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# OVER THE UNKNOWN COAST!

CRITIC'S SEAFOOD PICKS ■ REEF ADVENTURES ■ WATERPARK FRENZY

# THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS TEXAS

## H I G H W A Y S

MAY 2008

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# easy escapes



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Standing on the Galveston Seawall just across the boulevard from the stately Hotel Galvez, I wish I could rewind history, and learn more about some of the changes the grand hotel has witnessed in its near-century. One dramatic event was the 1915 hurricane, which roared ashore in a frenzy as intense as the hurricane that nearly destroyed the island in 1900.

The structure on which I'm standing—the Seawall itself—made the difference between the effects of the two storms. Visionary Galvestonians constructed the wall high enough to withstand the 1915 storm surge, so the hotel (built in 1911) weathered the brutal attack. Another amazing feat accomplished in those between-storm years was the elevation of more than 500 blocks of the island, including 2,000 buildings. Dredged sand increased the island elevation from zero to 16 feet behind the seawall, then sloped gradually across the island toward the bay. The result: Floodwater drains toward the bay, leaving the new land intact. The 1915 storm was outmatched by this infrastructure. Imagine the public endurance required to slog through that messy, but essential, project. Definitely a big idea.

I wonder what other big ideas might be required to keep a city like Galveston thriving. I'm impressed by the ongoing and extensive preservation efforts in Galveston's historic neighborhoods. Even the Galvez seems more grand following recent extensive renovation and stands renewed, ready to host the coming generation of visitors.

I pay particular attention to one unexpected symbol of new technology that sits in the Galvez parking lot. The 36-foot-tall, oil-derrick-looking contraption, called the **SeaDog**, is a pump designed to sit in the Gulf and harness wave energy to pump water. The SeaDog has succeeded its initial testing by Independent Natural Resources Inc., working with Texas A&M University. "Expanded tests of the unit will soon be underway," explains INRI's Mark Thomas. Assuming the tests go as planned, SeaDog pumps can provide energy and desalinated water—two essential ingredients for human survival—for both the city's residents and its tourists. It's the sort of innovation that could make a difference for cities like Galveston. And it could be another big idea. Take a look at [www.inri.us](http://www.inri.us).



The SeaDog pump, on display near the Hotel Galvez, is designed to harness the power of waves to generate energy.

*Charles J. Lohrmann*

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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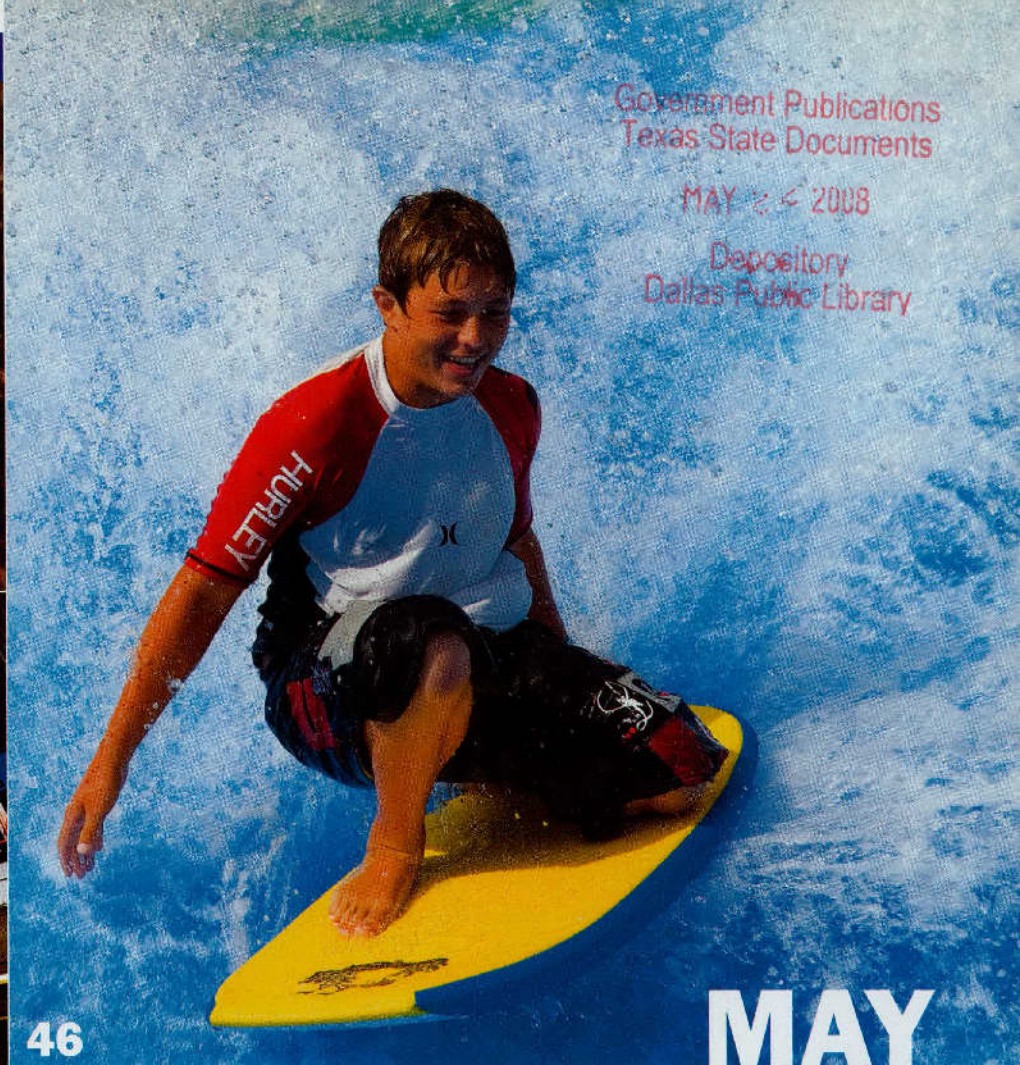




36



30



46

MAY  
2008Government Publications  
Texas State Documents

MAY 2008

Depository  
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## DEPARTMENTS

- 2 TALK TO TH** Readers sound off
- 6 FOR THE ROAD**  
Top picks and places
- 10 SPOTLIGHT ON ...**  
The Woodlands
- 14 TOP TABLES**  
Austin's year-round farmers markets
- 17 SPEAKING OF TEXAS**  
History, folklore, and fascinating facts
- 64 JUST PASSING THROUGH**  
Fort Boggy State Park/Centerville
- 67 TH TRAVELER**  
A roundup of May activities
- 72 READERS RECOMMEND**  
Travel tips from TH readers
- 73 WINDOW ON TEXAS**  
Sunflower with Bee/Marathon

## FEATURES

- 18 A TH MOMENT WITH ELMER KELTON** "All-time Best Western Author" Elmer Kelton shares his thoughts on writing, J. Frank Dobie, country music, and his beloved West Texas.  
BY MAXINE MAYES, PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER
- 22 UNKNOWN COAST** A collection of enticing hideouts—from Port Aransas and Rockport to Palacios to Crystal Beach—awaits along the central portion of Texas' Gulf Coast.  
BY JUNE NAYLOR, PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER
- 30 CRITIC'S CATCH: GOING COASTAL FOR SEAFOOD** A restaurant reviewer casts his net for succulent seafood at eight of his favorite coastal dining spots.  
BY DALE RICE, PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH
- 36 UNDER THE SEA** Man-made but nature-approved, artificial reefs formed on sunken ships and offshore oil rigs add to the wonders down under in Gulf waters.  
BY RAE NADLER-OLENICK, PHOTOGRAPHS BY JESSE CANCELMO
- 46 H2O-00000** From "lazy river" to Master Blaster, wet, wild, and wonderful fun is the order of the day at all three of the state's Schlitterbahns.  
BY MELISSA GASKILL

**ABOUT OUR COVERS** FRONT: For equestrians like Kurtis Williams, shown riding his six-year-old Quarter Horse, Dungareez, on the beach at Matagorda Bay Nature Park, it doesn't get any better than this. *Photo by Kevin Vandivier.* BACK: A vintage Coca-Cola chest and a wood-and-metal flag dress up the covered patio of Castaways Seafood and Grill in Port Aransas. The casual decor typifies Port A's relaxed vibe. *Photo by J. Griffis Smith.* (To order a print of this photograph, see instructions at left.)

PHOTOS FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: © JESSE CANCELMO; © ROBERT MIHOVIL; J. GRIFFIS SMITH

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## Eyes on the Pies

THE DAY after reading Charles Lohmann's story about the "Magic of Meringue" [Top Tables, March] at the Koffee Kup in Hico, I kidnapped my husband for lunch and we drove there. It was everything we expected, and more. We split a lunch and bought six different flavors of pie to share, both at the restaurant and at home. Even if we did have to battle a rainstorm, it was well worth the trip. We will return to see more of the town.

SHEILA GRISSOM  
Fort Worth

## If the Muleshoe Fits

I WAS excited to read Gerald McLeod's article on Muleshoe [March]. My mother was born in

a place called West Camp, between Muleshoe and Farwell. She remembers a community similar to Walnut Grove in the "Little House" series with a church and a school. My husband grew up in Muleshoe—he wrote his first letter to me at the Dinner Bell restaurant after we met at my aunt's house. Thank you for an excellent magazine.

ONIECE BLAIR  
Carrollton

I WAS looking forward to reading the Muleshoe article, as we stay there several times a year, but the photographer's "unusual technique" of multiple photographs does

not multiply their impact. I thought my glasses had broken.

JIM GLENN  
Blanco

ED. NOTE: *Keep those glasses, Jim! We found Artie Limmer's technique interesting—a fresh and whimsical way to illustrate the story. With hundreds of Texas towns to cover, we like to throw in some visual variety now and then.*

ALAMO Heights High School [in San Antonio] has a bronze mule in full action sculpted by alumnus and local artist George Schroeder. It is a magnificent piece and a far greater tribute to the esteemed beast than the one in Muleshoe.

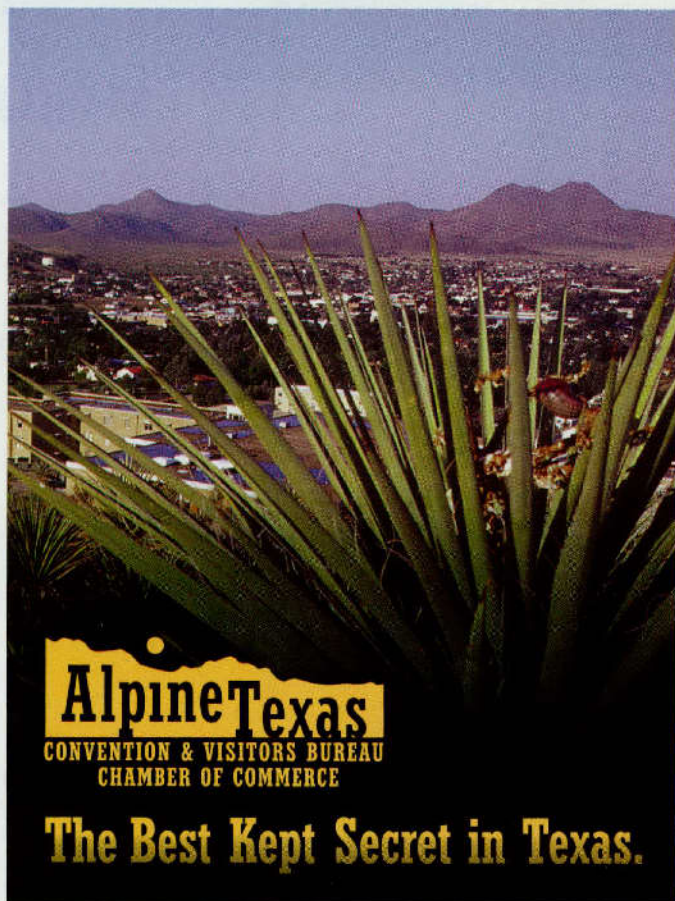
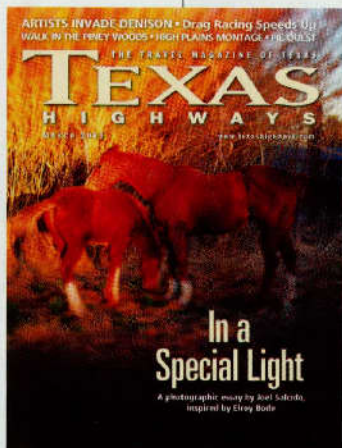
JACK VEXLER  
San Antonio

ED. NOTE: *Ears to you, Jack, for telling us about another mule tribute. Readers, you can find a photo of Alamo Heights High School's mule sculpture at [www.ahisd.net](http://www.ahisd.net) (it's part of the slide show on the home page). Go Mules!*

## Restore Your Image

IMAGES Gallery was not included in the story on Denison's art scene [by Randy Mallory; March issue]. We have a beautiful gallery in a beautifully restored, late-1800s building at 408 W. Main—right in the middle of Denison's Art Block. We showcase a group of 22 talented artists who have a variety of styles and mediums. As stated in the article, the Denison Spring Art Tour is a fun event with lots of artists doing demonstrations of their work.

M.M. ROBINSON  
Denison



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### May 2008

FORT DAVIS MEMORIAL DAY - Fort Davis Historical Site  
[www.fortdavis.com](http://www.fortdavis.com)

May 3-4 FIESTA CINCO DE MAYO - Come celebrate with us!

### June 2008

June 20-21 FIESTA DEL SOL

Downtown Alpine comes alive in the evening during this Summer Solstice Celebration. *Info: Jean Hardy, (432) 837-3360*

### July 2008

HOTTER THAN HELL DRAG RACES - Presidio

July 4 FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION - Kokernot Park, Alpine  
Parade at 5pm - Games, Drinks, Food and Fireworks after sunset  
*Info: Rhonda Cole, (432) 837-5539*

July 8-9 SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI RODEO REUNION ROPING  
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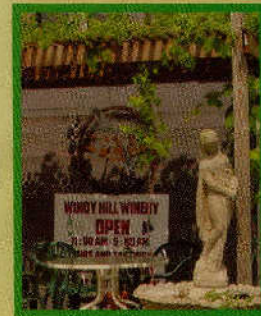
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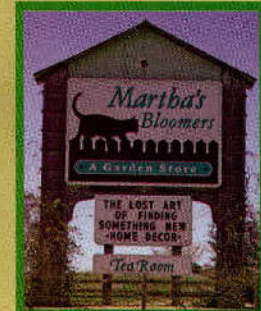
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# TALK to TH

## The Amazing Race

SHEILA Scarborough's article on Texas drag racing [March] was great. We are members of the North Texas Mustang Club, and our race team consists of ladies and gents mostly over 50. We race with other teams nine times a year in the Muscle Car Club Challenge. We race for points and are rewarded at an end-of-the-year banquet with trophies and jackets. Your article lets others know that drag racing in Texas, be it professional or amateur, is fun—and we are realizing our dreams to watch and race.

GEORGE FOWLER

Mabank

## Taking the Long Way

IN THE March issue's Table of Contents, you say that Clint is "a small town southwest of El Paso." I suppose you could make it that way, but it would be a long trip.

I was surprised that no mention was made in the article of the old radio station "XELO, Clint, Texas," and the Baby Chicks [by Mail] offer [through an advertising program]. Yes, we ordered some chicks, and the mailman delivered them.

KEN SUHLER

San Antonio

ED. NOTE: Thanks for the gentle correction, Ken. Yes, Clint is southeast, not southwest, of El Paso. What can we say—we like to explore! Readers, for more on XELO and other border radio stations, we recommend longtime TH contributor Gene Fowler's book (co-written with Bill Crawford) *Border Radio: Quacks, Yodelers, Pitchmen, Psychics, and Other Amazing Broadcasters of the American Airwaves* (University of Texas Press, 2002). It says that by the mid-1950s, "American radio fans had a plethora of border radio stations from which to choose. ... And across the Rio Grande from El Paso in Juárez was XELO, which received its mail in the tiny town of Clint, Texas. 'That's C, as in corn, L-I-N-T, Texas,' as singing cowboy Slim Hawkins told the folks."

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

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*del Guadalupe*



# For THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

© KEVIN VANDIVIER

## Lavender, Take Me Away

AH, LAVENDER. YOU COULD CALL it the workhorse of the herb world. Its aroma—sweet and herbal and fresh—soothes frayed nerves. It stars in luscious balms, lotions, and other beauty potions. It's lovely to look at, too, a deeply hued purple dusted with blue; and it adds an unexpected taste note in tea, pound cakes, ice cream, and other treats. And as if all those accolades weren't enough, its admirers and growers are such fun that they plan several months' worth of festivities to celebrate the blooming season.



Lavender thrives in the Texas Hill Country, thanks to a climate that resembles that of the Mediterranean.

First up, in **Stonewall** on May 17-18, is the 10th annual **Lavender Festival at Becker Vineyards**, which grows lavender as well as grapes. Give yourself ample time to tour the winery and sample a few wines, then settle in for hourly cooking demonstrations and presentations on such topics as growing and crafting with lavender. Also on the grounds, more than 50 vendors will offer lavender-spiked items ranging from bath salts to artwork. If you can plan in advance, make a reservation for a lavender-themed luncheon or dinner. The Lavender Festival at Becker Vineyards kicks off a six-week celebration of lavender known as the **Fredericksburg Lavender Trail: Farm to Table**, during which the area's five lavender farms open for tours and many of Fredericksburg's restaurants feature lavender in their recipes.

On June 14 and 15, the 4th annual **Blanco Lavender Festival** continues the celebration. Not only will the grounds of the Blanco County Courthouse bustle with vendors, speakers, and lavender-themed demonstrations, but eight farms open for free tours and activities ranging from gardening workshops to chair massages. On Saturday evening, the event continues in downtown Blanco, where you can enjoy a lavender-themed meal prepared by local caterers, plus live music in the park.

How did lavender take root in an area known for its goats and peaches? Writer Jeannie Ralston, who helped kick-start the region's



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lavender revolution in 1999 with her husband, photographer Robb Kendrick, tells all in her first book, *The Unlikely Lavender Queen: A Memoir of Unexpected Blossoming* (Broadway Books), which will hit bookstores this month. In lavender and love, Ralston writes, she found a new side of herself.

We can't promise you love. But we can give you lavender. For more details, contact Becker Vineyards (830/644-2681; [www.beckervineyards.com](http://www.beckervineyards.com)); Fredericksburg Lavender Trail ([www.fredericksburg-texas.com](http://www.fredericksburg-texas.com)); and Blanco Lavender Festival ([www.blancolavenderfest.com](http://www.blancolavenderfest.com)). —L.M.

## TAKE THE HIGHWAY

FASCINATED BY FREEWAYS? ME, TOO. Though it's kind of a love/hate thang. They're great when traffic is flowing smoothly, but not so good when there's impending gridlock. We're all headed somewhere almost every day, and often that involves a multi-lane superhighway. Face it: Trains, buses, subways, HOV lanes, loopy spaghetti-bowl interchanges, and imaginative 21st-Century mass-transit paradigms are parts of our realities.

Nowhere is the story of Texas freeways more thoughtfully and comprehensively presented than at Erik Slotboom's Web site [www.houstonfreeways.com](http://www.houstonfreeways.com). Slotboom, a Houston native with mechanical engineering degrees from Texas A&M and The University of Texas, literally wrote the book, *Houston Freeways—A Historical and Visual Journey* (downloadable on the Web site). The site is chock-full of interesting content, including vintage black-and-white and modern color photographs. It makes a convincing case that Houston (and not Los Angeles) is the world's most freeway-influenced city.

For additional stops on the information highway regarding this Texas transportation theme, check out [www.dfwfreeways.info](http://www.dfwfreeways.info), [www.texasfreeway.com](http://www.texasfreeway.com), [www.texhwyman.com/san.htm](http://www.texhwyman.com/san.htm), and [www.texastransportationforum.com](http://www.texastransportationforum.com). Buckle up, drive safely, and we'll see ya on the road.

—M.L.

## A KIOWA SKETCHBOOK

THERE IS NO MORE COLORFUL OR STRIKING American figure than the fierce horseback warrior of the Plains tribes. If the settling of the West is, as depicted in Western films, a sweeping pageant, the Plains warrior is a tragic hero: powerful, misunderstood, and doomed to defeat by an overwhelming and dominant force beyond his experience.

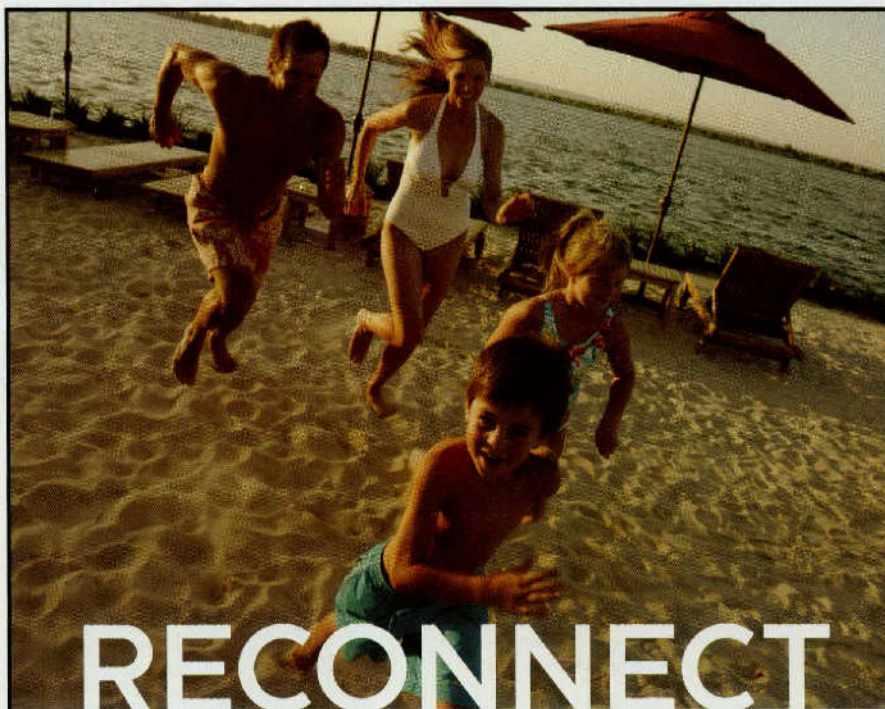
As the last warriors were imprisoned during the final quarter of the 19th Century, many were en-

couraged by their U.S. Army captors to illustrate the nomadic Plains way of life and warfare by creating colorful and graphic drawings in blank ledger books. In most cases, these drawings were sold to Army officers who kept them as mementos. Eventually, the ledger drawings earned the status of true art and of historic records and survived in the archives of museums and libraries.

One such collection of drawings forms the nucleus of an exhibit titled *A Kiowa's Odyssey: A Sketchbook from Fort Marion*, which will be on display at the **Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum** in Canyon through May 26. The original

32-page sketchbook, now disassembled, contains drawings made in 1877 by a Kiowa warrior named Etahdleuh Doanmoe. The drawings illustrate Doanmoe's experiences, along with those of 71 other Plains men who were captured by the U.S. Army and exiled from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to prison at Fort Marion in St. Augustine, Florida.

Although other sketchbooks and hundreds of individual sketches from Fort Marion survive in public and private collections, this one is among a small group that prison director Lieutenant Richard Pratt kept and the only one to which he added his own typewritten captions. Pratt eventu-



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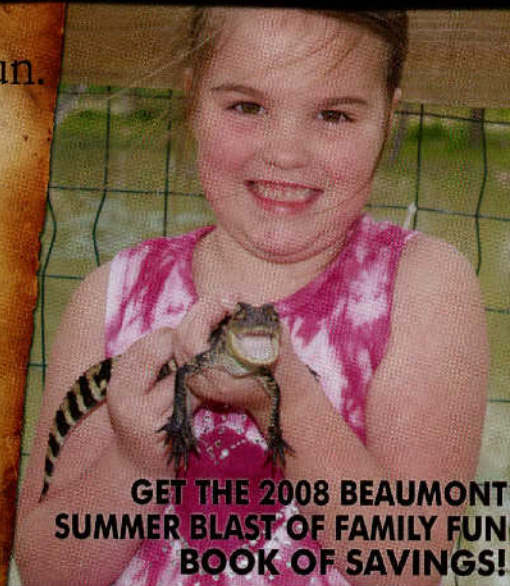
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## For THE ROAD

ally presented the sketchbook to his son Mason, who subsequently reorganized it into an album and added a preface and photos of the artist. Thus, as the exhibit explains, the sketchbook represents a layering of "voices" that span more than a century.

