

11325.6 H 537
57:01

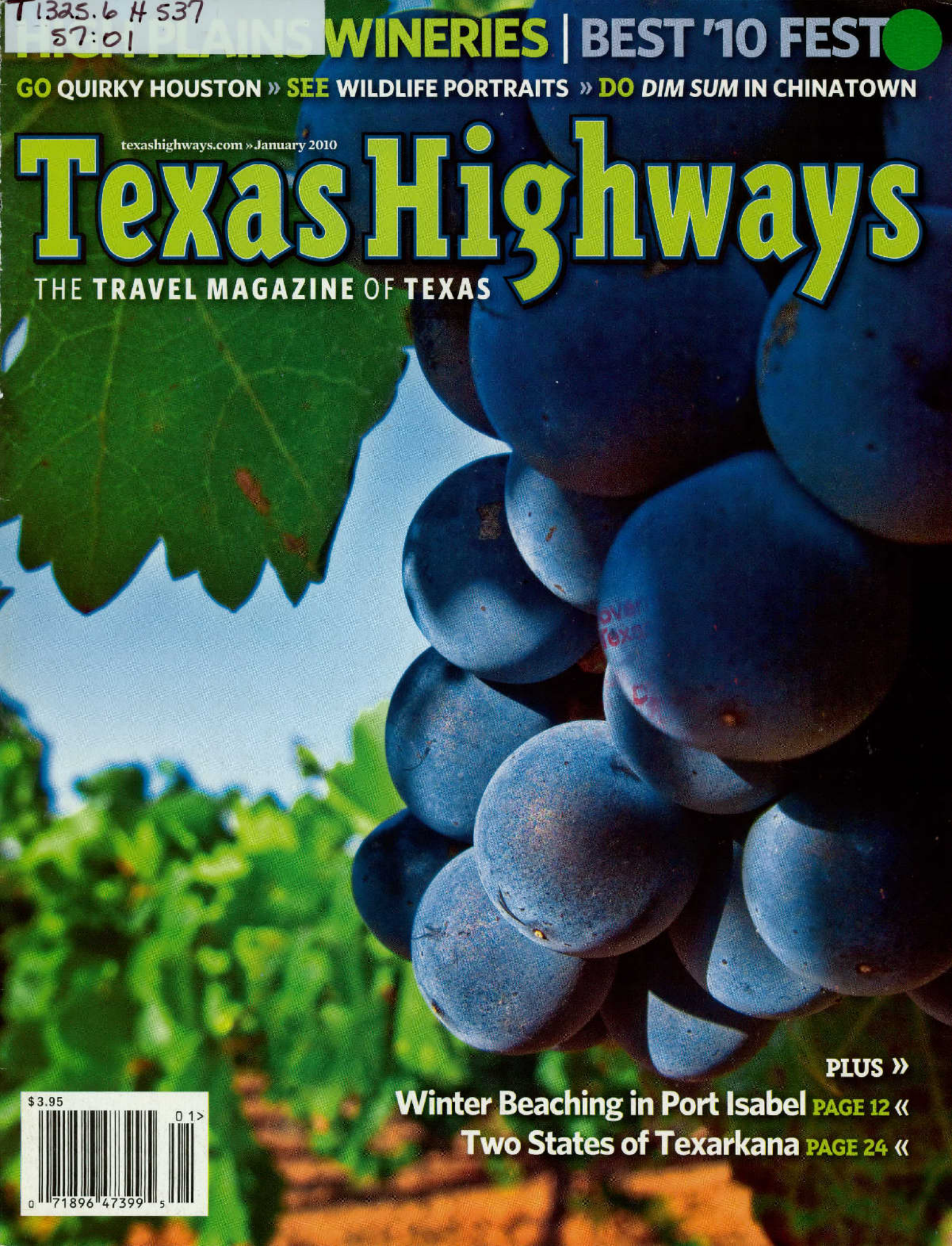
PLAIN'S WINERIES | BEST '10 FEST

GO QUIRKY HOUSTON » SEE WILDLIFE PORTRAITS » DO DIM SUM IN CHINATOWN

texashighways.com » January 2010

Texas Highways

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS



PLUS »

