Ralph Yarborough stumps*

to an uninterested crowd on the courthouse steps in Denison, 1954." Judge James Harris of Denison says the photo was likely taken on the steps of the old city hall, which housed a courtroom and was sometimes referred to as a courthouse.

Motorcycle Diaries

JUST WHEN I think I've seen everything worth seeing in Texas, you come up with a place I've never been but have to see. The article by Dale Weisman about motorcycling in the Hill Country [April] that mentions Leakey and all the motorcycling attractions in the area caught my attention. I was already planning a Texas trip to Fort Davis, but

my visit will include Leakey now. I have a new BMW, all ready to go, and I'll take this issue with me so that I won't miss a thing.

ELMER GOLDEN
Cincinnati, Ohio

AS A SUBSCRIBER for more than 20 years and a weekend-road-trip warrior (via motorcycle or car), I was very impressed with Randy Mallory's story on old US 80 [March]. As I was getting over my excitement about the March issue, along comes the April issue with Dale Weisman's story on motorcycling in the Hill Country. I hope you will continue to publish articles about not only destinations, but the methods and routes one must take to get there, for it's the stops along the way that really make the trip worthwhile.

PHIL GARRETT
Carrollton

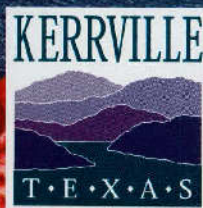
I WISH TO vehemently thank you for including an article about motorcycling. I was one of those who only read *TH* when at other people's homes. In late 2006, I paid for my own subscription, and now [after seeing this article], I am proud that I did.

DENNIS G. MARKEN
Comanche

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GREAT ARTICLE on motorcycling through the best parts of the Hill Country. I've done some of these routes on a bicycle, and let me tell you that the road numbers become part of you forever. Going down the backside of RR 337 into Vanderpool at 60 mph on skinny tires and in skinny pants chisels out a permanent memory.

BILL WILLIAMS
Wimberley

People and Places

PLEASE STOP with the *Texas Highways* Moment features. [The April issue included "A *TH* Moment With Kris Kristofferson."] It is the one facet of *TH* that I immediately skip over. I subscribe to your magazine to discover interesting towns, events, and points of interest in our great state. If I wanted to subscribe to *People* magazine, I would.

KEVIN QUINN
Sachse

ED. NOTE: *Duly noted, Kevin. We're sorry to hear you don't enjoy our occasional celebrity-Texan profiles, which, by the way, usually include travel tips related to the subject's favorite Texas haunts. We hope you'll find plenty of other features in TH to your liking.*

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© COURTNEY PERRY



This photo from our April issue of Kyle Denham sharing a tender moment with his horse depicts one of the simple pleasures of life in Quanah.

A Blessing on Quanah

I WAS THRILLED to read Courtney Perry's article about Quanah [April]. This Minnesotan was blessed to have had the opportunity to visit that beautiful yet harsh land, which is encased in such rich history. It was in Quanah that I met such sweet folk as Jimmie and Gene Naron when my daughter, Amy, went to work there. The Narons just scooped up my daughter, treated her like family, and made this far-away mom sleep so much better at night! Like Quanah Parker said, "May God bless the town of Quanah."

MARLA McCANN
Rosemount, Minnesota

Kingwood Connections

APRIL WAS a double delight! First, the article about Quanah was written and photographed by Courtney Perry, who grew up across the street from us and used to baby-sit our boys. We've proudly followed her photography career.

Second, Courtney mentioned Anna Sheppard in the article. Our local chapter of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas nominated Anna for Outstanding Texas History Teacher several years ago, and she won! Now retired (ha!), Anna substitute-teaches, works at museums, and writes Texas history curriculums. We credit her with inspiring a love of Texas history in thousands of students.

MARSHA RICHARDS
Kingwood

ED. NOTE: Thanks for pointing out that Courtney grew up in Kingwood, Marsha. We erred when we stated in April's Table of Contents that she is a former resident of Quanah.

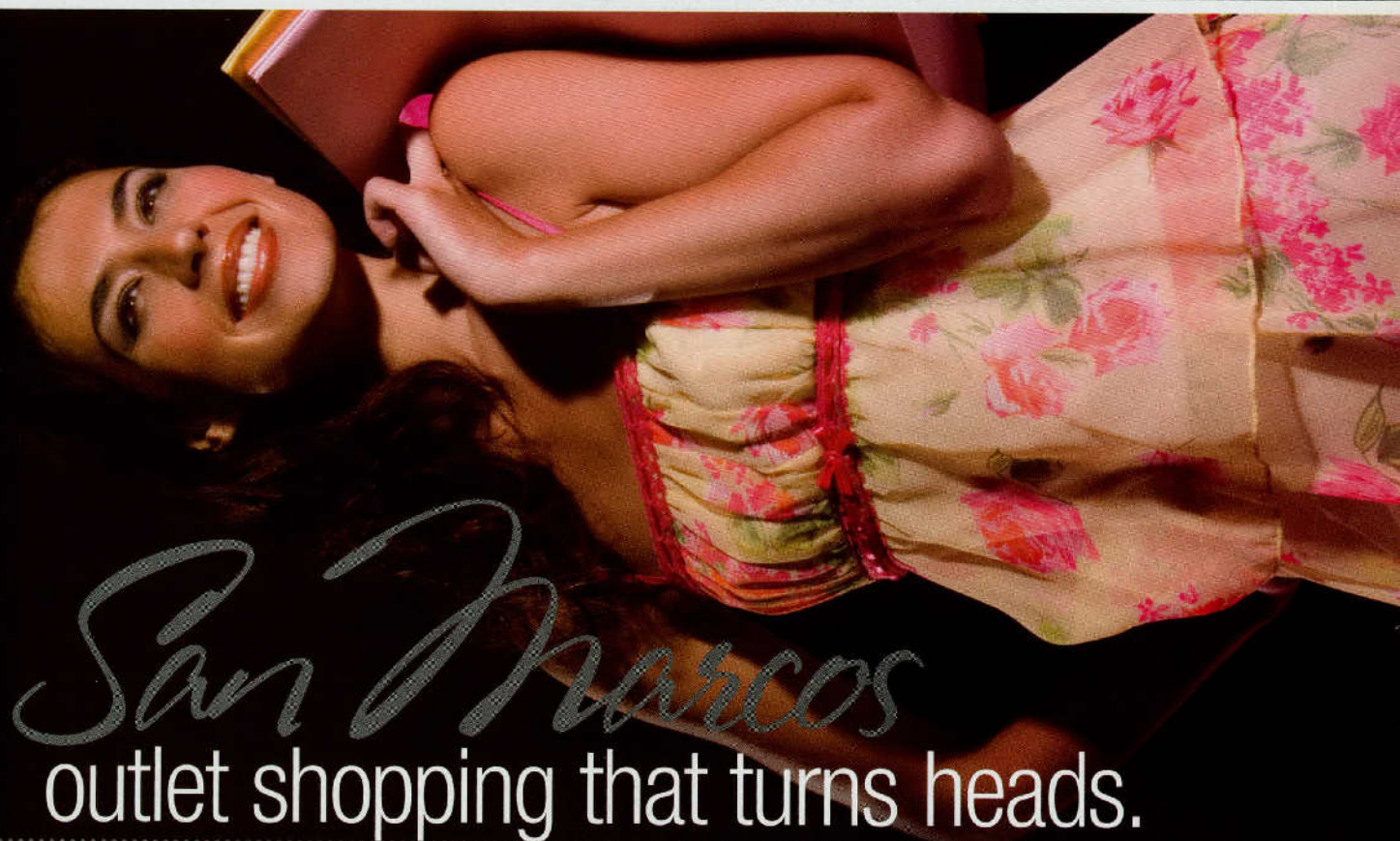
Fort Worth Bypass?

I GREATLY enjoyed Courtney Perry's article on Quanah, but I have one correction. [To reach Quanah], she said she followed US 287 west

and then north from Dallas. She should be reminded that the large city she left behind was Fort Worth, not Dallas. US 287 doesn't go through Big D at all. However she got there, it was a great story on Quanah.

EUGENE BRICE
Fort Worth

ED. NOTE: Thanks for keeping us on the right path, Eugene. You're right; US 287 goes through Fort Worth, not Dallas.



Czech Out the German Heritage

HOME IN La Grange is a true phrase for my husband and me. We were both born here and have come back after 30 years. Naturally, I was pleased to see the old hometown featured in your magazine. The photos were so good; I especially liked the ones of Monument Hill.

I was shocked at one statement, however, and just can't let it pass without comment: "The real heart of La Grange, though, is its Czech population."

If you look at the history of La Grange, [the early settlers included both Germans and Czechs]. The town has always had a balance between the two cultures. A trip around the square reveals the names of businesses and buildings whose [German] origin isn't in doubt. In this day of politically-correct everything, La Grange is not a Czech town. Now I feel better.

SHIRLEY "TOOTSIE" GIESBER TIEDT
La Grange

ED. NOTE: *Well said, Tootsie. Thanks for setting us straight.*

Cover Appeal

I DID NOT like the front and back covers of the

March issue. The pictures were great, but they should have been on the inside of the magazine. Please continue to put scenery instead of animals and people on the covers.

D. TICHAVSKY
Austin

And Speaking of Animals

REGARDING the letters in April's Talk to TH [about the snake and the jay in February's Window on Texas], I wonder what the reaction would have been to the "beautiful green jay" eating a slimy old earthworm! The snake was just making a living, like we and all creatures have to do. That's nature, and nature is not always pretty. But that's the way it should be, and hopefully, man won't change it. Outstanding photography, which is what the picture intended. Great magazine. Keep it up.

FARREL BECK
Rockport

I JUST FINISHED reading your April issue, and I was disappointed to see that you printed two negatives to one positive letter regarding the photo of the rattlesnake catching the green jay. I thought that was a classic photo of Texas nature in action and one of the most amazing

and beautiful pictures I had ever seen...one that should win some kind of award.

The beauty of God's natural world is not just in the pretty colors but in the complicated interplay that made all life possible, including us. Keep up the good work and kudos to the photographer.

FRANK VALDEZ
Santa Monica, California

Celebrating with Chocolate

I WANTED to thank you for your [February] story about the best chocolate locations in Texas. My mom and dad, who live near Houston, had an anniversary shortly after the article [appeared], so I called The Chocolate Bar and ordered a gift certificate for them. They haven't had a chance to go yet, but they're looking forward to visiting soon. Thanks to both *Texas Highways* and The Chocolate Bar.

BECCA BEAVER
Quinlan

WRITE OR E-MAIL: Talk to TH, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax 512/486-5879; e-mail: letters05@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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For THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

Compiled by Lori Moffatt

Beloved Botero

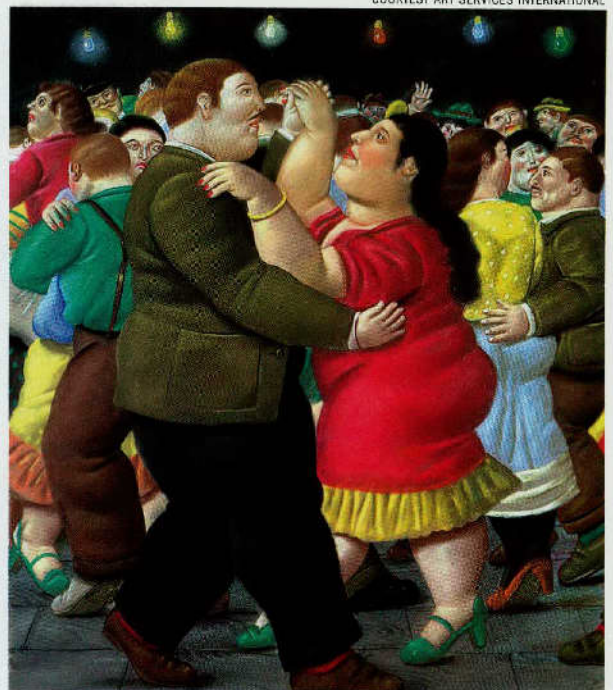
WHEN MOST PEOPLE THINK OF COLOMBIAN ARTIST FERNANDO BOTERO, they imagine his vibrant, exaggerated paintings of zaftig women and inflated party-goers. And yes, those robust images are part of Botero's portfolio. But Botero, who was born in Medellín in 1932, is a painter, sculptor, and draftsman who depicts the full range of human drama, blending beauty and violence, joy and misery, comedy and tragedy. (His latest paintings, for example, address conditions in Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison.)

From May 26 through August 19, the **San Antonio Museum of Art** and the **Southwest School of Art and Craft** co-host *The Baroque World of Fernando Botero*, a retrospective of 100 works culled from the artist's personal collection. This is the first U.S. retrospective of Botero's works since 1974, and it will travel throughout the United States through 2010. Call 210/978-8100; www.samuseum.org, or

210/224-1848; www.swschool.org. Also, see www.boteroSA.org.

WIPE OUT!

SURFERS AND WANNABE shredders, listen up: Catch a wave to downtown **Corpus Christi**, and experience life when your biggest cares were how far-out your surfboard looked and if you could ride



A retrospective of Fernando Botero's works, co-hosted by the San Antonio Museum of Art and the Southwest School of Art and Craft, includes *The Dancers*, painted in 2002.

the waves long enough to impress the other kids on the beach.

From June 1 through October 31, the **Texas Surf Museum** presents *Surfin' thru the '70s*. In addition to classic surf art, surfboard designs, and vintage surfwear, video footage and photographs of Texas surfers riding the Gulf Coast waves in the 1970s offer a sweet picture of surfer life. Mood rings, pet rocks, Farrah Fawcett posters, and Nixon newspaper headlines round out the decade's vibe. For a real trip, step into the typical teenage surfer's bedroom, decorated with a board in the corner, a lava lamp, and walls covered in cutouts from surf magazines.

Throughout the year, the museum commemorates Texas surfing history with memorabilia, more than 50 surfboards, photos of Texas' top competitors, a mock garage shop with surfboard-shaping tools, and a small theater that shows continuous surf movies. Dude, check it out, and then head to the beach. Call 361/888-7873; www.texassurfmuseum.com.

—REBECCA FONTENOT



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July 6

Stairway to Heaven:
Tribute to Led Zeppelin



July 7

Dark Side of the Moon:
Tribute to Pink Floyd



Star-Telegram



FOR THE ROAD

to major museums, but they dreamed of displaying their extensive personal collection of antiquities, African and Oceanic pieces, and modern art in Houston. On June 8, 1987, Dominique (who survived her husband by 25 years) realized this dream with the opening of the **Menil Collection**, which houses some 16,000 artworks in a stunning building designed by Italian architect Renzo

Piano. (The Menil was Piano's first commission in the United States.)

Twenty years later, the Menil Collection remains a treasure not only for Houston, but for the entire art world. Dominique's vision brought art to everyone: She stipulated that the museum charge no admission and worked with Piano to design a structure so that art could be viewed simply and intimately. The large windows, skylights, and ceiling louvers illuminate the galleries, and the muted gray-and-white interiors allow the artwork to take center stage.

As part of the museum's 20th-anniversary

celebration, *A Modern Patronage* (June 8–September 16) features some 70 pieces the de Menils previously donated to major art houses across Europe and the United States. Through July 8, the museum also showcases Andy Warhol's *Three Houston Women*, a trilogy of pop-art portraits that includes the artist's portrayal of Dominique, who was his close friend.

The de Menil family's ability to see Surrealism in African objects, Modernism in ancient treasures, and spirituality in great works of Abstract Expressionism makes for an interesting mix of art you won't want to miss. Call 713/525-9400; www.menil.org. —REBECCA FONTENOT



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TOUR DE FORTS

ON THE WESTERN EDGE OF THE HILL Country, Kimble and Menard counties offer stunning scenery to explore. If you enjoy bicycling, the second annual **Tour de Forts** (June 9–10) offers a pleasant way to see the countryside and get some exercise at the same time. The full 100-mile route meanders through the towns of **Menard, Fort McKavett, and Junction**, but you can bike as little or as much as you like, as you'll find rest stops and relief vehicles every 10 miles or so. While you're in Menard, you can join the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Presidio de San Sabá, which was established by the Spanish in 1757 to "civilize" the Apaches and Comanches and prevent France from establishing a presence in the area. For information about the bike tour, call 325/446-9133; www.cthrr.org.

I'M SO BLUE THINKING ABOUT YOU

BLUEBERRIES TAKE THE CAKE. AND THE pancakes, and the muffins, and the smoothies, and the cobbler...and just about everything they cozy up to. On June 9, **Nacogdoches** celebrates its local blueberry harvest with the 18th annual **Texas Blueberry Festival**. More than 10,000 people show up every year to salute the juicy blue fruits, and you should, too. Here's why: Not only can you listen to live music on three downtown stages, try your luck in a pie-eating contest or a domino tournament, and sample delicious fare ranging from blueberry pie to barbecue, but free shuttles will provide transportation to local berry farms, where you can pick your own berries to enjoy later. Instant *and* delayed gratification: What could be better than that? Call 888/653-3788; www.texasblueberryfestival.com.

LEAVE ME A LOIN

ON JUNE 16, WHICH JUST SO HAPPENS to be Father's Day (hint, hint), the city of Bryan

Indulge your senses in an exhibition of rare beauty.

Come see how the superstars of the 19th-century Salon—Bouguereau, Gérôme, Alma Tadema, and more—immortalized the beauty and grace of the human figure. A renowned collection of glorious European masterworks comes to Austin's stunning new museum just in time for summer.

A Century of Grace

19th-Century Masterworks from
the Dahesh Museum of Art, New York
May 18–August 5, 2007

Also on view June 1–August 12, 2007:
Master Drawings from the Yale University Art Gallery

A Century of Grace: 19th-Century Masterworks from the Dahesh Museum of Art, New York was organized by the Dahesh Museum of Art in collaboration with the Blanton Museum of Art. The Blanton's presentation of *Master Drawings from the Yale University Art Gallery* is made possible by the Inman Foundation.

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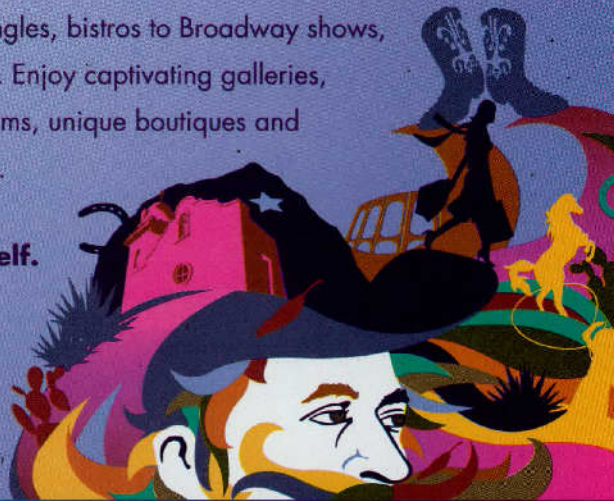
Adolphe-William Bouguereau, *The Water Girl*, 1885 (detail), oil on canvas, Dahesh Museum of Art

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EL PASO

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Painted Desert, Harold Beits

Phantom Ranch, Grand Canyon, Gunnar Widforss

Training the World to Travel West: Paintings of the Southwest from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Collection exhibits an innovative art program that became a powerful advertising vehicle to promote tourism at the turn of the 20th century. Due in part to the program's success, the West became an increasingly appealing destination for travelers who were intrigued by paintings of a landscape and culture both exotic and quintessentially American.

Selections from this collection will be on display in the Foran Gallery of the Panhandle-Plains Museum beginning June 23, 2007.

For more information or to book a tour, call (806) 651-2244 or visit www.panhandleplains.org. Organized by the Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe

PPHM
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2503 Fourth Avenue Canyon, Texas 79015 www.panhandleplains.org

FOR THE ROAD

hosts the first annual **Texas Reds: Steak & Grape Festival** in the heart of its historic downtown. Leave your vegetarian friends at home, for this bash will focus on red meat and red wine, with a steak cookoff, *vino* tastings from 11 Texas wineries, grilling demonstrations, and food-and-wine-pairing lunches promising a decadent, lip-smacking good time. (Feel free to bring the kids: You can herd 'em over to the children's tents to play while you sip and savor.) Strolling mariachis and continuous live music on two stages (including an evening concert by the Bellamy Brothers) keep things hopping. Learn more about activities, entertainment, and accommodations by calling 800/777-8292; www.texasredsfestival.com:

CATCH THE BUZZ

PERHAPS YOU'VE VISITED HOUSTON'S amazing Cockrell Butterfly Center at the Houston Museum of Natural Science and marveled as butterflies flutter around you like gossamer, iridescent fairies. Now, with a grand reopening on May 25, the center emerges even bigger and better. For not only will you find more plants, more butterflies, and a working bee colony in the glass-enclosed butterfly conservatory, but you'll also discover a new **Insect Wing** focusing on the millions of intriguing insect species beyond the butterfly family.

You say bugs aren't your friends? Think again. "Insects pollinate many of our food crops, provide food for birds and other animals, and break down dead matter to return its energy to the environment," says Dr. Nancy Greig, the museum's curator of entomology. Get ready to turn your "ewws" to "ooohs." Learn how insects are used in crime-scene investigations and why some bugs have such bright colors. Get eye-to-eye with a Goliath Birdeater Tarantula or a White-eyed Assassin Bug. Discover tools of the trade in a real entomology lab, learn how to create a butterfly garden at home, and crawl through a model of a beehive. You can even purchase edible insect snacks (spicy Mexican-style *chapulines* are all the rage right now, it seems) and learn how to train for a career in Hollywood as a "bug-wrangler." Call 713/639-4629; www.hmns.org.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT www.texashighways.com

A WOMAN? DON'T BARBETTE ON IT

Bumper stickers in Texas' Capital City proclaim "Keep Austin Weird." Thirty miles to the north, Georgetown cars and T-shirts respond with "Keep Georgetown Normal." So what about Round Rock, which sits in between? During the Roaring Twenties and following decades, a wildly popular

high-wire act by a female impersonator might've made folks wonder.

Born in 1904 in Round Rock, Vander Clyde (born Vander Clyde Broadway) seemed destined for life under the big top. His love of performing began when his mother took him to his first circus in Austin, and grew as he practiced tightrope-walking on her clothesline. He worked in Central Texas cotton fields to earn money to see more circuses until his graduation as high school valedictorian at age 14. He then headed south to San Antonio in hopes of joining the Alfaretta Sisters, known as the "world-famous aerial queens." The job required that he dress as a female, which sparked his idea for a solo act as a woman.