For more on this exhibit, call 806/651-2244; [www.panhandleplains.org](http://www.panhandleplains.org). —C.L.

### DIGGING THE WEB

A LITTLE-KNOWN "MUSEUM" CALLED **TEXAS Beyond History** has been taking armchair travelers to new heights, or depths, if you will, since 2001. Accessed through the Web site [www.texasbeyondhistory.net](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net), the virtual attraction is a collaboration between the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and 16 other organizations. It showcases the fruits of more than 80 years of research and allows visitors to tour more than 50 archeological sites throughout the state, many of which are inaccessible to actual travelers.

One such site is Hinds Cave in the arid Lower Pecos area, where researchers in the 1970s found unusually well-preserved fragments of ancient life. Hinds Cave holds the story of at least 9,000 years of hunter-gatherer activity. Online visitors can explore it from many perspectives; for example, you can view images of sandals made from yucca fibers, then flip to another page to see how researchers mapped where prehistoric humans cooked and slept. A click of the mouse, and you can delve into details about the excavation.

The Web site also covers archeological sites that are open to the public, including Hueco Tanks near El Paso, an oasis frequented for millennia by hunter-gatherers, desert farmers, and later travelers; Mission Espiritu Santo, a Spanish-Colonial site near Goliad; and Fort McKavett, a mid-19th-Century fort near Menard. Thanks to the treasure-trove of interpretive material at Texas Beyond History, a virtual visit to one of these sites proves a great prelude to the real thing.

—N.M.

### HAPPY BIRTHDAY, HEMISFAIR

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UTSA's Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio celebrates the 40th anniversary of the fair with the exhibit *HemisFair 1968: San Antonio's Introduction to the World*, on view through April 2009.

Along with photographs documenting the many performers who represented their home countries, such as Mexico's emblematic *voladores* (flying dancers), the exhibit features samples of clothing donned at the fair, including the miniskirts sported by hostesses at the Woman's Pavilion and the pink gabardine coat worn by Lady Bird Johnson at the opening ceremony. Also on display are such communication innovations as the IBM Selectra Typewriter and the Princess telephone.

The fair, designed to celebrate the 250th anniversary of San Antonio's founding and establish the city as a hub for interactions between the United States and Latin America, transformed this South Texas metropolis at a pivotal time in history. Call 210/458-2330; [www.texan.cultures.com](http://www.texan.cultures.com).  
—SUZANNE EDWARDS

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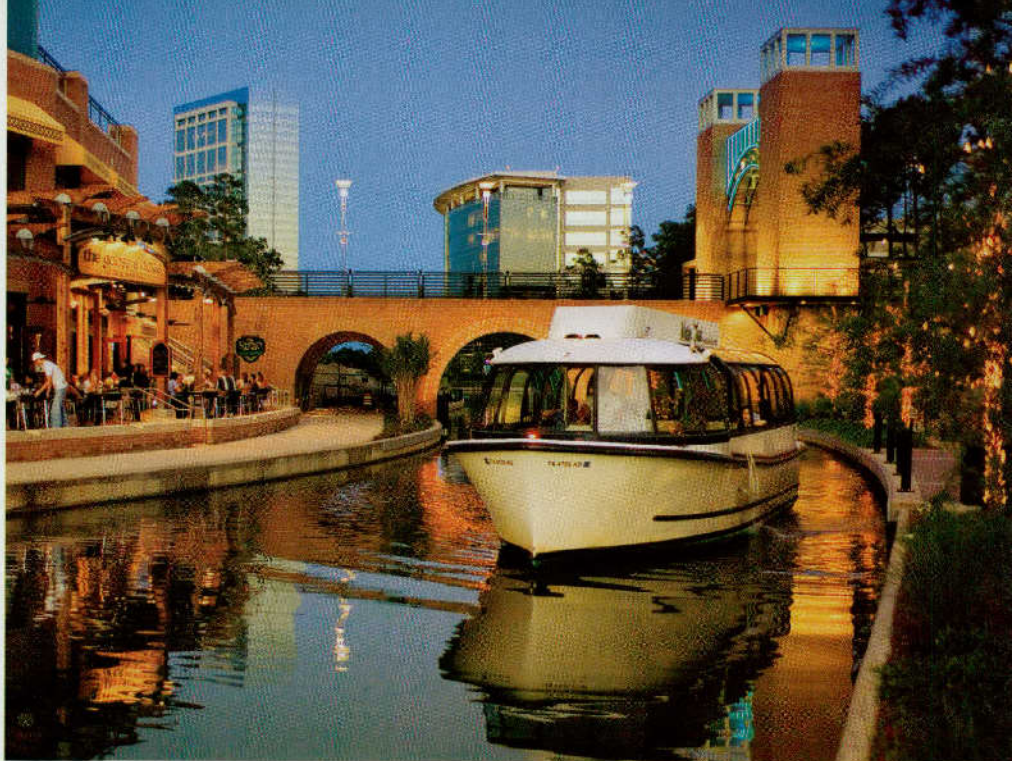


# Spotlight on THE WOODLANDS

## Fun in the Forest

"WHERE ELSE CAN YOU RIDE IN A water taxi to the mall?" exclaimed my friend Darla as she lobbied to lure me and my family to The Woodlands, the forested golfing and shopping hub 27 miles north of Houston. It was a hard sell: I'm not much of a shopper anymore, my husband hasn't picked up a putter in decades, and my young son just wants to run. Troubling images of us schlepping from boutique to box store flashed before my eyes—tired feet, tears, and tantrums (and I'm just talking about myself).

But Darla promised green expanses (100-plus parks), a wooded resort, outdoor sculpture, a world-class outdoor-concert venue, and The Woodlands Waterway (with that water-taxi ride)—enough family fun to keep even the Brady Bunch entertained



Forget traffic. Take a water taxi to your shopping, dining, or entertainment destination in The Woodlands.

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS/TED WASHINGTON


for several sunshine days. The consummate shopper, Darla also vowed to steal me away from the family for an afternoon of browsing and buying on Market Street.

And so my husband, Scott, young Lucas, and I were off for a weekend in The Woodlands. The zooms and fumes of Houston's I-45 eventually gave way to the peaceful, pine-lined streets in this master-planned community founded by businessman/real-estate developer George P. Mitchell in 1974. Intent on spending our first night in the thick of the forest of entertainment, we checked into the upscale, yet relaxed, Woodlands Waterway Marriott. And yes, it's right on the Waterway, home of the water-taxi rides, tops on Lucas' to-do list.


## HAIL TO THE WATER TAXI

JUST OUTSIDE THE HOTEL, WE BOARDED a taxi (one of six climate-controlled hybrid electric boats named for Texas rivers) and met Captain Sean. As we cruised past restaurants, parks, condos, and office buildings lining the 1.25-mile canal, Sean relayed local trivia over the loudspeaker: "The waterway (three- to five-foot deep) was originally a creek. ... In the distance is the 32-foot-tall *Millennium* sculpture, by Bruce White, with bird-shaped cutouts illuminated from within [one of 44 pieces of public art in the community]. There's the 32-story Anadarko Petroleum tower, the tallest building between Houston and Dallas." At one point, Sean asked the kids on board to move

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More than a golf and shopping mecca, The Woodlands offers 100-plus parks, a wooded resort, outdoor sculpture, and The Woodlands Waterway (with that water-taxi ride).

to one side of the boat and open the windows. He stealthily steered the craft by a large central fountain, and the suddenly-wet children giggled and dripped with delight.

The taxis make several stops along the route, including the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion (recently ranked fifth among the world's top 100 amphitheaters by *Pollstar Magazine*), Town Green Park (with its four-acre green space and kid-sized labyrinth featuring an Aesop's Fables theme), and our destination that afternoon, The Woodlands Mall.

#### A MALL FOR ME ... AND MINI-ME

THE WOODLANDS MALL harbors the typical top-notch mall offerings, anchored by Macy's and Dillard's. And it's one of the kid-friendliest malls around, with a full-sized carousel on the upper level, and a padded play area—surrounded by benches—for babies and toddlers. And there's also The Woodlands Children's Mu-



This way to Market Street, where an array of some 50 shops and restaurants awaits.

seum, where Lucas cleaned a giant set of teeth with rope-sized floss, donned a hard hat and grabbed a shovel for a dino excavation, and created his own watercolor originals.

Back at the taxi landing, I chatted with another captain, Dave, about the restaurants on either side of us. He said that Brio Tuscan Grille has the "best lasagna ever." Captain

Sean chimed in that "it's all good" at Rockfish Seafood Grill, where you can order "everything from pot roast to cedar-plank salmon without busting your budget."

Unfortunately, it wasn't dinnertime, but we had just enough time before the next taxi departure to duck into The Cheesecake Factory and tuck into rich slices of Godiva and Chocolate Tuxedo Cream cheesecake. We were so sugared up we could've swum back to the hotel, but we thought better of it.

#### WE'RE OFF TO MARKET STREET

WHEN DINNERTIME DID arrive, we drove only a mile from our hotel to Market Street—a shopping/dining/entertainment area with a quarter-acre Central Park and modern town-square design—our sights on Café Express. The "fast casual" restaurant (several locations in and around Houston and Dallas) was created by renowned chef Robert Del Grande, one of

the pioneers of modern Southwestern cuisine.

We ordered at the counter fronting the open kitchen, and sat down in a bright-red booth in the restaurant's vibrant environs with windows along each wall. In spite of the lively surroundings, mealtime was tellingly quiet as Scott and I savored our shared entrées, the Pasta Capri (linguine with shrimp, spinach, and a creamy roasted-tomato sauce) and Pasta Amore (penne pasta with roasted artichoke hearts, black-olive tapenade, roasted tomatoes, garlic, and pesto). Even the chicken tenders and fresh fruit pleased the palate of our sometimes-finicky four-year-old.

Afterward, we walked the "square," while I made mental notes on the stores and restaurants to get a head start on my Market Street excursion with Darla the next day. As we approached Central Park, Lucas made a beeline for some pop fountains, where children darted about, running to and from the water spouting from the ground. Never mind swimsuits; most of the kids sloshed about fully dressed, as did mine when he joined the splash-and-squeal extravaganza.

**FOR MORE** information on The Woodlands (pop. 88,000), contact **The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau**, 281/363-2447; [www.visitthewoodlands.com](http://www.visitthewoodlands.com). Along with the water taxis, you can also take trolleys to Market Street and several other attractions. For specific information on Market Street, including details on annual events like the Spring Fine Arts Festival (May 3, 2008) and Wine and Food Week (May 31-June 8, 2008), go to [www.marketstreet-thewoodlands.com](http://www.marketstreet-thewoodlands.com). Also see [www.thewoodlandsmall.com](http://www.thewoodlandsmall.com) and [www.woodlandsresort.com](http://www.woodlandsresort.com).



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# Spotlight ON THE WOODLANDS

As the sun set, colored lights transformed the dancing fountains into a liquid rainbow, enhancing the Mayberry-Disney-esque scene.

## PAMPERING IN THE PINES

THE NEXT MORNING, WE SLIPPED AWAY (just a few miles from the hubbub) to the forested Woodlands Resort. It was love at first sight—with the wooded surroundings and lake vistas, and nary a hint of snooty atmosphere. Our room was certainly posh, appointed with plush bedding and soft robes. But the luxury was almost for naught, as we spent most of our time at the resort's Forest Oasis Waterscape, with its three pools, the largest of which features a 3-D underwater marine mural and underwater music, waterplay area, and a double-helix water slide that only Scott dared to try. In the summer, daily poolside activities include water-balloon tosses and appearances by "Muffie," the ever-patient, face-painting clown, and in the evenings, s'more-making around a fire pit and Dive-In Movies.



S'more-making and "Dive-In Movies" keep summertime hoppin' poolside at The Woodlands Resort. COURTESY THE WOODLANDS RESORT

(We can attest that *The Incredibles* is truly incredible when you're floating under the stars.)

We dried off long enough to explore the resort, with its two championship golf courses, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, 145 miles of nature trails, and a full-service spa. Three restaurants cover the gastronomic and economic gamut,

from a cheeseburger poolside to filet mignon in an elegant dining room with a watery view.

*Resort news:* Construction has begun on a \$50 million "transformation and expansion" project that will add 150-plus guest rooms, a steakhouse, and a winding river to the Forest Oasis area.

## WHAT WOULD DARLA DO?

BACK AT MARKET STREET, DARLA AND I met up for a two-hour shop-a-thon. We scoped out the latest in espresso machines and other kitchen whirligigs at Sur La Table (did I really need that ceramic grater?), tried on shoes (from Anyi Lu to Pikolinos) at Shoeballou, cooed over the cribs and baby bedding at The Magic Moon, and swooned over Swoozie's assortment of gifts, tote bags, stationery, and party and picnic supplies—all in WOW colors. On the list for my next Woodlands trip is Jaded, the high-end fashion and accessories boutique for men and women, recently opened by World Wrestling Entertainment stars Torrie Wilson and Nick Mitchell.

Darla's ideal culinary evening on Market Street? "The crab cakes appetizer at Tommy Bahama's Tropical Café, and the pecan-crusted trout at Jasper's." Both restaurants flank Central Park and have patio seating. For dessert, "a latte truffle or two at Truffles Chocolate Lounge, and a nightcap at Crú—A Wine Bar," with 300-plus wines to choose from.

Darla and I capped off our Market Street spree at Jamba Juice, where the smoothie and juice combos go on forever. Lifting our frozen "Aloha Pineapple" concoctions, we made a toast—to the weekend, The Woodlands ... and water taxis.

-JILL LAWLESS

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# For THE ROAD

(continued from page 9)

you can relax. It's the 22nd annual Central Texas Airshow, and it's all in good fun.

A Friday-night concert by country star Aaron Tippin kicks off the event, followed by pyrotechnics and aerial acrobatics by pilot Bob Carlton of New Mexico, who flies a sailplane with twin jets strapped on the wings. "When he flies at night," says airshow coordinator Beth Ann Jenkins, "it looks like a giant sparkler in the sky."

This year's show focuses on planes from the Vietnam War era. On Saturday and Sunday, more than 30 military planes will be on display, and pilots will be on hand to discuss machinery, flight techniques, and their experiences in the war. Saturday's activities include a full-blown airshow, complete with high-precision aerial acrobatics, battle reenactments, and fireworks galore. (If you have \$900, you can even take a half-hour ride in a World War II P-51 fighter plane.)

Not all activity takes place in the air: Bungee-jumping and rock-climbing walls satisfy thrill-seekers, too; and dozens of vendors will sell such

memorabilia as carved wooden planes, authentic bomber jackets, and posters—not to mention kettle corn, hot dogs, Greek gyros, and unexpected festival fare like Australian-style shrimp-on-the-barbie. The sky's the limit. See [www.centraltexasairshow.com](http://www.centraltexasairshow.com). —L.M.

## PORT A ARTFEST

THE GULF COAST TOWN OF ROCKPORT has long been known as an arts destination, especially in July, when the annual Rockport Art Festival attracts talent from across the country. But across Aransas Bay, the town of Port Aransas is gaining an arts reputation, too, with galleries, home decor shops, and even an arts festival leading the charge. On May 17-18, the Art Center for the Island's 3rd Annual Artfest takes place in the courtyard of the Tarpon Inn, which has welcomed guests since 1886. Kids and adults alike can experiment with paints, clay, and other material; watch artisans' demonstrations; and purchase works by more than 20 area artists. If it has been awhile since your last visit to Port A, you may be surprised at the development taking place. But trust us: You'll still feel dressed-up in anything fancier than flip-flops. Call 800/45-COAST; [www.portaransas.org](http://www.portaransas.org). —L.M.

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# TOP Tables

NOTEWORTHY CULINARY JOURNEYS

BY KITTY CRIDER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN STILLMAN

## AUSTIN'S URBAN MARKETS

# Get Fresh!

CALL IT THE PULL of just-picked peaches, juicy, homegrown tomatoes, or blackberries as big as your thumb. Such jewels of early summer have attracted flocks of food-lovers to farmers markets for generations, but these days, you can skip the drive to the country; some of the most exciting markets are in the city.

Take the Austin metro area, for example. Two urban farmers' markets—



Produce from spring onions to watermelons awaits Saturday shoppers at the Sunset Valley Farmers Market, southwest of the Capital City. Most of the products sold here are grown organically or sustainably.

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Sunset Valley Farmers Market and Austin Farmers' Market—flourish here, not only in summer, but year round. At both markets, fresh produce coexists with prepared foods (bento boxes to hummus), pies, soy candles, and feather earrings, not to mention ATMs. In true Austin style, both also offer live music, and nearly every weekend feature a special event—from a green chile fest to an “Iron Chef” cookoff between top Austin chefs.

While other Texas cities (notably Dallas and Houston) also have urban markets, these Austin-area markets have achieved national reputations. Sunset Valley Farmers Market, southwest of town, was ranked No. 5 by *Eating Well* magazine last summer, and the centrally located Austin Farmers' Market made *Greenlight* digital magazine's Top 10 last fall. They're among heady company: The lists also include such premier markets as the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market in San Francisco, Union Square Greenmarket in New York City, and Santa Fe Farmers Market in Santa Fe, New Mexico. No other Texas markets made the cut.



FOR KRISTI HIBLER and her seven-year-old daughter, Amity, a weekly visit to the Sunset Valley Farmers Market is part of their Saturday routine. First, they stop at the Living Arts Bakery booth for a mixed-berry or Mexican-chocolate scone, and then they shop for a week's supply of seasonal fruits and vegetables.

"We buy most of our food here," says Hibler, a middle-school science teacher who

mushrooms, greens, and other produce from growers they know by name. Then they kick back with cups of iced coffee and listen to the tunes of local guitarist Jimmy Joe Natoli, who has a weekly gig here. The music is a key attraction for them. "Coming here is relaxing," says von Roeder.

Sellers also cherish the Sunset Valley venue. "I love this market—the quality of the products, the number of vendors, the

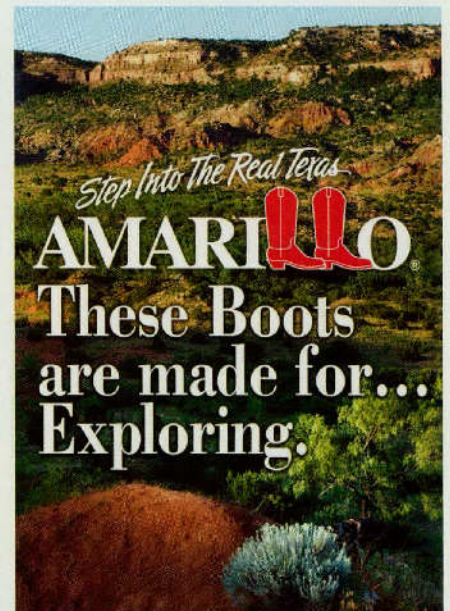
**The year-round farmers markets in the Austin metro area offer everything from blueberries to bento boxes, in colorful settings that include live music and special events.**

likes the fact that consuming locally grown food reduces her ecological footprint. She also likes knowing where her food comes from. "I've been buying eggs and cheese from the same people for years," she says.

Tommye von Roeder and her husband, Carroll, have been going to this market every Saturday morning, rain or shine, for a decade. Early in the day, when the selection is best, they buy their eggs, basil, tomatoes,

number of people drawn here. I think it can match California markets point for point," says Austin native and former West Coast resident "Aunt Nita" Garcia, who owns Aunt Nita's Homestyle Foods in Leander.

Garcia sells jumbleberry crunch pies, packed with a mixture of berries, as well as coconut-almond-buttermilk pies, relishes, quiches, and a table full of other goods. She says when she began selling



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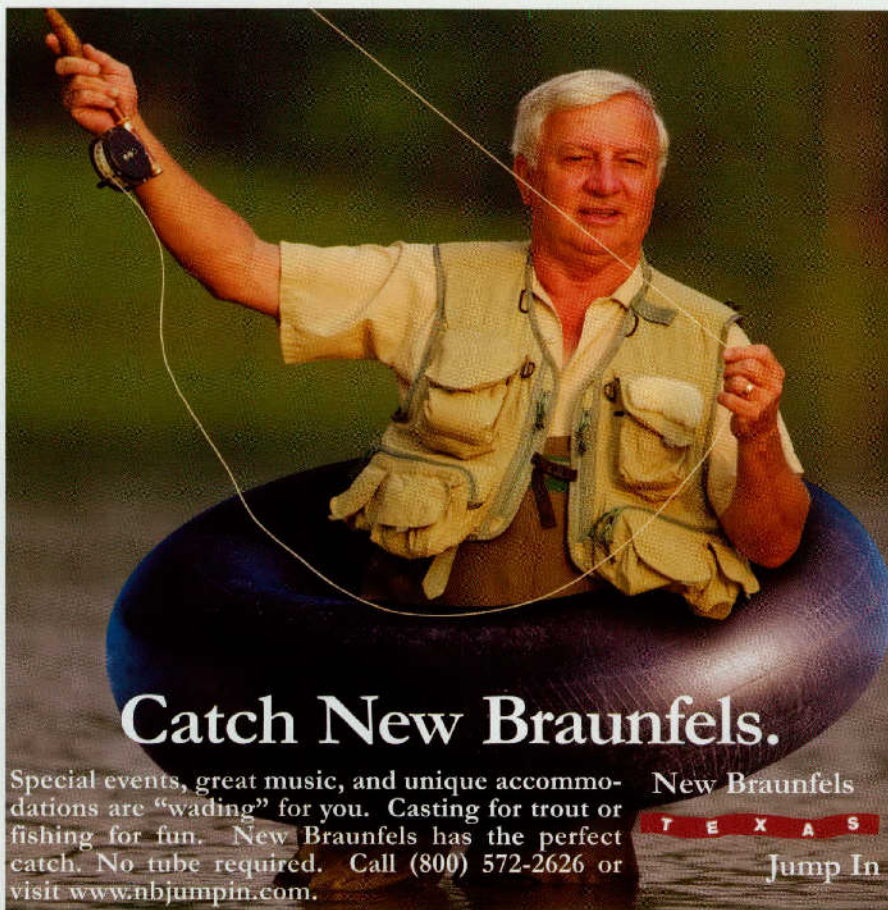
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T E X A S

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## TOP Tables

here years ago, she brought 10 bunches of beets she had grown. Didn't sell a one. So she took them home, made 10 jars of pickled beets, came back the next week, and sold them all. Today, she makes a half-dozen different pickles, as well as salad dressings, casseroles, spreads, and dips, using her own produce and that of other local growers when she can.

About 80 percent of Sunset Valley's products are grown organically or sustainably. Availability of specific items varies with the season, although several farmers have added hydroponics or greenhouses to their operations to provide tasty tomatoes even in January.

“Having homegrown tomatoes is a key to a year-round market,” says Pamela Boyar, who founded the market in 1997. Back then, it had only a dozen vendors at the peak of



Like most urban markets, the Sunset Valley market offers a range of non-food products, like these beads made by Austin artist Amanda Robbins.

the season; today, there are more than 100 growers/vendors, and the market is located in the 17-acre parking lot of the Tony Burger Center, a sports arena about five miles south of downtown Austin. Boyar estimates that 160,000 people visited in 2007.