Winter Beaching in Port Isabel PAGE 12 <<

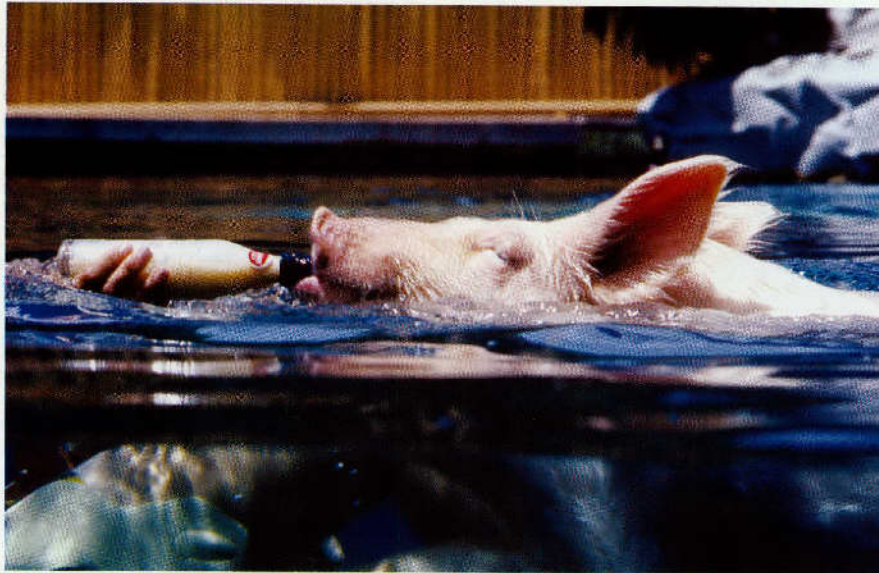
Two States of Texarkana PAGE 24 <<

\$3.95

0 1 >



0 71896 47399 5



TXDOT PHOTO LIBRARY, GREG WHITE

Ralph the Swimming Pig earned his (or her) bottle at the former Aquarena Springs in San Marcos, now known as the Aquarena Center, a research facility where visitors learn about Texas water issues.

Ralph and the State of Springs

RALPH THE SWIMMING PIG holds a special place in the pantheon of Texas tourism mythology. The stage name of Ralph actually applied to hundreds of pigs (usually females) trained to swim—and drink from a bottle—in daily performances with glamorous underwater mermaids at the Aquarena Springs' Submarine Theater in San Marcos. And callers still ask for him.

But the collective Ralph retired in the mid-1990s, when Texas State University-San Marcos chose to end the swimming-pig era and house the River Systems Institute (www.rivers.txstate.edu) in the hotel building adjacent to Spring Lake. Visitors are still welcome, and the glass-bottom boat tours still run, but the focus is rather more serious.

In November 2009, Aquarena Springs celebrated a reunion that drew the early bathing beauties and the original pilots of the famed glass-bottom boats. These boats still enable visitors to enjoy the underwater plants, fish, and other creatures, as well as the clear water that flows from 200 springs, one of the largest springs formations in the state.

Word of the reunion reminded me to check in with Aquarena Center Director Ron Coley and ask for his perspective on the Ralph era. "When you think about the geologic timeline, that this formation took 100 million years to take shape, that the springs have been flowing for six million years, and that archeological records indicate human activity at the springs for 13,000 years, you realize that Ralph swimming here was just one brief element of the Aquarena Springs story," he explained.

"In 1954," he added, "one of the first significant water conferences in Texas took place here, and each year, 125,000 people come to visit the springs. And, as last summer's drought became more serious, attendance increased. People realize that, when you want to study water in Texas, this is the place you come." (www.aquarena.txstate.edu)

And Coley pointed out that, since evidence suggests a continuous flow of visitors to the springs for 10,000-plus years, "those early people were not there just to get water but to enjoy the springs. They were the first eco-tourists."

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

Governor of Texas
Rick Perry

TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Deirdre Delisi **Chair**

Ted Houghton, Jr. **Commissioner**

Ned S. Holmes **Commissioner**

Fred Underwood **Commissioner**

William Meadows **Commissioner**

Amadeo Saenz **Executive Director**

Published monthly by the
Travel Information Division

Division Director Doris Howdeshell

Publisher Kathy Murphy

Editor Charles J. Lohrmann

Managing Editor Jill Lawless

Senior Editors:

Nola McKey, Lori Moffatt

Associate Editor Marty Lange

Photography Editor J. Griffis Smith

Web Editor Lois M. Rodriguez

Art Director Jane Wu

Associate Art Directors:

Kirsti Harms, Jane Sharpe

Editorial Assistant Cindy Newsom

Editorial Intern Kate Hull

Photography Intern Brianne Thoen

Marketing Manager Cindy Leffingwell

Circulation/Ancillary Products Manager

Deborah Follien

Business Manager Lucia Cordova

Administrative Assistants:

Ana Alvarez, Lupe Valdez

For advertising information: AJR Media Group, 25132 Oakhurst Dr., Ste. 201, Spring, TX 77386; 800/383-7677; fax 713/942-0277.