Adopting the stage name Barbettes, Clyde gained popularity as he performed across the United States. In 1923, he became the featured performer at the Alhambra Music Hall in Paris and, over the next 15 years, he became the toast of Europe. The worldly—and world-renowned—poet/filmmaker/playwright Jean Cocteau described Barbettes' act as a masterpiece, "one of the most beautiful things in the theater."

In 1938, a serious fall, complicated by crippling pneumonia, forced Barbettes to retire from the stage. He continued to train circus performers across the United States for many years, and in New York worked with productions by both Billy Rose and Orson Welles. He eventually moved back to Texas,



Barbettes (left and above), a female impersonator and high-wire artist from Round Rock, gained international renown in the 1920s and '30s for his strikingly beautiful performances.

spending his final years in Round Rock, where he died in 1973.

Barbettes' story inspired works by several writers and poets. It may have helped inspire director Blake Edwards' 1982 musical comedy, *Victor/Victoria*, starring Julie Andrews. Fascination with the performer continues: In 2001, Barbettes, a restaurant named for Vander Clyde, opened in Minneapolis.

—Megan Larson, Austin

THE GREAT CADDO LAKE PEARL RUSH

It wasn't as big as the Gold Rush of 1849, but Caddo Lake, which spreads across the Texas-Louisiana border, experienced a miniature rush of its own in the early 1900s. The discovery wasn't gold, but pearls—freshwater pearls in the lake's mussels.

The 1909 discovery is credited—depending on which source you read—to Japanese cook George Murata (*Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, July 1959), who had hired on with an oil-drilling crew, or to a couple of local fishermen who had decided to use the mussels' flesh as bait for their trotlines (*Jefferson: Riverport to the Southwest* by Fred Tarpley, 1983). According to the latter source, some of the mussels the fishermen opened came with unexpected hard, round, white bonuses.

Whoever discovered them, fortune hunters flocked to the lake as word of the pearls spread. Camping out for weeks at a time, they looked for pearl-bearing mussels. Because the searchers got down on all fours to root through the shallows where the mussel beds were located, they were dubbed "pearl hogs."

Some of those "hogs" were successful. A 1913 U.S. Bureau of Fisheries bulletin reported that in 1912, the value of pearls taken from both the Louisiana and Texas sides of the lake was \$99,200. That is roughly equivalent to \$1.9 million in today's dollars.

The building of a dam several years later near Mooringsport, Louisiana, covered the mussel beds with deep water, bringing the pearl rush to an abrupt halt.

Caddo Lake is not the only Texas site of pearl-bearing freshwater mussels. Divers with annual permits from the state currently harvest a small number of pink, purple, and lavender pearls from mussels in the Concho River near San Angelo.

—Mary G. Ramos, Dallas

Spotlight on FLYING A PLANE

COURTESY LORI MOFFATT



What a view! Flying provides a new perspective on Texas' varied topography.

Come Fly With Me

WHEN I VACATIONED IN COSTA RICA A FEW YEARS ago, I took a 10-passenger prop-plane the size of a minivan from San José to the fishing village of Quepos. The flight was noisy and exciting as we swept low over the countryside, but landing was the most memorable part. The pilot gracefully touched the plane down on the runway with a confident toss of her hair, whipped a pocket mirror from her handbag,

and applied a fresh coat of lipstick before the plane taxied to a stop.

When I took my first flying lesson a few weeks ago, my landing wasn't nearly so smooth. But my unflappable flight instructor, Virgil Kennedy, owner of the Austin Academy of Aviation, told me I did a good job, and I'm inclined to believe him. Flying builds pluck that way.

Yes, I took a flying lesson, and so can you.

Thanks to the new **Project Pilot** program launched by the national Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, wannabe pilots like me can take an introductory "discovery" flight at one of 3,500 flight schools throughout the country, at a sharply discounted rate (typically \$49 to \$99 for an hour in the skies). Sixty-five schools offer lessons within a hundred-mile radius of my home in Austin

alone, with hundreds more throughout Texas.

But why learn to fly? Only celebrities and lucky multimillionaires fly to places like Marfa and Caddo Lake and Palo Duro Canyon. The rest of us drive, right? Well, wrong. Lots of people know how to fly, and what's more, many pilots don't even own their own planes. If you have a pilot's license, you can rent a plane and zip to the next town just for the fun of it, if you want to. Turns out a lot of people do just that.

"Ever heard of the \$100 hamburger?" Virgil asked me as I signed a few forms and got ready for my first lesson.

"Are you talking about that expensive, massaged Japanese beef?" I asked.

Virgil, who has been flying since 1962 and teaching nearly that long, responded to some static-y chatter on his wireless radio and chuckled. "Nah. See, pilots look for any excuse to fly," he told me. "So a popular thing to do is to fly over to a nearby town with a good airport café, have lunch, and come back. We call 'em '\$100 hamburger' trips, though nowadays, the trips cost more than that."

"So, then," I said, doing the math, "it's okay for people to sign up for an introductory lesson on a lark?" I asked Virgil.

"Pilots love to fly," Virgil assured me. "And for a large number of people, that first flight sets the hook. I can tell because they can't stop smiling."

"I do like to smile," I said.

My plane, a jaunty white Cessna 172 Skyhawk, awaited on the tarmac. I climbed in the pilot's seat, fastened my seatbelt, and adjusted my earphones and headset, with which I'd communicate with Virgil and receive weather and traffic updates by radio. Virgil



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sat next to me (with his own set of controls) in the cozy cockpit. Out near the runway, a reassuringly low-tech windsock billowed in the wind. And on the crowded instrument panel, gauges indicated everything from altitude and airspeed to something called the “artificial horizon”—useful if you can’t tell whether the nose of the plane is pointed into the ground or up into the sky.



COURTESY VIRGIL KENNEDY

Lori “Icewoman” Moffatt takes a flying lesson.

Virgil made a few last-minute checks, turned the key in the ignition (just like a car), and the propeller began to gather energy for takeoff. We got an A-OK from the control tower, and soon, we were barreling down the runway. I pushed the throttle forward, then he flipped a switch somewhere and we were off. I looked out the window and saw eye-to-eye with a red-tailed hawk as we climbed higher.

The air was bumpy below cloud level, but once we had ascended high enough so the clouds looked like puffs of wispy cotton below us, Virgil had me take the wheel with my left hand. Well, it’s not called a wheel; it’s called a yoke, and it’s one of many controls used to guide the plane. Pilots keep their right hands free to control the throttle, the trim wheel (which makes the plane easier to fly), and the dozens of other buttons and knobs that adjust wing flaps, landing gear, and other parts.

With light pressure to the left, the plane banked left. “How’d you know we wanted to go that way?” Virgil teased me, and then adjusted the plane’s direction with his own yoke. Soon, though, I got the hang of it, maneuvering through gentle s-turns as we clipped along at 120 mph toward San Marcos,

more than a mile above spectacularly green hills and farmland.

“Pull the throttle very slowly, so you don’t hear a change in the engine,” Virgil instructed me as we readied to land. I gently tugged the throttle, reducing power to the engine, and listened for a difference in the steady hum. I tried to line the plane up with the runway, and Virgil made a few smooth touch-and-go landings, taking off again after a few seconds on the ground. Then, he let me try, and my bumpy, wobbly, and altogether unconfident approach made me realize how much more I’d have to learn if I were to take this flying thing seriously.

Would I? Could I? I thought briefly of pioneering Texas aviator Bessie Coleman, the first black woman pilot in the United States, and of stunt flier Katherine Stinson, who literally barnstormed the world of Texas aviation in the early 1900s. What if I became a daredevil aviator, too, stunning the world with my death-defying loop-de-loops, rolls, flips, and spirals? But then again, those \$100 hamburgers sound plenty exciting, too.

Try flying for yourself, and see what you think. It might open up a whole new world and a fun way to travel.

—LORI MOFFATT

To learn more about the Introductory Pilot Program, log onto www.projectpilot.org. Here’s how it works: Find a flight school near you and call to set up an introductory flight (often called a discovery flight), usually offered at about half the average rate of a one-hour lesson.

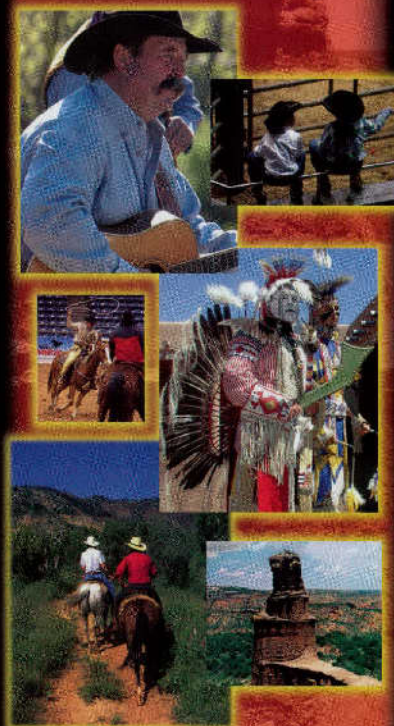
HUNGRY? NO PLANE, NO PROBLEM

At **Fredericksburg’s Airport Diner**, a 1940s-style diner adjacent to the Gillespie County Airport aircraft-parking ramp, you can watch planes come and go while chowing down on the café’s famous Bomber Burgers, blue-plate specials, hand-battered onion rings, and old-fashioned malts and shakes. Open Wed-Sun. Call 830/997-4999; www.hangarhotel.com/diner.

The Stinson Airfield Patio Cafe in San Antonio, which sits in the lobby of the historic airfield’s 1930s terminal building, serves savory, made-from-scratch enchiladas, chalupas, and other Mexican specialties, plus juicy burgers and fries. Tables on the outside patio afford views of the action on the airfield. Open Mon-Sat. Call 210/923-5969.

At **Brenham’s Southern Flyer Diner**, a 1950s-themed eatery at the Brenham Municipal Airport, jukeboxes play songs by Elvis and the Everly Brothers while pilots and other patrons dig into plates of chicken-fried steak, top-notch salads, and six varieties of hamburgers. Poodle skirts and saddle shoes rule. Open daily. Call 979/836-5462.

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The Hole Story

BY SHEILA SCARBOROUGH

I COME FROM a family of dictators when it comes to donuts. They have to be yummy, fresh, and still warm, or we start looking around for the thumbscrews. Much to my mother's hand-waving frustration when I was little, my father would often load me into the car in my jammies to go on a 9 p.m. donut run. He knew that the local bakers had donuts coming out of the oven at that hour, and that's when they'd taste

the best. Only recently did I learn that he came by his fetish from experience, as a youthful employee of the old Dixie Cream Donuts shop in downtown Austin.

These days, Texas donut aficionados find yeasty heaven at Round Rock Donuts, located just under the landmark silver water tower in Round Rock, north of Austin. Since 1926, the famous "orange donuts" have rolled out of the bakery by the dozens. Thanks to the Internet-based shipper Doughnuts Overnight, they're enjoyed throughout the lower 48 states.

But are they really orange? Well, sort of. Dale Cohrs, who owns the shop with his wife, Jan, says that in the old days, the distinctive golden-orange tint came from the richly-colored yolks of farm-fresh eggs. "In fact," says Dale, "sometimes they used duck eggs, which made them even more orange-y because of those big yolks. These days we use regular eggs and put a little tint in there, since people now expect that orange color.

"People are rabid about their donuts,"



MICHAEL A. MURPHY

Get 'em while they're hot! Round Rock Donuts turns out hundreds of dozens of their signature treats daily.

he continues. "They write letters to the *Round Rock Leader* about them, and people would take it personally if we didn't maintain our quality. Our shop is like a shrine to a lot of people. We also want to make it fun to come here."

Dale and some of his staff regale me with stories of customers' pilgrimages to the donut shrine. "Did you tell her about the time that the hearse pulled up to the take-out window?" asks office manager Linda Kohl. "The driver said the guy in the back had made a final request to be buried with a dozen Round Rock Donuts."

"And how about the woman in labor?" Dale said with a laugh. "She got some to go! Then there's the couple who own a car dealership in the UK, but when they come to Austin to visit relatives, they always come here to get donuts. Another

ROUND ROCK DONUTS is at 106 W.

Liberty Ave. in historic downtown Round Rock, at the base of the silver water tower. From IH 35, take FM 620 east toward downtown (FM 620 becomes Main St.), and turn left onto W. Liberty. Hours: Mon-Sat 4 a.m.-3 p.m., Sun 4 a.m.-2 p.m. Call 512/255-3629; www.roundrockdonuts.com.

Various Austin locations carry Round Rock Donuts (see Web site for details), as well as the Round Rock Donuts location in Temple (2668 S. 31st St.; 254/773-3611). If you're outside Central Texas, don't despair; you can order Round Rock Donuts through Doughnuts Overnight (www.doughnutsovernight.com).



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lady came in after staying in a local hotel; she said she was told to bring boxes and boxes with her back to Laredo.”

The bakery has quite a lineage. It was founded in 1926 by the Moehring family as Lone Star Bakery, and was originally on Main Street in downtown Round Rock. It then moved a few blocks over to the current West Liberty Avenue location. A devastating fire in 2001 leveled the first West Liberty building.

“Of course we had to rebuild,” says Dale, “but we wanted to give the new structure a ‘Round Rock’ look, like it had always been here.” They succeeded—the handsome establishment is built with traditional limestone, a tin roof, and soaring ceilings.

Although the bakery is famous for its orange donuts, its custom-decorated cakes and cookies are popular, too.

The bakery’s decor and pastry boxes feature a lasso-waving cowboy mascot named “Donut Joe” riding “Glaze,” a sort of hybrid horse/Longhorn with a round shape that’s suspiciously similar to a donut’s.

Dale and Jan spend very little money on advertising; new fans discover the shop by word of mouth, including Internet food forums like Roadfood.com and Chow.com. Both the Food Network and the Travel Channel recently featured the bakery.

At 10 minutes to nine on a Sunday morning, there are 12 cars and trucks in the drive-through, with manager Polo Garcia walking down the line taking orders to give the staff inside a head start. There are motorcyclists, grandmothers with kids, construction workers, and people apparently dressed for church. It can be a demolition derby in the small parking lot if you aren’t careful.

One patron walked inside, saw the line of nine people and said, “Guess I ought to go to H-E-B,” but after some more har-rumphing, he took a place in line. Good things come to those who wait.

It’s somewhat less crazed at 1:00 in the afternoon on a typical Wednesday—only three vehicles are (*continued on page 63*)

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Royal Blues

From

Her Tallness

EVERYBODY knows the tall girl.... She's a familiar sight on one of the big stages at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, or at Antone's, Austin's famous "home of the blues," or at any one of a thousand bars, honky-tonks, dance-

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halls, and festivals from coast to coast. One evening, in New Orleans, Ball was walking down Magazine Street, window shopping before a show, when a motorist exited a parking lot ahead of her and she courteously hollered out, "Hey, mistah, turn your lights on!" A reply came instantly drifting out of the stranger's driver's window: "Thank ya, Marcia!" Onstage or off, she is hard to overlook.

Part piano-playing dervish, part smoky-voiced chanteuse, part living exponent of the famous Mardi Gras dictum, "laissez les bon temps rouler" ("Let the good times roll!"), Ball is both heir to a century-long tradition of Louisiana "piano professors" that includes James Booker, Fats Domino, Professor Longhair, and Allen Toussaint, and also the 21st-Century embodiment of a modern career woman. After all, she oversees a showbiz corporation that includes band, staff, management, booking, publicity, and, oh yeah, the star (that would be "Her Tallness," as she playfully refers to herself).

Topping out at about 6 feet without heels, Ball is an indelible sight onstage. If she's wearing a spaghetti-strap top, you can watch her muscles flex rhythmically as her left hand holds down the bass line while her right dances up and down the keyboard with quicksilver abandon. Her legs are long enough that she can cross them while she plays, one foot working the pedals and the other swinging in time to the beat.

Ball was born on the Texas-Louisiana border, where the East Texas petroleum

I **IT'S THAT** little technicality
that allows me to claim
dual citizenship, and it works
in your favor if you know
how to use it. And
I'm proud of it.



Louisiana piana. Here, at home in Austin, Marcia Ball belts the blues while tickling the ivories.

economy beckons to the Cajun, black, and Creole cultures that co-inhabit South Louisiana. The “Golden Triangle,” as the Beaumont-Port Arthur-Orange area is known, has produced more than its share of famous musicians, including J.P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson, Janis Joplin, Mickey Gilley, George Jones, C.J. Chenier, Johnny and Edgar Winter, the Boogie Kings, Mark Chesnutt, Tracy Byrd, and many more.

Ball’s own music is an effervescent fusion of blues, rock, swamp pop, zydeco, R&B, torch-singing ballads, Mardi Gras anthems, and soul music that so far has yielded about a dozen albums, earning her a fistful of Blues Music Awards and three Grammy nominations, the latest for her 2005 concert set, *Live! Down the Road*.

Though she grew up in Vinton, Louisiana, and attended LSU as an English major, Ball has called Austin home since 1970. In the early 1990s, her husband, artist Gordon Fowler, and some partners opened La Zona Rosa, a club and restaurant that soon became the playhouse for a vivid collection of Austin musicians, artists, politicians, and raconteurs. It’s one of countless venues in Texas, Louisiana, and beyond, made merry by Marcia’s marvelous mix of Southern musical influences. If not the quintessential Austin musician, she’s among the elite, and she holds court as a consistently entertaining and vibrant creative force.



Marcia performs with the great New Orleans soul singer Irma Thomas at Jazzfest in 2002.

JOHN T.: When people in Texas think of “the border,” it’s usually shorthand for the Texas-Mexico border. But you come from border country, too, where two cultures rub up against each other. Were you born in Texas or Louisiana?

MARCIA: My parents lived in Vinton, Louisiana [near the state line], when I was born. Vinton didn’t have a hospital. The closest was Frances Ann Lucher Hospital in Orange, and that was where you would go to have your baby at that time. So I was born in Orange, but we were living in Vinton all the while. So it’s that little technicality that allows me to claim dual citizenship, and it works in your favor if you know how to use it. And I’m proud of it.

JOHN T.: Is there a special culture down there you were aware of as a kid?

MARCIA: When my daddy was a teenager, there were 40 clubs between the river and Lake Charles, including a showboat in the river on the Louisiana side. In the ’50s there were the Big Oaks and Louann’s, and in the ’60s and ’70s there

MY FIRST musical memories are probably from the skating rink, which was a tent that came to town in the summer and set up in empty lots and played records.

were the Texas Pelican Club and the Surf Club and the B&B Bar and all these other honky-tonks lined up on the highway [in Louisiana]. The [Texas and Louisiana] cultures spilled over into each other. And the culture that spilled over into Texas was Cajun. I’m sure there are some Texans that moved to Louisiana, but when I was a child, I used to hear, “If you’re a good little Cajun, when you die you’ll go to Port Arthur.”

The Cajun culture, which now extends all the way to Houston, always had a strong footprint in the Golden Triangle, Port Arthur in particular.

A lot of it was because the jobs were there. I remember when I was in junior high, they shut down the oilfield business—Vinton was built on the oilfield industry. There was no such word as

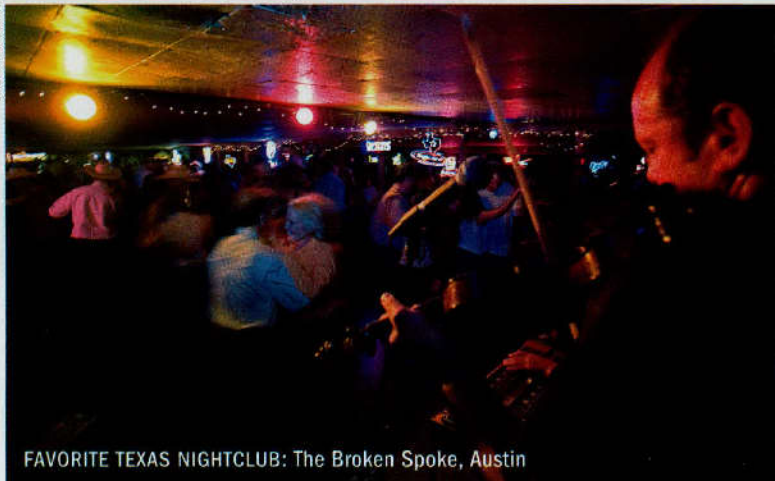
“downsize” then, but a lot of people moved to Rosenberg and Columbus, west of Houston—all of a sudden, there’s lots of Fontenots and Labadies and Boudreauxs living in Texas.

JOHN T.: Old US 90 was really the Mother Road in that part of the world, wasn’t it?

MARCIA: When I was growing up, there was a mile-long river bridge on old Highway 90 that went straight into downtown Orange, right by where they had just built the Jack Tar Hotel. From the time I could remember, in the mid- to late-50s, that was how you came into Texas. They didn’t finish that section of I-10 until about 1964-65. We learned to skateboard on the brand-new overpasses they were building for the country roads that went over where I-10 would go.



FAVORITE SPOT ON THE TEXAS GULF COAST: Port Aransas



FAVORITE TEXAS NIGHTCLUB: The Broken Spoke, Austin

We would go to Orange to the movies.... My eye doctor was in Orange. In other towns, the Brownies and the Camp Fire Girls would go to the bread factory and come home with a fresh loaf of bread—we went to the sulfur mines! Come home with a lump of sulfur.... Look, Mom! (laughs).

JOHN T.: You started playing piano at age 5; your grandmother and your aunt also played. What were some of your other musical memories?

MARCIA: My first musical memories are probably from the skating rink, which was a tent that came to town in the summer and set up in empty lots and played records. Great skating records came from

Texas as well as Louisiana. The Big Bopper was on the radio, and “The Big Bopper’s Wedding” and “Chantilly Lace”—that was home-grown stuff.

Every Wednesday night in the summertime they had dances in the Catholic Hall. I started going at that cusp in my life: Playing out in the yard and coming in with dirt necklaces and grass clippings stuck to my sweaty little body and a playsuit on, peeling out of that, taking a bath, getting out of the bathtub, still soaking wet because you don’t dry off after a hot day and a hot bath in a hot house, and putting on a little sundress with a

petticoat and going across the street to the dance.

One summer I remember Johnny and Edgar Winter coming over to play; they were teenagers. And the Boogie Kings came from both sides of the state line,

MARCIA’S TEXAS FAVORITES

LIKE Hank Snow, Marcia Ball and her husband, artist Gordon Fowler, have been everywhere, man. Even though Marcia spends her professional life on the road, she and Gordon like nothing better than putting in some serious windshield time exploring the far-flung corners of the Lone Star State. Here’s a sampling of their favorite Texas destinations and icons:

Favorite spot in the Big Bend: Boquillas Canyon

Favorite day trip in Texas: Enchanted Rock and dinner at the Hill Top Cafe near Fredericksburg

Favorite roadtrip in Texas (multi-day): My son Luke and I camped in the Guadalupe Mountains, spent the next night in Fort Davis, went to McDonald Observatory, swam the next day in the Balmorhea State Park pool, ate enchiladas, and visited the Caverns of Sonora.