Boyar telecommutes from Hawaii now, but her partners—Salila Travers and Jim Moore—work hard to make the market more than a *(continued on page 54)*



## THE CISCO KID

**W**hen Conrad Nicholson Hilton left his New Mexico home in 1919 at the age of 31, he had just \$5,000 to make a fortune in the Texas oil boom. He landed in the Panhandle town of Cisco with an eye on purchasing the local bank. When the price tag proved beyond

his reach, he took note of the bustling red brick hotel nearby, where the owner was renting rooms in eight-hour shifts to wildcatters and roughnecks. With his own stake, plus \$15,000 from investors (including his mother, Mary) and a \$20,000 loan from the bank he couldn't afford to buy, Hilton purchased the 40-room Mobley Hotel, which he described as a "cross between a gold mine and a flophouse," for \$40,000. As Hilton later wrote in his autobiography, *Be My Guest*, "The Mobley in Cisco, my first love, was a great lady. She taught [my business partners and me] the way to promotion and pay, plus a lot about running hotels."

Still riding the oil boom, Hilton purchased or leased hotels in Fort Worth, Dallas, and Corsicana before the 1924 groundbreaking of the much anticipated Dallas Hilton. With the goal of opening one hotel every year, he acquired or built hotels in Abilene, Waco, Marlin, Plainview, San Angelo, Lubbock, and El Paso.

Hilton was nearly wiped out by the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the resulting Great Depression, but he recovered to build one of the largest and most recognizable hotel chains in the world. Even after his death in 1979, the Hilton brand continues to thrive.

Today, the Cisco Hilton still stands, and is home to the Cisco Chamber of



A reproduction of an oil painting of Conrad Hilton by C.J. Fox is on display at the Conrad Hilton Center in Cisco (254/442-2537).

Commerce, a community center, and the Conrad Hilton Center, a historical museum that displays photos of Hilton and his family, as well as the hotel's original front desk.

—David Latimer, Austin

## THE LONDON BRIDGE TO TEXAS

**T**hirty words on a brass plaque are all that remain to mark the existence of the Anglo-Texan Society in London, England.

British author Graham Greene founded the society in 1953 as a joke. "I was in Edinburgh [Scotland] with [John Sutro], a friend of mine, and we met two nice Texan girls, whom we took to the theater," Greene recalled in a 1971 *New York Times Book*

*Review* article. "The next day, [on] the train coming back, we drank a little too much with our lunch, and I said, 'Why don't we have an Anglo-Texan Society?'"

The two men wrote a letter to *The London Times* announcing the society's formation, and that anyone interested in establishing "special cultural and social links between Britain and Texas" could write to the published address for more information. Not two weeks went by before they received more than 90 letters.

What started as a hoax seemed to spark the interest of the general population. On March 6, 1954, more than 1,500 Texans and society members showed up for a barbecue held in London in observance of Texas Independence Day, feasting on 2,500 pounds of beef donated by the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition.

Eventually, Greene moved on to other pursuits and left the society, so Sir Alfred Bossom, a member of British Parliament and an architect with Texas ties, took his place. He hosted meetings and luncheons at his home, and served Mexican food shipped from—where else?—Texas.

During the society's heyday, members included architect O'Neil Ford, Dallas mayor Robert L. Thornton, and Lawrence and Edward Marcus of Neiman Marcus. In later years, dinners were held at the House of Lords with the Duke of Edinburgh in attendance.

In 1963, Bossom suggested that a plaque be placed in honor of the Anglo-Texan Society on the outside of the building at 3 St. James Place in London where the society met. Texas governor Price Daniel Sr. presided at the unveiling, but the plaque wasn't enough to keep the organization going. During a special meeting in 1979, the society voted to disband.

—Lori Grossman, Dallas



The mood in the Boerne Public Library last summer was festive and the atmosphere electric, like that in a roomful of eager fans awaiting the appearance of a rock star. But the star the standing-room-only crowd awaited with such anticipation was San Angelo author Elmer Kelton, who was on a book-signing tour

“At first glance, West Texas can be pretty off-putting ... but if you’re born and brought up [here], ... it has a wild beauty of its own.”

to promote his 2007 memoir, *Sandhills Boy: The Winding Trail of a Texas Writer*.

Named by the Western Writers of America as “All-time Best Western Author,” Kelton has published more than 50 books during the last half-century. Four of them have won Western Heritage Awards from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, and one of those—*The Good Old Boys*—was made into a TNT movie starring Tommy Lee Jones and Sissy Spacek.

The author grew up on the McElroy Ranch in Crane and Upton counties. “My dad [working cowboy and ranch foreman

Celebrated author Elmer Kelton is at home in the rough West Texas terrain he depicts so eloquently in his novels. He has lived in San Angelo for six decades.



# Range Writer





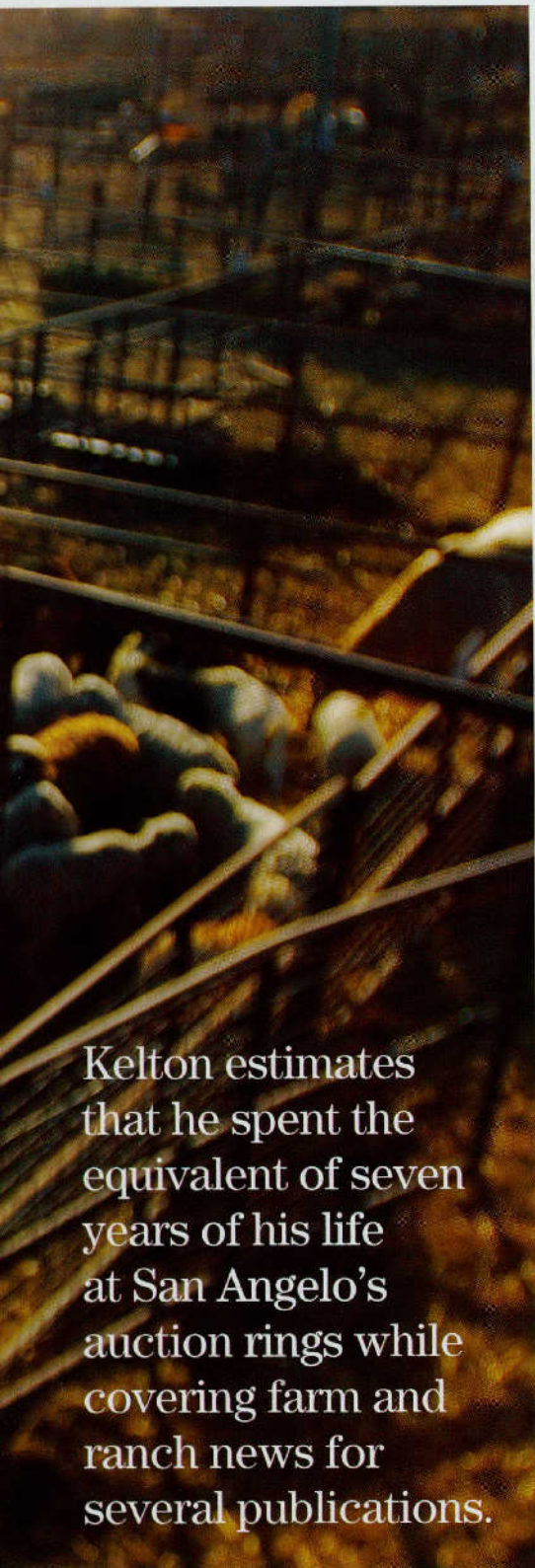


A TEXAS HIGHWAYS MOMENT  
WITH **ELMER KELTON**

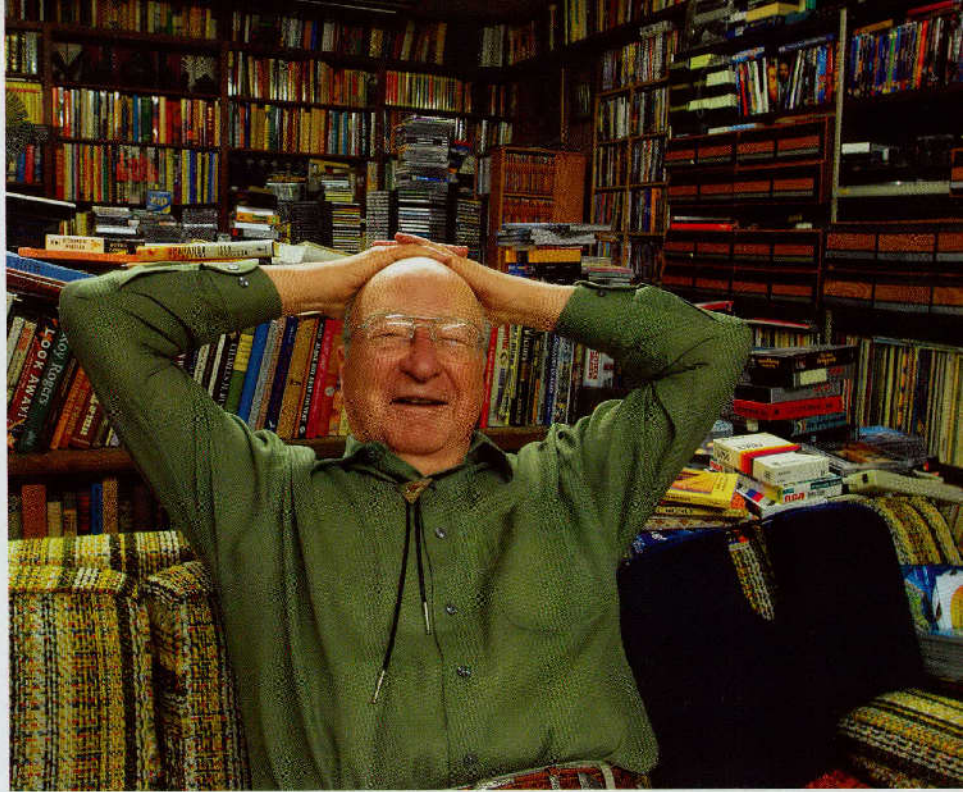


ABOVE: Shown at San Angelo's Producers Livestock Auction Co., which he frequented while working as a journalist, Kelton says, "It took me 42 years to quit my day job." FACING PAGE: Bookshelves line the walls of the author's library, the largest room in his San Angelo home.





Kelton estimates that he spent the equivalent of seven years of his life at San Angelo's auction rings while covering farm and ranch news for several publications.



Buck Kelton] wanted to make a cowboy out of me," he told the audience, "but every time he turned around to see where I was, I was reading a book." He noted that he still has the first book he ever owned: a hardcover edition of *Treasure Island*, for which his mother paid 79 cents. "I own so many books that I think they reproduce in the dark," he added, drawing a laugh.

After entertaining listeners with excerpts from his memoir and tales of cowboy characters he has known, Kelton fielded questions like these from his fans.

"Who was the real-life model for Charlie Flagg [the central character in Kelton's best-known book, *The Time It Never Rained*]?"

"My mother was always convinced it was my father," the author replied, "but Charlie was really a composite of people I knew."

"Do your novels start with an idea or a character?"

"It varies," he said. "In *The Time It Never Rained*, I started with a situation—the drought of the '50s; in *The Good Old Boys* I started with a character—Hewey Calloway."

He added, "I've often been asked how my characters differ from the traditional, larger-than-life heroes of the mythical West. 'Those,' I reply, 'are seven feet tall and invincible. My characters are five-eight and nervous.'"

"Do you have any advice for young writers?"

The author's reply was simple: "Keep your day job. Read, read, read, and keep on reading. Write, write, write, and keep on writing."

The next morning I met with Kelton over breakfast at the Limestone Grille inside Boerne's Ye Kendall Inn, and I asked some questions of my own.

**MAYES: I understand that poor eyesight played a big role in your limitations as a cowboy.**

**KELTON:** We [my family and I] didn't realize I was nearsighted, but when we went out on drives to round up cattle, I couldn't see very far. I'd miss cattle

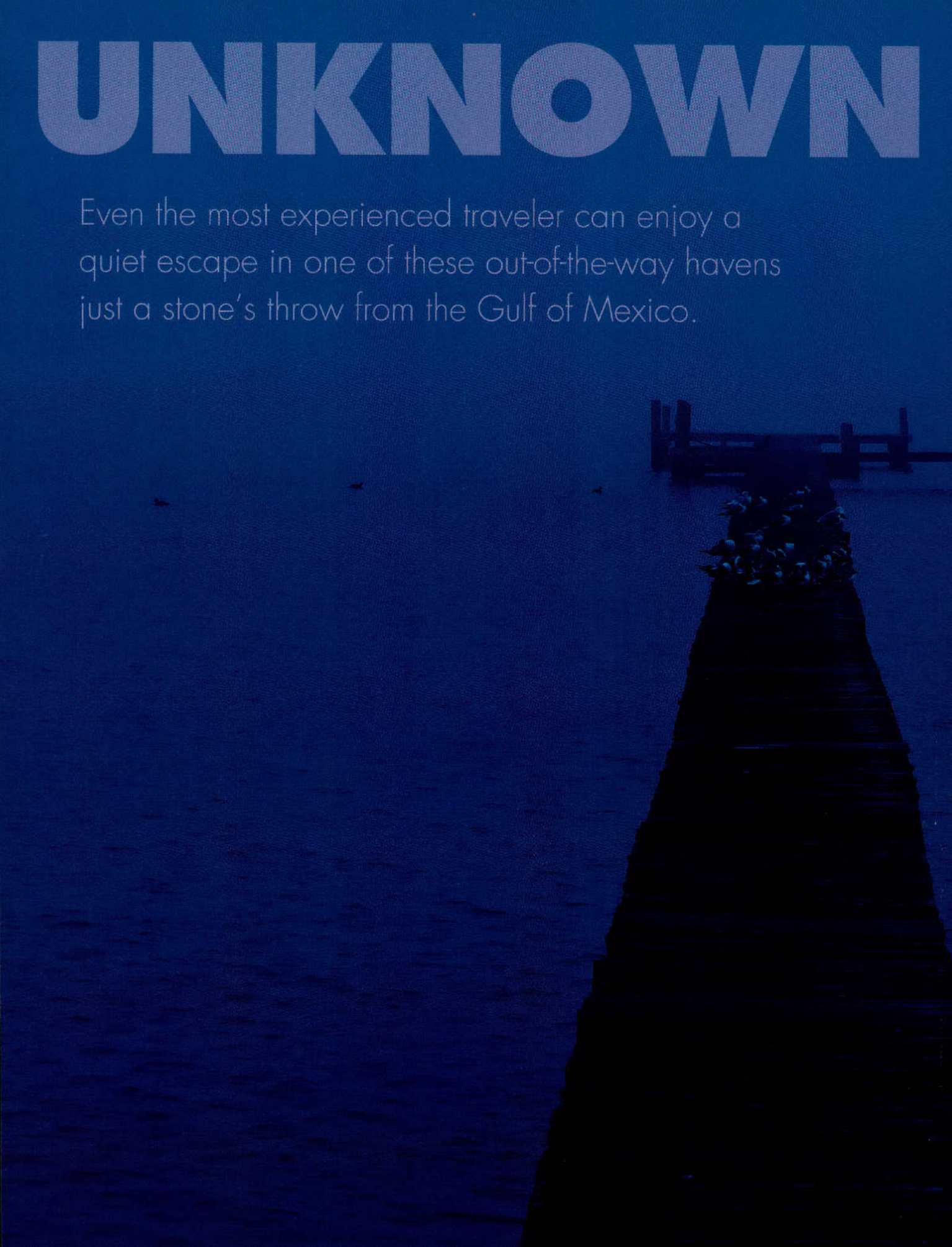
and others would come along and have to pick them up.

**MAYES: If you hadn't been nearsighted, do you think you would be a stove-up cowboy now instead of an award-winning author?** (continued on page 55)



# UNKNOWN

Even the most experienced traveler can enjoy a quiet escape in one of these out-of-the-way havens just a stone's throw from the Gulf of Mexico.





# COAST

BY JUNE NAYLOR ■ PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN VANDIVIER

LONG BEFORE I actually laid eyes on the Habitat, an eight-acre nature retreat wedged between Goose Island State Park and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge just north of Rockport, I was fascinated by its promise of peaceful seclusion. Everything I'd heard about its simplicity and quiet setting told me I'd find a seaside spot to be treasured. But despite the enticing image of a log cabin just a short walk from a quiet bay, this visit eluded me for years.

Even though I've wandered from the crab shacks around Port Arthur all the way to the empty beach called Boca Chica at the southern tip of the state, there remain pockets on the long Texas shoreline that I've yet to explore. Such was the case with Lamar, the community that claims the Habitat, just a few minutes away from Port Aransas. I decided to carve a few days from my schedule to wander along a 210-mile reach from Port Aransas, near Corpus Christi, to the Bolivar Peninsula.

The gulls are your only companions on this mist-shrouded pier off the Lamar Peninsula.







**SOON** after arriving at the Habitat, it occurs to me that I can't remember the last time I heard ... nothing.

"People love to come out here and see trees and stars and simply find out what quiet is again," says Wayne Nugent, who, with his wife Robin, built this little haven 10 years ago. "Sometimes all you hear are the owls calling to each other at night."

The Habitat offers prime birding, and the four cabins typically are booked from November through March, the magical season when endangered whooping cranes live nearby. And fall is the time to see hummingbirds.

Wayne, who teaches junior high science in Rockport, urges me to walk down the road that runs in front of the Habitat toward St. Charles Bay before nightfall, just to get an appreciation for the hush along the water.

"We don't have televisions or phones in the cabins because we encourage people to get out and muck around, discover all the trails," he says. "It also gives guests a chance to spend more time with each other."

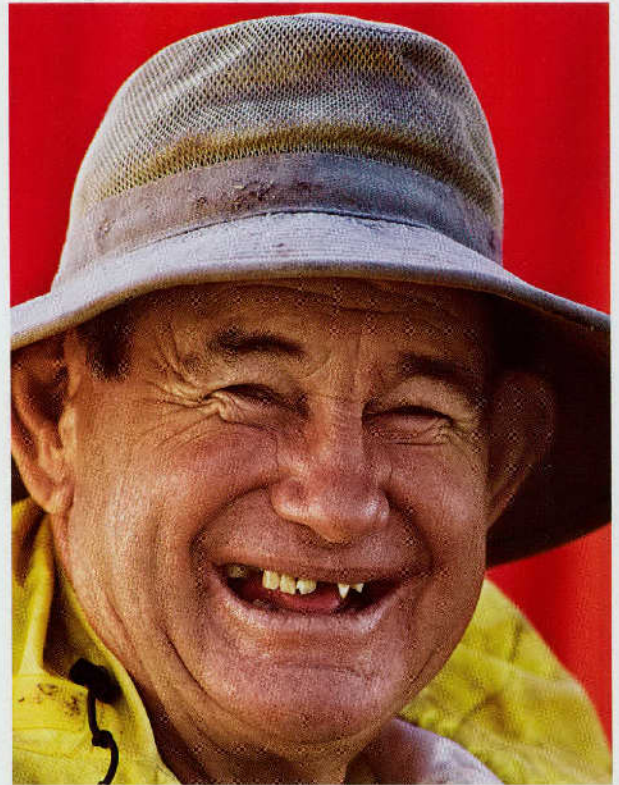
On my dusk walk down to the bay, the silence is interrupted only by a mealtime ruckus going up from flocks of ducks and egrets hiding in some marshy reeds; it feels as though those birds and I are alone in the world.

Next morning, my wandering continues with an early-morning drive to the wildlife refuge to try and see the whoopers, then over to Goose Island State Park to gawk at the Big Tree, a 1,000-year-old live oak thought to be the largest in Texas, and finally, across the LBJ Causeway to the town of Fulton, eight miles south, to grab a cup of gumbo and an oyster po-boy at Capt. Benny's, one of the super-casual seafood spots in town.

But I most relish the quiet time at Kingfisher, my pond-side Habitat cabin framed by palmettos, fan palms, and live oaks. A kitchenette allows me to fix basic meals, and Wayne leaves orange juice, milk, cereal, and homemade banana-nut muffins, as well as his own kicky salsa with a bag of tostada chips. It's simple—as Wayne says, "We're big on 'no frills' here." But it's homey, with a good reading light perfect for tucking into a mystery novel. The screened-in porch is the ideal place for coffee in the morning, wine in the evening, and for listening to nothing.

From Lamar, I wander 70 miles northeast, passing San Antonio Bay and crossing Lamar

**THE DRIVE EN ROUTE** passes inlets with fanciful names like Chocolate Bay, until I reach Galveston. Determined to stay my course, I steer straight through and board the free ferry that delivers me to Crystal Beach.



Jimmy Yeamans, a longtime resident of Matagorda, still prowls the region's waters for crab and oyster.

Sporting the distinctive yellow crown plumage that indicates it's time to attract a mate, this brown pelican stares down the camera. Even though the Gulf Coast population of the brown pelican in Texas and Louisiana are building, the birds are listed as endangered.



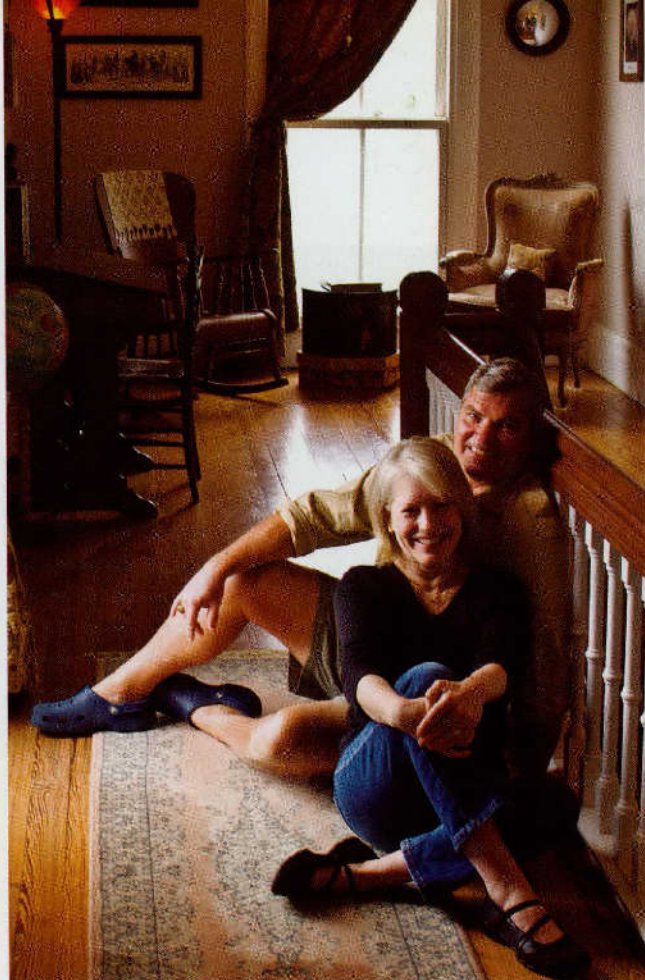
DISCOVER THE  
COAST







**SOON** after arriving at the Habitat, it occurred to me that I couldn't remember the last time I heard ... nothing.



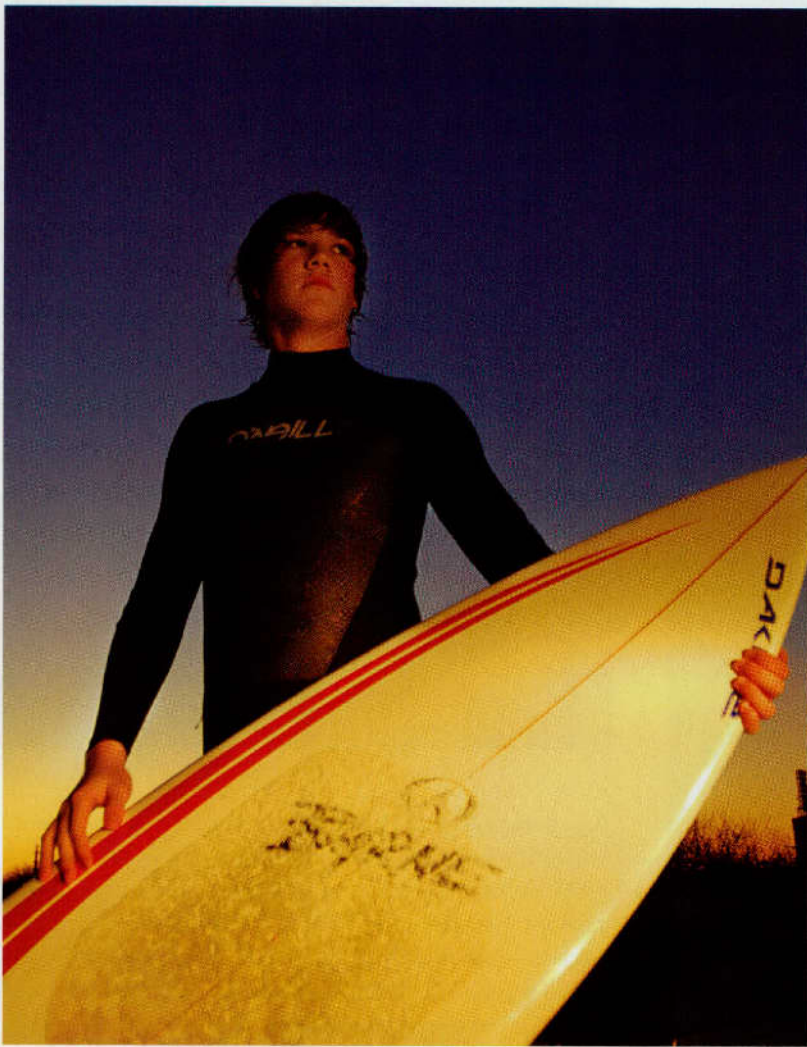
Bay, to the village of Palacios (pronounced “Puh-LASH-us”), where the historic Luther Hotel overlooks the seawall. In 1995, archeologists discovered the wreckage of the French explorer LaSalle’s ship *La Belle* in Matagorda Bay, not far offshore. Palacios is popular with historians and avi-tourists traveling the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail to spot some of the 200 or so species migrating through or nesting here.