Subscriptions to Texas Highways are \$19.95 annually (\$29.95 foreign). Call **800/839-4997**. (Call 386/597-4297 outside the U.S.) Copies of current and back issues are available. Call 512/486-5823. For subscription services, call 800/839-4997. To be removed from mailing list sales, write to *Texas Highways* Marketing, Mailing Lists, Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009.

Texas Highways (ISSN 0040-4349) is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, 150 East Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; phone 512/486-5858; fax 512/486-5879. The official travel magazine of Texas encourages travel within the state and tells the Texas story to readers around the world. www.texashighways.com

Periodicals Postage paid at Austin, Texas, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Texas Highways* Circulation, Box 421132, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1132.

© Texas Department of Transportation 2010. All rights reserved. www.txdot.gov



MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION





COVER
STORY


16

High Plains Vintners

With the Panhandle's cool nights, high altitude, dry climate, and just-right soil composition, grape-growers in the region produce wine-quality fruit.

Text by MELISSA GASKILL
Photographs by J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information 

features

24 **Twice as Nice!**
Texarkana overlaps the border of two states, and offers a mix of diversions, including an Italian Renaissance-style theater and a Scott Joplin mural.

Text by **MARTY LANGE**
Photographs by **PARK STREET**

30 **Wild Wild Life**
Ace photographer and expert naturalist Greg Lasley presents an extraordinary collection of wildlife images, all captured in Texas.

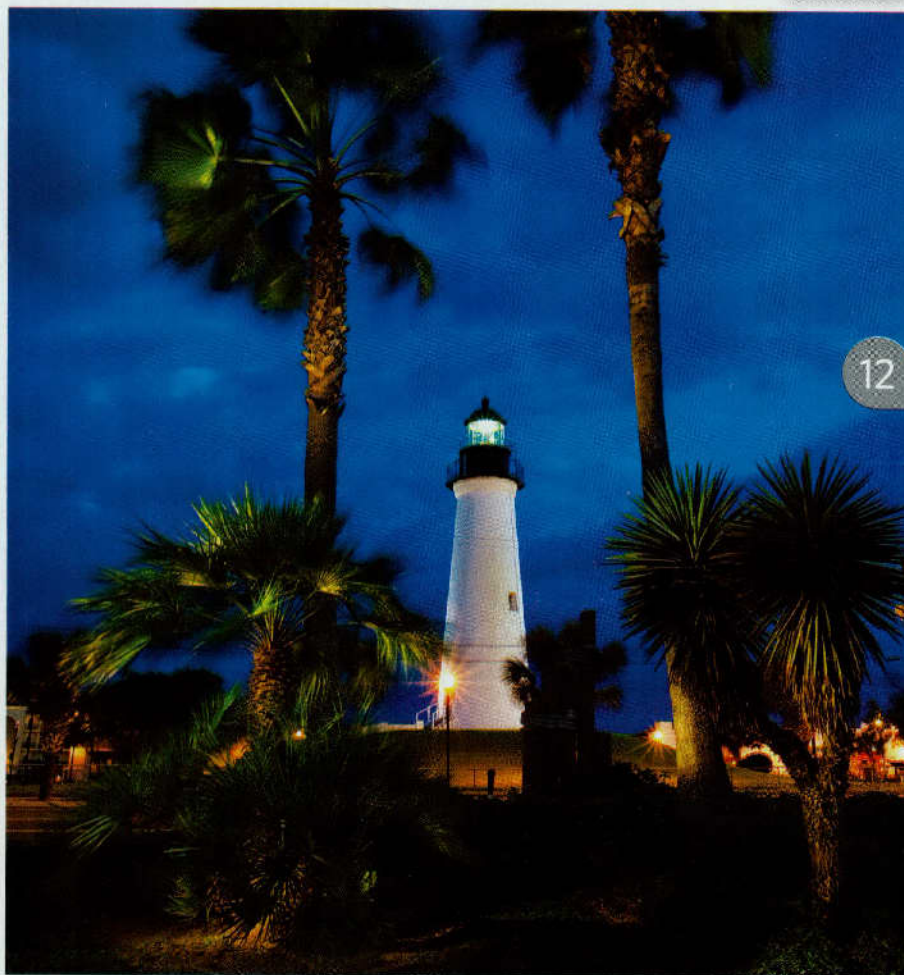
Text by **JOHN** and **GLORIA TVETEN**
Photographs by **GREG LASLEY**

38 **Quirky H-Town**
Sophisticated Houston harbors a collection of oddball attractions, from supersize sculptures of former heads of state to a museum of funeral history.