Favorite Texas food: Gordo’s chili

Favorite kitschy Texas icon: The statue of Popeye in Crystal City

Favorite song about Texas: “Under the X In Texas” by Johnny Gimble

Favorite secret Texas getaway: A friend’s place on the Frio River (It’s a secret!)

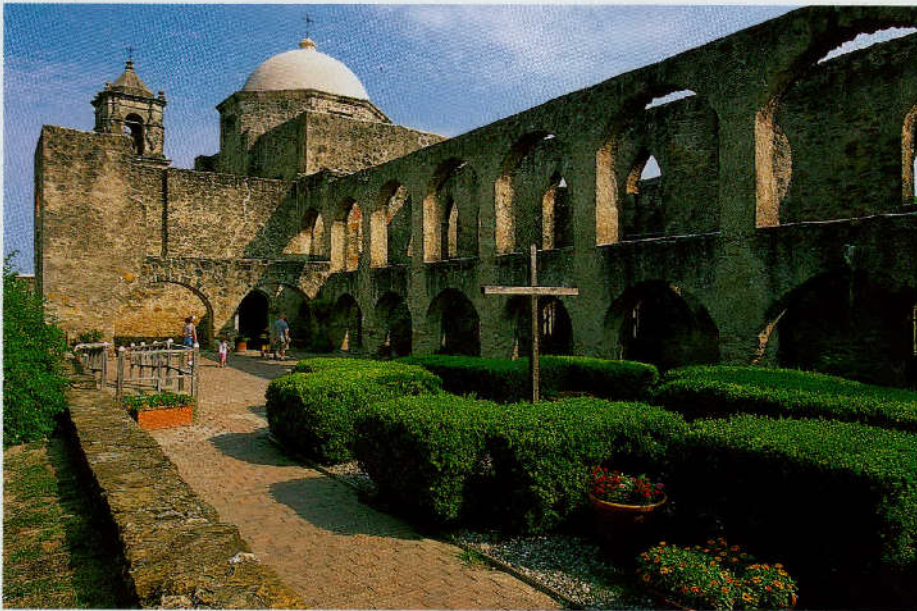
Favorite spot to feed the Muse: Behind the wheel, on any road

Favorite Texas soda pop: Big Red

Favorite Texas hotel: The Gage Hotel in Marathon

A TEXAS HIGHWAYS MOMENT WITH MARCIA BALL

STAN WILLIAMS



FAVORITE TEXAS PARK:
The missions of San Antonio

and Cookie and the Cupcakes, also from both sides. That's the whole thing: The border is an imaginary line.

JOHN T.: You arrived in Austin in 1970. It was another era, wasn't it?

MARCIA: I had no career when I moved here in April 1970. I had been in a band in Baton Rouge, but [due to] some bad experiences [in New Orleans], my first husband and I headed west in an Austin-Healey Sprite with everything we owned. And we stopped in Austin because our former guitar player was here. He was living in a huge house in Hyde Park that he'd rented with two other guys from Baton Rouge. It was like the Munsters' house. He said we could stay as long as we wanted.

We rolled into town on this beautiful, wet, green, spring day. Barton Springs was running like glory, and there was nothing above the springs but the woods. People took us in, they took us out to the lake, they took us to Hamilton Pool. The



Back in the day with Freda and the Firedogs in 1972.

third night somebody took us to a party by the University—three houses, wide-open doors, kegs all hooked together and music going on the front porches of all of the houses. And at that point I thought, I don't really need to go to San Francisco—I was 20 years old and I was far enough from mama in Austin.

And that was it. We both got work at UT, rented a house at the corner of Oltorf and Lamar for \$110 a month, with three bedrooms and two baths. My Baton Rouge roommate and her husband and kid moved in with us, and then my brother-in-law moved in. So we were here! We put our roots down.



W **WE ROLLED** into town on this beautiful, wet, green, spring day. Barton Springs was running like glory, and there was nothing above the springs but the woods.

JOHN T.: You arrived at the same time the Armadillo World Headquarters began putting Austin on the musical map.

MARCIA: The Armadillo opened in 1970 and the famous One Knite club was happening and I had a band in the living room.

JOHN T.: You were also singing with a hippie country band, Freda and the Firedogs,



FAVORITE TEXAS HIGHWAY: The River Road between Lajitas and Presidio (RR 170)

first fundraiser in '73 or '74 and filled the joint. James White, who runs the Spoke, said, "This is great—these hippies can fill this place up!"

I went to the Split Rail for the first time to see Kenneth Threadgill. The only reason we went is that [songwriter] Bobby Charles was staying here, and he'd heard about Kenneth Threadgill, and he would not be deterred from seeing this guy. So

he rounded up a bunch of us hippies to go to the Split Rail. Within a year, I was playing there every Sunday night.

JOHN T.: Once you were making successful records, you could have settled in New Orleans as easily as Austin. So why Austin?

MARCIA: I have never regretted moving

to Austin; I have never even considered not living in Austin. People who lived here once and moved away are in some kind of limbo. They're all giving off this air of exile, and they're just waiting to get back.

Since South Austin is the same neighborhood that I've always lived in, I can pretend that not that much has changed.

JOHN T.: So Austin it is, then.

MARCIA: I do feel so closely connected to Austin.... I feel meteorologically connected here—in Louisiana, it's a challenge to survive, but I love the climate here. I would never consider retiring anywhere that my friends weren't. This is my family. I went out the other night and realized that I need to go out more, because these are my people, this is my family. We need to sustain one another for the rest of our lives. ★

JOHN T. DAVIS interviewed Kris Kristofferson for the April issue of *Texas Highways*.



Marcia with her husband Gordon Fowler at La Zona Rosa in Austin.

at a time when hippies and rednecks didn't necessarily mix.

MARCIA: The first time I went to the Split Rail (a beer joint in South Austin that became the Firedogs' headquarters), it was a redneck dive. Hippies didn't go there or to the Broken Spoke. That changed, though. The Firedogs played Lloyd Doggett's



DALLAS BY CAROLYN BROWN

dream.

IN BIG **D**



REUNION TOWER PANORAMA AT DUSK



FERN DELL GARDEN, DALLAS ARBORETUM

Dallas

has gained a reputation as the home of Neiman Marcus, big hair, and the Cowboys, but I find much more beyond the glitz, especially when it comes to photography. Since my arrival in 1971, I've discovered Dallas as a delightful place to photograph. My subjects include the Art Deco architecture and the State Fair at Fair Park, the natural oasis of the Dallas Arboretum, the chic and surprising plazas, the grand glass castles in the downtown area, and wildflowers, parks, and elegant homes. All these, and more, feed my hungry eyes. As I look back, I've found no other place that offers more subject matter than Dallas. Over the past 36 years, I've trained my cameras on ancient pyramids and temples in the Middle East, and I've captured pre-Hispanic sites and churches throughout Mexico, Central, and South America. As my photographic work evolved, I found that the city I had adopted as my new home was changing, too, taking on a distinctive blend of sophistication, vibrancy, and heart.

DALLAS BEGAN nearly 170 years ago as a trading post—operated by John Neely Bryan—in the Three Forks area of the Trinity River. The city has since matured to become an architectural mecca, rich with successful businesses and shopping centers, art galleries and museums, high fashion, higher education, medical centers, entertainment, parks, and national professional sports venues. And it just won't stop. □ Every day, there is something new or renovated, and it's always big in Dallas. The 19-block Dallas Arts District, which will be one of the largest urban arts districts in the country when it's finished in 2009, will have more buildings designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects than any other site in the world. □ The one-time African-American neighborhood of State Thomas-Uptown may soon connect to the Arts District by way of a walled walkway under Woodall Rogers Freeway. State Thomas contains some of the city's most historic Victorian homes. These colorful and intricately decorated dowagers stand beside, or are nestled between, rows and rows of new stone and stucco apartments. □ Other renovations in the Cedars, Knox-Henderson, Greenville Avenue, and Kessler Park areas continue the trend of older neighborhoods taking on new life. And the Victory development, with its grand American Airlines Center, is alive with growth. □ Apart from the glamour of Dallas, there are fascinating down-home gems tucked away in unlikely places. In Oak Cliff, the growing Bishop Arts District offers a selection of restaurants and shops in buildings that date to the days of the streetcar. The district isn't far from one of my favorite views: the mural painted on the outside of Oak Cliff Floral. Created by Carlos Nicholls, it portrays long-stemmed, twisted irises in drop shadows growing out of the air conditioner. Eugene Belk opened the store in 1937, and his daughter Iris runs the business now. Her favorite flower just happens to be the iris.

The book *Dallas: Where Dreams Come True* (photographs by Carolyn Brown, essay by Jim Donovan, © 2003) is available at The Afterimage Gallery. Call 877/868-5462.

I'M A Colorado-born girl, and Texas was the last place on earth I would have expected to spend the larger part of my life. But here I am, rewarded beyond imagination, living with my beautiful Victorian Bulldog, Gilda—and with the opportunity to photograph one of the most energetic and sun-filled cities in the world, a precious treasure found right in my own backyard.

—CAROLYN BROWN



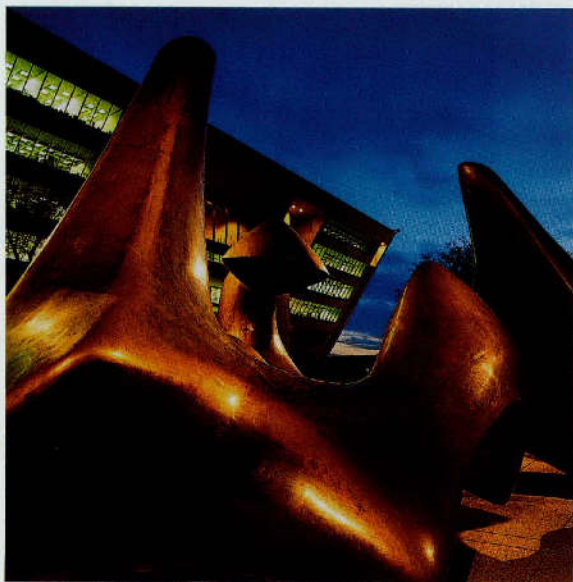
dream.

IN BIG D



dream.

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HENRY MOORE'S *THE DALLAS PIECE*, AT CITY HALL



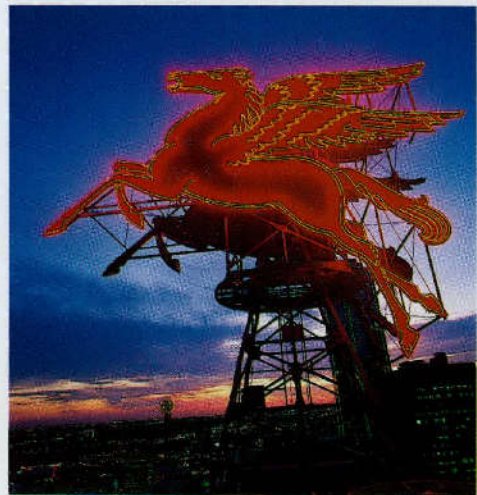
DALLAS COUNTY'S "OLD RED" COURTHOUSE



OVERVIEW, TEXAS STATE FAIR, INCLUDING TEXAS STAR FERRIS WHEEL



LATINO CULTURAL CENTER



MAGNOLIA PETROLEUM COMPANY'S "PEGASUS"

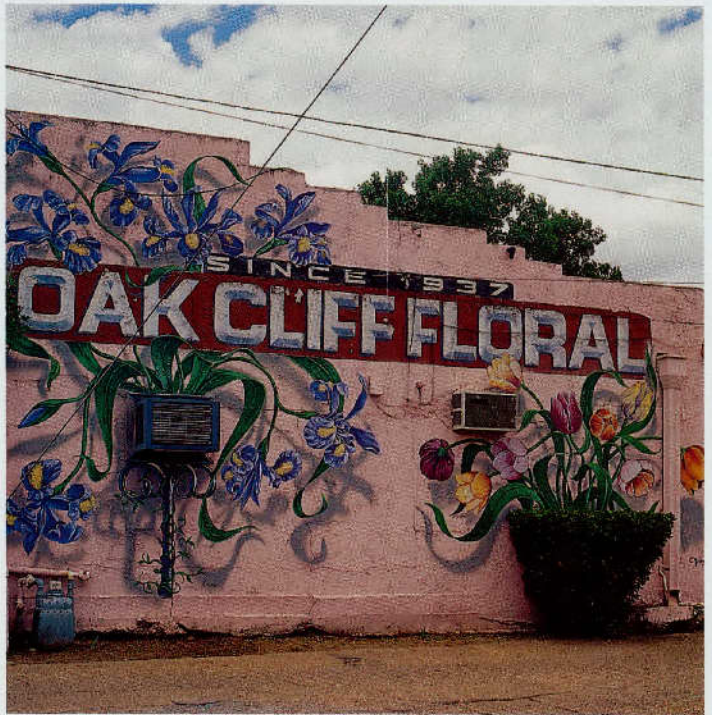
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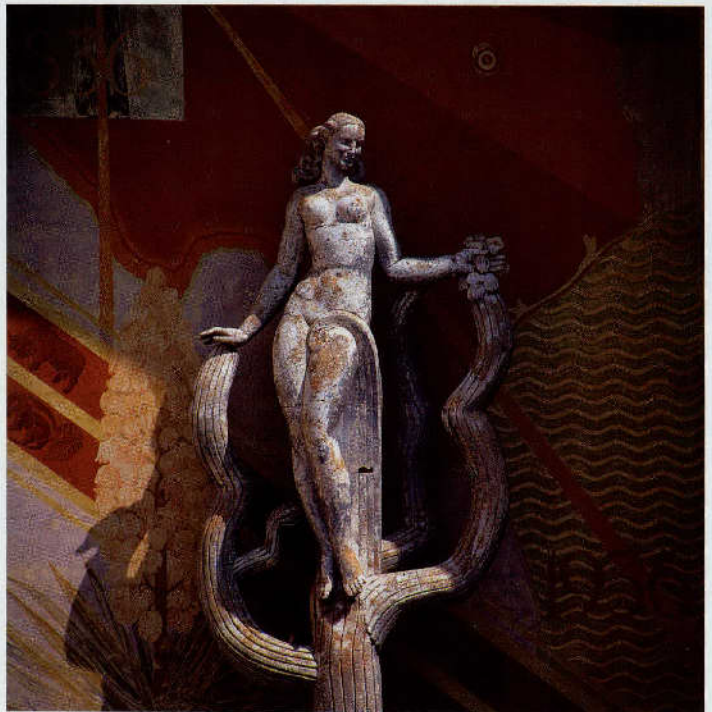




DALLAS SKYLINE AT NIGHT



OAK CLIFF FLORAL'S MURAL OF IRISES, DESIGNED BY CARLOS NICHOLLS



RAOUL JOSSET'S SPIRIT OF THE CENTENNIAL, AT FAIR PARK



10 Great Places to (really) get away

By Melissa Gaskill

Photographs by
Laurence Parent

a blue-black dome arcs overhead, filled with a million sparkling pinpoints from one jagged horizon to the next. No other light of any kind intrudes. Wind rattles through yucca and grasses, overcoming an otherwise total silence. This is Pine Canyon Number 4 primitive campsite in Big Bend National Park, so far from civilization that, for tonight at least, civilization may as well not exist.

As the reach of cell phones and wireless networks extends farther and farther, and adventure-seekers roam ever greater distances (even spas are opening up in what used to be the country), it gets harder to find places like this without days of trekking or spending a fortune. Places miles from nowhere—without high-rises and big-box stores, traffic, or even other people—with stunning scenery, abundant wildlife, dark skies, and lots of solitude. Luckily for us, those places still exist here in Texas. Here are some of the best.



Among the nation's longest undeveloped shorelines, Padre Island National Seashore stretches more than 60 miles, 55 of which are accessible by boat, on foot, or four-wheel-drive. I counted a handful of hardy campers between mile markers five and 10, an occasional hard-core fisherman until about mile 20, and nothing much after that except wind, waves, seabirds, and—our lucky day—a sea turtle! Pick a camping site you like anywhere on the beach, and after watching a riotous sunset over grass-covered dunes, sit under the light of a star-studded sky and, occasionally, bioluminescent waves to boot. This fits my definition of the perfect beach.

Padre Island National Seashore, North Padre Island, 361/949-8068; www.nps.gov/pais.



One of the largest parks in the country, with more than 800,000 acres, Big Bend is also one of the least visited—thanks to, you guessed it, its remote location. Some of its most unexplored square footage lies along 118 miles of the Rio Grande, accessible only by canoe, kayak, or raft. Some 40 backcountry campsites are easier to reach but are still pretty darned remote—in fact, you'll need a high-clearance vehicle and, depending on the weather, four-wheel drive. Bring everything you'll need, including water. Stash the groceries in a bear-proof box, then kick back and enjoy the solitude under the stars. For those of us who love the feeling of being someplace wild and unspoiled, this is heaven.

Big Bend National Park, 432/477-2251; www.nps.gov/bibe.

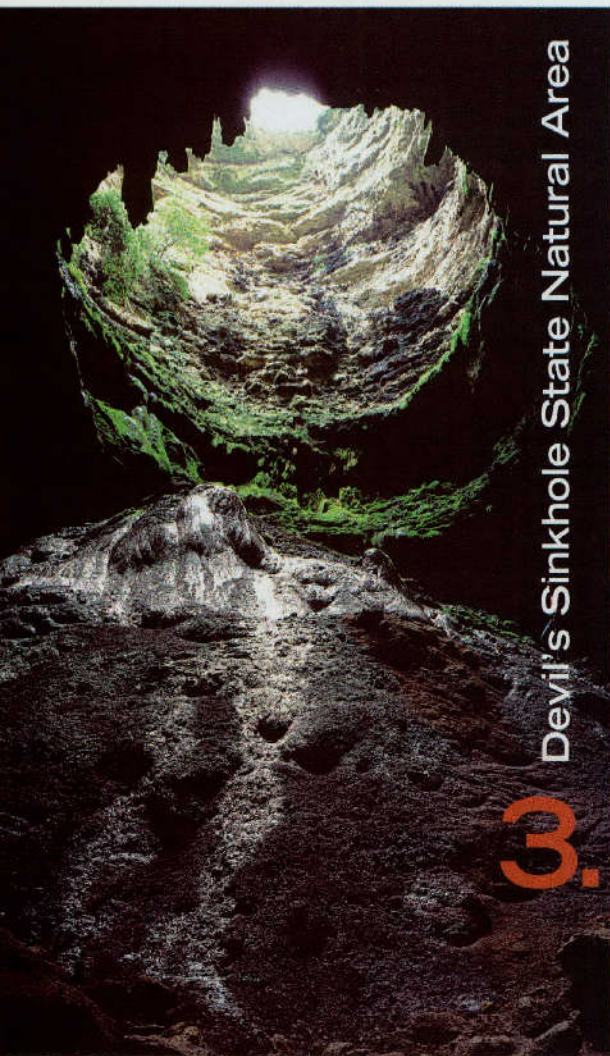


Big Bend National Park 2.



from it

all



3. Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area

This vertical cavern reminded an early discoverer—perhaps one with a guilty conscience—of the entrance to hell.



Hence the diabolical name for a divine place, reached via a serpentine road where ranch gates tick by and glimpses of the Llano River invite you to slow down. Arrange a day tour at the visitor's center in Rocksprings to ponder the 140-foot-deep collapsed cave at your leisure. Peering over the edge of the viewing platform, you can hear the plink of water droplets far below. It's that quiet here. From May to October, millions of Brazilian free-tailed bats depart the cave every evening, attracting dozens of onlookers (which passes for a crowd in these parts), but during the day, you'll likely have the place to yourself.

Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area, 830/683-2287; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.



4.

Hill Country State Natural Area

The Wilderness Primitive

Camp is nestled back in this undeveloped park deep within the Hill Country. The route to the camp covers rocky hills, grasslands, oak and juniper groves, and swaths of sotol. The campground is little more than some shaded picnic tables and fire rings with a small, still pond nearby that invites contemplation. First-come, first-served, but don't expect a crowd, although you can bring one—campground capacity is 40. Otherwise, your company will be butterflies, grasshoppers, birds, and in the evening, deer and armadillo.



Hill Country State Natural Area Wilderness Primitive Camp, Bandera, 830/796-4413; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.



5. Palo Duro Canyon State Park

Parts of this 120-mile-long, 800-foot-deep canyon, which drops dramatically out of the High Plains, are relatively popular, but much of it is suitably secluded. Where the road ends at the equestrian camp, a trail into the juniper and mesquite trees wanders some five lonely miles through tall grasses and cottonwoods before reaching the park's border. Trails twist and turn past walls of red, yellow, green, and white that represent a geologic history spanning 250 million years. Water gurgles over sand glittered with gypsum, and coyotes often serenade the quiet nights.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park, 806/488-2227; www.palodurocanyon.com, or www.tpwd.state.tx.us.



The Stars at Night (well, you know)

One of the lures of isolated places is the chance to lie under skies illuminated like some cosmic holiday display, drinking in the wispy Milky Way, along with an occasional shooting star. This experience requires the absence of artificial light, which, as anyone who travels much can tell you, has invaded most of our landscape.

Well, the stars are big and bright here in Texas, and in some places, our sky is still pretty dad-gummed dark, thank heavens. Some of the darkest skies include those above Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Devils River State Natural Area, Big Bend National Park, and Padre Island National Seashore. Bring a flashlight, folks, and your binoculars for some serious stargazing.

Other locations, while remote, are affected by sky glow from nearby towns and cities and isolated sources of light such as towers. The International Dark Sky Association estimates that roughly half of our lighting is inefficient, shines up into the sky, or supplies more light than needed. Eliminating that by half would help preserve our dark skies, and our view of the stars.