I stop in the Old Main Bookstore for a cup of freshly brewed gourmet coffee and to browse the new and used books. A couple of doors down, I marvel at creations inside Etched In Time, a gallery and studio where Gayle Ayers crafts and sells her magnificent art-glass pieces. She creates cabinet door panels and stemware with all manner of intricate designs, but I’m most fond of her custom message-in-a-bottle gifts, colored glass bottles etched with designs like a lighthouse, a tulip, or a shooting star, each with a personalized message on the paper scroll inside.

My lunch destination is Blessing, 12 miles inland from Palacios. The century-old Blessing Hotel may look worn

**LEFT:** The cabins at the Habitat, tucked away on eight acres near St. Charles Bay, between Goose Island State Park and the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, offer ideal solitude after a day of fishing, hiking, or wildlife viewing. **ABOVE:** Rik and Peggy Stanley own and operate the Stanley-Fisher House bed and breakfast in a Matagorda house built in 1832 (one of the first built in Texas) by one of the signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence.





The sun is setting over Surfside, and it's time for Houstonian Christian Roskar to call it a day and leave Quintana Beach behind until tomorrow.

around the edges, but there's no better restaurant in the area than the hotel's coffee shop. Never mind that everyone seems to know everyone else; strangers are warmly welcomed. A small cadre of regulars encourages me to grab a plate and serve myself from the enormous spread covering the giant, antique wood-burning stovetop and nearby tables. Among the goodies I find are the best fried chicken I can remember, fresh green beans, squash, salads, giant yeast rolls, and strawberry shortcake.

A few miles along the road to Bay City, I turn off to take a closer look at the equine sculptures by horseman and artist Danny Stephens. In a studio adjacent to his barn, Danny displays a dozen or so beautiful bronzes. When he's not training horses or competing in calf-roping events, he's fashioning dramatic images of horses in rodeo action or at play with children, all sized to sit on an entry table, bookshelf, or desk.

Craving another comfy night's rest, I check into the historic Stanley-Fisher House B&B in tiny Matagorda. Built in 1832 by Samuel Rhodes Fisher, one of Stephen F. Austin's 300 colonists and a signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the imposing, two-story home has

been restored to show off intricate detail, such as beautiful tongue-and-groove paneling. Peggy and Rik Stanley, who left the Dallas-Fort Worth area to live on the coast, updated the 4,000-square-foot home with modern bathrooms and central air, and they extend hospitality defined by lavish breakfasts and plenty of good books. *(continued on page 58)*

**ON MY DUSK WALK** down to the bay, the silence is interrupted only by a ruckus from flocks of ducks and egrets hiding in the reeds; it feels as though those birds and I are alone in the world.

The Gulf of Mexico sands and polishes remnants of storms and floods—like this sculpted tree trunk—before casting them up on the shore for beachcombers to enjoy.







DISCOVER THE  
**UNKNOWN**  
COAST

# Critic's Catch

GOING COASTAL FOR **SEAFOOD**





## A seafood aficionado selects his favorite dining spots from Galveston to Port A.

BY DALE RICE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Waiters are dressed to the nines. A cocktail waitress glides through the dining room taking orders. The pace is slow, and owner Clary Milburn likes it that way. It's part of the casually elegant atmosphere he has cultivated at Clary's Seafood Restaurant in Galveston, and diners love it.

Milburn, still passionate about his operation after 30 years at the restaurant's helm, is making his several-times-a-night rounds when he stops by a table to ask a couple if they are enjoying their meal.

"We're from Kansas City," the man tells him, "and we don't have anything like this up there. This place is a gem."

Family and recreation brought these tourists to the Texas Gulf Coast, but they discovered another, much less publicized reason to visit: Great dining can appear as wonderfully and unexpectedly as a heron standing in a roadside pool of water.

Clary's is one such discovery. Just across the causeway from the mainland on Interstate 45, well off the beaten tourist path, this restaurant serves as a monument to another era.

After years of working in private clubs, Milburn left the service industry in the 1970s. Following a four-year break, he was asked by a longtime patron what it would take for him to re-enter the field. "I would like to have a small place open to the public in a private-club style," was his reply.

"I thought the public should have the opportunity to see what it's like to dine in a private club," he says. "So I developed my cocktail-waitress style, my waiter style, my slow style."



ABOVE: Grab a seat at the Bakery Cafe in Aransas Pass, and prepare to please your palate. You won't be disappointed. FACING PAGE: Sumptuous fare like this grilled polenta-roasted tomato appetizer, can be found at the cleverly named Venetian Hot Plate in Port Aransas.





Things haven't changed much. The staff won't even hand customers menus until they've settled in. Milburn's attitude toward service permeates his place, just as other elements define other restaurants along the coast, from the shrimp at The Outrigger Restaurant in Palacios to the magnificent Italian dishes at the Venetian Hot Plate in Port Aransas.

Entrées like those augment all the other reasons to trek up and down the Texas coast—world-class birding, abundant fishing, boating, museums, galleries, and festivals.

Though the coast provides a multitude of tourist destinations, it's also home to major commercial fishing fleets, which ply the Gulf for shrimp, oysters, and fish

such as flounder, red snapper, redfish, and tuna.

The bounty may end up on plates across the nation, but nowhere is it fresher than in the coastal restaurants of Texas, where a catch that arrives on the dock in the morning can be on your plate for lunch. That makes our coast an appealing spot for dining. Although seafood is the main attraction, it isn't the only fare worth seeking out.

To help lure you to the coast for a visit, here are eight restaurants I think are well worth a stop.

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### CLARY'S SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

*Galveston*

**P**hotographs of past customers intermingle with framed paintings on the walls of Clary's Seafood Restaurant, which the owner describes as "casually elegant."

Once seated at one of the white-linen-covered tables, start your meal off with the slightly spicy seafood gumbo—it's a good introduction to Clary's—and then move on to the stuffed flounder entrée. The whole flounder (from head to tail) has the center bone removed and is filled with a Creole-flavored crab stuffing. Reward yourself with the chocolate-sour cream cake topped with warm frosting, a home-style finish to the meal.

Milburn insists that no dish is better than another at his restaurant. "The fried shrimp are as good as the flame-broiled shrimp," he says.

---

### RED SNAPPER INN

*Surfside Beach*

**F**ried fish may be a coastal staple, but charbroiled or sautéed red snapper offers a welcome alternative at the Red Snapper Inn. Both styles are nicely handled.

The red snapper Veracruz is a hearty item. Resting on a bed of rice pilaf, large

**A catch that arrives  
on the dock in the  
morning can be on  
your plate for lunch.**

ABOVE, LEFT: Affable owner and chef Clary Milburn has achieved national culinary acclaim for his splendid seafood restaurant on Galveston Bay. FACING PAGE: Find your way to The Outrigger in Palacios, where entrées like fried flounder await.









sautéed fillets of snapper are crowned with a chunky sauce of tomatoes, onions, capers, and—in an unusual twist—thick, long strips of colorful bell peppers.

The restaurant, which is decorated with life preservers, fishing nets, and a fish tank and sits just east of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, also offers homemade apple pies.

### THE OUTRIGGER RESTAURANT

*Palacios*

Since restaurant cooks couldn't satisfy them, Outrigger owners Cheryl and Wayne Dodd never ate seafood when they dined out. "So we decided to cook our shrimp and fish the way we would if you came to our house," says Cheryl.

The result is a wonderful meal, like a po'boy piled high with a generous mound of perfectly fried shrimp. The "whopper" salad is topped with fresh grilled shrimp from the nearby bay, while the most popular plate is the fried-shrimp platter.

Housed in a former lumber building that dates to the early 1900s, the eatery is known for making all its dishes from scratch; the menu includes homestyle baked goods.

*(continued on page 59)*

ABOVE: "Right off the boat" rings true at Charlotte Plummer's Seafare Restaurant in Fulton, where fishermen unload their catch just 50 feet away. FACING PAGE: Tank you very much. The decor of the Red Snapper Inn at Surfside Beach has an aquatic touch.

The Red Snapper Inn  
is decked out with  
life preservers,  
fishing nets, and  
a fish tank with  
two pacu.

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



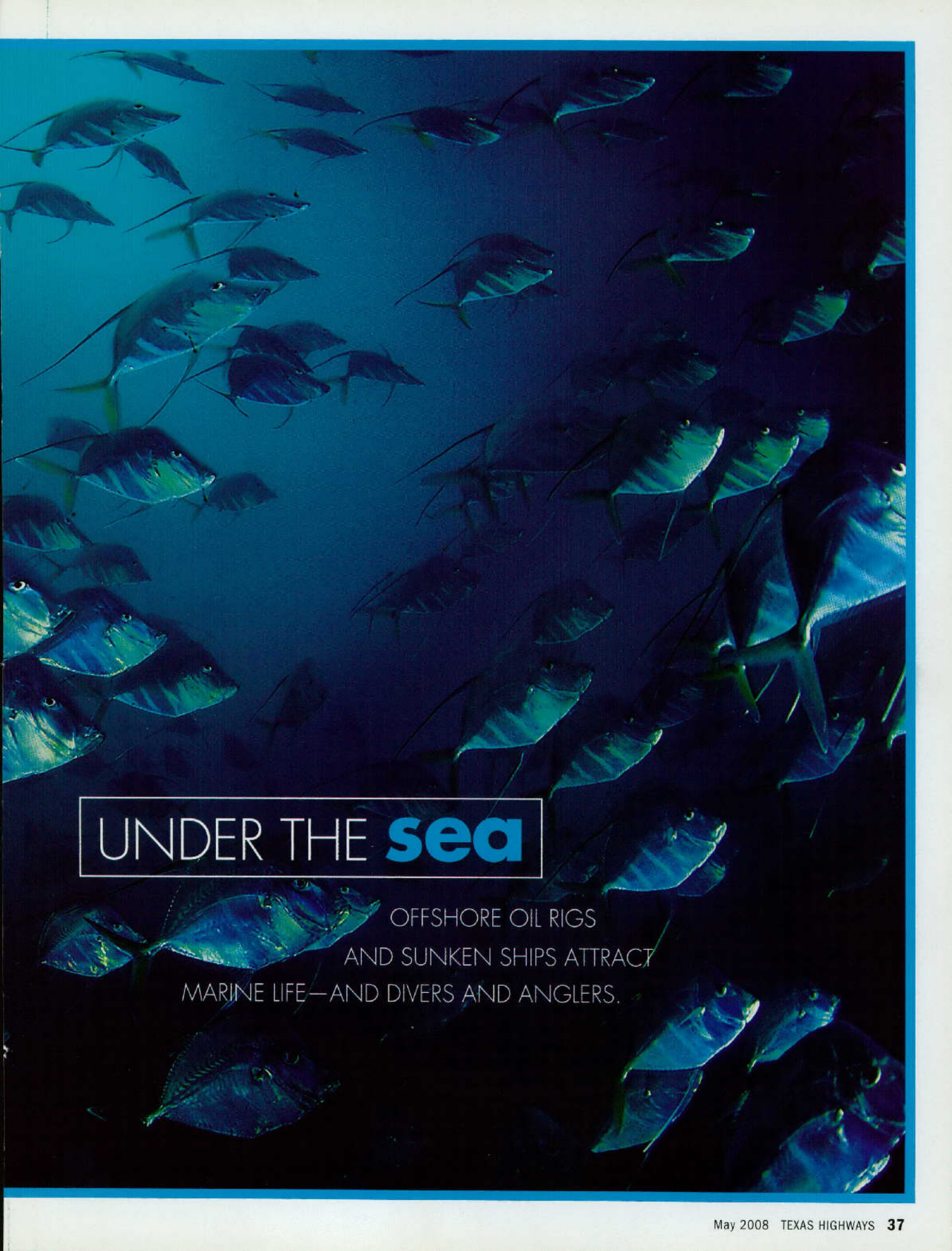




DISCOVER THE  
**UNKNOWN**  
COAST







UNDER THE **sea**

OFFSHORE OIL RIGS  
AND SUNKEN SHIPS ATTRACT  
MARINE LIFE—AND DIVERS AND ANGLERS.



It's a glorious August morning in Port O'Connor as we pull away from the fueling dock—windless, with calm blue waters and mild blue skies punctuated by fleecy wisps of cloud. We're aboard the charter boat *Coastal Safari I*, a 30-foot, twin-engine Mako captained by veteran fishing guide Joe Surovik. Although the boat can accommodate six passengers, only three are on board today: me, my husband, Walt, and photographer Jesse Cancelmo. Our destination is a string of oil and gas platforms between 20 and 30 miles out, in clear water, far beyond the jetties.

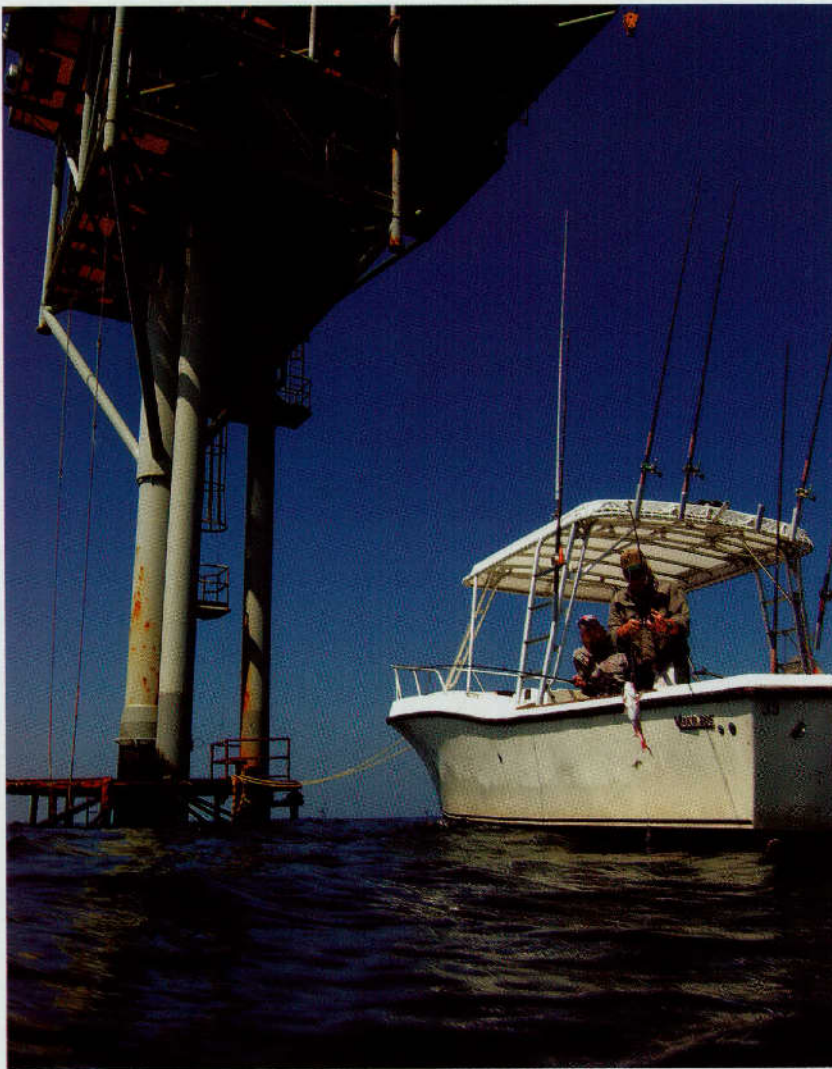
To many people, an oil rig jutting starkly 100 feet or more from the water looms as an incongruous symbol of industrialization against the natural landscape. But there's another side to the rig story, well known to anglers and divers.

"Those rigs create habitat," says Captain Joe, who's been leading offshore fishing trips up and

down the Texas coast for 40 years. "You put a structure out there and the barnacles come to it, then the smaller fish that feed on them, and then the larger predator fish come. That's where most fish are caught."

Sunken ships also create habitat. As divers who explore shipwrecks have long known, submerged vessels attract life to their encrusted surfaces (such hard surfaces are in short supply naturally in the Gulf)—entire mini-ecosystems built upon barnacles, algae, sponges, corals, the small fish that hide among them, and the predators that feed on those. The State of Texas officially recognized the value of man-made reefs during the early 1970s when it sank 12 obsolete World War II Liberty Ships to the bottom of the Gulf at a half-dozen sites along the coast (see sidebar on the latest sinking, page 41).

In 1990, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department established a similar role for rigs with its "Rigs to Reef" program, which acquires decommissioned platforms, leaving them in place (when possible) instead of dismantling and removing them. The platforms we'll visit today, however, are all fully operational, and their easy visibility is a plus for fishermen and captains.



ABOVE: Captain Joe Surovik reels in a red snapper aboard his charter boat *Coastal Safari I*, moored to a rig off Port O'Connor. FACING PAGE: Spanish hogfish dart among tube sponges at the High Island 389 Oil Rig, near the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary ([www.flowergarden.noaa.gov](http://www.flowergarden.noaa.gov)). PREVIOUS SPREAD: A school of silvery lookdowns passes a gas platform. The fish are so named for their seemingly snobbish expression.



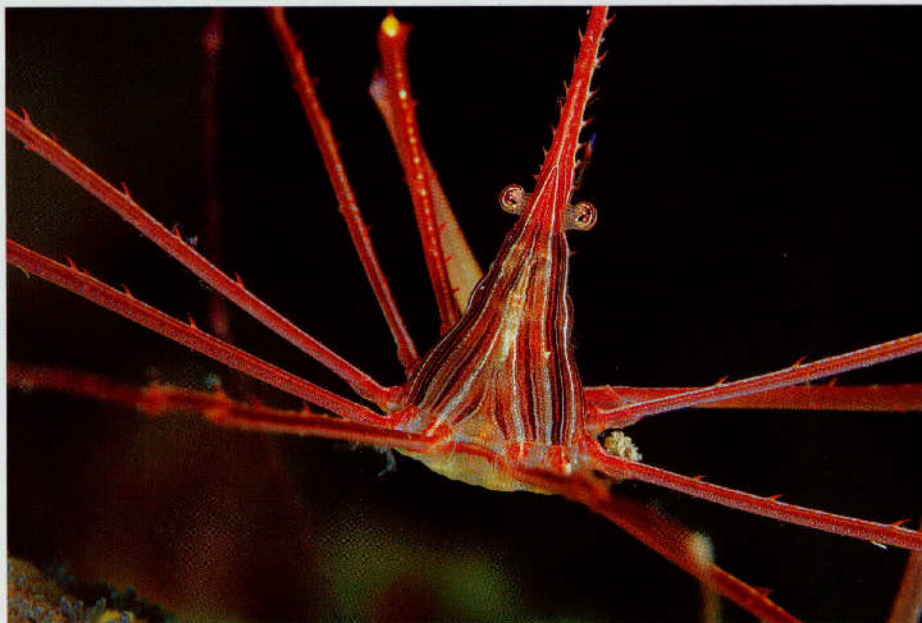
**TO MANY PEOPLE,** AN OIL RIG JUTTING STARKLY FROM THE WATER LOOMS AS AN INCONGRUOUS SYMBOL OF INDUSTRIALIZATION AGAINST THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE. BUT THERE'S ANOTHER SIDE TO THE RIG STORY.







**SUBMERGED VESSELS** ATTRACT LIFE TO THEIR ENCRUSTED SURFACES. SUCH HARD SURFACES ARE IN SHORT SUPPLY NATURALLY IN THE GULF.



Captain Joe ups the throttle, and we slice through the bay and out to sea at a brisk 25-knot clip. Though I've no deep-water experience, visions of snapper, grouper, and kingfish dance in my head.

Within 45 minutes, we approach a platform—a massive maze of steel girders and pipework thrusting skyward. But a shrimp boat is already moored there, so we move on a few miles to the next rig.

At the second location, we tie off—to the rig itself—with a length of strong rope. Now it's time for a short course in deep-sea fishing. Captain Joe has provid-

ABOVE: A tessellated blenny peers out of its barnacle home. LEFT: Surf and turf. The arrow crab protects its reef space.





© EARL NOTTINGHAM

**The USTS *Texas Clipper*** became the latest addition to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's "Ships to Reef" program on November 17, 2007, when it was sunk 17 nautical miles off South Padre Island.

The 473-foot, 7,000-ton vessel, commissioned in 1944 by the U.S. Navy, has a colorful history of service: first as an attack transport (USS *Queens*) during World War II; next as a postwar trans-Atlantic cruise liner (SS *Excambion*); and finally, between 1965 and 1996, as the first Texas Maritime Academy training ship—a Galveston-based cruising summer classroom for Texas A&M University sea cadets.

The *Clipper's* reefing in rough waters capped a decade of negotiations and preparatory work, including extensive cleanup to remove contaminants and physical modifications to the ship for diver safety. It settled on the flat 134-foot bottom where it will eventually develop the features of a mature ecosystem, from barnacles, algae, and coral to game fish. It is expected to become a popular attraction for both divers and sport fishermen.

"Fish were already beginning to gather there by the next day," says TPWD artificial reef specialist Bob Murphy.

It stands out from 14 other WWII-era ships sunk along Texas' coast in being southernmost among them—a location that might draw colorful semitropical marine life not found at higher latitudes. And in contrast to the others, which were mostly stripped to featureless hulls prior to reefing, the *Clipper* retains its upper deck structure, lending extra interest for divers and fish alike.

Tonya Merritt, co-owner with her husband, Bill, of Gigglin' Marlin Divers in Houston, is enthusiastic about the new destination. "We are excited that Texas was selected for this artificial reef, especially since the *Clipper* had such a proud history," she says. "We like to do two-day or weekend trips, and we're always looking for new spots that are close enough to drive to. This site will also be a great addition to our training program, especially for advanced and technical scuba training." —RAE NADLER-OLENICK

On November 17, 2007, the historic *Texas Clipper* was sunk (by controlled flooding) in some 134 feet of water 17 nautical miles south of South Padre Island. Over the next year, the ship will begin to resemble a mature ecosystem—to the delight of anglers and divers.

ed both the bait—silvery saltwater shad, ribbonfish, and squid—and the tackle. The rod is larger and heavier than I'm accustomed to; the line is equipped with a pair of mean-looking hooks and a sinker heavy enough to lie firm on the bottom while the bait dangles enticingly above it.