Text by **CAROL BARRINGTON**
Photographs by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

46 **Save the Date**
At Texas' small-town festivals, you can fly a kite, learn a Greek folk dance, or pick a lavender bouquet. Plan now to make the most of these spring and summer celebrations.

Text by **NOLA McKEY**



departments

3 | Talk to TH
 Readers sound off
 Polkas and trailer food

5 | Postcards
Forbidden Gardens
 China comes to Texas,
 plus new exhibits at San
 Antonio's Institute of
 Texan Cultures and a
 musical tribute to the
 '50s in New Braunfels

9 | TH Taste
 Uncovering
 Houston's Chinatown

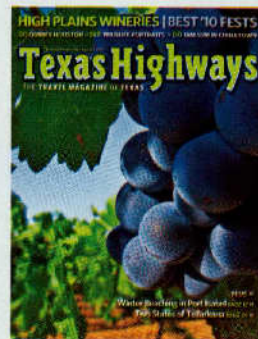
Enjoy dim sum-and-Asian-
 market tours led by a renowned
 Chinese-cooking teacher

12 | Weekender
Good Morning, Isabel
 Head to Port Isabel for new
 adventures, plus the NBA
 All-Star Game in Arlington

52 | Speaking of Texas
History with a travel twist
 Explore Mother Neff State
 Park, and learn why Texans
 owe the park's namesake
 a debt of gratitude

58 | TH Traveler
A roundup of January events
 Modern dance and live
 music in Houston, plus a
 Midland exhibit that features
 portraits of your favorite
 country-western musicians

61 | Window on Texas
Riveting Reflection
 A floating museum? The
 shallow pool around the
 base of the Modern Art
 Museum of Fort Worth
 gives the illusion that the
 building is afloat.



About Our Covers

FRONT: Luscious Ruby Cabernet grapes,
 which typically produce a rich, full-bodied
 red wine, await on the High Plains' Bogar
 Vineyards, near Welch.

BACK: A wild-eyed clown intrigues visi-
 tors at the Orange Show, a 3,000-square-
 foot, maze-like area on Houston's east
 end that's filled with exuberant folk art.

Both photos by J. Griffis Smith

Photographic Prints Available



Some images in this issue, including the
 front and back covers, are available as
 prints in two distinctive formats. For more
 information, call toll-free 866/962-1191,
 or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.

Polkas and Pepe's

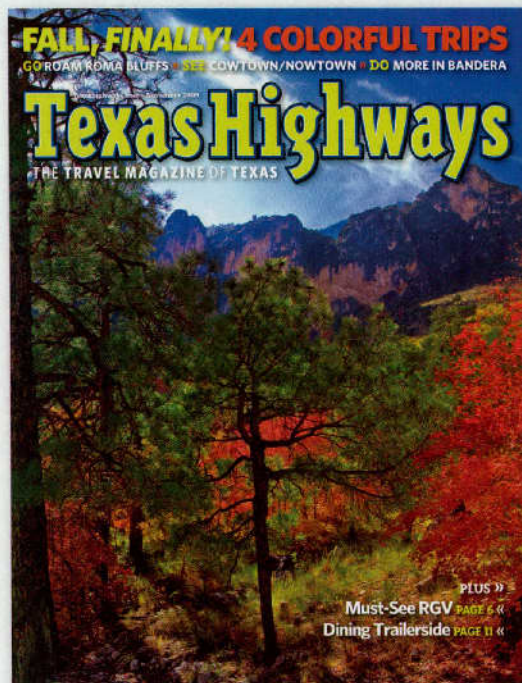
Regarding "Things to See in the RGV" [Postcards, November]: I realize to pick only 15 things to enjoy in the Lower Rio Grande Valley is truly difficult. I have been coming to the Valley since 1993 and have enjoyed it tremendously. I would like to add to Eileen Mattei's "River Watch." Riverside Club in Mission is noted for their polka music. Barefoot Becky performs there every year with her band [February 18, 2010]. Also, next door to Riverside, Pepe's on the River [2601 South Conway Ave.; 956/583-3092; call for hours] has a wonderful view of the Rio Grande, and has delicious food and music and dancing.