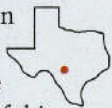
—MELISSA GASKILL



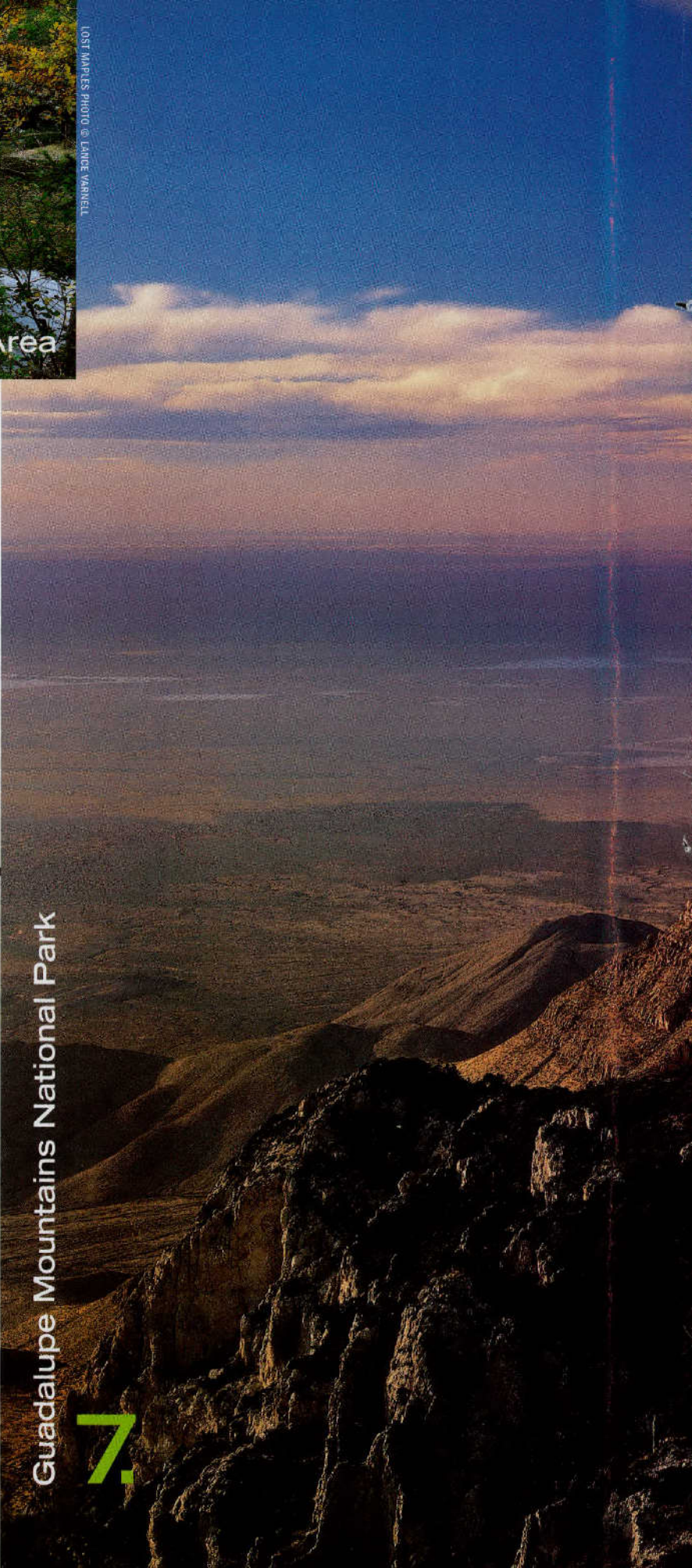
6.

Lost Maples State Natural Area

At approximately 2,200 feet in elevation and more than five miles from the park entrance, the primitive back-country Campgrounds G and H of this park guarantee peace and quiet. True, crowds do swarm the first part of the East Loop along the Sabinal River to ooh and aah at the glorious fall colors of the maple trees, but few of them even know the West Loop exists, much less venture down it. So you'll have the steep limestone canyons, plateaus, woods, and creeks to yourself, the better for spotting deer, foxes, porcupines, or some of the park's rare species of birds, such as the Green Kingfisher.



Lost Maples State Natural Area, Vanderpool, 830/966-3413; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.



Guadalupe Mountains National Park

The rugged slopes of this far-out park, little-changed for centuries, lure professional and amateur geologists alike with one of the finest examples of an ancient fossil reef anywhere on the planet, and captivate wildlife watchers of all sorts with an incredible diversity of habitats. These slopes are home to hundreds of plant and animal species, many of which are found nowhere else. Roads don't go far here, which keeps down the crowds, and the noise. Instead, you can explore the park via 80 miles of trails. The steep trek up Guadalupe Peak rewards hikers with an incredible view of miles and miles of Texas, barely marred by human hands. On the shady McKittrick Canyon trail, madrone and maple trees mix with more expected plants like agave and yucca. The middle of nowhere never looked so good.



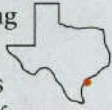
Guadalupe Mountains National Park, 915/828-3251; www.nps.gov/gumo.

7.



■ To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.magazineprints.com.

Reaching this 38-mile-long barrier island across the bay from Port O'Connor requires a boat (hire a guide in town if you don't have your own). Island population: zero (unless you count birds, deer, alligators, and other wildlife). The circa-1852 lighthouse, in the National Registry of Historical Landmarks, is worth the hike, but the main attraction is a beach barely touched by humankind. Bring your own water. Heck, bring everything you think you'll need. There's no convenience store, unless you're ready for a long swim.



*Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area,
979/244-6804; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.*



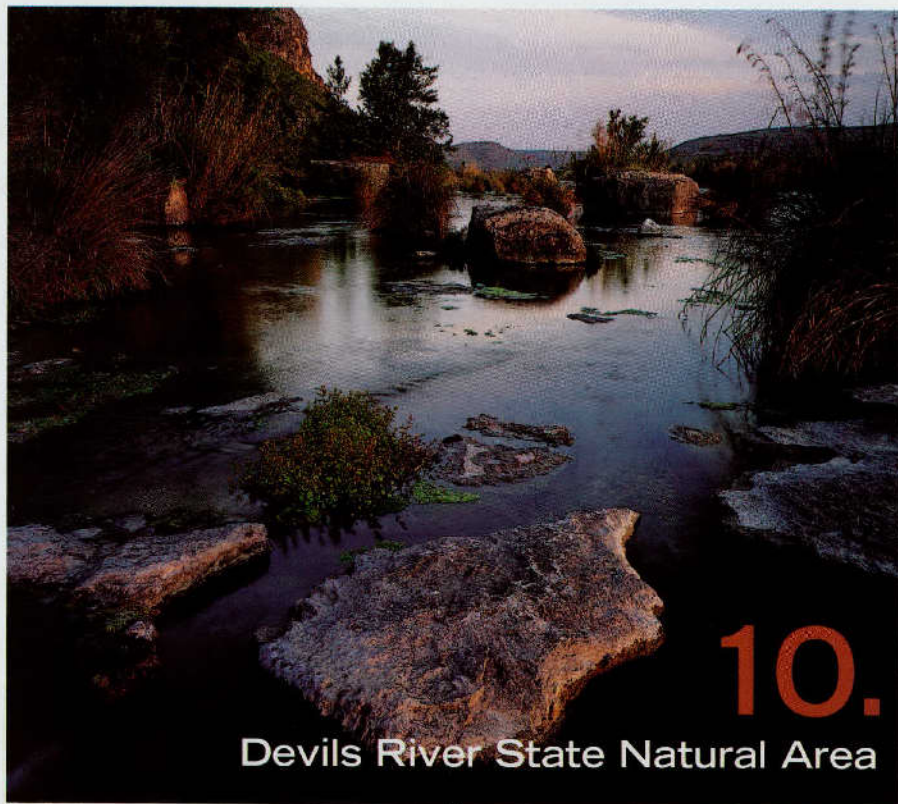
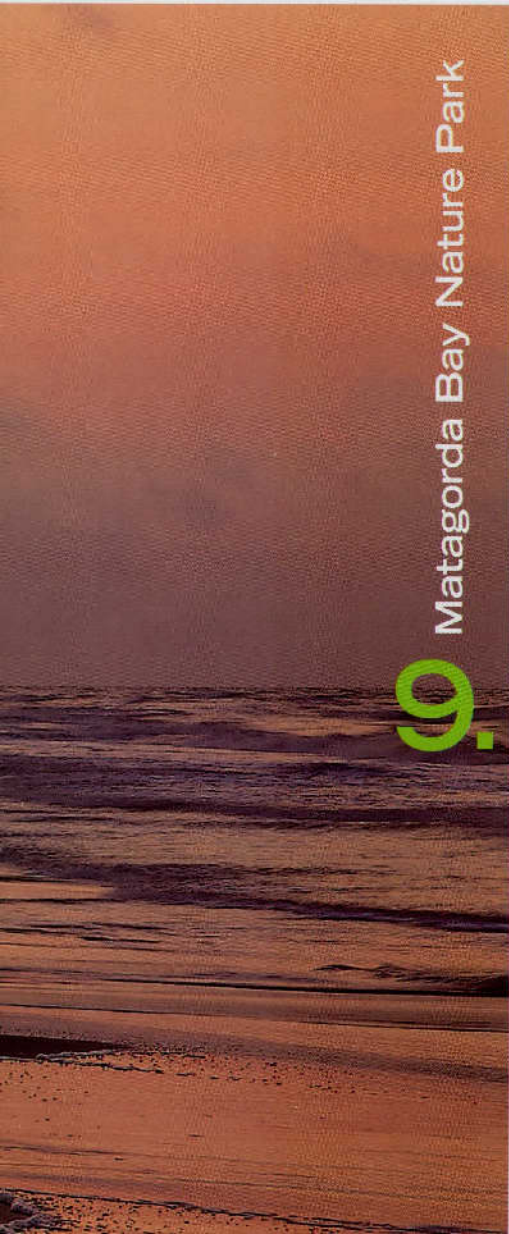
Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area





Matagorda Bay Nature Park

9.



10.

Devils River State Natural Area

Thanks to the Gulf Intra-coastal Waterway, Matagorda Peninsula is accessible by one of Texas' last operating swing bridges. Even on crowded holidays, people congregate on just the first three of the 22 miles of beach. Beyond, your only company will be shorebirds and cows cooling off in the surf or grazing on the dunes, the only sounds the whisper of ghostly tendrils of blowing sand and thrumming of the gentle surf. Head to mile marker 10 or 12 for maximum remoteness, as the park's far end is accessible by boat from Sargent Beach. The beach narrows and shell middens crunch under your tires (four-wheel drive required), and eagle-eyed beachcombers may spot Civil War or Spanish shipwreck artifacts among sundial shells, whelks, and driftwood. The waterway and mainland are visible from atop the dunes, but at beach level, you'll feel blissfully apart.



Matagorda Bay Nature Park, Matagorda County, 800/776-5272, ext. 4740; www.lcra.org/parks.

South of Sonora and north of Del Rio is, well, not a whole lot of anything. Which is, of course, a great reason to come here. The park comprises nearly 20,000 acres, but its figurative centerpiece is a mile of Devils River shoreline. Eighty percent of the water flow comes from springs, several of them originating in the park, making the Devils Texas' most pristine and untamed river. Wear your Wellies or go barefoot and walk the road, really little more than a narrow passage through brush along the river, to fully appreciate the sparkling water's pastel hues. You may startle a buck from a stand of oaks and pecans, or a heron from the thick ferns and mosses, or spy a faded ancient drawing on the cliff rocks.



Devils River State Natural Area, Del Rio, 830/395-2133; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

MELISSA GASKILL is willing to go to great lengths to enjoy peace and quiet, even driving off road (Toyota Motor Sales loaned her an FJ Cruiser for this trip).

Longtime contributor LAURENCE PARENT provided jaw-dropping scenics for last month's story on "10 Top Hikes."

Light pours into a high-ceilinged room where fabric swatches spill across long tables and fashion sketches cover one wall. Jackets, skirts, and vests hang on a rack, awaiting final touches. This could be a design studio in Dallas or New York or some other high-fashion center. But gaze out the tall windows, and you'll spot a row of historic brick buildings across West Grand Avenue in downtown Yoakum. Founded in 1887, this old railroad town in southeast Texas serves as the headquarters of rising design star Double D Ranch.

Double D Ranch

Yoakum's best-known products used to be custom saddles and commercially grown tomatoes, not haute couture. Then Double D's designing women—Margie McMullen and daughters Cheryl McMullen, Audrey Franz, and Hedy Carter—put Yoakum on the fashion map. And let's not forget the clan's patriarch, Doug McMullen—"Double D" stands for Doug and Daughters.

The family once ranched full-time, and their roots run deep in Texas. When they launched Double D Ranch, they saw no reason to leave Yoakum, even though some people in the fashion industry thought that a small town of some 6,000 people was an unlikely location for an emerging design house. But the McMullens don't do things the way people do in New York. Flouting convention accounts for part of their success.

"We're not big-city people," explains Audrey, sitting next to her mother in Double D's spacious offices in a building that once housed a harness-and-buggy shop. "Besides," she adds, looking over at her sister Cheryl, the creative mastermind behind Double D's designs, "she needs peace and quiet to work."

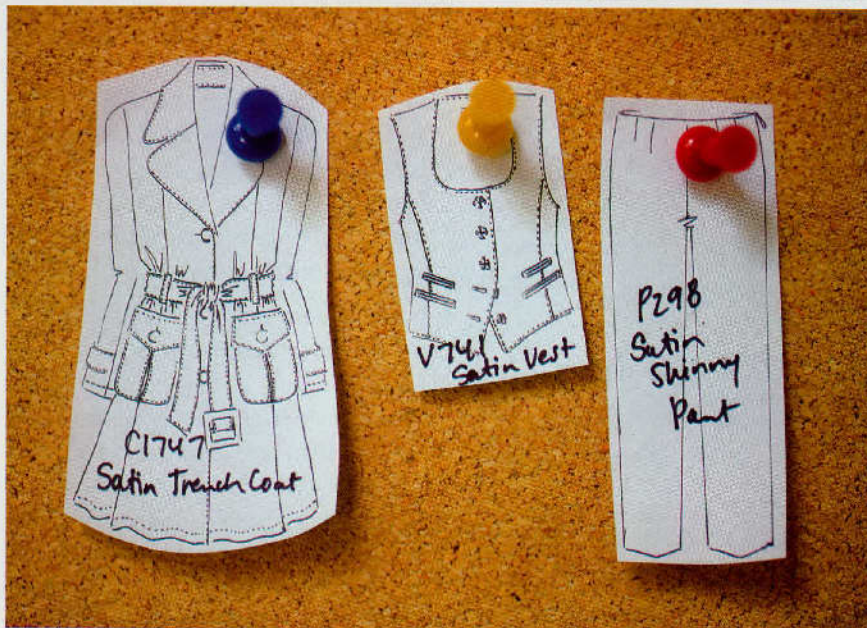
"Yeah, a week in New York and I'm hyperventilating," agrees Cheryl with a laugh. "I can't breathe there. I need wide-open spaces."

[CLOCKWISE FROM TOP] Known for its hip, Western-themed fashions, Double D Ranch is based thousands of miles from Manhattan, in downtown Yoakum. The principals, Hedy Carter, Audrey Franz (standing), Cheryl McMullen, and Margie McMullen, hail from a local ranching family. Both rock-and-roll-inspired pieces and soft fabrics star in the spring collection. Sketches of a satin ensemble under consideration hang in the pattern-making room. Leather jackets and broomstick skirts like these shown in the outlet store typify the brand.





YOAKUM'S DESIGNING WOMEN



COURTESY DOUBLE D RANCH

In late 1989, the year of Double D's conception, Cheryl couldn't breathe in another state—New Mexico. During a family ski vacation to Angel Fire, she got altitude sickness and headed down to Taos to shop. "I saw this turquoise flash," recalls Cheryl. "It was a man in a coat made from one of those Pendleton blankets [known for their Native American-inspired designs]." She loved the coat and tracked down the local shop that made it so she could order one.

Back then, Cheryl and Audrey ran an interior design store in Yoakum. When the sisters went to the next gift market at the Dallas Market Center, Cheryl wore her



Pendleton coat. "People went nuts over it," she says. "We had to check the coat because so many people stopped her that we couldn't get anything done," adds Audrey.

When Doug heard the story, he suggested to his three daughters that they try to make and sell the coats. They bought some Pendleton blankets at retail and began where many startups do—in the family garage. "We were throwing stuff together just to be able to make snow-skiing money," says Cheryl. "It wasn't a business."

Double D Ranch blends vintage and modern, familiar and foreign, tailored and edgy, to create a distinctive American look.

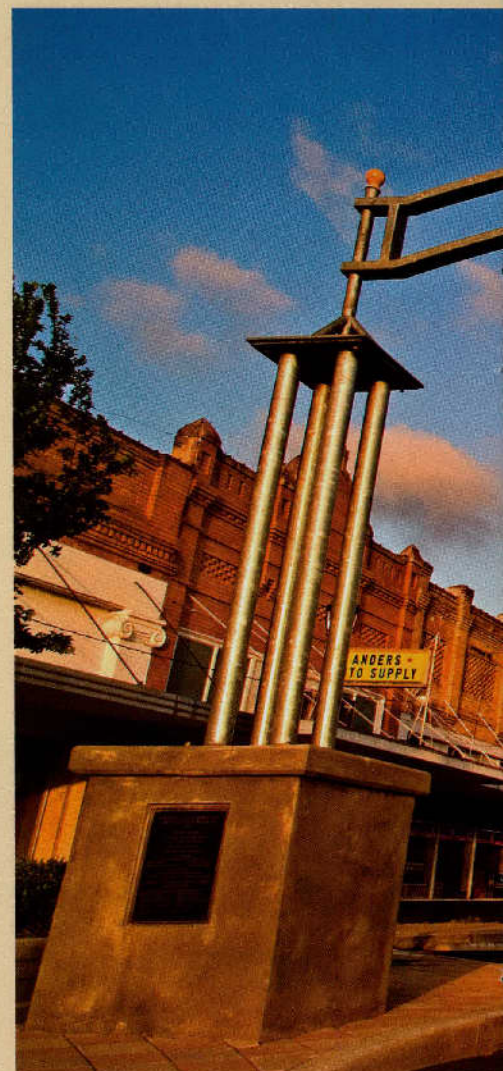
Buying Pendleton blankets and cutting them up for jackets proved to be way too costly. When the sisters took a sample to market three months later, they got \$150,000 in orders, but they soon figured out that it would cost almost twice that much to make the coats. "We realized that we were going to lose money, but we'd said we'd make them, so we did," says Audrey.

After that expensive lesson, they scraped \$200 together and charged an airline ticket to New York so that Cheryl could go to a fabric show and find reasonably priced material that still looked like a Native American blanket. "We had one obstacle after another—from finding the fabric to finding the people to cut and sew it," Audrey says of Double D's early days.

"The business hasn't changed a lot in that regard," adds Hedy. "We still wonder sometimes how things are going to get made." Often, they get made with improvisation and old-fashioned elbow grease. For instance, the women once bought velvet to make broomstick skirts similar to the kind Navajo women wear. "We'd get huge trashcans and fill them with water and starch," recalls Audrey. "Then we'd dip the skirts and twist 'em to get the traditional pleating effect." "To relieve the boredom, we'd have races to see who could do them the fastest," interjects Hedy. "Then we'd dry 'em on a truck hood," says Cheryl. "We're country."

The following season, the women expanded their Native American-themed collection and ventured to New York for an apparel show. "We loaded everything up, and Daddy pulled the collection there in a horse trailer," says Cheryl. "You can imagine what this looked like going down Fifth Avenue."

The fledgling Texas design house, though, turned heads in Manhattan and beyond. Cheryl blended vintage and modern, familiar and foreign, tailored and edgy, to create a distinctive American look. Orders poured in for her creations. *(continued on page 42)*



"Whoa! Life's Too Short. Relax... Country Living," proclaims a billboard welcoming visitors to Yoakum. Once a gathering spot for cattle driven up the Chisholm Trail, this small southeast Texas town bills itself as the world's leather capital. In addition to Double D Ranch, leather-related businesses include Tandy Brands Accessories, Inc., Circle Y Saddles, Tex Tan Leather Company, and several other saddle and leather shops.

Double D Ranch president Margie McMullen has designs not only on helping her company grow, but also on helping to revitalize downtown Yoakum. As president of Yoakum's Economic Development Corporation for the past eight years and a member of the city council for four, she has been a driving force behind Yoakum's ongoing downtown renaissance. The first phase—improving historic Pershing Square

SAMPLING the GOOD LIFE in YOAKUM



and West Grand Avenue with new sidewalks, retro-looking streetlights, trees, and signage—was completed last year.

Margie also pushed to develop **Chisholm Trail Park**, at the intersection of West Gonzales Street and US 77A. The project was funded by TxDOT

79th ANNUAL TOM TOM FESTIVAL

One of the oldest festivals in Texas, the **Tom Tom Festival** honors Yoakum's tomato-growing heritage and takes place the first weekend in June (June 1-2, 2007). The lineup includes a parade, rodeo, salsa-making contest, barbecue cookoff, carnival, craft booths, children's games, horseshoe and volleyball tournaments, a car and motorcycle show, live music, and a Dachs-hund race. For details, contact the Yoakum Area Chamber of Commerce (see page 43).

and private donors, including Double D Ranch. Here, you can stroll among larger-than-life topiaries depicting three Longhorn cattle accompanied by a horse and rider and three cowdogs. Stone benches and native plants also adorn the park.

Other attractions include the **Yoakum Heritage Museum**, housed in a historic home at 312 Simpson Street. Be sure to visit the "Leather Room," where you can learn more about the local leather industry. The museum also displays artifacts from Yoakum's railroad-boomtown days.

On the second Tuesday of each month, you can tap your feet to more than two hours of country music at the **Country Music U.S.A. show**, which is held in the Yoakum Community Center. A home-style meal is available before the show.

Yoakum also holds several annual events that celebrate the area's history, including the **Tom**



Downtown Yoakum (top) recently received a face-lift, which includes a sweeping archway over West Grand Avenue. Topiaries in Chisholm Trail Park (above) recall the town's trail-driving heritage.

Tom Festival in June (see box), **A Night in Old Pearl City** in November, and **Land of Leather Days** in February.

—KATHRYN JONES

She glammed up traditional notions of “Western wear” with butter-soft suede, velvet, fringe, silver conchos, beadwork, hand embroidery, and, for Double D’s signature jackets, hundreds of silver nailheads—so many it couldn’t be done, manufacturers told her. But Cheryl persisted. Now one jacket design calls for thousands of nailheads. “We didn’t know there was a ceiling or limit,” says Cheryl.

By 2005, Double D’s annual sales hit \$10 million. The fashion house maintains two corporate showrooms in Dallas, one for apparel and one for its home decor line. The latter features bed linens, furniture, and decorative leather pillows, which sport embellishments such as embroidery

and fringe. The home decor line started after Cheryl couldn’t find fabric or furniture she liked for decorating her ranch house and decided Double D needed to produce its own.

These days, Double D’s four major fashion collections (spring, summer, fall, and holiday) include up to 200 different designs each. The theme for this year’s spring collection pairs



Designer Cheryl McMullen (left) fits the Skywalker jacket from the fall collection on her sister Hedy Carter, who oversees production.