Lesson One concerns fishing for popular bottom feeders like snapper, grouper, triggerfish, and flounder. Let the hooks sink to the bottom—about 80 feet here—then, with a finger still on the line, feel for the delicate nip that signals the presence of the prized red snapper. When you detect that small tug, pull the pole up sharply to set the hook before reeling your catch in. Not being used to the Gulf's swift undercurrents, I overreact at first. ("Don't stand



**IN THESE CLEAR WATERS,** SCHOOLS OF RED SNAPPER  
100 STRONG CAN EASILY BE SEEN CRUISING BELOW, WHILE A  
SLEEK BARRACUDA CUTS THROUGH THE DEPTHS LIKE A KNIFE.



behind *her!*” the captain jokes.) But I soon get the hang of it. Suddenly I feel a nibble, jerk the rod hard, and begin to work the reel. A plump red snapper emerges from the sea. The first fish of the day! But disappointment quickly follows. As the most-sought-after game fish, the species is protected, and in federal waters, individual fish under 16 inches must be released (regulations are similar in state waters). This one is only 15 inches long; I return it to the depths.

Walt is fishing next to me when the next bite comes. As I struggle to bring

in the thrashing fish, he pulls up his own line—the bait stolen—and I hesitate for an instant, fearing a snarl. At once, my line goes slack. “You lost him,” says Captain Joe reproachfully. “That would have been a keeper. Don’t *ever* stop reeling.” Soon Walt has a snapper of his own, again a little too small, but what the heck. We’re fishing!

The captain shows us a second technique, for catching fish that swim higher up—a strong cast that leaves the fish enough slack to run with it. When the fish starts

to run, you set the hook, then start to reel.

Meanwhile, Jesse—always happiest in the water—has donned a wet suit and is preparing to take pictures. He brought his air tanks along, but for now, snorkel gear will suffice. Grabbing his Nikon D200 camera (in underwater housing), he slips over the side and begins snapping away. He first aims upward to capture our efforts on deck. Next, he plunges below the surface—straight into a school of red snapper, which parts into two smaller schools at his approach, then gently disperses. “I

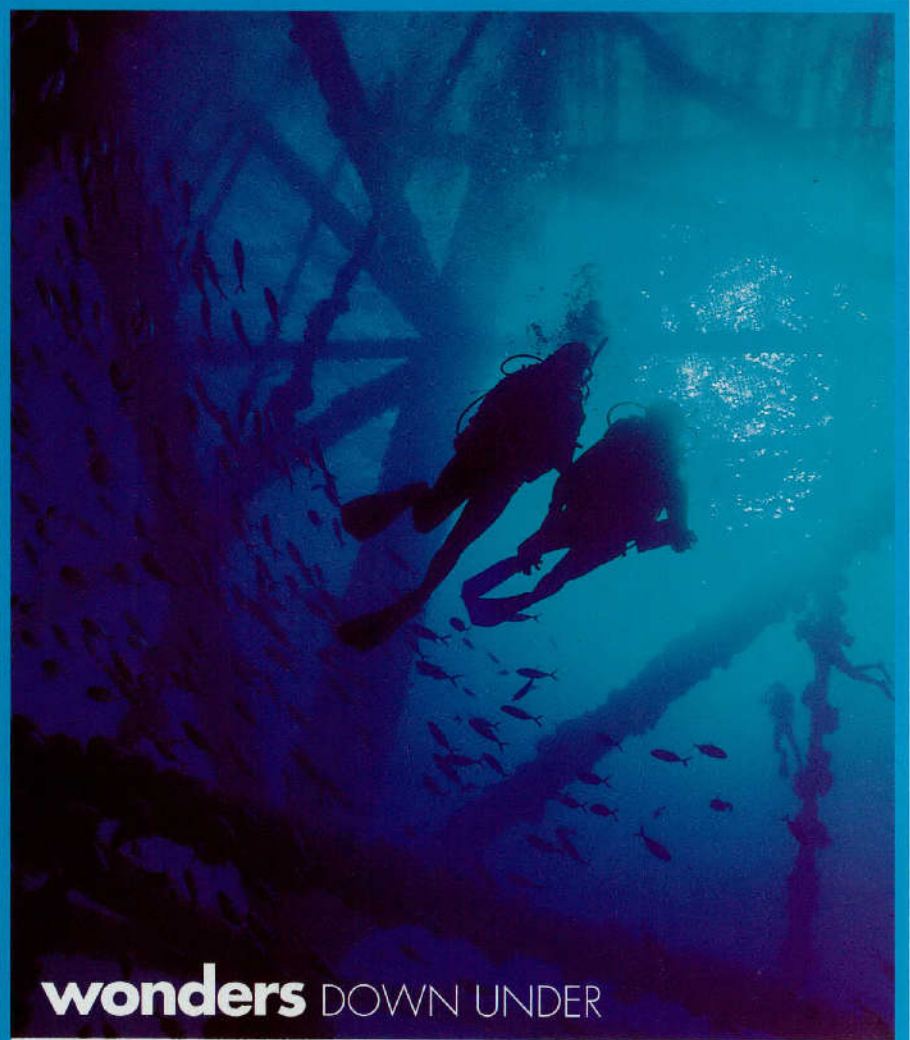
ABOVE: Oooh ... barracuda. Known as the “tiger of the sea,” the fierce barracuda hunts along reefs and in the open waters of the Gulf to satisfy its big appetite.





would have expected to see them down deeper," he says of the unusual event.

As the day progresses, we change rigs from time to time in search of more action or clearer waters. It's a Thursday, and few other boats are around. "On the weekend, there's a boat tied to every rig," Captain Joe tells us. Not that we're alone. The same platforms are active pumping stations, and we're reminded of that when a helicopter suddenly and noisily lands on one. There's company under the surface, too. In these clear waters, schools of red snapper 100 strong can easily be seen cruising below, in the company of gray triggerfish and



## wonders DOWN UNDER

**Jesse Cancelmo** has been diving Texas reefs for more than 30 years. "I feel relaxed and comfortable in the water environment; it's therapeutic for me," says Cancelmo, who moved to Houston from Philadelphia in 1976 after three years of diving World War II shipwrecks off the East Coast. "And, of course, there's the excitement of all the animal life and colors and sensations underwater that fuels my passion for scuba diving."

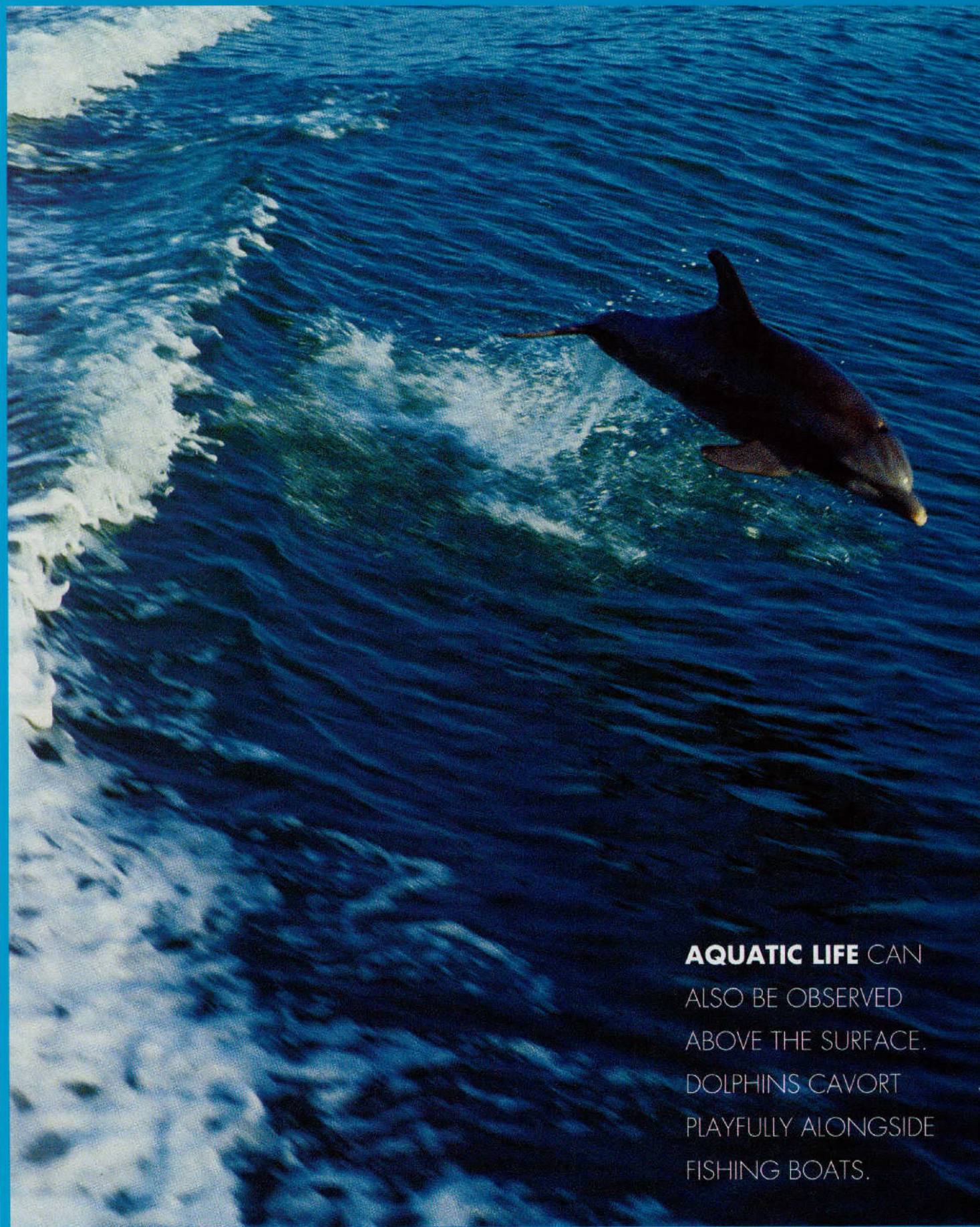
Cancelmo has photographed Texas reef life at many locations, from the Flower Gardens—a pair of exotic semitropical natural reefs some 100 miles south of the Texas/Louisiana border—to sunken ships and oil platforms up and down the Texas coast.

Every dive is a new adventure. On the day of our fishing trip, in addition to schools of red snapper, Cancelmo reported another sighting: "I saw a couple of barracudas hanging out together toward the mid-level of a rig, though they're usually solitary. Grouper stay deep down, near the bottom. Triggerfish typically hang right onto the framework because they eat crustaceans and stuff that's on the rig itself. They've got these powerful jaws, and they just start chomping away."

Though Cancelmo has dived top international sites as diverse as Indonesia, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Red Sea, the Galapagos Islands, and the Atlantic/Caribbean from Bermuda to Bonaire, his heart remains in Texas. His book *Texas Coral Reefs* will be published by Texas A&M University Press this spring. Find out more at [www.cancelmophoto.com](http://www.cancelmophoto.com).

—RAE NADLER-OLENICK





**AQUATIC LIFE** CAN  
ALSO BE OBSERVED  
ABOVE THE SURFACE.  
DOLPHINS CAVORT  
PLAYFULLY ALONGSIDE  
FISHING BOATS.



scrawled filefish. A sleek barracuda cuts through the water like a knife, and not far away, dolphins cavort playfully.

Along with the red snapper, there are plenty of other species to catch: Grouper, flounder, amberjack, triggerfish, kingfish (king mackerel), sea trout, and sailfish—among others—abound in these waters. The ice chest is filling up with grouper and triggerfish.

Toward midafternoon, we arrive at the last of the six rigs we will visit. It turns out to be the best spot of all, with water clear all the way to its 75-foot bottom. The fish are biting. Walt quickly snags another red snapper, and simultaneously, a school of them bubbles up from the depths as if curious. Jesse, who's been lounging on deck, grabs his camera and snorkel and dives back into the water to get pictures. Next, it's my turn. My first cast brings up a fat calico grouper, a handsome fish with bright orange spots and ornate fins. It's followed by several below-size red snapper and then finally, a keeper.

But the high point comes late in the day. Captain Joe has cast a baited line far out and handed the pole to me. I've barely taken over when something grabs the bait and runs with it—something much bigger and with more fight than I'm accustomed to. I fight back, so excited I almost forget to brace the pole in one of the railside sockets provided for that very purpose. As the pole bends straight down, I hang on and reel madly. I want to see what's on the other end! At last it emerges. It's a fine 20-pound kingfish, its iridescent body gleaming in the sunlight.

A few minutes later, Walt brings up a similar-sized kingfish of his own (this

must be today's spot to catch them), but by now it's time to head back. I'm well-pleased with our combined catch. Although experienced offshore anglers would likely have taken more, the three red snapper, five grouper, three triggerfish, and two kingfish will keep us in fillets for some time to come.



The author shows off her catch—a rock hind, or calico grouper, one of several types of spotted groupers found in the Gulf of Mexico.

Back on shore, Captain Joe's workday is far from over. He still has to fillet the fish (which he adeptly accomplishes with an electric knife) and attend to his boat. At the dockside fish-cleaning station, he even shares an easy kingfish recipe: "Fillet the fish, and place it (skin side down) on a charcoal grill; sprinkle with salt, pepper, and garlic powder, and cover with one-quarter-inch mayonnaise. Grill for about 8-10 minutes (until flaky; do not turn over). You'll love it!"

Tired but happy, we say our goodbyes to the captain and Jesse and head for Josie's, a local restaurant that will prepare

your fresh-caught fish for you. ("You hook 'em, we cook 'em!") There, over a leisurely dinner of grilled snapper and Tex-Mex sides (rice, beans, guacamole, tortillas), served family style, we wind down from our long day in the sun and salt air. The air conditioning is welcome and the atmosphere charged with other excited anglers pouring into the packed dining room with their own catches. It's been an adventure and an education rolled into one. ★

RAE NADLER-OLENICK says, "Captain Joe [Surovik] is a great guy—fun, supremely knowledgeable, and a good teacher. I'm planning to go back and apply what I learned on my first trip to catching even more fish."

When he's not diving Texas reefs and rigs, JESSE CANCELMO is likely to be photographing hammerhead sharks in the Galapagos Islands or capturing the underwater wonders of Indonesia. See more of his work at [www.cancelmophoto.com](http://www.cancelmophoto.com).

## essentials CAST-AWAY!

EXCELLENT online resources exist for planning a successful offshore trip. In Port O'Connor—a fishing-tourism mecca—Captain Joe Surovik's **Coastal Safaris Guide Service** (361/983-1407) is among some 2 dozen businesses listed under Guides/Outfitters on the **Port O'Connor Chamber of Commerce** Web site, [www.portoconnor.com](http://www.portoconnor.com). The chamber's phone number is 361/983-2898.

Other coastal Texas cities offer comparable services. The two basic options are charter boats and party boats. Charter boats generally carry 2 to 6 passengers

who pre-book a trip together. Party boats are larger, carry many more people, depart at regular intervals, and may accept walk-ons; they also cost less per passenger.

Because trips differ widely in length, destination, and price, you should research them through the individual companies' Web sites. Find out what fish are in season, and what services are provided. Most operations will supply the bait and tackle, and many will clean and fillet your catch for you. **Also, learn what permits are required and where to get them.** Note: A Texas license with saltwater "stamp" is required even for deep-sea fishing. If you don't already have a license, you'll be able to purchase one locally. One-day permits are also available.

### always bring along:

- Sun protection
- Seasickness protection (check with a pharmacist for options)
- Plenty of fluids
- An ice chest for your catch

FACING PAGE: A bottlenose dolphin jumps the *Coastal Safari I's* wake. Captain Gary Bridges of Port Aransas' Dolphin Encounters tours ([www.kohootz.com](http://www.kohootz.com)) says that when a dolphin breaches the water and reenters nose first, it's a playful gesture; if it lands on its side, it's usually a sign of aggravation, possibly with a dolphin from outside the pod.



How a Little **Texas River**  
Spawned an Ocean of  
**Waterparks**

H<sub>2</sub>O







By **Melissa Gaskill**

**T**he city pool where I hung out as a youngster had a blue plastic slide, the kind that adorned most swimming pools in the 1960s. This one turned a complete 360 degrees before spitting me out like a watermelon seed to land with a satisfying—and refreshing—splash. I couldn't get enough of it. ● Well, water slides have come a long way since then.

For proof, just visit a Schlitterbahn water park in New Braunfels, South Padre Island, or Galveston. The original location in New Braunfels has been voted "The World's Best Waterpark" for 10 consecutive years by *Amusement Today* magazine, which surveys amusement park fans around the world.

Sean Beck of Baytown catches a wave on the Boogie Bahn surf ride at Schlitterbahn Galveston. How does it work? Simple: Riders "surf" on a thin sheet of rushing water pumped over a wave-shaped, foam-padded slope.







## Schlitterbahn Waterpark Resort NEW BRAUNFELS

It all started in 1966, when a couple named Bob and Billye Henry bought a small motel on the Comal River. Inspired by watching their three children and assorted motel guests swimming and tubing, Bob envisioned a 60-foot-tall German castle replica—a nod to the area’s heritage—with water pumped from the river to flow down four slides. When he built those slides in 1979 and dubbed his new park Schlitterbahn, some 5,000 people showed up. The next summer, the Henrys added a pool and a miniature “river” for tubing. Ever since, the family has continued to expand and innovate, filling the original 40 acres with chutes, slides, pools, rivers, and picnic areas. The Henrys added entire new sections to the park in 1991 and 1996.



Today, bright-red mushroom fountains and oversize fiberglass alligators combine with green trees, blue sky, and lots of water to create a summer fantasyland, like a vision induced by too many popsicles or too much hot sun. Except it’s all real: From toddler-friendly activity pools to heart-stopping rides, more than 40 attractions beckon. And splashy innovation is everywhere, from the water coasters that blast riders uphill on high-velocity jets of water to the park’s swim-up refreshment bar, wave pool, and children’s water playground.

My family began visiting in the early 1990s. My three kids were small, and we

could spend an entire day in the park’s center section, hot-footing it between a generous children’s play area of shallow water and pint-sized slides, two water coasters, and a 1,077-foot-long “lazy river.” In between, we watched daredevils on the bodyboarding ride, which creates a “perfect wave” using a machine developed by a longtime surfer from California.

When the kids grew bigger, we pursued greater thrills in the Blastenhoff area, which includes a six-story water coaster with a scream-inducing, 27-foot drop; the fast and dark Black Knight tube ride; the wave-filled Torrent River; and a water-

**Tube chutes, body slides, and speed slides get the heart pounding; the lagoon pool and hot tubs calm it down.**



J. GRIFFIS SMITH

ABOVE: At the 65-acre Schlitterbahn New Braunfels, revelers cool off in one of the park’s three “continuous rivers.” Logjams in some areas give way to exhilarating tube-chute action in others. FACING PAGE: Artisans created the five-story sandcastle at the center of the South Padre Island Schlitterbahn. Dozens of slides, showers, and “dumping pails” make this a popular family play spot.



activity fun house, where they could shoot Mom with a water cannon.

Amazingly, we didn't hit the original section of the park for several years. This tree-filled maze of walks, steps, and chutes, which still has that German castle, uses water from the adjacent Comal River for many of its attractions. Tube chutes, body slides, and speed slides get the heart pounding; the lagoon pool and hot tubs calm it down. Just grab one of 16,000 black inner tubes from the ever-morphing mountain of them by the river, hop in, and stay wet all day.

## Schlitterbahn Beach Waterpark SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

**N**ot content to drench revelers in Central Texas, the owners of Schlitterbahn opened a second park in 2001 behind the dunes on South Padre Island. The centerpiece of this park is, naturally, a sandcastle, bigger than any in your wildest dreams—six turrets and five stories of ramps, stairs, and nets connecting dozens of water features and four slides. A broad view of the island from bay to beach at the top is an attraction all by itself. The bodyboarding ride here is bigger

than the original back in New Braunfels. It stood as the world's largest, in fact, until topped by a larger one in California. No matter, more than 100,000 gallons of water a minute creates a curling "wave" you can surf without worrying about jellyfish. Members of the Schlitterbahn Surf Team

perform surf tricks ranging from flips and headstands to hula-hoop-spinning five nights a week at sunset during the summer season. The park's year-round, full-service restaurant, which offers beach-to-bay views, is a great spot for watching the boarding action. If you try it yourself, be

### Slippery Tips

- **Beat the peak summer-season crowds** by visiting the parks in April, May, late August, or early September (Wednesdays are the least busy days). Catch the ever-popular water coasters and surfing rides first thing in the morning, at lunchtime, or in the evening, when crowds typically thin.
- **Changing rooms** are located in each park, and you can rent a locker for valuables. Parking and inner tubes are free, and the park allows ice chests (no alcohol or glass) for picnicking. You can also buy waterproof wristbands that can be used for food, beverages, and gift-shop purchases. Wear water shoes to avoid doing the hot-pavement high-step. A limited number of life jackets for small children are available at each park.

—MELISSA GASKILL



© LARRY DITTO



forewarned that not all bathing suits can stand up to a wave this powerful.

More sedate entertainment can be found here on the four man-made beach areas or on the wide and sandy real thing, just across a boardwalk. This park also debuted the Rio Aventura, a half-mile float

**More than 100,000 gallons of water a minute creates a curling "wave" you can surf without worrying about jellyfish.**



Refreshing! Tubers get gleefully "maytagged" at Schlitterbahn Beach Waterpark at South Padre Island. Tip: Keep your car keys in a locker, not in your pocket.







that doubles as the route to the beaches and wave pool. Shoot down a tube slide, bob through the Rio's lazy sections and whitewater rapids, and float back in line for another ride, all without ever getting out of the water. Also introduced at this park: Sea Trek, where oversize aquatic helmets allow guests to go underwater and breathe naturally while exploring the marine life around a "shipwreck." There's an additional charge for this attraction.

## Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark

### GALVESTON

**T**he Galveston location, which opened in 2006, features more than 30 rides, slides, and pools, including a dozen heated attractions under a retractable roof system, so the fun doesn't have to stop just because summer does. This park also features three tubing rivers. It's fun to jump in from the wave beaches and circle the various sections of the park without ever touching dry land. Several intersections along this intertwined system are a wet-and-wild version of a Houston freeway interchange. Get yourself in position early and paddle hard or touch down with your feet, keep the screaming to a tolerable level, and, if you make a wrong turn, well, just go around again. The Cliffhanger Speed Slide here holds the all-time Schlitterbahn speed record, with brave souls achieving velocities of 40 miles per hour on its 80-foot drop.

My old blue slide would be amazed.★

Barreling down a 250-foot-long tube that drops some four stories, MELISSA GASKILL had an epiphany: Water parks are more than loads of fun—they're a shortcut to never-ending childhood.

**The Schlitterbahn parks** are open only on weekends in April, May, and mid-August through mid-September, and they're open daily during the summer season (Memorial Day through mid-August). Parts of the Galveston Island park are open year-round. Check current season dates and hours at [www.schlitterbahn.com](http://www.schlitterbahn.com).

## Several intersections along this intertwined system are a wet-and-wild version of a Houston freeway interchange.



ABOVE: Schlitterbahn's "lazy river" rides offer guests a chance to chill out and travel from one part of the park to another. FACING PAGE: Grab a buddy. The Dragon Blaster at Galveston starts with a 20-foot plummet, then hurtles along on water jets through a series of twists, turns, and drops.

BOTH PHOTOS © ROBERT MICHOWIL



# TOP Tables

(continued from page 16)

row of produce booths and pickup trucks. About once a month, they hold a festival, usually with a food theme (strawberry, pepper, tomato, herb, pumpkin, blackberry, or melon, for example) and often offer kids' activities. One Saturday last summer, pony rides were the order of the day, and by 9 a.m., there was already a line of eager kids. With the aromas of kettle corn and fresh-roasted peanuts, the market took on fair-like qualities.

And, like going to a fair or a festival, a visit to the Sunset Valley Farmers Market is not to be rushed. For one thing, there are hundreds, sometimes thousands of shoppers—both residents and tourists—a diversified lot in jeans, shorts, exercise gear, and saris. You'll also want to take your time and savor all the sights, sounds, and tastes you won't find at your local grocery store.

## AT THE DOWNTOWN AUSTIN FARMERS' Market, in Republic Square,

Saturday-morning shoppers include young singles, retired couples, parents with babies, software experts, financiers, writers, politicians, vegetarians, meat-lovers, film producers, and architects. They're often on foot, having walked or run over from nearby lofts or the city's popular hike-and-bike trail. They may even be carrying a fold-up scooter or pushing a stroller. They chat with the vendors and with each other, sharing food tips or opinions on politics, sports, or music. They mosey along, taking in a demo from one of Austin's leading chefs or a lecture on organic gardening. Some eat breakfast at the market, buy groceries for the next week, pick up artisan breads or flowers for a party, or get local root beer on tap—even a pink drink made from prickly pear cactus.

A project of the local nonprofit Sustainable Food Center, the Austin Farmers' Market features some 55 vendors, with 86 percent of the participating farmers and ranchers offering organic or sustainable products. According to Market Director Suzanne Santos, this venue attracted about 63,000 people last year. It also spawned a Wednesday-evening market in Triangle Park, a



Shopping at an urban farmers market is a social experience; both buyers and sellers enjoy the interaction.

new development on Guadalupe Street. The sister market was an immediate hit, drawing 25,000 people in just 34 weeks.

The atmosphere at the new venue is especially sociable: Parents take their children to play in the splash fountain, pick up empanadas or perhaps a fresh-roasted chicken, breads, peaches, and drinks, and then sit on the grass and listen to the music of various artists while the kids scamper around. "Sometimes people linger until dark and we've packed up the trailers," says Santos.

Chefs and amateur cooks attuned to the eat-local movement love this midweek market, because it gives them a good source of fresh local products between Saturdays. And like the Saturday market, it offers more than produce. Fresh chick-

en, duck, pheasant, and rabbit abound, as well as frozen beef, pork, and bison, much of it natural or grass-fed.

Farmers like the midweek market, too, because they can sell in a pretty, grassy park in yet another area of the city. On Saturdays, most do not have the staff to be at more than one location.

**ALL OF THESE URBAN** farmers' markets offer local products that fall into the boutique category—artisan breads, mozzarella marinated with pesto, pasta salads, and spinach-feta spreads. These foods are a party or picnic waiting to happen. Shoppers, many of them non-cooks or microwave-literate only, snap them up. And that sums up the story of the modern-day farmers markets in the Lone Star capital: There's something fresh and local for everyone.

KITTY CRIDER, former food editor of the *Austin American-Statesman*, has frequented farmers' markets from the West Coast to the East Coast.

Staff Photographer KEVIN STILLMAN made sure to arrive early for this shoot. "At big-city markets, the best produce goes fast," he says. His approach works for shoppers, too.

**ALL OF AUSTIN's** year-round produce markets offer free admission.



The **Sunset Valley Farmers Market** takes place about 5 miles south of downtown Austin in the parking lot of the Tony Burger Center, at 3200 Jones Rd. (on the east-bound access road of US 290 West between Brodie Ln. and Westgate Blvd.) in Sunset Valley. Opens Sat. 9-1. Call 512/443-0143; [www.sunsetvalleyfarmersmarket.org](http://www.sunsetvalleyfarmersmarket.org).

The **Sat. Austin Farmers' Market** takes place downtown at Republic Square, at 4th and Guadalupe streets. Opens 9 to 1. Free parking on the street and in the state parking garage at 3rd and San Antonio streets. Call 512/236-0074; [www.austinfarmersmarket.org](http://www.austinfarmersmarket.org).

The **Wed. Austin Farmers' Market** takes place at Triangle Park, at 46th and Guadalupe streets. Opens 4 p.m.–8 p.m. (spring/summer hours). Free parking in the parking garage across the street.

The Sustainable Food Center will host "Farm to Plate," a wine-and-food-tasting, at the Triangle Park market on May 7, from 5 p.m.–8 p.m. For tickets and details, visit [www.sustainablefoodcenter.org](http://www.sustainablefoodcenter.org).



(continued from page 21)

**KELTON:** If I'd been a real *good* cowboy, like I wanted to be, I'd probably be babysitting somebody's ranch out on the Pecos River.

**MAYES:** That's a good example of how things often work out for the best even though it's disappointing at the time.

**KELTON:** Another example is *The Time It Never Rained*. I wrote that book three times before the publisher would take it. I've always been grateful it didn't sell those first two times because it would have gone out there and died and nobody would have heard of it again. As it is, it's my signature book.

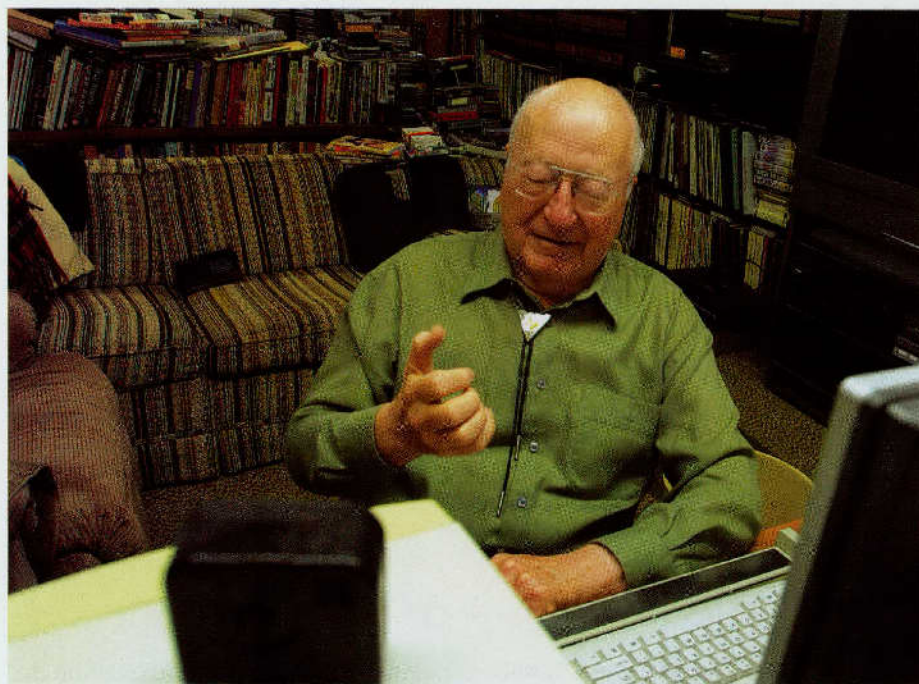
**MAYES:** It's my favorite of all your books. I've heard it's yours, too. Why?

**KELTON:** It's more personal to me because I lived it. My historical novels I lived vicariously, but that one I lived for real.

**MAYES:** I love that line you wrote in your memoir about your dad's reaction to the Great Depression, "He could never forget those mortgaged cows that for so long bore down on his shoulders like the weight of the world."

People often ask Kelton if he has any advice for young writers. His reply: "Keep your day job. Read, read, read, and keep on reading. Write, write, write, and keep on writing."

**KELTON:** Well, that kind of tainted his life because it was such a hard experience. And he was always afraid the next depression was just about to start. From the standpoint of economics, he was always pessimistic. If it didn't start this afternoon, it'd probably start tomorrow. It left him pretty badly scarred.



You'd have hand cramps, too, if you'd written more than 50 books, including such award-winners as *The Time It Never Rained*, *The Day the Cowboys Quit*, and *The Good Old Boys*. Kelton says his current writing station is a big improvement over the setup he often used while covering livestock news—a portable typewriter perched atop a bale of hay.

[Kelton writes in his memoir that when he and his wife wanted to purchase their first home in 1948 for \$6,500, his father gave him this advice: "You'd better wait until they're cheaper." He also shares his father's reaction when he told him at age 16 that he wanted to become a writer: "... That's the way with you kids nowadays, you all want to make a living without working for it."]

lines, but I think my very best is in *The Good Old Boys*: "For the last five or six days Hewey Calloway had realized he needed a bath."

**MAYES:** With more than 50 books to your credit, how do you continually create such distinctive characters?

**KELTON:** The world is full of distinctive characters. [Grin.] I just pick and choose.

**MAYES:** After seeing other parts of the world during your years in the service, and meeting your wife, Ann, in Austria, you still came back to West Texas, which you call your *querencia*, or place of the heart. What is it about that area that makes it paradise to some and purgatory to others?

**KELTON:** At first glance, West Texas can be pretty off-putting. Dry, flat land, blowing sand, and these long droughts that we have. But if you're born and brought up in West Texas, you can see that it has a wild beauty of its own. And if newcomers stay long enough, they generally begin to get drawn into it.

**MAYES:** You've lived the last six decades in San Angelo. If I had just one day to

**MAYES:** I also love the first line of *Cloudy in the West*, when you describe the main character chopping weeds: "All afternoon Joey Shipman had been killing his step-mother with the hoe, chopping her to pieces an inch at a time ... ." How could you not keep reading after that sentence!

**KELTON:** I think that's one of my best first



**spend there, what would you suggest I see?**

**KELTON:** I would urge you to visit old Fort Concho, the frontier fort that spawned what became San Angelo. It is probably the most intact—as contrasted to reconstructed—frontier-era fort in the West.

“I like George Strait. It’s too bad he didn’t come along in time to sing with Bob Wills; I think they would have fit together beautifully.”

**MAYES:** In your memoir you wrote: “I will stop almost anything I’m doing to listen to a good fiddle player.” Does that still hold true?

**KELTON:** Yes, it does. My first clear recollection of listening to country music was when we were living at a line camp on the McElroy Ranch in Crane County called Sand Camp. My dad had an old, battery-powered Atwater Kent radio with a morning-glory horn on it. He ran an antenna up the windmill tower, and we could pick up WFAA in Dallas-Fort Worth and some Mexican border stations. With the limited amount of time that he’d play that radio, because of the battery, we almost always listened to country music. I still enjoy the old-fashioned, raw country music as it was in the ’20s and ’30s, the old artists—Jimmie Rodgers, the early Sons of the Pioneers, Bob Wills, Gene Autry—a lot more than I enjoy the general run of what we call country music today.

**MAYES:** What current Texas music artists do you enjoy?

**KELTON:** Red Steagall, Don Edwards, Michael Martin Murphey, Willie Nelson. And I like the music that’s played at cowboy symposiums like the one in Lubbock [National Cowboy Symposium & Celebration].

**MAYES:** What about George Strait?

**KELTON:** I like George Strait. It’s too bad

he didn’t come along in time to sing with Bob Wills; I think they would have fit together beautifully.

**MAYES:** What parts of Texas do you like to visit?

**KELTON:** I love the Hill Country, its history

and the beauty of the landscape. And the people—they’re just solid, old bedrock Texas people with a strong German influence. I’ve always liked them and felt a kinship to them.

**MAYES:** When you travel in the state, where do you like to eat?

**KELTON:** In Fredericksburg, we like Friedhelm’s [Bavarian Inn] and the Old German Bakery & Restaurant; in Kerrville, Mamacita’s and Annemarie’s Alpine Lodge; and in Boerne, the one here—Limestone Grille. In my teenage years, going to rodeos and other places, I fell in love with chicken-fried steak and gravy. But I guess my favorite of all foods continues to be Tex-Mex. During my travels I’ve tried Mexican food just about everywhere. We have several excellent

Mexican restaurants in San Angelo—Henry’s Diner, Fuentes Cafe Downtown, Los Panchitos. We just take our pick.

**MAYES:** As a youngster, you thrilled at every chance to go to the movies, and during your UT years in Austin you went to a lot of movies at the Ritz and Cactus theaters down on East 6th, right?

**KELTON:** Yes, I just loved Westerns, and those theaters specialized in them. And they were cheap.

**MAYES:** How did you feel when *The Good Old Boys* was adapted as a film?

**KELTON:** It came as a surprise because it had been optioned once many years earlier, and nothing came of it. Then somebody sold TNT on the idea, and they asked Tommy Lee [Jones] if he would do

## A Writer’s Writer

Asked what he would change about his life, Elmer Kelton says, “For one thing, I’d meet J. Frank Dobie!” Kelton enrolled at the University of Texas in the early 1940s partially because Dobie—Texas’ leading folklorist at the time—taught there. However, only juniors and seniors were allowed to take his class. The freshman writing course Kelton took in the English Department proved a poor substitute.

“The teacher assigned us a short piece on any subject matter of our choosing,” he recalls. “So I wrote about West Texas ranch life. She gave me a D, and said, ‘The writing is fine, but you’ll never become a writer until you learn to write about subjects of importance.’” On the other side of the campus, upperclassmen were enjoying Dobie’s course in Life and Literature of the Southwest.

In his memoir, Kelton writes: “I frequently saw Dobie around the campus in his floppy old rancher hat and his khaki pants with cuffs tucked into the tops of his black boots, South Texas-style. I would be tempted to introduce myself, but then I would wonder what a freckle-faced kid from the West Texas sandhills could say to a man of his iconic stature, especially a kid who couldn’t earn his beans as a cowboy.”

World War II intervened, and Kelton entered the U.S. Army. By the time he returned to UT in 1947, Dobie was no longer on the faculty, so Kelton never got to meet his hero. —MAXINE MAYES  
Kelton’s memoir, *Sandhills Boy: The Winding Trail of a Texas Writer*, was published by Forge Books in 2007. To learn more about the author, visit [www.elmerkelton.net](http://www.elmerkelton.net).





The author relaxes in his library as he watches one of his favorite films, *The Longest Day*, a 1962 epic about D-Day. Kelton himself saw combat infantry service in Europe during World War II. He met Ann, his wife of 60 years, while stationed in Austria.

it. He said, "If you'll let me direct it, I'll do it. Then Tommy Lee the actor will do what Tommy Lee the director tells him to do." [Chuckle.] I was really pleased with

**KELTON:** I'd hate to have to stand up and defend that in front of a jury. I appreciate the compliment, but I can't say that I believe it.

"I've often been asked how my characters differ from the traditional, larger-than-life heroes of the mythical West. 'Those,' I reply, 'are seven feet tall and invincible. My characters are five-eight and nervous.'"

the way it turned out ... he followed the book pretty closely.

**MAYES:** How do you feel about being voted "All-time Best Western Author" by your peers in the Western Writers of America?

**MAYES:** I read that you were greatly influenced by J. Frank Dobie. What about him, specifically, made him your hero?

**KELTON:** Because he wrote about the kind of people I knew when I was growing up, people who lived in small towns and in

the country. He saw the importance in local history and local culture.

In 1990, Kelton retired from a journalism career that spanned more than four decades, including stretches at the *San Angelo Standard-Times*, *Sheep and Goat Raisers' Magazine*, and *Livestock Weekly*. He's fond of saying, "It took me 42 years to quit my day job." But he has no intention of quitting writing. *Hard Trail to Follow* was released in January; *Many A River* is due out late this month.

"Nature has slowed me down some," he says, "but it has not stopped me."★

Sisterdale writer MAXINE MAYES can hardly wait to get her hands on Kelton's next book, *Many a River*.

Photo Editor KEVIN VANDIVIER was struck by Elmer Kelton's unpretentious nature and the obvious joy the author finds in his lifework. "In terms of photographing people," says Vandivier, "this shoot was a highlight of my career."



## UNKNOWN COAST

(continued from page 28)

Their home is a five-mile drive from the beach, so I take the road that parallels the old Colorado River channel. I'm waylaid by a herd of several hundred cattle, driven by cowboys moving the animals to pastures on the west side of Matagorda Bay. When the road dead-ends at the Gulf, I encounter one of the most spectacular sculptures I've seen in ages.

This one-ton, shiny scrap-metal artwork welded in the shape of a roseate spoonbill was crafted by the Lower Colorado River Authority railcar maintenance staff, and it welcomes everyone to the remarkable new Matagorda Bay Nature Park, which offers plenty of opportunities for enjoying this utterly unspoiled stretch of waterfront.

Supervisor Betsy Terrel, a former Baptist school teacher with an anthropology and science background, enthusiastically describes the magnificent monarch migration through here in the spring and the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, an event coordinated with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Participants noted some 230 species in mid-December 2007.

Betsy and her staff also facilitate a number of education and conservation awareness programs for students in local and distant school districts, because "It's more

important than ever for kids to interact with the environment to create that personal bond," she says. "Here they get to help with a beach dune erosion study and they can help promote coastal awareness. It's a great fit with the LCRA's mission."

On the park's jetty pier, anglers are out early, casting for red drum, gafftopsail catfish, speckled trout, black drum, and whiting. By afternoon, the picnic tables and grills will be busy. One Saturday each month, there's a guided, four-hour kayaking trip through the east bay's estuaries. Participants learn to paddle and review safety procedures before hitting the water, and then they're off with guides, learning about the ecosystem, wetlands, and birds.

The final stop on my itinerary of quiet escapism awaits 115 miles northeast, at Crystal Beach on the Bolivar Peninsula. The drive en route passes inlets with fanciful names like Chocolate Bay, until I reach Galveston. Determined to stay my course, I steer straight through the island city and board the free ferry for the 10-minute ride that delivers me to Crystal Beach.

Good thing I wasn't looking for much action, as Crystal Beach offers little—which is its allure. In addition to beachfront homes, a few guest houses, a hardware store, and a town grocery, the community offers a handful of restaurants and marinas. The place most popular with lo-

cal is the Stingaree Restaurant on the Intracoastal Canal, where specialties include barbecued shrimp and crazy-rich crabmeat au gratin. To find out what was going on in town, I picked up a copy of *The Beach Triton*, the town paper, but it was three months out of date. No matter, all I wanted to do was walk the beach at sunrise and listen to the surf.

My wishes were granted in spades, as I had the silent beach all to myself. ★

Intrepid explorer and regular *TH* contributor June Naylor spends a lot of time off the beaten track to find new hideouts to share with *Texas Highways* readers.

*TH* Photography Editor Kevin Vandivier broke away from the office to enjoy some great seafood and Gulf Coast sunrises. He grabbed a few photographs in between.

### essentials HIDDEN TREASURE



**The Habitat**, 164 Fourth St., Lamar, 361/729-2362; [www.txhabitat.com](http://www.txhabitat.com).

**Old Main Book Store**, 438 Main St., Palacios, 361/972-1438.

**Etched in Time**, 414 Main St., Palacios, 361/972-5587; [www.etchedintime.us](http://www.etchedintime.us).

**Blessing Hotel and Coffee Shop**, 128 Tenth St., Blessing, 361/588-9579.

**Sculptor Danny Stephens**, between Blessing and Bay City, 361-588-7038.

**Matagorda Bay Nature Park**, 6420 FM 2031, Matagorda; 979/863-2603 or 800/776-5272, ext 4740; [www.lcra.org/parks/developed\\_parks/matagorda.html](http://www.lcra.org/parks/developed_parks/matagorda.html). Kayaking trips are offered on one Sat. each month. If you bring your own kayak, the guided trip costs \$25 per person. Otherwise, the trip costs \$50 per person, including kayak, guide, and safety supplies. Trips can be scheduled for groups of six or more.

**Stanley-Fisher House Bed & Breakfast**, 107 Saint Mary's St., Matagorda, 979/863-2920; [www.stanley-fisher.com](http://www.stanley-fisher.com).

**Stingaree Restaurant**, Stingaree Road at the Intracoastal Canal, Crystal Beach, 409/684-2731; [www.stingaree.com](http://www.stingaree.com).



The State Champion Coastal Live Oak, known as "The Big Tree," plays a role in local lore from its home in Goose Island State Park, where it spreads its crown 90 feet, reaches a height of 44 feet, and measures 35 feet in circumference.



## Critic's Catch

(continued from page 34)

### CHARLOTTE PLUMMER'S SEAFARE RESTAURANT

Fulton

**T**his view can't be found in many restaurants along the Gulf. With Charlotte Plummer's sitting on the edge of a commercial harbor, even diners at a late Sunday lunch can often watch fishermen unloading their bounty of oysters just 50 feet away.

The restaurant, which has been open since the 1970s, offers a variety of fresh Gulf seafood, including amberjack and mahi-mahi.

It also has a large salad bar (perfect for those who might need a respite from big plates of fried fish), tasty gumbo, and homemade desserts like bread pudding and Key lime cheesecake.

### BAKERY CAFE

Aransas Pass

**N**ot everyone can dine on seafood morning, noon, and night; breakfast sometimes demands an alternative.

Operating since 1929 on one of the main streets in downtown Aransas Pass, this café delivers a hearty breakfast for a modest price (an omelet plate with home fries and fresh biscuits costs less than \$4). But if you must get your seafood fix, the fisherman's platter comes stacked with fried oysters, shrimp, and fish along with crab cakes, soup, and salad.

Despite often being packed on weekday mornings, the café offers prompt and friendly service.

### VENETIAN HOT PLATE

Port Aransas

**P**erhaps the biggest surprise on the coast, this Italian restaurant serves a spaghetti pescatora that is every bit as good as any I've had in top Italian restaurants in the United States.

Reminiscent of a dish I adored in a tiny



Pancakes or crab cakes? The popular Bakery Cafe—a community hub in Aransas Pass—has both.

restaurant in Venice, Italy, this one features pasta tossed with a wine-garlic-clam sauce and is topped with mussels, clams, shrimp, and scallops. It is divine.

The starters are enticing as well. A grilled portobello mushroom holds a mound of Italian sausage that is flavored with fennel and cooked with a thick, spicy marinara sauce. The Caesar salad is drizzled with an unusually zesty dressing and garnished with anchovies. It doesn't get any better than this.

### BEACH & STATION STREET GRILL

Port Aransas

**H**oused in one of the few remaining structures that survived Hurricane Carla's wrath in 1961, this eatery has a beach-shack vibe replete with beer signs and old black-and-white photos of seashore scenes hanging on the walls.

There's sometimes a wait for a table on Sunday mornings, which isn't surprising given the good pancakes, big omelettes, warm biscuits, and homemade cinnamon rolls. When it comes to seafood, owner Gil Harty recommends the flounder stuffed with cheese, baby shrimp, crawfish, bell peppers, and onions. "The grilled shrimp is probably the best in town," he adds.

### CASTAWAYS

Port Aransas

**T**his Port A restaurant has a special hook: It will cook a fisherman's catch.

"We cook it how you bring it in," says manager Domingo Hernandez. "Usually that's filleted and deboned."

However, there are customers who have been known to bring in a whole fish and tip the cook extra to clean it for them for dinner.

Typically, the fish is prepared one of the ways listed on the menu: fried, grilled, or blackened, and seasoned with the secret house spice mix, lemon pepper, or teriyaki sauce. Occasionally, the chefs will prepare a whole fish with a tasty stuffing, something that's not on the menu.

"We'll go out of our way for the customers," says Hernandez.

Situated several blocks from the water, the restaurant's large outdoor patio and bar has plenty of picnic benches and is a great place to eat your fresh catch (or order from a menu that includes redfish, mahi-mahi, tuna, and snapper) while enjoying some fresh, coastal air.

**A**s you can see, the Texas coast shines as one of the state's premier travel destinations, and the plenti-



ful, outstanding dining choices here make a trip even more rewarding and memorable.

Let us know about your favorite seafood spots on the Texas coast. Shoot us an e-mail at [letters05@texashighways.com](mailto:letters05@texashighways.com). ★

DALE RICE is the restaurant critic at the *Austin American-Statesman*. He has been a frequent visitor to the Gulf Coast since moving to Texas in 1979. Text adapted from the *Austin American-Statesman* and reprinted with permission.

On this assignment, photographer GRIFF SMITH enjoyed great food and good company all along the Gulf Coast.

## essentials GULF FARE

Clary's Seafood Restaurant, 8509 Teichman Rd., Galveston, 409/740-0771; [www.galveston.com/clarysseafood](http://www.galveston.com/clarysseafood). Hours: Tue-Sat for lunch and dinner



(occasionally open Sun, but call ahead).

Red Snapper Inn, 402 Bluewater Hwy., Surfside Beach, 979/239-3226; [www.redsnapperinn.com](http://www.redsnapperinn.com). Open daily for lunch and dinner.