Double D duds like this lace-trimmed skirt and zippered jacket with pearl studs and leather cutwork sell in more than 800 stores nationwide.

innocence with edginess, or “Heaven-sent and Hell-bent,” as Audrey describes it. So look for pearl accessories and embellishments and soft fabrics with rock-and-roll-inspired pieces. Audrey adds that the fall collection “is about getting back to our roots.” Called “Return to Taos,” it will feature more of Double D’s signature jackets, which typically cost \$500 to \$600.

About 800 retailers, in-

cluding upscale department stores, small boutiques, specialty shops, and Internet retailers, carry Double D’s designs. The top states for sales are Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Kansas, California, Wyoming, and Arizona. “But our customers are everywhere,” says Audrey. Double D’s celebrity customers include rock guitar legend Carlos Santana and country music icons Reba McEntire and Tanya Tucker.

Despite success and growth, Double D is still a family affair. Cheryl oversees design, while Audrey functions as the chief operating officer and interacts with buyers and employees. Hedy is the “production trail boss,” making sure

that supplies and finished products comply with the company’s exacting standards. Margie wears the president’s hat.

Although Cheryl has no formal training in fashion design, she holds her own in design circles—Double D Ranch has been honored by the fashion world with awards such as the Western Image Award Manufacturer of the Year in 1996. Cheryl credits designer Ralph Lauren for having created a “true American look” with Western-inspired fashions that helped open the door for Double D. “It was easier for us because of Ralph,” she says. “He made that look a genre. It isn’t a fad. It’s here to stay.”

She traces her creative vision to her deep connection with the Southwest and interests in Western history and culture. In an upstairs loft at Double D’s headquarters, Cheryl has crammed shelves and racks with things she loves—an antique guitar, Native American garments, vintage cowboy boots, and Western clothes, even old rawhide lampshades. “It’s all great inspiration,” she says.

Even though the McMullens embrace the small-town lifestyle and plan to stay close to their roots, they’re not holding back the reins on Double D. The company is negotiating to license the Double D Ranch name and turn it into a more omnipresent national brand. This past February, Double D launched a denim



This venerable brick building houses Double D Ranch's outlet store; the company's headquarters are around the corner. Hand-embroidered linen skirts (left) form part of the spring collection.

collection with much lower prices than the fashion house's main collection. Shoppers can expect to see the upscale denim duds turn up in stores such as

Dillard's and Nordstrom. "I feel like we're a racehorse that's ready to run," says Cheryl. "We're fixin' to let 'er loose."

Audrey offers a theory about why Double D gallops when so many others stumble on the high-fashion trail. "We had a vision," she says. "We're kind of progressive, independent women."

"We had a huge guardian angel," says Cheryl. Her mother offers still another explanation. "We're blessed because the family works together and enjoys it so much," says Margie. "The key to everything is that we're family." ★

Regular contributor KATHRYN JONES wrote about Saint Jo-based artist Donna Howell-Sickles in the May issue.

JOEL SALCIDO shot the story on Gillespie County in our May issue. To see more of his work, visit www.joelsalcido.com.

DOUBLE D RANCH AND YOAKUM

DOUBLE D RANCH'S apparel, furniture, and home furnishings sell throughout the United States in select department stores, boutiques, and small specialty stores. For a list of stores that carry the brand, call 800/899-3379, or visit www.ddranchwear.com.

The company's outlet store is at 509 Lott St. in downtown Yoakum. Hours: Mon-Fri 8-5, Sat 10-3. For details, call 361/293-2394, or visit the Web site.

YOAKUM

Yoakum is at the intersection of US 77A and Texas 111, about 40 miles northwest of Victoria. Visitor information follows. For details, call the Yoakum Area Chamber of Commerce at 361/293-2309; www.yoakumareachamber.com. Other helpful Web sites include www.cityofyoakum.org and

usa.com. The area code is 361.

DINING *Mi Casa*, at 123 W. May St., offers Tex-Mex fare, hamburgers, and more. Call 293-7262.

Locals head to **H&H Cafe & Bakery**, at 719 Lott St., for barbecued brisket, chicken-fried steak, and specials such as chicken spaghetti and meatloaf. Call 293-3232.

The Green Door, at 213 W. Grand St., offers sandwiches, homemade soups, and a full breakfast menu, including omelettes. Call 293-3450.

LODGING *The Grand Cottage* is at 506 W. Grand Ave. in downtown Yoakum, near the historic district. Call 293-8492; www.thegrandcottage.com.

Stay in your choice of 2 restored, 2-story homes dating to the early 1900s at **Our Guest House** (406 E. Hugo St.) and **Our Guest House, Too** (408 E. Hugo St.). Call 800/762-1475; www.ourguesthouse.com.





REFORMED JAILHOUSES

“Go to jail” isn’t always a welcome invitation, but hold on.

In Texas, you just might like it. In the heart of many a Texas county seat stands a veritable fortress unlike any other building in town: the old jail.

The modern public’s curiosity about historic hoosegows has led some counties to turn them into tourist attractions.

By Jean Upton Hall

The earliest jail I found that still hosts visitors is the **El Paso County Jail at San Elizario**, built in 1850. This flat-roofed adobe building hasn’t changed much since then. Its cottonwood-log ceiling barely clears the two iron cages built to hold three prisoners each, but which often housed up to 12 prisoners per cell. Some say the El Paso County Jail is “the only jail Billy the Kid ever broke into.” According to legend, to rescue a friend, the Kid fooled the jailers into opening the outer door, locked them in, and then high-tailed it with his buddy.

As part of the El Paso Mission Trail, the old building isn’t far from Chapel San Elcario (for which the town got its name, albeit with changed spelling). A short stroll to the plaza in front of the church gives you a sense of the Mexican Colo-

nial Period, especially during community festivals, when locals gather around a central kiosk to hear mariachi bands play.

Built in 1867, **Fort Stockton** was one of a string of frontier forts designed to protect westward-bound settlers. In 1886, the fort closed, and it was soon abandoned. By 1981, when conservationists began efforts to restore the fort, only the old **Military Guardhouse** and three other buildings were left intact.

Constructed of cut stone and heavy timbers, the guardhouse still has its 1868 cornerstone and has changed very little over the years. It’s a classic example of a frontier jailhouse, with dirt floors, no ventilation, and a massive, heavily scarred door. You can read records of inmate offenses and punishments; one poor

[FACING PAGE] Ben Sanchez, executive director of the El Paso Mission Trail Association, gives tours of the old El Paso County Jail at San Elizario, along with the three historic missions just east of El Paso. The old adobe jail building has two cells and a cottonwood-log ceiling.



fellow charged with insubordination had to carry a 25-pound log “from Reveille to Retreat” during his 30-day incarceration. An adjacent cell, evidently used to restrain violent prisoners, still has two chains hanging from the walls, as well as remnants of shackles.

Other restored structures in the fort include two barracks buildings, one set up with a couple of soldier mannequins lounging on bunks. A buffalo head hangs over the fireplace. The other barracks is a museum covering the history of the fort with artifacts such as an 1858 tin canteen, an infantry trumpet, and the photograph collection of 16th Infantryman William G. Wedemeyer, who took images of the fort between 1884 and 1885. Three officers’ houses have also been restored, as well: One regularly opens to visitors for tours, another hosts historical reenactments and special events, and the third serves as a private residence.

How about staying the night at the 1878 Bexar County Jail in San Antonio? Transformed into

a Comfort Inn in 2003, it’s a mere three blocks from the River Walk. From inside, bars on some of the windows look oddly right with the brocade draperies, and in the lobby, framed articles and photos on the walls chronicle the building’s earlier purpose.

San Antonio was on a major travel route during the Wild West era, so some of the stories on display tell of the cowboys and rugged individualists who passed through. Saloons, gambling houses, and dance halls made settings for law-breaking that kept the jail full of customers. Originally only two stories high, the jail eventually expanded to five.

As time went by, the jail’s location on Camaron (Spanish for “shrimp”) Street gave rise to the nickname “Shrimp Hotel.” The jail closed in 1962. Preserved by the San Antonio Conservation Society in 1983, the historic structure was adapted to modern use with the stipulation that the façade easement remain untouched.



The 1886 Wheeler County Jail at Mobeetie stands strong in a town once known as “Hidetown,” then the only settlement in the Panhandle. It had been notorious for harboring outlaws, but by the time officials built this two-story stone jail, the Texas Rangers had begun to tame the town. When residents elected Captain George W. Arrington as sheriff, he and his family moved into the jail’s living quarters.

Today, the front entrance still looks foreboding with an emblem of crossed keys above the double door. But when you step inside the sheriff’s living quar-

The 1910 Hidalgo County Jail (above) in Edinburg now forms part of the town’s Museum of South Texas History. The inset photo shows the old jail’s maximum-security cell, which includes an interpretive exhibit with such artifacts as a leg iron and ball and chain. A classic example of a frontier jailhouse, the Military Guardhouse (facing page) at historic Fort Stockton still has its 1868 cornerstone.

The modern public's **curiosity** about historic **hoosegows** has led **some counties** to turn them into **tourist attractions**.



GHOSTS BEHIND BARS

Jail visitors often ask, "Are there any ghosts?" In fact, visitors at many of the jails report eerie sights and sounds. In the interest of research, I took a ghost hunt with Central Texas Ghost Search paranormal investigators at Buffalo Gap Historic Village. While I didn't see anything unusual, electronic instruments did register energy.

Manager Justin Frazier told me that when the Village offers Halloween tours, scary decorations aren't the only things folks comment about. For instance, in the 1879 courthouse-jail, there's a lone cell at the head of the stairs that once held incorrigibles and kept them separate from non-violent prisoners in the drunk tank. It stays locked and empty. Yet visitors sometimes ask Justin, "Who was the guy in that cell?"

—JOAN UPTON HALL

PHOTOS THIS PAGE © WYMAN MEINZER



ters, the furniture, dishes, pictures, and other comforts make it look as though the family has just stepped out for a moment.

The steel cells of the jail that were once upstairs were removed long before the Old Mobeetie Association took on the task of turning the building into a museum in 1972. (The cage you see in the yard came

from neighboring Fort Elliott.) Now, exhibits of maps, implements, and pictures are grouped to show the stages of Panhandle history, and costumed mannequins accompany each section: early Native Americans, buffalo hunters and the Wild West, Fort Elliott soldiers, and settlers. One unusual relic remains from the old



Visitors to Buffalo Gap Historic Village learn about Texas' frontier days through tours of historic structures anchored by the 1879 Taylor County Jail-Courthouse (top), now a museum (call 325/572-3365; www.buffalogap.com). Panhandle history takes the spotlight at the Mobeetie Jail Museum (above), housed in the 1886 Wheeler County Jail.



Spend the night at the 1878 Bexar County Jail (above left) in San Antonio, which is now a Comfort Inn. Housed in the 1888 Wharton County Jail, the 20th Century Technology Museum (above right) in Wharton showcases technological innovations in fields ranging from aviation to farm equipment.



jail: a portable hanging device that could straddle the open space over the stairway and later be dragged out of the way.

Although Mobeetie eventually lost its county seat status, the old jail is not only well kept, but also hosts large events on its seven-acre grounds.

The 1888 Wharton County Jail in Wharton reopened in July 2005 as the 20th Century Technology Museum. Talk about adaptive uses! Owner David Bucek, a restoration architect, teamed up with electronic engineer Art Schulze and his wife, Sharon, to use the first floor of this Victorian Italianate style building to showcase technological development in various fields: household devices, communication, computers, and aviation.

The first thing you see when you drive up to the museum is a rear-propeller VariEze plane mounted on a pole as if in flight. If you think that's odd, wait until you see the flapping-wing Ornithopter plane—flown only once in the '30s while towed by a tractor.

Of the hundreds of items in the museum, one that seems to capture people's fancy is the 50-year-old, 350-pound Wurlitzer jukebox that stored only 24 songs on low-fidelity 78 rpm disks. Compare that to a hand-held iPod that stores thousands of songs!

Art says, "Seeing the progression of innovations helps us follow and appreciate the thought processes involved." For instance, a NASA engineer who visited the museum admired the ingenuity of a simple pair of pants-stretchers that made ironing easier.

After closing as a jail, the 1910 Hidalgo County Jail in Edinburg served time as a fire station in the '30s. It reopened as a museum in 1970, welcoming visitors in Spanish Mission Revival style—but with window bars replaced. The museum's popularity led to one expansion after another until the complex came to be the Museum of South Texas History.

The museum staff sponsors educational programs such as classes, hands-on activities for children, and guided tours. Divided into sections, the Rio Grande Legacy Exhibit introduces visitors to South Texas geology, ancient plants, animals, and native peoples; then delves into encounters with Europeans and the establishment of the region as a frontier of New Spain; and finally addresses important changes that have occurred up to the present.

Nevertheless, one of the most popular attractions here is the old jail. Most of the first floor had been the sheriff's family home, and as visitors enter the jailer's office and look up, they see the steel trapdoor

of the gallows. Upstairs, the cell blocks that once occupied the space have been removed, but two small rooms remain. In one, a steel door with a peephole opens into the solitary confinement "violent cell." In the other, a barred door opens into the hanging room where you see the other side of that steel trapdoor visible downstairs. The apparatus was used just once.

Jail exhibits include historical photos of the building from its fire station days. Other exhibits display jail paraphernalia, such as a ball and chain and a rare kind of leg iron called an "ankle spur" that has rods on the side to make walking almost impossible.

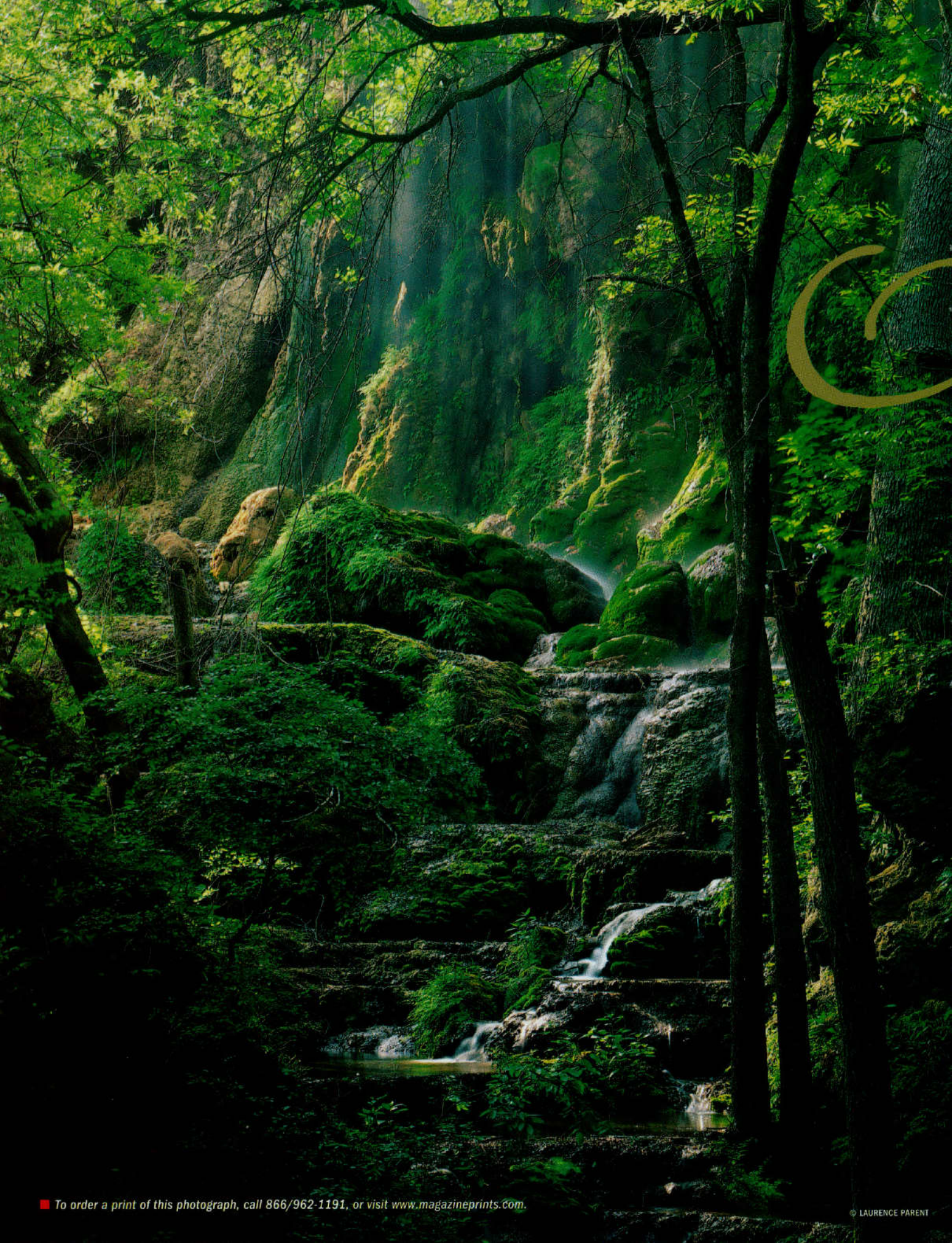
Imagine what John Wesley Hardin, Sam Bass, or Billy the Kid would have thought at seeing good guys like you and me going to jail...on purpose. ★

JOAN UPTON HALL is the author of *Just Visitin' Old Texas Jails* (State House Press, McMurry University, 2nd ed., © 2007), which tells the stories and shows photos of 56 vintage jails, 42 of which are open to visitors.

JAILHOUSE SITES

- 1. El Paso County Jail at San Elizario**, 1110 Church St. Call 915/851-1682; www.rootsweb.com/~txseghs.
- 2. Fort Stockton Military Guardhouse**, 301 E. 3rd St. Call 432/336-2400; www.ci.fort-stockton.tx.us.
- 3. 1878 Bexar County Jail in San Antonio**, now the Comfort Inn Alamo River Walk, 120 Camaron St. Call 210/281-1400 or 800/223-4990; www.comfortinnsanantonio.com.
- 4. 1886 Wheeler County Jail at Mobeetie**, now the Mobeetie Jail Museum, on Texas 152, 11 miles west of Wheeler. Call 806/845-2028; www.mobeetie.com.
- 5. 1888 Wharton County Jail in Wharton**, now the 20th Century Technology Museum, 231 S. Fulton St. Call 979/282-8810; www.20thcenturytech.com.
- 6. 1910 Hidalgo County Jail in Edinburg**, now the Museum of South Texas History, 121 E. McIntyre St. Call 956/383-6911; www.mosthistory.org.

Other old Texas jails are listed alphabetically by town on the author's Web site, www.joanuptonhall.com/books.htm (click on the cover of *Just Visitin' Old Texas Jails*).



■ To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.magazineprints.com.

© LAURENCE PARENT

A HILL COUNTRY

Voyagers

GOOD CHOICES

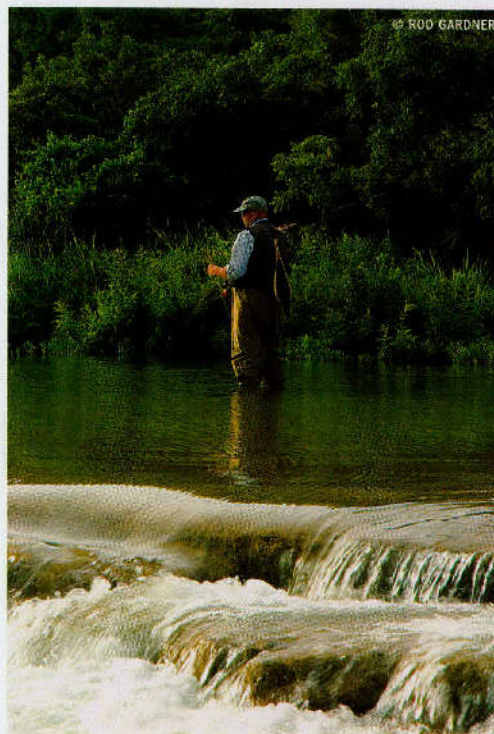
“**Y**ou pick the place, sweetheart,” Bob Foreman said to his wife, Lynn, as they planned their Valentine’s Day celebration. “Just name it and we’ll go.” How many lovers smile and say those very words to their mates as special occasions approach? Ka-zillions, no doubt.

Lynn knew she could pick just about any place in the world. Their careers had taken them on assignments that spanned the globe, and together, they had enjoyed gourmet restaurants on the seven continents.

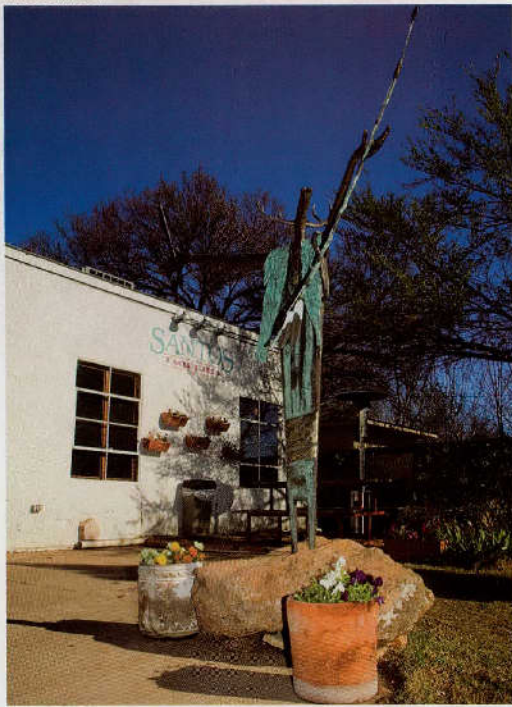
Bob and Lynn retired to their beautiful CAVU Canyon Ranch near Segovia, 10 miles east of Junction, about six years ago. But they stay plenty busy, having built three cozy cabins on the ranch to rent to photographers, artists, and other folks in need of relaxation and rejuvenation.

The couple’s “Sugar Shack,” “Cool Cabin,” and “Lone Star Loft” offer various combinations of comfort, including screened porches, loft-style sleeping, or art supplies for the tinkering. There’s a central fire ring for those who enjoy lounging around a crackling blaze and swapping tales. It’s called the “Liar’s Pit.” From the cabins, a walking trail leads to Sycamore Creek, a running stream fed by live springs and stocked with bass.

At Colorado Bend State Park, don’t miss a guided tour to spectacular Gorman Falls, a group of spring-fed waterfalls that plummet more than 65 feet to the well-worn boulders below. Above, Danny Updike whiles away a morning fly-fishing on the San Saba River.



by Howard Peacock



Santos Taquería y Cantina serves Mexican food to swoon over in Mason.

The place is so peaceful, Lynn was tempted to not go anywhere at all for that celebratory meal—not Paris, not Venice, not Shanghai.

“What say we go to Santos over in Mason?” she proposed. “Let’s stuff ourselves with shrimp and chicken quesadillas, visit with friends over a little wine, and listen to the stories.”

“Ah, yes,” responded Bob. “And all the guacamole we want. I can handle that.” Santos Taquería y Cantina was just the place, and only a pretty drive of about 50 miles through the hills at twilight. Could life get any better than this?

THIS LAND, OUR LAND

Lying westward and northerly of the area known as the Texas Hill Country, rounded hills, craggy limestone bluffs, brushy plateaus, and greening valleys form dramatic landscapes. They beckon you to explore them or to put up your feet and just gaze.

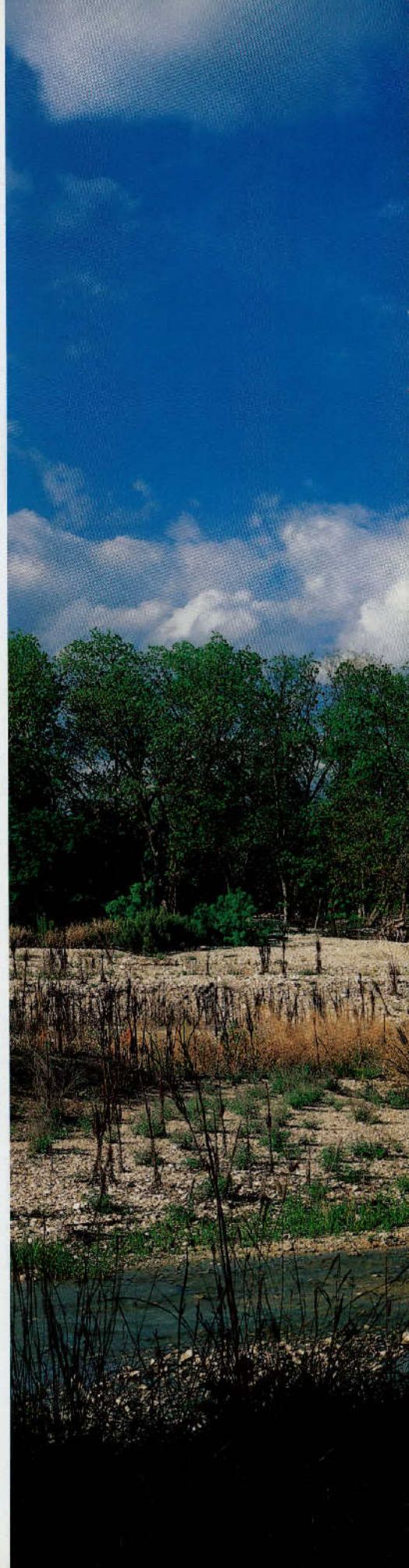
From about 1600 to the mid-1800s, Native Americans of various tribes, notably Apaches and Comanches, made this region their hunting grounds. Numerous pictographs around Paint Rock depict their symbols and signals (see “Sketches of Paint Rock,” March 2007). In the Conquistador Era, Spanish explorers crossed the valleys and plateaus. Anglo American settlers followed, putting down roots in the mid-1800s; then came folks from many parts of the world.

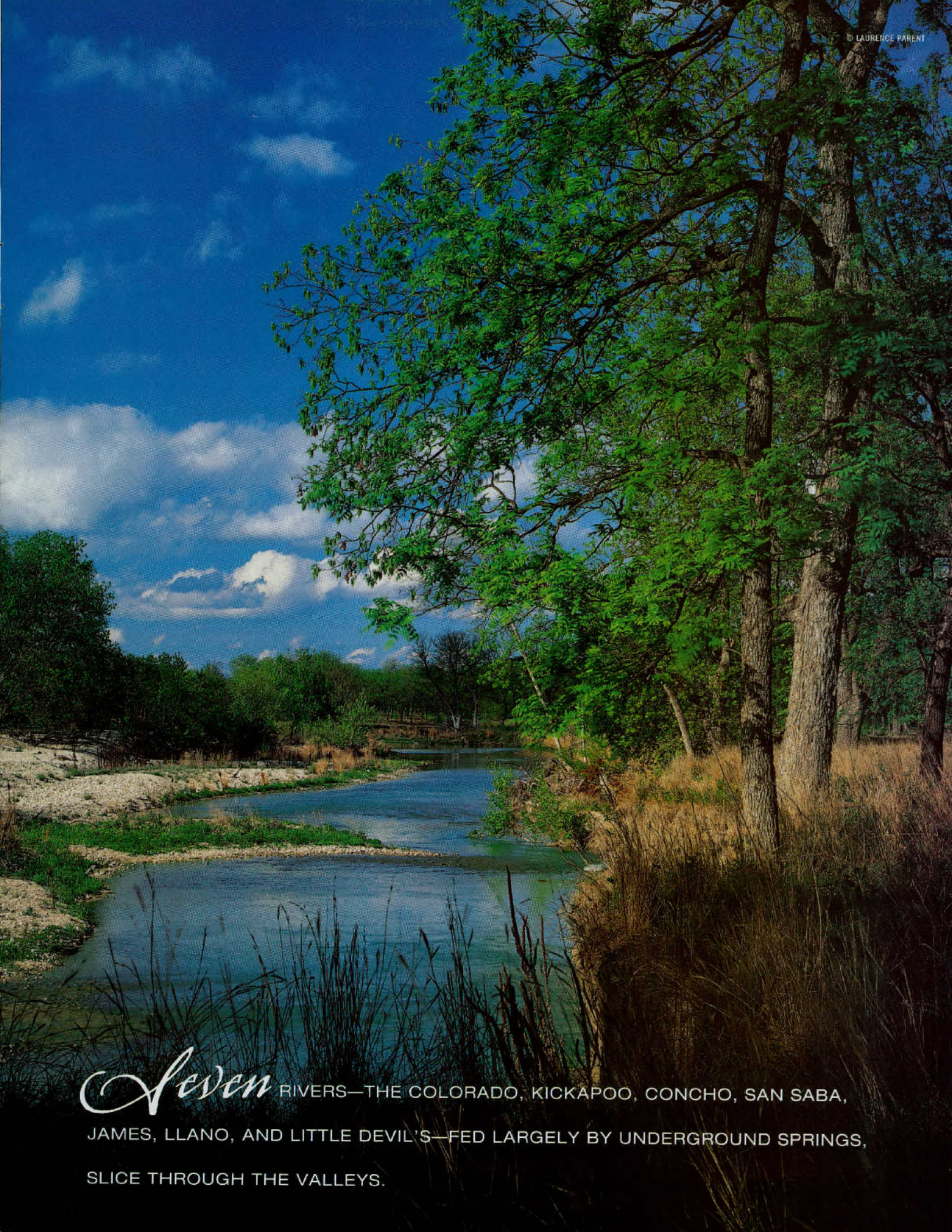
Seven rivers—the Colorado, Kickapoo, Concho, San Saba, James, Llano, and Little Devil’s—fed largely by underground springs, slice through the valleys. Numerous creeks alternately flood and go bone dry.

Country music, hearty eating, rock hunting, annual festivals, interesting shopping, and story-swapping make up the main diversions here. And the storytelling never stops. In fact, one of America’s great writers of stories, Fred Gipson—whose classics *Old Yeller* and *Hound Dog Man* probably made you weep when you read them long ago...and maybe still do—was born in Mason County. He spent much of his life writing here.

It’s a good region to linger awhile.

The South Llano River appeals to anglers and sightseers alike.





Seven RIVERS—THE COLORADO, KICKAPOO, CONCHO, SAN SABA,
JAMES, LLANO, AND LITTLE DEVIL'S—FED LARGELY BY UNDERGROUND SPRINGS,
SLICE THROUGH THE VALLEYS.

GETTING TOGETHER

If you've spent any time at all around Texas towns, or stopping in them for lunch or dinner on a long drive, you'll know Santos Taquería y Cantina even if you'd never laid eyes on it. Located on the southeast corner of the Main Square in Mason, it's got that distinctive look of a place where folks gather.

At Santos, you might say "it's the character of the place" that draws the people. Which would mean the kitchen being right out in the open so you can take in the good smells and see what's cooking, along with the sparkling clean appearance of the dining spaces inside and on the patio, the relaxed and talky customers, and Santos Silerio herself—mother of eight and boss of the kitchen, quietly giving orders while slapping dough balls into shape for your tortillas. Her family calls her "the original Energizer Bunny."

The restaurant and Sandstone Cellars Winery next door grew from the talents and imagination of two young entrepreneurs, Santos' son Manny and his partner Scott Hauptert. The two lived all over the country before putting down roots in Mason, where they found "defining moments" in the fresh air and countryside. They soon bought and renovated an old gas station on the town square, lured Manny's mother back from Mexico, and established Santos Taquería y Cantina and Sandstone Cellars Winery. They also rent out a lovely 19th-Century cottage next to the winery.

You should try at least three of the four salsas on your gorditas, tacos, quesadillas, or other such dishes. There's the Signature Salsa with roasted tomatoes, jalapeños, and garlic; Salsa Roja, featuring toasted Arbol chiles; Salsa Verde, a bright green salsa with cilantro and jalapeños; and, if you have the mouth of a matador, the bright orange

Salsa Habanero, made with tomato, garlic, and the world's hottest pepper, the habanero.

"The more salsa, the more stories you hear," they say. "It blows open the ears and loosens the tongue."

SNAPSHOTS & SURESHOTS

If you're an amateur or a pro photographer with a higher-than-average interest in nature, you might have the good luck to cross paths with Rod Gardner, a veteran nature photographer who lives and works in these parts and serves as a guide for groups of students and visitors.

Rod's a charter member of the North American Nature Photography Association, and his favorite subjects have ranged from polar bears and African elephants to Texas butterflies, birds, and wildflowers.

"Nowadays, any spot on the San Saba River is a favorite place for me to photograph," he says. Here's betting you'll like it, too.

Rod charges \$150 per day to guide two people; additional guests cost \$50 each. Call 325/456-1188; www.rgardnerphoto.com.

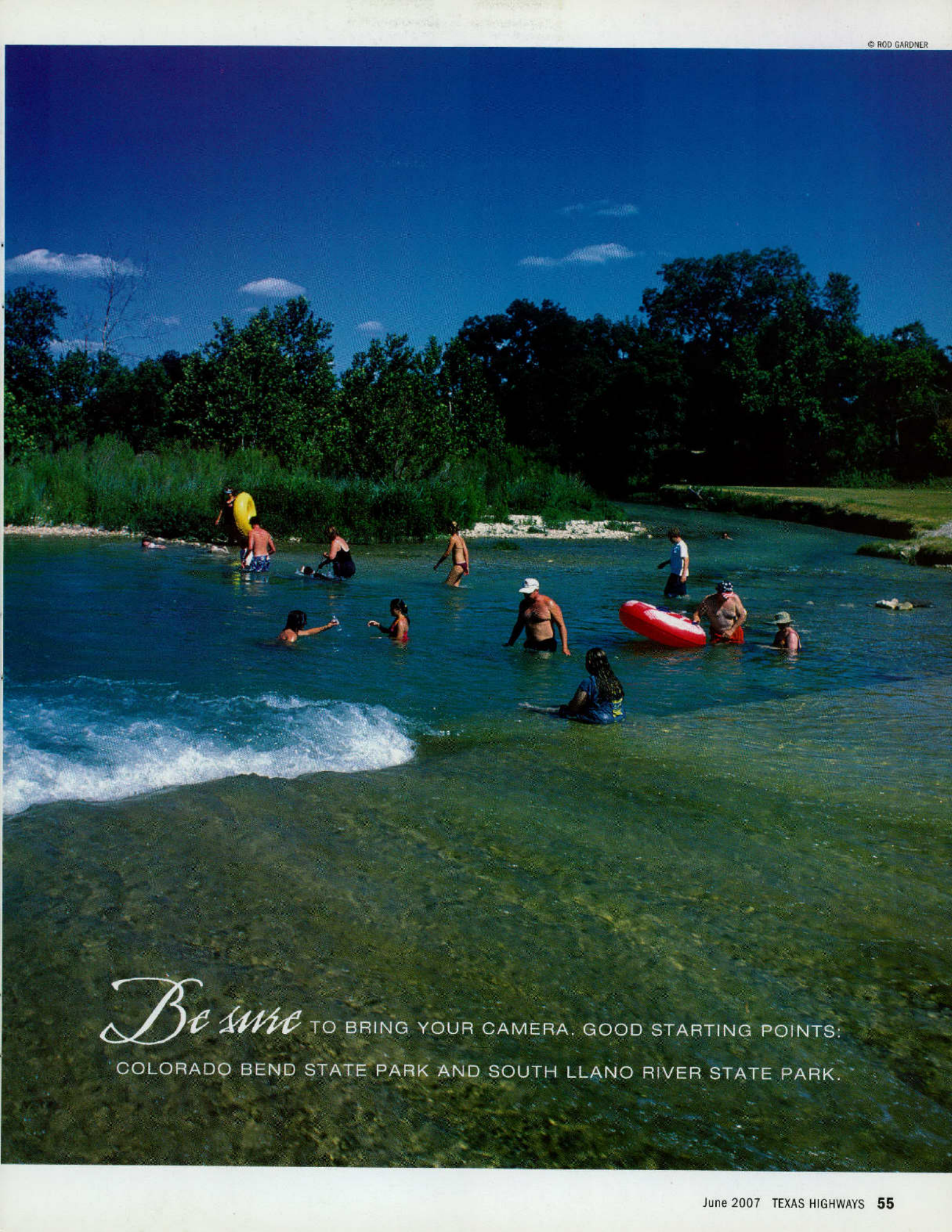
—HOWARD PEACOCK

THE SAVANT OF SANDSTONE CELLARS

If I can catch Don Pullum, the winemaker of Sandstone Cellars Winery, for a bit of talking, I like to linger in his company near the wine barrels. They exude a sweet aroma.

Swimmers enjoy the cool water at South Llano River State Park.





Be sure TO BRING YOUR CAMERA. GOOD STARTING POINTS:
COLORADO BEND STATE PARK AND SOUTH LLANO RIVER STATE PARK.

“*You’d want* SOMETHING WITH A TRIPLE-TONGUED ATTACK, SOMETHING SPRITZY WITH COMPLEXITY. SISTER CREEK MUSCAT CANELLI WOULD BE PERFECT FOR SUCH A BOOGIE-WALKIN’ OCCASION.” —Winemaker Don Pullum

© ROD GARDNER



Mason entrepreneurs Manny Silerio (left) and Scott Hauptert flank winemaker Don Pullum at Sandstone Cellars Winery. Manny and Scott founded the winery, along with Santos Taquería next door, after relocating to Mason from Los Angeles.

The first time I saw Don was when he came striding through the front door of Santos Taquería y Cantina. He held a bottle of wine in one hand and two wine glasses in the other.

“Is that Ernest Hemingway come back to life?” I thought. Don sat with a friend, opened the wine, poured a tasting for the friend and himself, and started a conversation. Don can talk wines and their history, lore, and importance to the human saga as long as time allows. He knows the splendid grape. For not only does Sandstone Cellars produce and sell its own wines, but it showcases dozens of other wines, as well—as long as they’re produced with Texas grapes and made in Texas.

During my last visit with Don, I played a game with his wit on wine’s various roles in human experience. “Suppose I needed the perfect wine for an afternoon session with a jazz trumpeter,” I said. “What would you recommend?”

“You’d want something with a triple-tongued attack, something spritzy with

complexity,” he advised. He told me that Sister Creek Muscat Canelli would be perfect for such a boogie-walkin’ occasion.

“How about the wines for a serious business conference at dinner?” I asked him. “How about the perfect wines for a wedding reception?” “Or the perfect wine for a romantic evening?” Oh, yeah! Indeed, yes. There are such wines.

COUNTRY MUSIC MEMORIES

“Dang me! Dang me!” You could be singin’ that old Roger Miller lament, moanin’ like you’d been kicked nekkid to the cactus patch on a nasty night, if you get near Brady and miss a visit to the Heart of Texas Country Music Museum.

Right there you’ll find a true treasure trove of

memories of your favorite stars of country music: costumes and dainty gowns and do-dads of all kinds, pictures and posters galore, paraphernalia that touched their very flesh. They’ll touch your tickle-box and/or your heart.

We’re talkin’ Hank Thompson’s \$5,000 clown-loud coat that he wore in Las Vegas performances...Patsy Cline’s silvery gown and a purple “Southern Belle” dress worn by Loretta Lynn...guitars plucked by the fingers of Buck Owens and Floyd Tilman...Barbara Mandrell’s Jubilee jukebox she bought for her mansion in Tennessee...Johnny Cash’s boots and June Carter’s oh-so-goldy gown...Minnie Pearl’s hat with a \$1.98 price tag... 48 pounds of mostly pink duds decorated with purple grapes, worn by Leon Russell that time he sang with Willie Nelson....

“About 75,” museum creator Tracy Pitcox says when asked how many stars are represented in the museum’s hundreds of items. A deejay on Brady’s radio station KNEL, Tracy knows country music. “We change out the exhibits from time to time, depending on new items that I can buy or trade for.”

The biggest exhibit at the museum is a 1956 bus used by the great mellow-toned Jim Reeves and his band. Tracy nailed the

© ROD GARDNER



“The Liar’s Pit,” a large fire ring outside the guest cabins at CAVU Canyon Ranch in Segovia, awaits the evening’s storytelling.



Jim Reeves' 1956 touring bus attracts visitors to the Heart of Texas Country Music Museum in Brady.

winning bid for the bus at a Nashville auction. You gotta see it, folks. Talk about spiffy! Especially Jim's relaxing room in the back of the bus. He usually drove, but he needed a place to ease on down and party from time to time.

BACK TO NATURE

From cave-crawling and birdwatching to sauntering along nature trails both long and short, you've got a rich palette of possibilities in these hills. Be sure to bring your camera. Good starting points: Colorado Bend State Park and South Llano River State Park both offer excellent facilities for camping and recreation.

Colorado Bend State Park covers 5,328 acres of hills, canyons, and groves of live oaks and pecan trees near the Colorado River and adjoining creeks. Juniper spreads and intermittent grassy areas nestle into the southeastern corner of San Saba County. Wiggles of the Colorado River define the park's long border before emptying into Lake Buchanan.

Features of the park include Gorman Falls, a picturesque cascade of 65 feet fed by underground springs. Sign up early for self-guided "cave-crawling" explorations, or, if you prefer to walk upright, you can opt for a large-cave experience. Bring your binoculars and try to spy some of the 200 bird species spotted here. At least 47 breed in these parts, including the spectacular painted bunting and indigo bunting.

If you like to "talk turkey," South Llano River State Park near Junction is your kind of place. It's one of the largest and oldest winter roosting sites for the Rio Grande turkey in Central Texas, according to the *Texas Almanac*. Several hundred wild turkeys flock to the trees here and breed in the springtime.

The park and adjacent Walter Buck Wildlife Management Area also offer some 20 miles of hiking and biking trails, plus favorite spring wildflower-viewing spots and year-round birdwatching. Birders have recorded more than 200 species here, including 19 classed as "very rare." Four varieties of hummingbirds dazzle their fans.

Canyons on the escarpment of the limestone hills contrast with riverside woods of pecan, elm, oak, and sycamore trees. Nearby Buck Lake lures anglers young and old—large catfish frequently get hauled out of the water to the filleting bench. Botany-minded visitors wander the trails narrowing their eyes for rare and uncommon species of plants that prefer the brush country.

COOPER'S 'CUE

I always enjoy spending time at Cooper's Barbecue in Junction, whether I'm chowing down on great ribs or just listening to strangers' stories. I hope two or more of them will take the table next to me so I can overhear some of their talk. Workmen taking a break from their dusty duties on road repairs make good talkers. There must be 98 or a ka-jillion barbecue places in these parts, some right fancy, others weathered and plastered in handwritten signs about this or that. Virtually without fail, wherever you eat, you find the meat to be tender, tasty, and juicy—whether you indulge in brisket, ribs, chicken, pork, sausage, or a lip-smacking combination.

THE GREAT TOPAZ

One day, I overheard some workmen talking about the Great Topaz. Was it found by a farmer while plowing his peanut rows, as some reports say; or in

SOJOURN SITES

FIND MORE information about attractions in the area at www.texashillsandrivers.org and at www.masonxoc.com.

CAVU Canyon Ranch is in Segovia, some 10 miles east of Junction. Call 325/446-9135; www.cavucanyonranch.com.

Santos Taquería y Cantina is at 205 San Antonio St. in Mason. Call 325/347-6140.

Sandstone Cellars Winery is at 211 San Antonio St. in Mason. Call 325/347-WINE; www.sandstonecellarswinery.com.

The **Heart of Texas Country Music Museum** is at 1701 S. Bridge St. in Brady. Call 325/597-1895; www.heartoftexascountry.com.

Colorado Bend State Park is in Bend. Call 325/628-3240; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

South Llano River State Park is near Junction. Call 325/446-3994; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Cooper's Barbecue is at 2423 N. Main St. in Junction. Call 325/446-8664.

The **Mason Square Museum** is at 130 Ft. McKavett in Mason. Call 325/347-0507.

The **Green House** is at 605 San Antonio in Mason. Call 325/347-6040.





The Green House offers natural health products in a cozy shop in Mason.

a creek with a funny name? What might it be worth today if you bought it at the jewelry store? And so on. From their talk, I picked up the name Wilburn Shearer. I later phoned Mr. Shearer, told him I was interested in the story, and asked what he might tell me about the gemstone.

“My great-uncle Albert Lee McGehee found it in 1904,” he said. “Picked it up on Dry Prong Creek in Mason County. He took it home and used it as a doorstop in the family’s farmhouse.

“Later on, the Smithsonian people learned about its size. It weighs 1,296 grams and is said to be the largest Blue Topaz discovered in North America. The Smithsonian Institution bought it for \$75 in 1913 and took it to Washington,” Mr. Shearer told me.

But that’s not the end of the tale. These days, the topaz is back home in Mason, at the brand-new Mason Square Museum. The Smithsonian loaned it to the museum through summer 2008.

THE PANICKY PIG

Margaret and Jeff Durst own and manage a shop called The Green

House in Mason, which sells vitamins, minerals, herb preparations, organic foods and garden supplies—all the natural health products. While we lingered in the breeze on the porch, Margaret and I talked about the importance of animals to the surrounding farmers, ranchers, and their young ’uns.