The Outrigger Restaurant, 515 Commerce St., Palacios, 361/972-1479; [www.outriggerrestaurant.com](http://www.outriggerrestaurant.com). Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Charlotte Plummer's Seafare Restaurant, 202 N. Fulton Beach Rd., Fulton, 361/729-1185; [www.charlotteplummers.com](http://www.charlotteplummers.com). Open daily for lunch and dinner.

Bakery Cafe, 434 S. Commercial St., Aransas Pass, 361/758-3511. Open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Venetian Hot Plate, 232 Beach St., Port Aransas, 361/749-7617; [www.venetianhotplate.com](http://www.venetianhotplate.com). Open Tue-Sat for lunch and dinner.

Beach & Station Street Grill, 235 Beach St., Port Aransas, 361/749-2303. Open Thu-Mon for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Tue for breakfast and lunch.

Castaways, 320 N. Alister St., Port Aransas, 361/749-5394; [www.castawayssporta.com](http://www.castawayssporta.com). Open daily for lunch and dinner.

# TEXAS HIGHWAYS

## READER SERVICE GUIDE TO ADVERTISERS

(Reader service numbers are in red.)

1. Alpine Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 2
2. Amarillo, Texas, pg. 15
3. Beaumont CVB, pg. 8
4. Brenham/Washington County, pg. 3
5. Bryan-College Station Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 64
6. Cedar Park Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 66
7. Del Rio Chamber of Commerce, pg. 9
8. Denton Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 11
9. Fort Stockton Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 9
10. The Georgetown Palace Theatre, Inc., pg. 70
11. Glen Rose Visitor Center, pg. 69
12. Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 8
13. Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 66
14. Horseshoe Bay Resort, Marble Falls, pg. 7
15. Kerr Arts & Cultural Center, pg. 67
16. Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 4
17. KerrvilleLife.com, pg. 5  
Comanche Trace, Kerrville  
Integrity Group Texas, Kerrville  
Palacios del Guadalupe, Kerrville
18. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, pg. 68
19. Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 10
20. McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 13
21. Moody Gardens, pg. 4
22. Greater New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce, pg. 16
23. Odessa Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 9
24. Paris Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 15
25. Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce, pg. 15
26. Texas Conquer Cancer License Plate Program, pg. 70
27. Texas Forest Country Partnership, pg. 16
28. Texas Hill Country River Region, pg. 12
29. Village of Salado, pg. 65
30. Visit Big Bend Tourism Council, pg. 9
31. Visit Longview Texas, pg. 6
32. Waxahachie Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 14
33. City of Webster, pg. 13

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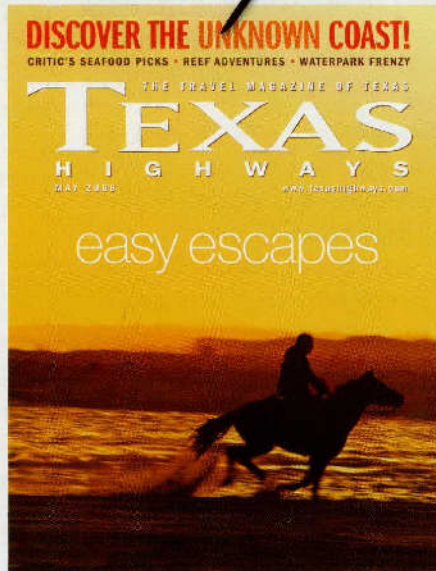
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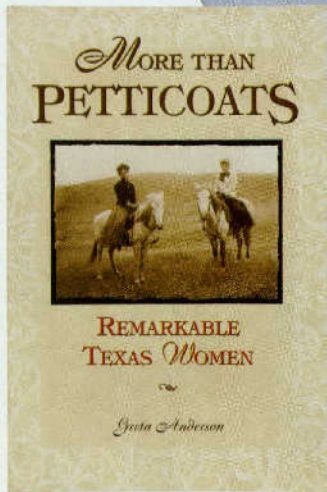


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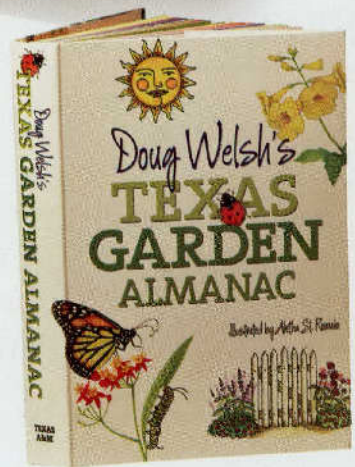
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# Best



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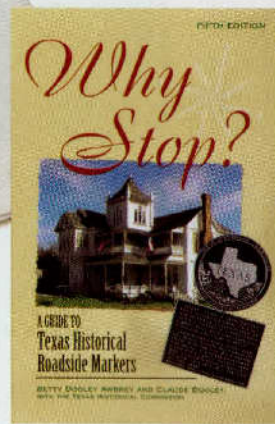
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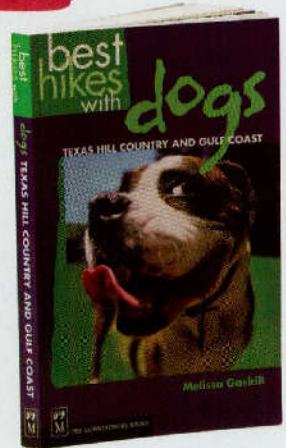
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# Just PASSING Through

BY LIZ CARMACK

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURENCE PARENT

## The Legend of Fort Boggy

AS THE LAST swimmers of the day collect their beach balls and a lone angler cleans his catch, a beaver plows a rippling “V” across the small lake at Fort Boggy State Park, near Centerville. Then, with a loud *thwack* of its tail upon the water’s blue-green surface, it dives below.

The beavers, pileated woodpeckers, and wood ducks usually have this slice of East Texas to themselves the first part of the week. But starting around Wednesday, they share it with visitors who come here to fish, swim, picnic, hike, and camp.

Opened in 2001, Fort Boggy State Park encompasses 1,847 acres in Leon County—land donated 16 years earlier to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by Eileen Crain Sullivan, the widow of prominent Centerville banker Joe Sullivan. The Sullivan family’s roots in the county date to 1860.

Visitors exploring the park shouldn’t expect to find remains of its namesake, Fort Boggy, a palisaded fort constructed



A misty morning sunrise rewards visitors to the fishing pier at Fort Boggy State Park near Centerville.

in the area in 1840 and itself named for a nearby creek. The former garrison’s exact location is unknown, but a written account of the area’s history says the 75-square-yard fort consisted of two blockhouses and 11 dwellings and sheltered 75 residents who sought refuge

from raids. Both the Keechi and the Kickapoo tribes inhabited the region at that time.

FORT BOGGY STATE PARK, 4994 TX 75 South is about 4 miles south of Centerville. Call 903/344-1116; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us).



The Sullivan family dug a 15-acre lake here a century later, in 1940. Today, the unnamed lake is the

park’s focal point and attracts waterfowl and wildlife, as well as recreation-seekers.



“Fort Boggy provides a sanctuary for migrating waterfowl,” says Jeff Beshears, chairman of the Leon County chapter of Delta Waterfowl, a North American conservation group. “It has tons of shallow water, an attraction for blue-winged and green-winged teal, wood ducks, mallards, gadwalls, northern pintails, and American widgeon.”

To see a diversity of ducks, birders should visit September-March. Teal appear in September, and other ducks arrive in mid-November. Wood ducks call the park and nearby Boggy Creek home year round.

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next to a small dock. A canoe, kayak, or small boat powered by a trolling motor (no wakes allowed) affords the easiest access for fishing and birding here. Anglers find the waters full of brim and crappie, and also catch the occasional bass.

To help cultivate a new generation of anglers, the county's Delta Waterfowl chapter sponsors an annual Kids' Fishing

Park Service Rustic) reminds me of similar facilities built throughout Texas parks by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the 1930s. But Texas prison labor constructed this native-red-ironstone shelter in the late 1990s.

Because the park is at the eastern end of the region's post oak savanna and the western edge of a mixed pine/hardwood

## This secret slice of East Texas attracts waterfowl and wildlife, as well as recreation-seekers.

Day after park staff stock the lake with rainbow trout. Chapter members teach the children to fish, and provide a hot dog lunch to all the young participants and their families.

"It's free, and all the fishing equipment is provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife," says Beshears.

During the summer, anglers share the water with families who crowd a grassy "bathing beach" and a roped-off swimming area, which extends roughly 60 yards into the lake. "The most popular activity is swimming," says park superintendent Wesley Hamilton.

On a gentle slope leading to the bathing beach, a playground and 20 concrete picnic tables are dappled by sunlight filtered through red and white oaks, maples, and sweet gums. A pavilion at the top of the hill, next to the parking lot, accommodates large groups.

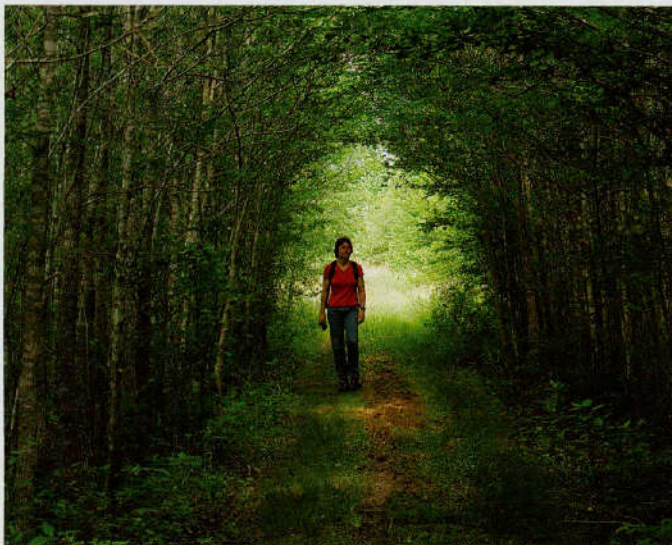
The park's location, midway between Dallas and Houston, and its proximity to Interstate 45 make it a popular rendezvous spot for friends and families who live in North and south-east Texas.

The pavilion's architectural style (called National

forest, it boasts diverse flora and fauna—about 700 plant species and 60 bird species. A two-mile loop trail west of the lake immerses hikers, mountain bikers, and campers in the ecotone. Along the trail, sun-drenched post oak savannas—sprinkled with wildflowers and native grasses—alternate with shady hardwood bottoms.

The tunnel of sweet gum trees at trail's end makes for a great photo opportunity,

I haven't fished since I was a kid, but the relaxed expressions on the faces of two fly fishermen—who have the lake to themselves this late spring day—make me consider trading my hiking boots for a fishing pole. The men slowly float around the lake on their pedal-driven kayaks, casting in shallows along the shore and




Writer Liz Carmack hikes through a Tolkienesque canopy of sweet gum trees.



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Jeff Beshears told me, "Fort Boggy is the best-kept secret in central East Texas." I'm glad I know about it.

LIZ CARMACK is the author of *Historic Hotels of Texas: A Traveler's Guide* (Texas A&M Univ. Press, 2007). She relishes the time she spent at the park and in Centerville.

Acclaimed landscape photographer LAURENCE PARENT fondly recalls shooting dawn's morning mist hanging over the lake at Fort Boggy.

# Just PASSING Through

as do the carpets of pink phlox and golden coreopsis along the path in spring, and the goldenrod and little bluestem in the fall.

A second trail rings the lake for about a mile-and-a-half, cutting through thick forest with understory vegetation that includes American beautyberry, yaupon, and Alabama supplejack. A few clearings provide views across the lake of the picnic area and beach.

From one of these I spot the perfect post-hike perch—a table 20 feet from the water. After my hike, I sit and meditate on lengthening shadows and dragonflies flitting along the green, gold, and buff-colored reflections on the water's mirror-like surface. The fly fishermen and the only bathers depart, leaving me alone with the approaching evening.

A frog chorus arises as the beaver begins its water ballet, and I remember what

## Centerville Attractions

**Woody's Smokehouse** has 2 locations on either side of I-45 at the intersection of TX 7 (exit 164). Customers like the wide variety of smoked meats, baked goods, and preserves. The store on the northeast side of the intersection offers the largest selection and includes a barbecue restaurant. Call 903/536-9663; [www.woody-smokehouse.com](http://www.woody-smokehouse.com).

**Country Cousins Barbecue**, 930 W. St. Mary St. (on the southeast side of I-45 and TX 7) sells primarily take-out, but offers outdoor seating and caters parties in the park. Beef brisket and Slovacek sausage—made in Snook with a combination of beef and pork—are customer favorites. Call 903/536-3271.

**Town Café**, at TX 7 and TX 75, is well known for its breakfasts, chicken-fried steak, and the all-you-can-eat catfish on Fri. nights. Call 903/536-2919.

The **Leon County Courthouse**, at Commerce and St. Mary's streets, is an 1886 Renaissance Revival building constructed of brick with cast-iron columns. It underwent restoration in 2006-2007.

**Parkview RV Park and Cabins**, 4447 TX 75 South, offers 7 cabins, 7 campsites with full RV hookups, a pavilion, and barbecue grills across from the park. Call 903/344-3641.

**Country Memories**, 126 N. Commerce St., features antiques, collectibles, furniture, glassware, and china. Call 903/536-5222.

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Don Puckett of La Porte enjoys a day of fly fishing in his kayak.



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## Galveston Greats

THE 34TH ANNUAL GALVESTON HISTORIC Homes Tour is set for **May 3-4** and **10-11**, the first two weekends of the month. Ten houses dating from 1839 to 1912 will be available for public viewing, including the elegant 1839 Williams House, the 1859-61 antebellum Allardyce House (which survived the 1885 fire and 1900 hurricane), and the c. 1870 double-gallery, 10,000-square-foot, Greek Revival McLemore House (at left), which previously served for more than 80 years as the Lasker Orphanage. For tickets and information, go online to the Galveston Historical Foundation Web site, [www.galvestonhistory.org](http://www.galvestonhistory.org); call 877/772-5425; or stop by the Ashton Villa Heritage Visitors Center.

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**DEL RIO: First Friday Art Walk** May 2. Downtown art galleries. 830/775-0888

**DEL RIO: George Paul Memorial Bull Riding** May 3-4. Val Verde County Fairgrounds. [www.drchamber.com](http://www.drchamber.com) 830/775-9595

**EL PASO: Broadway in El Paso presents The Fresh Aire Music of Mannheim Steamroller** May 4. Historic Plaza Theatre. [www.theplazatheatre.org](http://www.theplazatheatre.org) 915/544-8444

**EL PASO: Armed Forces Day** May 17. Military equipment displays, chili cook-off, live music, historical tours, health fair, and more. Noel Field, Fort Bliss. [www.bliss.army.mil](http://www.bliss.army.mil) 915/568-2497

**MIDLAND: 25th Annual Celebration of the Arts** May 16-18. Fine art, 5-K & 10-K Run for the Arts, hands-on art activities, live entertainment, and Saturday night street concert. Midland Center and Centennial Plaza. [www.artsassemblyofmidland.org](http://www.artsassemblyofmidland.org) 432/687-1149

**ODESSA: Fiesta West Texas** May 1-4. Food, family entertainment, live nightly concerts, carnival, and more. Ector County Coliseum, 42nd Street and Andrews Highway. 432/580-8112

**ODESSA: 42nd Annual West Texas Jazz Party** May 16-18. MCM Elegante. 432/550-0996 or 432/683-2026

### GULF COAST

**BEAUMONT: Free Family Arts Day** May 3. Art Museum of Southeast Texas. 409/832-3432

**BEAUMONT: Boomtown Film & Music Festival** May 17. Showcase of regional music and independent film. [www.boomtownfestival.com](http://www.boomtownfestival.com) 409/225-7141

**CORPUS CHRISTI: U.S. Wind & Water Open** May 9-11. Competition for national championships in wind & water extreme sports at McGee Beach. Windsurfing, kite boarding, and wake boarding are among the categories in play. [www.uswindandwateropen.com](http://www.uswindandwateropen.com) 361/888-7500

**CORPUS CHRISTI: Beach to Bay Marathon** May 17. A 26 point-to-point relay route divided into six legs that begins on North Padre Island and ends at downtown's Cole Park. More than 9,000 participants from around the world. [www.beachtobayrelay.com](http://www.beachtobayrelay.com) 361/881-6166

**CRYSTAL BEACH: Texas Crab Festival** May 9-11.

Enjoy tasty crab dishes, sample a variety of food and craft vendors, go for rides, play games, and hear great music. Gregory Park, Texas 87. [www.bolivarchamber.org](http://www.bolivarchamber.org) 409/684-5940 or 800/386-7863

**GALVESTON: 100 Years of Broadway** May 3.

The Grand 1894 Opera House. [www.thegrand.com](http://www.thegrand.com) 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894

**HOUSTON: La Boheme** May 1, 3. Houston Grand Opera. [www.houstongrandopera.org](http://www.houstongrandopera.org) 713/228-6737

**HOUSTON: Ritmo Latino** May 2. Houston premiere of the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, Grammy-award winning salsa and Latin music band. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Drive, Hermann Park. [www.milleroutdoortheatre.com](http://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com) 281/373-3386

**HOUSTON: Billy Budd** May 2, 4, 9. Accusations of mutiny and an accidental death leave sailor Billy Budd in

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danger of hanging for murder. Houston Grand Opera. [www.houstongrandopera.org](http://www.houstongrandopera.org) 713/228-6737

**HOUSTON: Dragon Boat Festival** May 3. Buffalo Bayou at Allen's Landing. Downtown. [www.texasdragonboat.com](http://www.texasdragonboat.com) 281/381-7154

**HOUSTON: Cinco de Mayo** May 4. Features mariachis, folkloric dancers, and more. Comité Patriótico Mexicano de Houston production. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Drive, Hermann Park. [www.milleroutdoortheatre.com](http://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com) 281/373-3386

**HOUSTON: Madame Butterfly** May 9-11. Set to Puccini's memorable score, experience this Houston Ballet production at Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park. [www.milleroutdoortheatre.com](http://www.milleroutdoortheatre.com) 281/373-3386

**HOUSTON: Houston Art Car Parade** May 10. Features 250 wild wheeled wonders from all over the U.S. Enjoy this mobile display of creative genius. Downtown Houston. [www.orangeshow.org](http://www.orangeshow.org) 713/926-6368

**HOUSTON: Mr. Marmalade** May 16-Jun. 1. A grown-up play about playing grown up in which a precocious 4-year-old enacts a wild vision of adult dysfunction as seen through a child's eyes. [www.stagestheatre.com](http://www.stagestheatre.com) 713/527-0123

**HOUSTON: Highland Games & Celtic Festival** May 17-18. Enjoy the sights and sounds of Scotland with traditional athletic competition, highland dancing, pipe bands, children's games, a variety of workshops, all things Celtic, Scottish harp, and more. Houston Farm

& Ranch Club at Bear Creek Park. [www.houstonhighlandgames.com](http://www.houstonhighlandgames.com) 713/871-0061 or 713/774-7179

**KEMAH: 40th Annual Blessing of the Fleet** May 4. Decorated shrimp boats and pleasure craft file past the Cadillac Authentic Mexican Restaurant where the officiating priest and minister bless each of the boats. Kemah Boardwalk. [www.kemah.net](http://www.kemah.net) 281/334-9880

**LA PORTE: Monumental VW Bug Bash** May 18. Annual car picnic of all things Volkswagen. San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site. [www.bayareavwclub.com](http://www.bayareavwclub.com) 713/398-0183 or 281/479-2431

**ORANGE: Texas Cajun Heritage Festival** May 17. City Boat Ramp/Recreation Area. [www.orangetexas.org](http://www.orangetexas.org) 409/883-1011

**PASADENA: 35th Annual Strawberry Festival** May 16-18. Three-day family event features arts & crafts, a carnival, barbecue cookoff, beauty pageant, three stages of entertainment, children's pavilion, mud volleyball, and more. Pasadena Fairgrounds. [www.strawberryfest.org](http://www.strawberryfest.org) 281/991-9500

**PORT ARTHUR: S.A.L.T. Fishing Rodeo** May 24-25. Popular Gulf Coast fishing tournament. Pleasure Island. 409/718-8787

**PORT ARTHUR: Oh Boy! Oberto Redfish Cup** May 30-Jun. 1. Premier inshore saltwater fishing championship. Includes a youth tournament and fish art competition. Pleasure Island. 800/235-7822

**SEABROOK: Keels & Wheels Concours d'Elegance & Auction** May 3-4. Features classic auto-

mobiles and vintage wooden boats. Lakewood Yacht Club, 2425 NASA Parkway. [www.keels-wheels.com](http://www.keels-wheels.com) 713/521-0105

**WHARTON: Jazz Band Concert** May 1. Horton Foote Theatre, Wharton County Junior College. 979/532-4560

## HILL COUNTRY

**AUSTIN: Old Pecan Street Spring Arts Festival** May 3-4. More than 200 artists and craftspeople join musicians and food vendors to turn Sixth Street, originally named Pecan Street, into a lively street fair. [www.oldpecanstreetfestival.com](http://www.oldpecanstreetfestival.com) 512/443-6179

**AUSTIN: Tower of Power** May 4. Long-standing soul, funk, and R&B band noted for potent horn arrangements. One World Theatre. [www.oneworldtheatre.org](http://www.oneworldtheatre.org) 512/329-6753

**AUSTIN: Austin Symphony** May 16-17. Featuring Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F Major, and Symphony No. 9 in D Minor. Long Center for the Performing Arts. [www.austinsymphony.org](http://www.austinsymphony.org) 512/476-6064

**AUSTIN: O. Henry Pun Off** May 17. Brush Square, 409 E. 5th St. [www.punpunpun.com](http://www.punpunpun.com) 512/472-1903

**AUSTIN: Return to Forever** May 29-30. Legendary jazz quartet of Chick Corea, Stanley Clarke, Lenny White, and Al Di Meola plays 2 shows at the Paramount. [www.austintheatre.org](http://www.austintheatre.org) 866/443-8849

**BANDERA: St. Stanislaus Parish Festival** May 4. Mansfield Park. [www.stanislausfest.com](http://www.stanislausfest.com) 830/460-4712

**BOERNE: Historic Homes Tour** May 10. [www.visitboerne.org](http://www.visitboerne.org) 830/249-7277

**GEORGETOWN: Festival of the Arts** May 30-Jun 8. [www.georgetowntexasymphony.org](http://www.georgetowntexasymphony.org) 512/864-9591

**KERRVILLE: Symphony of the Hills** May 1, 4. Cailloux Theater. [www.caillouxtheater.com](http://www.caillouxtheater.com) 830/896-9393

**KERRVILLE: 37th Annual Kerrville Folk Festival** May 22-Jun. 8. Each year since 1972, more than 100 performers grace the stages that were once a springboard for the careers of Lyle Lovett, Nanci Griffith, and countless others. A mecca for songwriters and music enthusiasts alike. Camping, concerts, songwriting competitions and workshops, arts & crafts, food, and more. Quiet Valley Ranch. [www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com](http://www.kerrvillefolkfestival.com) 830/257-3600

**KERRVILLE: Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair** May 23-26. River Star Arts & Events Park, 4000 Riverside Drive. [www.tacef.org](http://www.tacef.org) 830/896-5711 or 888/335-1455

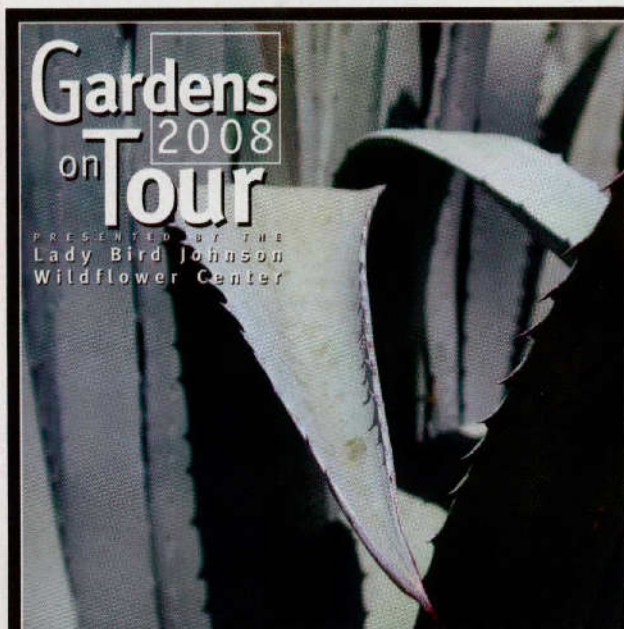
**KERRVILLE: Texas Hill Country Bird & Nature Photography Alliance Ranch Previews** May 24-25. Explore bird and nature photography opportunities on premier private ranches in the Texas Hill Country. Advance registration required. [www.hillcountryphoto.org](http://www.hillcountryphoto.org) 830/833-0958

**MARBLE FALLS: MayFest** May 8-11. Johnson Park. [www.marblefalls.org](http://www.marblefalls.org) 830/693-2815 or 800/759-8178

**SAN MARCOS: Cinco de Mayo** May 2-3. Features live music, menudo competition, arts & crafts, and a downtown parade. San Marcos Plaza. [www.sanmarcoscharms.com](http://www.sanmarcoscharms.com) 888/200-5620

**SAN MARCOS: Texas Natural & Western Swing Festival** May 17. Relax on the banks of the San Marcos River and enjoy the sounds of Texas Western Swing legends. San Marcos Plaza. [www.sanmarcoscharms.com](http://www.sanmarcoscharms.com) 888/200-5620

**STONEWALL: Lavender Fest** May 17-18. Becker Vineyards. [www.beckervineyards.com](http://www.beckervineyards.com) 830/644-2681



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**TAYLOR: Bloomin' Festival** May 3. Historic Downtown Taylor. [www.taylormainstreet.com](http://www.taylormainstreet.com) 512/844-4475

**UVALDE: Cinco de Mayo Celebration** May 5. 830/278-3361

## PANHANDLE PLAINS

**ABILENE: Western Heritage Classic** May 8-11. Preserves the heritage of the ranch cowboy. Features a parade, ranch rodeo, nightly dances, and much more. Taylor County Expo Center. [www.westernheritageclassic.com](http://www.westernheritageclassic.com) 325/677-4376

**AMARILLO: Greater Southwest Music Festival** May 1-3. Features more than 10,000 music students and their teachers in contests, including band, choir, jazz bands, show choir, orchestras, solo, and ensemble. Amarillo Civic Center, St. Paul United Methodist Church, and Polk Street United Methodist Church. [www.gswmf.com](http://www.gswmf.com) 806/373-5903

**COLORADO CITY: Lake Colorado City Bicycle Tour** May 3. Reservations required. Lake Colorado City State Park. 325/728-3931

**ELECTRA: 25th Annual Electra Goat Barbecue** May 9-10. City Fairgrounds. [www.electratexas.org](http://www.electratexas.org) 940/495-3577

**FLOMOT: Washington Cattle Co. Flomot Bluegrass Festival** May 15-17. 806/469-5278

**LUBBOCK: Literary Lubbock** May 2. Merket Center, Texas Tech University. [www.ttup.ttu.edu](http://www.ttup.ttu.edu) 806/742-2982

**SAN ANGELO: Armed Forces Day Celebration** May 17. Fort Concho. [www.fortconcho.com](http://www.fortconcho.com) 325/481-2646

**THROCKMORTON: World Championship Rocky Mountain Oyster Fest & Barbecue Cookoff** May 16-18. Frank Rhoades Memorial Arena. [www.worldchampionshiprockymountainoysters.com](http://www.worldchampionshiprockymountainoysters.com) 940/849-3170

**VERNON: Santa Rosa Roundup Rodeo** May 14-17. Santa Rosa Rodeo Grounds. 940/552-7236

## PINEY WOODS

**CONROE: Lone Star Stampede PRCA Rodeo & Texas State Championship Barbecue Cookoff** May 8-10. Lone Star Expo Center, 9055 FM 1484. [www.conroerodeo.com](http://www.conroerodeo.com) 281/413-5961

**CROCKETT: Lions Club PRCA Rodeo** May 8-10. Porth Ag Arena. 936/544-0999 or 936/546-2265

**HUNTSVILLE: General Sam Houston Folk Festival** May 2-4. Sam Houston Memorial Museum. [www.shsu.edu/~smm\\_www](http://www.shsu.edu/~smm_www) 936/294-1832

**JEFFERSON: 61st Annual Pilgrimage Tour of Homes & Spring Festival** May 2-4. Stroll through four of Jefferson's most beautiful and elegant homes festooned with fresh flowers and period furnishings. The renowned *Diamond Bessie Murder Trial* comedy/melodrama stages six performances in the historic Jefferson Playhouse. Fine art show, crafts, twilight garden stroll, colorful parade, docents in period costumes, and much more. [www.theexcoelsiorhouse.com](http://www.theexcoelsiorhouse.com) 903/665-2672 or 888/467-3529

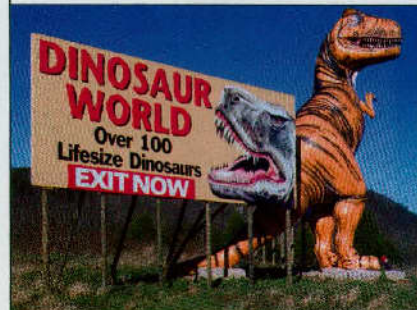
**MINEOLA: May Days** May 8-10. Mineola Civic Center. [www.mineolachamber.org](http://www.mineolachamber.org) 903/569-2087

**SAN AUGUSTINE: PRCA Rodeo** May 16-17. Rodeo Arena. [www.senaugustinetx.com](http://www.senaugustinetx.com) 936/275-3610

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**THE WOODLANDS: The Police with Elvis Costello & the Imposters** May 20. Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. <http://pavilion.woodlandscenter.org> 713/629-3700

**PRAIRIES AND LAKES**

**ADDISON: Taste Addison** May 9-11. A plentiful weekend of food, music, and family fun featuring more than 50 of Addison's best restaurants. Carnival, arts & crafts,

wine tasting and seminars, children's entertainment, and nonstop music. Addison Circle Park. [www.addisontexas.net](http://www.addisontexas.net) 800/233-4766

**ATHENS: Farm & Ranch Tour** May 20. 800/755-7878

**ATHENS: 77th Old Fiddlers Reunion & Contest** May 30. Downtown Courthouse Lawn. [www.athenstx.org](http://www.athenstx.org) 888/294-2847

**AZLE: Azle Lake Run & Walk** May 17. Includes a 10K run, 2-mile run, and 2-mile family walk in wooded neighborhoods along the shore of Eagle Mountain Lake. Azle High School, 1200 Boyd Hwy. [www.azlakerun.org](http://www.azlakerun.org) 817/444-2929

**BENBROOK: Tri-Benbrook Sprint Triathlon** May 4. Benbrook Community Center/YMCA, 1899 Winscott Road. [www.ironheadrp.com](http://www.ironheadrp.com) 817/707-0500

**BRENHAM: Brenham Country Flavors Festival** May 3. Downtown Brenham. [www.downtownbrenham.com](http://www.downtownbrenham.com) 888/BRE-NHAM

**BRENHAM: 118th Annual Maifest** May 9-10. One of the oldest German festivals in Texas, this event includes parades, pageants, food, crafts, and exhibits. Enjoy polkas, waltzes, and country music. Downtown Brenham. [www.maifest.org](http://www.maifest.org) 888/273-6426

**BRIDGEPORT: Butterfield Stage Days Festival & PRCA Rodeo** May 8-10. Includes a carnival night on Thursday, PRCA rodeo Friday and Saturday nights, and festival Saturday in Harwood Park. [www.bridgeportchamber.org](http://www.bridgeportchamber.org) 940/683-2076

**COPPERAS COVE: Rabbit Fest** May 15-18. City Park. [www.copperascove.com](http://www.copperascove.com) 254/547-7571

**DALLAS: The Police with Elvis Costello & the Imposters** May 21. Superpages.com Center. [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com) 214/373-8000

**DALLAS: CATS** May 27-Jun 1. Music Hall at Fair Park. [www.dallassummermusicals.org](http://www.dallassummermusicals.org) 214/217-1536

**DENTON: 20th Annual Cinco de Mayo Festival** May 3. Quakertown Park, 321 E. McKinney. [www.dentonparks.com](http://www.dentonparks.com) 940/349-8285

**DENISON: Memorial Day Parade** May 26. Main Street, Downtown Denison. [www.denisontexas.us](http://www.denisontexas.us) 903/465-1551

**ENNIS: Cinco de Mayo Festival** May 3. [www.visitennis.org](http://www.visitennis.org) 972/878-4748

**ENNIS: National Polka Festival** May 23-25. Learn about Czech & Slovak traditions, religious customs, folk dances, tastes, sights, and sounds. Enjoy 14 sensational live polka bands including Grammy Award-winning Brave Combo. KJT Auditorium, Sokol Auditorium, Knights of Columbus Hall, and Downtown



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**FARMERS BRANCH: Dallas Symphony Orchestra Concert & Fireworks** May 31. Farmers Branch Historical Park. 972/919-2620

**FORT WORTH: Mayfest** May 1-4. Trinity Park. 817/332-1055

**FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Symphony** May 9-11. Program of Shostakovich and Mendelssohn. Bass Performance Hall. [www.fwsymphony.org](http://www.fwsymphony.org) 817/665-6000

**FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Opera Festival presents Angels in America** May 16, 18, 24, 31. Bass Performance Hall. [www.fwopera.org](http://www.fwopera.org) 817/731-0726

**FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Opera Festival presents Turandot** May 17, 25, 30. Bass Performance Hall. 817/731-0726

**FORT WORTH: Crowne Plaza Invitational at Colonial** May 19-25. Prestigious annual PGA Tour event features the world's top golfers. Texas legend Ben Hogan won this championship five times, and his statue overlooks the famous course. Colonial Country Club. [www.crowneplazainvitational.com](http://www.crowneplazainvitational.com) 817/927-4280

**FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Opera Festival presents Lucia Di Lammermoor** May 23. Bass Performance Hall. 817/731-0726

**FORT WORTH: Hidden Gardens Tour** May 31-Jun. 1. [www.historicfortworth.org](http://www.historicfortworth.org) 817/336-2344

**FRISCO: Kenny Chesney's Pirates & Poets Tour** May 3. Reigning Country Music Association Entertainer of the Year Kenny Chesney adds longtime favorites Brooks & Dunn, and Grammy-winning singer LeAnn Rimes to his Pirates & Poets Tour. Pizza Hut Park. [www.pizzahutpark.com](http://www.pizzahutpark.com) 214/373-8000

**GAINESVILLE: Gainesville Area Chamber 22nd Annual Rodeo** May 1-3. Gainesville Riding Club Arena. [www.gogainesville.net](http://www.gogainesville.net) 940/665-2831

**GIDDINGS: Lee County Fair & Rodeo** May 10-17. Charcoal challenge, carnival, arts & crafts, quilt show, State of Texas Noodle Cookoff, softball tournament, parade, and live music. Sheriff's Posse Arena and Fireman's Park. [www.giddings.net](http://www.giddings.net) 979/540-2720

**GRAND PRAIRIE: George Lopez** May 16-17. Popular standup comedian, and star of ABC and Nick at Nite's *George Lopez*, and the HBO special *America's Mexican*, plays Nokia Theatre. [www.nokialivedfw.com](http://www.nokialivedfw.com) 214/373-8000 or 972/647-5700

**GRAPEVINE: 24th Annual Main Street Days** May 16-18. Outdoor Adventure Historic Downtown Grapevine. [www.grapevinetexasusa.com](http://www.grapevinetexasusa.com) 817/410-3185 or 800/457-6338

**LULING: 81st Annual Field Day** May 15. Includes hayride and tour of historic farm, exhibitors, agricultural education, and guest speakers. Luling Foundation Farm. [www.lulingfoundation.org](http://www.lulingfoundation.org) 830/875-2438

**PLANO: Blackland Prairie Festival** May 11. Historic cobbled streets downtown filled with music, costumed performers, artists, food vendors, and more. [www.blacklandprairiefestival.org](http://www.blacklandprairiefestival.org) 214/808-1222 or 214/208-0669

**RICHARDSON: Cottonwood Art Festival** May 3-4. Features more than 240 local, regional, and national artists, as well as local and regional musicians. [www.cottonwoodartfestival.com](http://www.cottonwoodartfestival.com) 972/744-4580

**RICHARDSON: Wildflower! Arts & Music Festival** May 16-18. Galatyn Urban Center. [www.wildflowerfestival.net](http://www.wildflowerfestival.net) 972/744-4580

**ROCKWALL: Founder's Day Festival** May 31. Historic Downtown Square. [www.rockwallfoundersday.com](http://www.rockwallfoundersday.com) 972/771-7740

**SEGUIN: Sebastopol May Day** May 3. Sebastopol House State Historic Site. 830/379-4833

**TEMPLE: Central Texas Airshow** May 2-4. Temple Airport, 7720 Airport Rd. [www.centraltexasairshow.com](http://www.centraltexasairshow.com) 254/298-5770

**WEIMAR: Gedenke! Festival** May 10. Arts & crafts, food, drink, bands, barbecue cookoff, and parade. Downtown Weimar. [www.weimartx.org](http://www.weimartx.org) 979/725-9511

**WHITEWRIGHT: Rose & Garden Tour** May 3-4. 903/364-2000

**WHITEWRIGHT: Fiddlefest** May 24. 903/364-2000

**WAXAHACHIE: Country Thunder USA** May 30-Jun 1. Features more than 50 country music recording artists live in concert, including Tim McGraw, Pat Green, and Jason Aldean. Long Branch Circle and Griffin Road. [www.countrythunder.com](http://www.countrythunder.com) 262/279-6960 or 972/878-4748

## SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

**BEEVILLE: Cinco de Mayo** May 3. Downtown Beeville. 361/362-3981

**PEARSALL: Potato Festival** May 9-10. Downtown Pearsall Public Library. 830/334-9414

**SAN ANTONIO: Savor the Arts** May 1. Russell Hill Rogers Galleries and Lecture Hall, Southwest School of Art & Craft. [www.swschool.org](http://www.swschool.org) 210/224-1848

**SAN ANTONIO: SAWS Garden Jazz Party** May 4. San Antonio Botanical Garden. [www.sabot.org](http://www.sabot.org) 210/207-3250

**SAN ANTONIO: Shakespeare in the Park** May 21-24. A live outdoor presentation of the *Tempest* produced by Magik Theatre and ARTS San Antonio. San Antonio Botanical Garden. [www.sabot.org](http://www.sabot.org) 210/207-3250

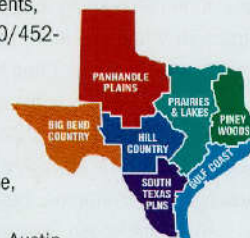
**WESLACO: Dragonfly Days** May 15-18. Valley Nature Center and Estero Llano Grande State Park. [www.valleynaturecenter.org](http://www.valleynaturecenter.org) 956/969-2475

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

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

FOR TEXAS TRAVEL QUESTIONS, call 800/452-9292 to reach a TxDOT Travel Information Center, where a professional travel counselor will provide routing assistance, advise you of any emergency road conditions, and send brochures (including the official *Texas State Travel Guide* and map, accommodations guide, and quarterly *Texas Events Calendar*).

SEND FUTURE EVENT INFORMATION TO: *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax: 512/486-5879; e-mail: [trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us](mailto:trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us). 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.




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# Readers RECOMMEND...

TIPS FROM OUR READERS

IF YOU have ever been to Palestine's **Hamburger Bar**, then you're lucky. Not only are the burgers the best in Texas, but so are the onion rings. The restaurant doesn't look like much, but when you close your eyes and taste that burger and onion rings, you'll think you're in heaven.

DONNA FARMER

*Hamburger Bar is at 502 N. Tennessee St.; 903/729-5353.*

AFTER some 30 years, **The Omelettry** in **Austin** continues to shine as a favorite breakfast stop with a friendly, funky atmosphere. The pancakes are terrific. Choose from gingerbread, whole wheat, and—my favorite—butter-milk with bananas and chocolate chips. I also love their oatmeal served “all the way” with brown sugar, cinnamon, butter, and raisins, as well as the House Special omelet (with sautéed mushrooms, onions, bell peppers, ham, and cheese) and the Popeye (with spinach, of course). Like writer John Gunther's quote on the restaurant's menu says, “All happiness depends upon a leisurely breakfast.” This place is a welcome refuge and, quite possibly, Austin at its finest.

OWEN CHICESTER, *Austin*

*The Omelettry is at 4811 Burnet Rd.; 512/453-5062.*

I JUST returned from a stay at the **Crane House Retreat** in **Lamar**. During my trip, I enjoyed sitting in a rocking chair on the home's screened-in porch and watching a family of whooping cranes feed within 200 yards of the



COURTESY KUDOS! STAGE AND GRILL

Try the **Deluxe Burger**, a grilled steak patty topped with melted cheese, red onions, lettuce, tomatoes, and avocados, and served with freshly made kettle chips and dipping sauce.

I SUGGEST checking out **Kudos! Stage and Grill** in **Kaufman**, a revitalized theater and restaurant. There is live entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights, plus good food—a great return for your money.

BUCK CRINER, *Crandall*

*Kudos! Stage and Grill is at 113 N. Jackson St.; 972/932-0412; www.kudosstageandgrill.com. Menu items include a marinated flat-iron steak, fried pickles, grilled-chicken salad, blackened tilapia, and fried butterfly shrimp.*

bed and breakfast. The guest book lists over 90 bird species that visitors have identified. Crane House is nestled among windblown oaks on property that borders the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

MAY KOLLAJA

*Crane House Retreat is located across the Copano Causeway off Park Rd. 13 in Lamar. For specific directions, call 361/729-7239;*

in **Bracken**. Gus, a retired firefighter and the owner, uses only mesquite in his barbecue pit. The restaurant often holds special events with live music. Make sure to try the Hum-dinger Special.

GARY WINKLER, *San Antonio*

*Bucket Brigade is at 8770 FM 2252; 210/651-5402.*

*www.cranehousetretreat.com. Guests can fish from the property's private beach, rent a kayak, or savor homemade jellies made on-site.*

I WOULD like to recommend **Royers Round Top Café** in **Round Top**, which has wonderful apple pie, along with many other pies to choose from. Pies are their specialty, and they'll ship them, too.

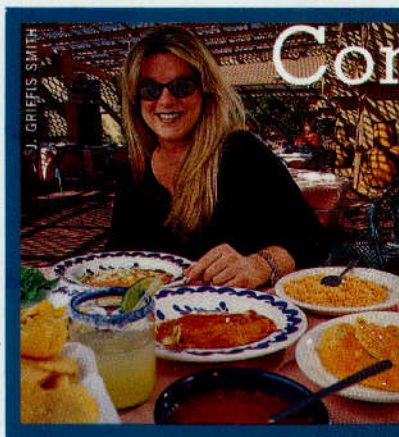
SHARON FISCHER

*Royers Round Top Café is at 105 Main St.; 979/249-3611; www.royersroundtopcafe.com. Other pies include pecan, buttermilk, butterscotch chip, strawberry rhubarb, cherry, and chocolate chip. Can't decide? Then get the Pie Sampler Plate, comprised of four different slices of pie served with vanilla ice cream.*

THE BEST barbecue I have ever had in the United States is at **Bucket Brigade**

**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.

**Next month...** We'll head to **West Texas** to hike **Guadalupe Mountains National Park** from **Dog Canyon** to **McKittrick Canyon**, and soak up the restorative waters of **Chinati Hot Springs**. We'll also spend a **TH Moment** with Austin singer-songwriter **Joe Ely**.

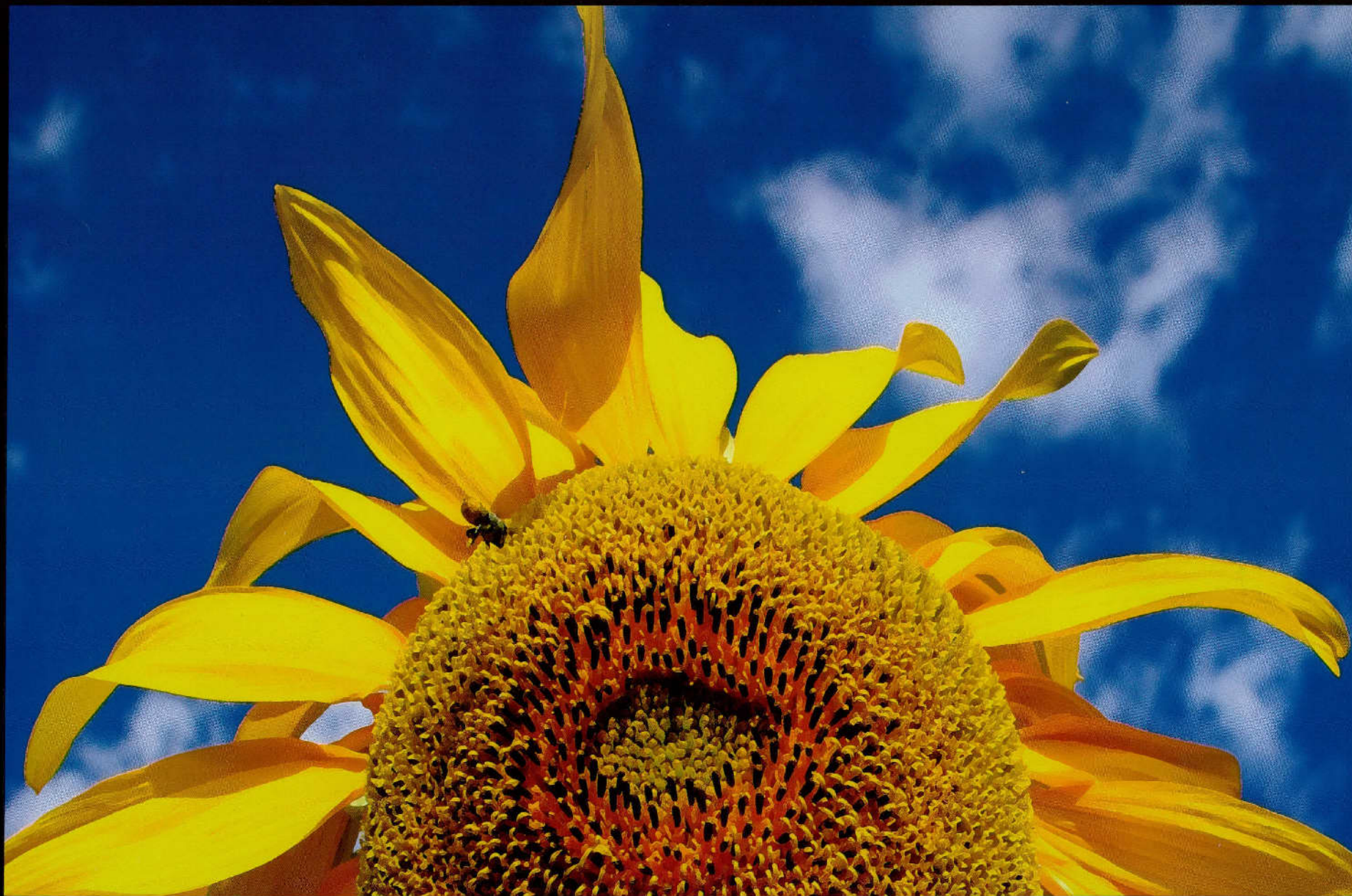


Come **Blog** with us!

Texas travel honcho June Naylor shares tips on trips, restaurants, shops, and events.

Go to [www.texashighways.com](http://www.texashighways.com)





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window on  
**TEXAS**

MARATHON SUNFLOWER WITH BEE was taken by writer/photographer E. Dan Klepper of Marathon. The central patterns of sunflowers have 34 spirals repeated in one direction and 55 in another. See more of Klepper's work at [www.edanklepper.com](http://www.edanklepper.com).

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





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