“One time a woman came in the store for her regular supply of vitamins,” Margaret told me. “She said her son wanted to enter his super pig in the judging at a big livestock show coming up. Trouble was, that pig had panic attacks every time the boy put him up for the prize. And that ruined everything. Normally, the pig was calm and genial; you know how pigs always seem to be smiling.

“She asked me what people take for getting panicky, and I told her what the research in Naturopathy might suggest. She decided to try that approach; after

all, she said, people and pigs have a lot in common.

“Before the show, she mixed the preparation in a bottle of water, and poured it into the pig’s mouth in plenty of time for it to absorb the mixture. Afterwards, she came back to the store just beaming. Told me it worked fine—the peaceful pig won a ribbon, and her son was all smiles.”

Linger awhile in this convivial part of Texas. You’ll get to feeling peaceful and happy, too. ★

San Antonio writer HOWARD PEACOCK wrote his first *Texas Highways* feature some 27 years ago.

MICHAEL A. MURPHY



This stunning 1,296-gram Blue Topaz was found in Mason more than a century ago.

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

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Thrilla of a Flotilla

BY LOU ANN DEAN

THE EAST TEXAS SUNRISE casts a hazy red-orange hue in our rearview mirror as my husband, Keith, and I drive west along a foggy Texas 103 out of Lufkin. As the car pierces the thick morning mist, rolling pastures dotted with live oak and hickory trees give way to gigantic long-leaf pines. The highway merges with Texas 7, and we near Davy Crockett National Forest. Around another bend, the object of our destination is upon us: the Neches River. Two hundred years earlier, we'd be plunging headlong into the drink, but the highway bridge safely handles our crossing.

We begin slowing down as we approach a queue of cars toting shiny metal canoes and brightly colored kayaks. Keith points out a tall white heron standing in a marshy swirl of water and mist to the left of us. We've reached Temple-Inland's North Boggy Slough, the meeting point for our day's excursion: the Neches River Rendezvous. It may be early (7 a.m.), but the parking lot is practically full! Over 300 nautical, back-to-nature registrants are primed to access their inner Lewis and Clark.

Gina Donovan, communications director for the Texas Committee on Natural Resources, along with the Lufkin/Angelina County Chamber of Commerce, organized this 10-mile floating excursion in 1994 to promote "keeping the Neches wild." Over a decade later, the Rendezvous has become a popular East Texas nature-tourism event. "The Neches is

one of the last free-flowing rivers in Texas," Gina tells me. "We need to see that it stays that way."

Once out of our car, I wind my way through clusters of shorts-clad people both young and old, gathered around a group of canoes. Although participants don't have to provide their own boats, many choose to do so. Others, like me, have rented theirs from either Shawl's Canoe School in Lumberton or Tack-a-Paw Expedition of Leesville, Louisiana, which have provided canoes and kayaks since the Rendezvous' inception. Vendors also transport individuals' outriggers to the put-in point.

I can't help but notice the smell of burning mesquite in the air, then I see smoke rising from a concession trailer. It's parked near Temple-Inland's hunting lodge, which is on the grounds of North Boggy Slough. I walk over to investigate and see that Smokehouse Catering of Nacogdoches is readying the coals for lunch.



© LANCE VARNELL

Lou Ann Dean and her husband, Keith, enjoy canoeing downstream during last year's Neches River Rendezvous.

Although I've brought along granola bars, other snacks, and plenty of water, I begin anticipating their legendary burgers.

Since it's not feasible for the Rendezvous' many participants to access the river simultaneously, all watercraft are given a designated put-in time. A volunteer tells me that Keith and I are scheduled to board the shuttle van at 8:30, so there's time for mingling.

I notice an attractive young woman wearing sunglasses reminiscent of Audrey Hepburn's in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Her fashionable straw hat with a melon-colored band accentuates her neon-bright T-shirt, which reads "Rendezvous Volunteer." I see her nametag and note that this is Heather Kartye, the event's coordinator. Heather is chatting with Lufkin nature photographer Dick Pike and his wife, Geraldine.

"We're out birding today and were just passing by," says Dick, his Nikon camera dangling around the neck of his khaki-colored shirt. "I saw all the cars and wondered what the commotion was." This is a great place for birders, since East Texas lies in the path of warblers, vireos, and other species of neotropical migrants.

Eventually, we'll be shuttled about 10 miles away, where our canoes await. From there, the Neches River Rendezvous' route will wind along the borders

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H-E-B

“The Neches is one of the last free-flowing rivers in Texas,” says Gina Donovan. “We need to see that it stays that way.”

between Cherokee, Houston, and Angelina counties. This portion of the river also serves as the eastern boundary of the Davy Crockett National Forest.

When I wonder if recent storms have created unforeseen obstacles along the Neches, Heather assures me that the organizers have made sure that the river is

passable. “There are two places that you’ll have to portage, but the Boy Scouts will be there to help you,” she says. There’s nothing more assuring than a Boy Scout helping you cross the street, whether the street is made of concrete or water.

Keith signals for me to board the shuttle van. Nine of us fill the ve-

hicle as Dennis Clark of Lufkin enthusiastically proclaims that this is his fifth Rendezvous. “The first time I went, I had so much fun, I went out and bought myself a canoe,” he says.

As our driver turns left out of the parking lot and heads west on Texas 7, I ask Dennis how he deals with the Texas heat and humidity when he’s canoeing. He quips, “You mean your canoe doesn’t have air conditioning?”

Lively conversations soon start throughout the van regarding the history of the Caddoan mounds, Spanish missions, and sawmills. Barge traffic and riverboats loaded with cotton and timber once floated down the Neches.

We turn right onto a bumpy, reddish dirt road and in minutes, we’re at our Rendezvous starting point. Here, all of our boats are lined up and ready to go. Outfitters hand out life preservers, and a rocky path leads us down to the river, where members of Boy Scout Troop 136 of Lufkin assist everyone into their boats for the journey. Once it’s our turn, our

canoe is slid into the slowly moving, tea-colored water. Keith sits behind me and soon we’re off. The next group of two men have a harder time with their vessel. One sits firmly in the canoe, but the other overestimates the craft’s steadiness. The canoe careens and tips over, dumping the men into the waist-deep water.

“Come on in. The water’s fine!” they call out, laughing. As we watch the men get back into their righted canoe, Keith and I dip our paddles into the water and gently move downstream.

We paddle between steep, conifer-lined banks, and I scour the incline for animals. Although beavers, once abundant, have been dec-

imated by trappers, sightings of this furry creature still occur, and white-tailed deer, raccoons, coyotes, skunks, and nutria are common. Keith’s coworker, Nacogdoches botanist Trey Anderson, had warned us to be on the lookout for wild hogs, too. On a recent canoe trip, he’d seen more than 100 drinking from the Neches’ shallow waters. On our journey, though, nary a boar nor otter nor river rat do we see. We do see plenty of dragonflies, water striders, minnows, and one curious bee buzzing from canoe to canoe, checking us all out.

Canoeing on the Neches offers plenty of time to meet others enjoying the experience. We trade leisurely “hellos” with fellow Rendezvous-ers and learn the group is comprised of various church youth groups, grandparents with their grandkids, college students, and families. One family from Lufkin sidles up next to us, and that’s where we meet Cleo.

“Who is this you’ve brought with you?” I ask Rhonda Greene of Lufkin, pointing to her curly black Lhasa Apso, who is snuggled in between Rhonda and her

THE 2007 NECHES RIVER RENDEZVOUS begins at 8 a.m. on June 2 at North Boggy Slough, located off Texas 103 between Lufkin and Crockett. Free shuttle service is provided to and from the river. Entry fees: \$25 canoes, \$15 kayaks. Fees cover two passengers, two meal tickets, and two T-shirts. Call 936/634-6305; check out the Web site, www.visitlufkin.com; or e-mail: hkartye@lufkintexas.org.



CANOE RENTALS Shawl Canoe School, \$35 per canoe (cash or check only); 409/755-BLUE; and Tack-a-Paw Expedition, \$40 per canoe; 800/256-9337; <http://tackapaw.com>.

GOOD READ *Paddling the Wild Neches* by Richard M. Donovan (Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2006).

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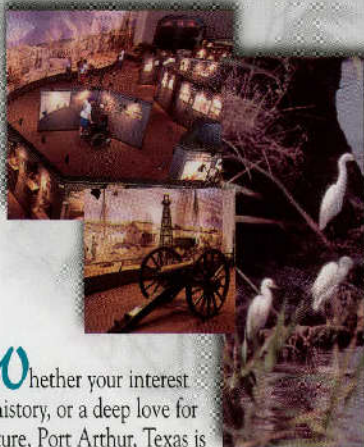


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Just PASSING Through

husband, Maxey. "This is Cleo," Rhonda says. Cuddling up to Rhonda, Cleo looks the dandy, with a red bandana tied around his neck. He seems to be loving every second of this, although he'd probably like a chance at clambering up the banks of the river. I photograph them as Rhonda holds Cleo's paw up and waves.

The quiet flow of the smoothly moving water gives way to sounds of singing coming 'round the river bend. That's when we encounter the Tyler Outdoor Club, five canoes strong, singing a reprise of Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary." "Rollin', rollin', rollin' on the river!" They pass by us pretty quickly, with the Greenses close behind.

We make a brief stopover to stretch our legs on a potentially treacherous muddy bank, then we enjoy a moment of solitude and seclusion under a small canopy of Virginia creeper. Later, we encounter trees with bulbous roots pushing out from the river's edge where erosion and rough currents have carved away the soil. Many of these trees eventually plunge into the water, making for interesting navigational decisions. Which way should we go? With the heat of the mid-morning sun bearing down on us, we choose one and forge ahead toward a shady area, which provides a nice respite.

As we stroke the water, I consider the history of this mighty river. The Neches supposedly received its name from Spanish explorer Alonso De León, who led expeditions into the region in the late 1680s. According to one account, De León encountered a band of Neches Caddos and referred to this river by their name. By 1820, Anglo settlers were filling the region, and Stephen F. Austin recognized how valuable the river was as a means of transportation.

My attention quickly diverts to a rainbow-winged dragonfly hitching a ride on the bow. I lean back and allow Keith to navigate. We approach a huge tree fallen across the water with no way around it but on land; it's time to portage.

By the time we've figured out how to get around the limbs sticking out of the water, we see that three sets of canoeists are on land, scraping their canoes along the rocky, muddy beach. Since there isn't much land to walk on here, we wait our turn in the water near the roots of the felled tree. It took a mighty strong wind to topple a tree of this magnitude.

Amazingly enough, a group of Boy Scouts step in to help us out. "Here, I'll get that," one says to me, taking the bow of the canoe into his hands. Keith again takes the other end, and we walk the short distance to the other side of the tree. Once they set the canoe back into the water, I step inside, and it lurches a bit sideways. I don't want to take an unexpected bath, so I steady myself and wait for the canoe to stop rocking.

With this bit of excitement behind us, we push onward. Already we've been in the water for three hours, but the time has flown by. We're now on the home stretch!

We round a bend, and as we dip our paddles for the last time, sounds of cars rumbling across the Texas 7 bridge signal that the end of our river ride is near. Yet another Boy Scout helps us out of the canoe while outfitter Mary Carter helps pull our canoe up to the shore. I feel a bit wobbly as I get my land legs back. All too soon, another shuttle returns us to our starting point. We're ready for some juicy Texas hamburgers!

Back at the lodge, we assemble our char-grilled, one-pound(!) burgers and help ourselves to some fresh peach cobbler. We sit on wooden benches at picnic tables shaded by a large oak tree, and toast our paddling panache.

As I reflect on the day's events, I look across the crowd of people enjoying their hamburgers and basking in the experience of a day well spent. I smile and privately acknowledge the peace, serenity, and thrills that the Neches affords. I take another bite of peach cobbler, and then Keith sweetly tells me that my keys are locked inside our car. It looks like this day's adventures aren't over yet. May the Neches River Rendezvous be just the right-size adventure for you. Paddle on.

LOU ANN DEAN visits Gilmer later this year to cover it for our August issue.

TOP Tables

(continued from page 15)

in the drive-through and five people are lined up inside. But some of those could be large orders.

How many large orders are there? There's a sign on the checkout counter that says, "Do you spend more than \$40 a month at Round Rock Donuts? Ask about our House Account." That's a lot of donuts.

Round Rock Donuts opens at 4 a.m. They don't just start cooking then; they

Donut Resuscitation

Can you resuscitate a dead, old donut? First, don't let them die! Round Rock Donuts have no preservatives, so unless you can inhale an entire order at once, it is always good to freeze some of them in a wax-paper wrap. When you're ready to eat more, pop them into the microwave for about 45 seconds.

Did you forget to freeze your donuts, and they're already two or three days old? The original owner's granddaughter Suzy Moehring Mallard recommends slicing the donuts in half, buttering the cut sides, and flipping them a few times in a hot frying pan to get that toasty flavor back.

Donuts really hopelessly old and hard? Make Round Rock Donuts bread pudding! Mary K. Boling's recipe is on the bakery's Web site.

actually *open*. Who in the world is coherent enough in the wee hours to drive over and get donuts? It turns out that even then, customers come through at a pretty healthy clip—newspaper-delivery people, shift workers, hunters, fishermen, and the early workers for companies on staggered hours. They all have the munchies, and not just for donuts. The bakery offers other items, too, like apple fritters, muffins, cinnamon rolls, and sausage wraps.

The bakery is also known for its trademark cookies with seasonal shapes, hand-iced decorations, and delicate teacake flavor. Former UT women's basketball coach Jody Conrath always orders the oatmeal cookies. Customers can even bring in their own cookie cutters if they want a certain shape for a custom order.

But it is the vintage 14-burner gas oven called "Big Bertha," a transplant from the original Main Street location now enthroned in the back of the bakery, that gives those cookies their perfect consistency. The old gal seems to delight in confounding new employees; they have to learn its 1920s quirks before they can recreate the magical crusty-cookie alchemy for which the bakery is famous. There is no thermometer, only a single control valve to turn the burner flames up and down as the

flat shelf racks rotate inside the drum. It's a very hot pastry Ferris wheel. Bakers have to learn to work by touch and feel, and humidity varies the baking time.

The bakery also specializes in imaginative cakes for all occasions, using the bakery's own cake and icing recipes. An antique wooden display case shows off the variety, including a pizza cake. "People often order it to have something unusual for a teenager's birthday party," says Linda Kohl. "The icing is made to look just like grated cheese and onions."

The shelves in the cake-decorating room are stacked to the ceiling with styling kits for every theme, movie, and sport you

can imagine, plus a few you probably wouldn't expect—the bakery's "Macho Man" and "Sexy Sue" cakes are popular for bachelor or bachelorette parties.

Betty Adams has been a fan of the bakery since 1994, when she started working at nearby Dell Computer Corporation. Today she is CEO Michael Dell's receptionist, the perfect job for enticing others to in-

vestigate Round Rock Donuts.

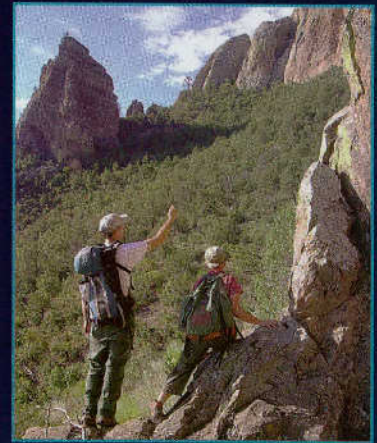
"These are excellent donuts," says Betty. "Whenever I get a big order for a meeting at work, I get a box for myself, too. I'll spend the calories for these donuts."

Betty's not alone—people from all over get their donut fix from Round Rock Donuts, even people from nearby Austin, which has its share of donut shops. Dale Cohrs says that in this case, Round Rock cuisine refuses to take a back seat to that of its Austin neighbor. There are bragging rights at stake, after all.

"Our donuts have been a tradition here for more than 80 years," says Dale. "People expect them to stay the same, and we don't disappoint them. Today you can still walk in and get donuts with the exact same taste that your grandparents enjoyed."

After 20-plus years in the U.S. Navy, SHEILA SCARBOROUGH is now a full-time writer specializing in travel. This is her first article for *Texas Highways*.

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(Chisos Mountains Basin)

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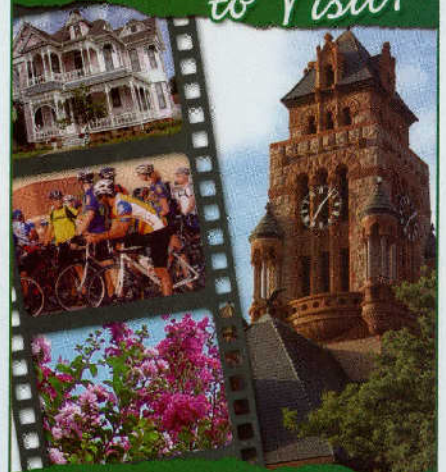


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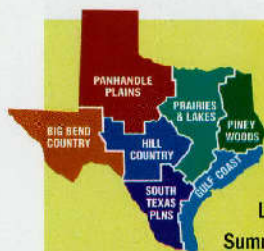
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LISTING DEADLINES: Spring (Mar., Apr., May) Dec. 1; Summer (Jun., Jul., Aug.) Mar. 1; Fall (Sep., Oct., Nov.) Jun. 1; Winter (Dec., Jan., Feb.) Sep. 1

BECAUSE OF SPACE LIMITATIONS, we can't print every event we receive. Please note that dates sometimes change after we go to press. You may want to confirm a particular event by calling the number listed with the festivity or by contacting the local chamber of commerce or convention and visitors bureau.

FOR INFORMATION ON ANY DESTINATION IN TEXAS: Call 800/452-9292 toll-free from anywhere in the U.S. and Canada, between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Central Time. A professional travel counselor at one of the Texas Department of Transportation's Travel Information Centers will answer your Texas travel questions, provide routing assistance, send brochures (including the official *Texas State Travel Guide* and map), and advise you of any emergency road conditions.



FOR A QUARTERLY, MORE DETAILED SCHEDULE OF events, write for a free copy of the *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. For an online listing of events, with details, go to www.texashighways.com.

BIG BEND COUNTRY

1-2

EL PASO
Ballet Folklórico
Tierra del Sol
915/920-3110

1, 8, 15, 22, 29

ODESSA
Hot Summer Nights,
Cool Music
432/335-4682
or 337-1492

2

MARATHON
Buffalo Bash
432/386-4516

ODESSA
Brand New Opreé
432/580-3177

9

EL PASO
El Paso Museum of History
Grand Opening
915/532-1707

10

FORT DAVIS
Vintage Air
Hot Rod Show
800/524-3015

14-19

ODESSA
Juneteenth Celebration
432/332-2515

14, 28

FORT STOCKTON
Annie Riggs Museum
Summer Concert Series
432/336-2167

16

FORT DAVIS
Robin Hood
432/426-3015

17

EL PASO
Music Under the Stars:
Pete Escovedo
915/541-4481

23

PRESIDIO
Ride to
Las Burras Canyons
432/229-3416

27

PECOS
Old-Timers
Reunion
432/445-2406

27

PECOS
West of the Pecos Parade &
Reeves County Sheriff's Posse
Barbecue
432/445-2406

27-30

PECOS
125th
World's First Rodeo
432/445-2406

29-30

EL PASO
Nuestras Tradiciones
915/566-8016

29-Jul 1

FORT DAVIS
Coolest Fourth
800/524-3015

30

PECOS
West of the Pecos Rodeo
Dance
432/445-2406

SANDERSON

July 4 Celebration/
Old-Timers Reunion
432/345-2676

30-Jul 1

EL PASO
Downtown
Street Festival
915/544-8864

ODESSA
Happy Birthday USA!
432/580-3177

GULF COAST

1-3

ARANSAS PASS
Shrimporee
361/758-2750 or
800/633-3028

TOMBALL

Crazy Days of Summer
281/351-3301

Tomball Centennial's
Heartbeat Festival
281/351-3301

1-2, 8-10, 15-16

BAYTOWN
Wait Until Dark
281/424-7617

1-17

HOUSTON
(began May 22)
Monty Python's *Spamalot*
713/558-TUTS or
888/558-3882

2

BEAUMONT
Free Family Arts Day
409/832-3432

CORPUS CHRISTI
National Fishing Day
361/939-7784

HOUSTON
Accordion Kings & Queens
Concert
281/373-3386

LAKE JACKSON
Mike Tomaro with the
Brazosport Jazz Orchestra
979/230-3156

2, 9, 16, 23, 30

PASADENA
Armand Bayou
Pontoon Boat Experience
281/474-2551

7, 9-10, 15-17

HOUSTON
Houston Ballet
713/227-2787

8

PEARLAND
Summer Concert Series:
Mango Punch
281/652-1673

8-9

SEADRIFT
Shrimpfest
361/785-2251

8-10

TEXAS CITY
Funfest
409/935-1408

9

BEAUMONT
Spindletop Spin
Bicycle Ride
409/839-2332

CORPUS CHRISTI
C-101 C-Sculptures
361/289-0111

DACOSTA
VFD Barbecue
361/575-2959

EAST BERNARD
Czech Kolache Klobase
Festival
979/335-4827
or 335-7907

HOUSTON
Buffalo Bayou
Anything That Floats
Parade
713/752-0314

9-10

KEMAH
Spring Kids Festival
281/334-9880

10

ALVIN
Tour de Braz
281/585-3359

HOUSTON
Classy Chassis
Vintage Auto Show
713/838-9050

11

FULTON
Music at the Mansion
361/729-0386

12

HOUSTON
Norah Jones
713/629-3700

15-17

GALVESTON
The Jubilee Banjo Band
800/821-1894

WHARTON

Juneteenth Celebration
979/531-0916

15-16, 22-23

HOUSTON
Houston Symphony
281/373-3386

16

BEAUMONT
Car Show
409/838-2508

SANTA FE
Classic Car & Bike Show
409/925-8558

WEST COLUMBIA
Juneteenth Memorial
979/345-4656

16-17

EL CAMPO
Ricebelt
Antique Tractor Show
979/543-9498

17-23

VICTORIA
Victoria Bach Festival
361/570-5788

19

HOUSTON
Juneteenth Celebration
281/373-3386

PORT ARTHUR

Juneteenth Celebration
409/982-8040
or 982-5457

21

HOUSTON
African Tales & Rhythms
281/373-3386

22

PEARLAND
Summer Concert Series:
Wilfred Chevis
281/652-1673

22-23

WHARTON
Wharton County Freedom Fest
979/532-0927

23

HOUSTON
Houston Pride Parade
713/529-6979

26-Jul 8

HOUSTON
Sweet Charity
713/558-TUTS or
888/558-3882

30

EDNA
Fourth of July Celebration
361/782-5718

KEMAH
Classic Car Show
281/334-9880

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HILL COUNTRY
1-2 HONDO 42nd Annual Experimental Aircraft Association Fly-In 830/426-3037
1-3 AUSTIN Texas Greek Festival 512/844-3856
BRADY Heart of Texas Thunder Drag Boat Races 325/597-3491
GEORGETOWN (began May 31) Festival of the Arts 512/864-9591
1-10 KERRVILLE (began May 24) Kerrville Folk Festival 830/257-3600
1-17 WIMBERLEY <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> 512/847-6969
1-3, 8-10, 15-17, 22-24, 29-Jul 4 GEORGETOWN 1776 512/869-7469
2 BANDERA Rod, Custom & Classic Car & Motorcycle Show 830/589-7609
2-3 AUSTIN Ballet Under the Stars 512/502-8634
UVALDE Sacred Heart Festival 830/278-3448
2, 9, 16, 23, 30 BANDERA Rodeo 830/535-4096
3 LAKEHILLS St. Victor's Parish Festival 800/364-3833

4-24 WIMBERLEY <i>The Music Man</i> 512/847-0575
5, 19 BOERNE Abendkonzerte 830/537-4367 or 249-7277
7, 14, 21, 28 SAN MARCOS Summer in the Park Concert Series 888/200-5620
8-9 JOHNSON CITY Lavender Evening with Art & Music 512/241-9588
8-10 FREDERICKSBURG Antique Tractor & Engine Show 830/997-3012
9 AUSTIN Patty Griffin 512/389-0315
FREDERICKSBURG Volksport Verein 10-K Walk & Swim 830/997-2533
JUNCTION Tour de Forts Bike Ride 325/446-9133
9-10 AUSTIN Danskin Women's Triathlon 800/452-9526
BLANCO Blanco Lavender Festival 830/833-5101
9-13 SAN MARCOS Texas Water Safari 512/738-6607 or 888/200-5620
9-16 MENARD 250th Anniversary of Presidio de San Saba and Mission Santa Cruz 325/396-2245 or 396-2424


9-24 AUSTIN Capital of Texas Juneteenth Celebration 512/832-9058
14-16 SAN SABA 67th Annual Rodeo 325/372-5141
14-30 INGRAM <i>Tom Sawyer</i> 830/367-5120
15 AUSTIN John Hammond Quartet 512/329-6753 Norah Jones 866/443-8849
15-16 LAMPASAS Riata Roundup 512/556-5172
STONEWALL Peach Jamboree & Rodeo 830/644-2735
15-17 BOERNE Berges Fest 830/229-5230 or 210/240-3398
16 AUSTIN <i>Robin Hood</i> 512/329-6753
BERTRAM Bertram's 125th Birthday 512/355-3473
SAN MARCOS Juneteenth Celebration 888/200-5620
17 AUSTIN Austin Symphonic Band 512/345-7420
21-Jul 7 KERRVILLE <i>Guys & Dolls</i> 830/896-9393
22-23 BURNET Rodeo 512/756-6642



23 BANDERA RiverFest 830/796-4447 FLORENCE Friendship Day 512/775-7395
23-24 BURNET Texas Hill Country Railfair & Festival 512/477-8468 or 756-4297
23, 30 BOERNE Shakespeare in the Park 830/249-4616
24 AUSTIN Stanley Jordan 512/329-6753
29-30 AUSTIN Strings Attached 866/235-0270
30 KYLE Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks 512/262-3939

PANHANDLE PLAINS

1-2 BROWNWOOD Texas Bluegrass Celebration 325/646-8531
HASKELL Haskell County Trail Rides 940/864-2851 or 742-3347
WRCA Ranch Rodeo/ Wild Horse Prairie Days 940/864-2749
PALO PINTO Palo Pinto County Sesquicentennial Celebration 940/325-2557 or 888/779-8330
1-3 AMARILLO Cowboy Roundup USA 806/372-4777
2 MINERAL WELLS 150th Old Settlers Day 940/325-2557
SLATON South Plains Air Show 806/828-6238
SWEETWATER Soap Box Derby 325/235-4954
2-3 ABILENE Regional Quilt Show 325/695-5585
4-7 CANADIAN Gene Howe Wildlife Management Area Summer Adventure Series 806/323-5397
7-9 WICHITA FALLS Red River Rodeo 940/592-2156
8-9 CROSS PLAINS Robert E. Howard Days 254/725-6562

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- The Promise
- Somervell County Museum

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8-9
PAMPA
 Burnin' the Bricks in June
 Old Pampa Drag
 806/669-3241

8-10
HAMLIN
 Centennial Celebration
 & Homecoming
 325/576-3501

SAN ANGELO
 Festival on the Concho
 325/655-9866

8-17
ABILENE
 Texas High School
 Rodeo Association
 State Finals
 325/677-4376

8-Aug 18
CANYON
 TEXAS Musical Drama
 806/655-2181

9
CROSS PLAINS
 Barbarian Festival
 254/725-6562

GORMAN
 Tour of the Peanut Country
 Bike Ride
 254/734-3810

HAMLIN
 5-K Run/Walk
 325/576-2731

SAN ANGELO
 Frontier Day at Fort Concho
 325/481-2646

13-16
DUMAS
 Dogie Days Celebration
 806/935-2123

14-15
SWEETWATER
 VW Bug & Caravan Rally
 325/235-5488

14-16
COLEMAN
 70th Annual PRCA Rodeo
 325/625-2163

WICHITA FALLS
 Legends of Western Swing
 Music Festival
 972/612-9598

14-17
BOYS RANCH
 Youth Cowboy Poetry
 & Music Gathering
 803/322-2635 or
 800/687-3722

16
ABILENE
 Summer Music Festival
 Concert
 325/670-1431

AMARILLO
 Top of Texas Music Revue
 806/670-0847

SAN ANGELO
 Campfire Concert
 325/481-2646

WICHITA FALLS
 Oil Bowl Football Classic
 & Parade
 940/692-9390

21-23
BIG SPRING
 74th Cowboy Reunion
 & Rodeo
 432/263-8485

21-23, 28-30
ALBANY
 69th Fort Griffin Fandangle
 325/762-3838

22
MINERAL WELLS
 Bluegrass Festival
 940/325-2557

22-24
MORTON
 Texas' Last Frontier
 Heritage Celebration/
 Buffalo Soldier
 Living History Encampment
 806/266-5484

23
BIG SPRING
 Old Settlers Reunion
 432/267-8255

PAMPA
 Bike Tour
 806/669-3241

23-24
PAMPA
 Junior Rodeo
 806/669-3241

28-30
AMARILLO
 Will Rogers
 Range Riders Rodeo
 806/622-2102

29-Jul 1
SAN ANGELO
 Lake Nasworthy
 Drag Boat Races
 325/655-4136

**29-30, Jul 6-8,
 12-15, 19-21**
CISCO
 The Great Santa Claus
 Bank Robbery
 254/442-5019

30
OLD GLORY
 Old Glory Texas Days
 Celebration
 940/989-3609

PINEY WOODS

1-2
LIVINGSTON
 Alabama Coushatta Powwow
 936/563-1100

1-3
LONGVIEW
 AlleyFest
 903/237-4000

1-3, 8-10
NACOGDOCHES
 Our Town
 936/564-8300

2
HENDERSON
 Downtown Block Party
 903/657-6551

LUFKIN
 Neches River Rendezvous
 936/634-6305

2-3
TYLER
 Texas Guitar Festival
 903/531-1349

2, 9, 16, 23
SHENANDOAH
 Music on the Plaza
 at Portofino
 800/207-9463

6-9
GLADEWATER
 Round Up Rodeo
 903/845-5126

7
CONROE
 City of Conroe
 Concert in the Park
 936/522-3025

8-9
CROCKETT
 Fiddlers Festival
 936/544-2359

8, 10
LONGVIEW
 Opera East Texas
 903/234-1300

9
JACKSONVILLE
 Tomato Fest
 903/586-2217

NACOGDOCHES
 Texas Blueberry Festival
 888/653-3788

14
LUFKIN
 Flag Day
 936/634-6305

16
CONROE
 Juneteenth Jazz Fest
 936/672-5623

16
HUNTSVILLE
 Juneteenth Celebration
 936/291-1626

22-23
CENTER
 Shelby County Sheriff's Posse
 PRCA Rodeo
 936/598-8453
 or 598-3682

23
CONROE
 Guy Clark
 936/441-SHOW

29-30
HUGHES SPRINGS
 Hometown Fourth
 & Barbecue Cookoff
 903/639-2351

WOODVILLE
 Whispers in the Wind
 Historical Outdoor Play
 409/283-2272

30
JASPER
 Patriotic Celebration
 409/384-5231

TEXARKANA
 Sparks in the Park
 903/798-3978

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

1
DALLAS
 George Benson & Al Jarreau
 214/692-0203

WACO
 Brazos Nights Concert
 254/750-5781

1-2
GATESVILLE
 34th Annual Shivee
 254/865-2617

PALESTINE
 Heritage Balloon Festival
 903/723-1914
 or 723-3014

SEGUIN
 Fiestas Juan Seguin
 800/580-7322

YOAKUM
 Tom Tom Festival
 361/293-2309

1-3
ARLINGTON
 Texas Scottish Festival
 & Highland Games
 800/363-7268

1-10
FORT WORTH
 (began May 19)
 Fort Worth Opera Festival
 817/731-0726

2
BUCKHOLTS
 Cotton Festival
 281/374-0644
 or 732-1614

COMANCHE
 Comanche Cyclone
 Bicycle Tour
 254/842-5492

MESQUITE
 Mesquite Rodeo Bike Ride
 972/741-5900

PALESTINE
 Embrace the Arts
 903/723-3014 or
 800/659-3484

2-3
McKINNEY
 Art & Jazz Festival
 972/547-2660

OAKLAND
 Fireman's Festival
 979/263-5575

SEGUIN
 Rural Heritage Days
 800/580-7322

WAXAHACHIE
 Gingerbread Trail
 Historic Homes Tour
 972/937-0681


2-9
NAVASOTA
 Grimes County Fair
 936/873-2284
 or 825-6600

2, 9, 23
COLLEGE STATION
 Starlight Music Series
 979/764-3486


3
FLATONIA
 Sacred Heart
 Spring Festival
 361/865-3568

3, 10, 17, 24
SEGUIN
 Sunday Concerts in the Park
 Series
 800/580-7322

4, 11, 18, 25
MESQUITE
 Mesquite Symphonic Band
 972/216-8125



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5-17
DALLAS
Chicago
 214/565-1116

5, 12, 19, 26
LEWISVILLE
 Summer Concert Series
 972/219-3401

7-10
LOCKHART
 Chisholm Trail Roundup
 Barbecue Cookoff
 & Music Festival
 512/398-2818

7, 14, 21, 28
ROCKWALL
 Concert by the Lake Series
 972/771-5733

8-9
COOPER
 Delta County Jamboree
 & Barbecue Cookoff
 903/395-4314

ELGIN
 Juneteenth Festival
 512/281-2477

8-10
DALLAS
 CityArts Celebration
 972/943-4624 or
 214/571-1301

FORESTBURG
 Sesquicentennial
 Celebration
 940/964-2455

8-16
GREENVILLE
 Hunt County Fair
 903/454-1503

SULPHUR SPRINGS
 Hopkins County
 Dairy Festival
 903/885-8071

8, 15, 22, 29
ADDISON
 Summer Salsa
 800/233-4766

**8-10, 14-17,
 21-24, 28-Jul 1**
SHERMAN
South Pacific
 903/892-8818

9
ATHENS
 Uncle Fletch's Burger &
 Barbecue Cookoff & Festival
 903/520-3595
 or 675-5165

FORT WORTH
 IndyCar Series
 Bombardier Learjet 550
 817/215-8500

SULPHUR SPRINGS
 Texas State Champion
 Homemade Ice Cream
 Freeze Off
 903/885-6515

THURBER
 70th Reunion
 254/672-5337
 or 631-5747

9-10
TERRELL
 Antique Tractor & Engine
 Show
 972/563-5703 or
 214/369-5517

9-Jul 14
ROUND TOP
 37th Annual International
 Festival-Institute
 979/249-3129

11
GRAND PRAIRIE
 Norah Jones
 214/373-8000

12
YOAKUM
 Country Music USA
 361/293-2843

13-16
CLEBURNE
 Johnson County
 Sheriff's Posse
 PRCA Rodeo
 817/556-9910

WEATHERFORD
 Parker County Sheriff's Posse
 Rodeo
 817/599-9076

13-17, 21-Jul 21
DALLAS
 Shakespeare in the Park
 214/559-2778

14
COLLEGE STATION
 Celebration of Juneteenth
 979/691-4069

FORT WORTH
 George Jones
 817/212-4280

15-16
GREENVILLE
 Audie Murphy Days
 903/450-4502

WEIMAR
 Juneteenth Celebration
 979/725-6207

15-24
GARLAND
Hello, Dolly!
 972/205-2790
 or 675-5584

16
ATHENS
 Power Maiden
 Sprint Triathlon
 903/677-2000

BRYAN
 Texas Reds:
 Steak & Grape Festival
 979/209-5526

CLEBURNE
 Juneteenth Parade & Festival
 817/556-3716

DENTON
 Juneteenth Celebration
 940/349-7275

FARMERSVILLE
 Audie Murphy Day Celebration
 972/784-6846

FORT WORTH
 Lake Worth Classic Car Show
 817/237-4731
 or 797-1197

PALESTINE
 Dogwood Jamboree
 903/729-5611
 or 729-7080

17
DALLAS
 Chamber Music at the Nasher
 214/692-0203

19
ANDERSON
 Juneteenth Celebration
 936/873-2215
 or 825-6600

GIDDINGS
 Youth Rodeo Finals
 979/822-0843

MESQUITE
 Shelley Carroll Quartet
 972/216-6444

19-23
ELGIN
 Western Days
 512/285-4515

19-Jul 8
DALLAS
 Monty Python's
 Spamalot
 214/565-1116

21-24
LULING
 Watermelon Thump
 830/875-3214

21-24, 28-Jul 1
FORT WORTH
 Miss Witherspoon
 817/923-3012

22-23
THORNTON
 Homecoming
 254/385-6713

22-24
DE LEON
 Quilt Show
 254/893-2634

ENNIS
 Texas Motorplex
 O'Reilly Chevy Spectacular
 Weekend
 972/878-4748

ROWLETT
 Festival of Freedom
 972/412-6192

23
BELLVILLE
 Summer Music Festival
 979/865-3407

FORT WORTH
 Classic Car Show
 817/244-2972
 or 797-1197

Gordon Lightfoot
 817/212-4280 or
 877/212-4280

WAXAHACHIE
 Cow Creek Country Classic
 Bike Rally
 972/937-2390

24-30
BOWIE
 Jim Bowie Days Festival,
 Parade & Rodeo
 940/872-1173

24-Jul 7
FORT WORTH
 American
 Paint Horse Association
 World Championship Show
 817/392-7469

26-27
DALLAS
 The Police
 214/373-8000

26-28
ARLINGTON
 Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse
 817/861-2287

28-30
CELINA
 Balloon Festival
 972/382-3600

TEAGUE
 Rodeo
 254/739-2558

28-Jul 1
CANTON
 First Monday Trade Days
 903/567-6556

GRAND PRAIRIE
 Damn Yankees
 972/642-2787

29-30
ADDISON
 The Music Man
 800/233-4766

AVERY
 Historic Avery
 Tomato Festival
 903/684-3825
 or 684-5510

WHITESBORO
 Rodeo & Fireworks
 903/564-3731

29-Jul 1
McKINNEY
 Seven Brides
 for Seven Brothers
 469/742-6313

SEGUIN
 Freedom Fiesta
 800/580-7322

29-Jul 15
BRENNHAM
 Harvey
 979/830-8358

30
CLEBURNE
 Fourth of July Celebration
 817/645-2455

GRAND PRAIRIE
 Alysheba
 Breeders Cup Stakes
 972/263-7223

McKINNEY
 Chili Cookoff
 214/544-0500

Classic & Custom Car
 Show
 214/544-0550

MIDWAY
 Fish Fry & Fireworks
 936/348-3591

SULPHUR SPRINGS
 Independence Day
 Celebration
 888/300-6623

30-Jul 1
GARLAND
 Star Spangled Fourth
 972/205-2749

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

1
SAN ANTONIO
 Southtown First Friday
 210/222-1521

3, 9-10, 17
WESLACO
 Festival de Guitarra
 956/968-9142

8-10
SAN ANTONIO
 Texas Folklife Festival
 210/458-2224

15
SAN ANTONIO
 Gartenkonzert
 210/222-1521

16
SAN ANTONIO
 Norah Jones
 210/224-9600

16-17
BEEVILLE
 Back Through Time
 History Celebration
 361/375-2558

29-Jul 2
SAN ANTONIO
 Arts & Crafts Show
 210/227-4262

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HOLLY DUNCAN, *Wichita Falls*

Family Cow Creamery is 5 miles from Crowell. Take Texas 6 north for 5 miles, turn east on FM 3103, and go south on CR 219 for 1 mile. Call 940/684-1269. For store locations throughout Texas, visit www.familycowmilk.com. Milk flavors include banana, cookies and cream, and green apple, as well as plain ol' white. The hormone-free creamery is owned and operated by fifth-generation dairy farmers.

DURING a recent trip to **Boerne**, we ate at **Bear Moon Bakery Café**. The grilled eggplant, onion, tomato, and cheese sandwich on home-made bread is about the best sandwich I have ever tasted. It comes with a nice side salad. I love cooking, so I asked the waiter if they grill the vegetables in olive oil to give them such a great flavor. It turns out it's the same citrus vinaigrette dressing used in the salad. Lovely artwork on the walls, good coffee, and a friendly wait staff make it a wonderful experience in a nice Hill Country town.

DEBRA BEMENT SEAMANS, *Georgetown*
Bear Moon Bakery Café is at 401 S. Main St.; 830/816-BEAR.

I ENJOYED reading your motorcycling article [in the April issue]. I was wondering how you could have missed the **Garven Store** in **Mountain Home**? It's always a motorcycle stopover for a bite to eat and a cold drink.

DAN McATEE, *Austin*

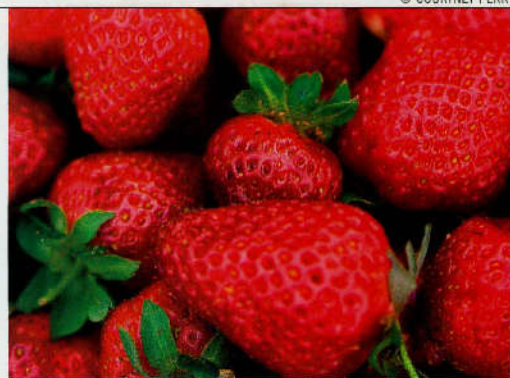
Garven Store is at 27304 US 83 North; 830/640-3235; www.garvenstore.com.

BUSINESS has us traveling frequently between Houston and Dallas. The highway is long, but one stop makes it all worthwhile: **Rancho Viejo Mexican Restaurant** in **Buffalo**. We've never had a bad dish, but we do have several favorites. For an appetizer, try the "Papa Nachos," made with sliced baked potatoes instead of tortilla chips and topped with beef, chicken, sausage,

I WANT to tell you about a place worth visiting: **The Strawberry Patch** in **Wharton**, owned by Weldon and Melissa Boerger. The berries are top grade, and you can either pick them yourself or [call ahead] and have them pick some for you. There's also a peach orchard, and Melissa makes all kinds of jams and jellies, which are for sale at the gift shop. They also serve fresh strawberry ice cream by the cup. One thing that's especially interesting is a world map hanging from a wall with colored pins showing where visitors are from. It's amazing how many people visit from foreign countries. Just recently, a couple from Australia came by on their second trip to the United States to get strawberries.

CARLENE COTTON, *Wharton*

The Strawberry Patch is at 7622 FM 1301; 979/531-0048; www.texasberrypatch.com. Get there fast! Strawberry season ends in mid-May, while peach season continues through mid-June.



When picking strawberries, look for fruits that are plump, firm, and red throughout. And don't overlook the smaller ones. Oftentimes, they're the most flavorful.

or bacon, and covered in cheese and gravy. It's served with guacamole, sour cream, and jalapeños. For an entrée, the "Tortugas Plate" can't be beat! It includes two golden-fried avocados filled with beef or chicken and topped with Monterey Jack cheese. A cheese puff and rice come on the side. My husband's favorite is the "Anaheim Enchiladas," a long, mild pepper filled with beef or chicken fajita meat, rolled in a flour tortilla, and covered with chili and cheese. *Muy bueno!*

PEGGY CALDWELL, *Huffman*

Rancho Viejo Mexican Restaurant is at 335 Craig St.; 903/322-7474; www.ranchoviejo.com. An additional location is at 102 S. Elm St. in Madisonville; 936/348-6000.

YOU NEED to check out **Latigo Café-Bakery** in **Bellville** for basic cowboy food and fancy gourmet dining. Chef Doug Atkinson has a large following, an interesting background, and an impressive résumé. The restaurant even does catering for many of the town's events, and is within walking distance to the town square and courthouse.

KATHY CLEVELAND, *Friendswood*

Latigo Café-Bakery is at 412 E. Main St.; 979/865-9066; www.latigobrand.com. Cobb

salad, pulled-pork sandwiches, molasses-glazed quail, and lemon-pepper catfish are just a few of the items served.

I HIGHLY recommend **Raphael's Restaurante Mexicano** in **Aubrey**. I held my daughter's college graduation dinner there in 1999 and didn't get back for another visit until recently. I'm happy to say that the food and service remain topnotch. My daughter and son-in-law found their brisket tacos excellent, and I can say the same for my garlic shrimp. The charro beans and *pollo a la parrilla* were also really tasty; the servers refilled our (free) chips and salsa without being asked.

SABRINA O'CONNOR, *Austin*

Raphael's Restaurante Mexicano is at 26615 US 380 East, Ste. 100, 10 miles east of Denton (near Little Elm); 940/440-9483.

Next month... We're going to the dogs—or rather, with them—on some fun, **pooch-friendly trips**. We'll journey to **El Paso's historic missions**, explore old favorites and new finds in **Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio**, and discover what's cookin' in Texas' "**Hidden Kitchens**." And we'll bring you the scoop on **Blue Bell's 100th anniversary**, too!

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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window on TEXAS

MOSS-DRAPED CYPRESS TREES rise majestically out of Mill Pond at Caddo Lake State Park. For more information on this 478-acre state park and others, visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

■ To order a print of this photograph, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.magazineprints.com.