I enjoy *TH*. Your articles and photos are awesome!

JOAN NIELSEN
Donna

"Love the November cover. Pine Spring Canyon is one of the most beautiful places I've ever been."

—CRAIG COTTIER,
Dallas



On the Trailer Trail

I was certainly pleased to read Anthony Head's *TH* Taste on "Dining Trailerside" in Austin [November]. I immediately drove over to South Congress and had a great lunch. You didn't include one of my favorites: Chris' Little Chicago, at 3600 South Lamar [512/300-1791; www.chrislittlechicago.com], serves an assortment of hot dogs that I sure can recommend.

I look forward to *TH* arriving every month.

GEORGE D. HARVEY
Austin

We're Not in Texas Anymore

Just a short note to tell you how much we enjoy *TH* every month. My wife (a native Texan) and I lived in Texas for most of our adult lives, but moved back to Kansas (my home state) to be near family. Her mother and father have sent us *TH* for years. Keep up the great work!

BILL ECKLES
Lawrence, Kansas

TH READER RECOMMENDATION



Johnson City Stop

MY HUSBAND and I will come up with any excuse for a road trip to stop in at the **Chrome Cactus** in **Johnson City**. The red building is easily recognizable with the chrome sculptures out front. A genuine Texas burger joint, it serves mouth-watering, old-fashioned hamburgers with thin patties and chopped iceberg lettuce, tomato, and onion on sourdough buns. Don't miss the fried, pickled green tomatoes! You can also get fried chicken, chicken-fried steak, and a good "road-side café" breakfast. The restaurant is owned and staffed by some of the friendliest people in Texas, to boot, and might soon become as

legendary as the past president Johnson City is named for.

KRISTI GREENE, Dripping Springs

Chrome Cactus is at 801 South US 281; 830/868-2375; www.chromecactusburgers.com.

➔ **TH READER RECOMMENDATION**

All You Can Eat

READERS Recommend is one of my favorite sections in *TH*. I often plan my various business trips so that I can stop at one of the recommended restaurants. I am always pleased with the experience, and I'm returning the favor now.

In **Sulphur Springs**, **Burgers and Fries** easily has the best burger in the region. Good fries, too. **LouViney Winery & Restaurant** has good local wine and good food. Regulars' favorites are the blackened tilapia and the white-chocolate bread pudding. They also produce/sell Miranda Lambert's wines—I like Crazy Ex-Girlfriend.

In **Winnsboro**, **ciboVino** has Italian pastas and pizza baked in wood-fired, stone ovens. And **Stacey's Fish Fry** in **Miller Grove** has the best catfish between Dallas and Texarkana, and the boiled shrimp are pretty good, too!

MARC MAXWELL, Sulphur Springs

Hours vary for the following; call ahead. In Sulphur Springs, Burgers and Fries is at 208-B College St.; 903/885-9496. LouViney Winery & Restaurant is at 206 Main St.; 903/438-8320; www.louviney.com. In Winnsboro, ciboVino is at 218 N. Main St.; 903/342-0028; www.cibovinoitalian.com. In Miller Grove, Stacey's Fish Fry is at 7565 FM 275 South; 903/459-3300.

➔ **CONTACT TH**

We want to hear from you! Send feedback and recommendations to: Texas Highways, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. E-mail: letters05@texashighways.com. We reserve the right to edit items. Because we're unable to check out every recommendation, and because hours vary and details can change, please call ahead for more information.

PLEASE PASS THIS MAGAZINE ALONG

PRINTED IN TEXAS ON RECYCLED PAPER





KERRVILLE

SMALL TOWN • BIG EVENTS!



January 21-22
Ballet Folklorico de Mexico
Kerrville Performing Arts Society
830.896.9393 • www.kpas.org



January 26 & January 28
Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet
Kerrville Performing Arts Society
830.896.9393 • www.kpas.org



February 12
Chocolate Fantasy Gourmet Dinner
February 14
Chocolate Fantasy Extravaganza
Kerr Arts and Cultural Center
830.895.2911 • KaccKerrville.com



Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau
800.221.7958 • kerrcvb@kvc.com • KerrvilleTexasCVB.com



Do!
Visit the
Katy Heritage
Museum

Forbidden Gardens

An intriguing site in Katy reprises Chinese cultural landmarks Text by SHEILA SCARBOROUGH

TO GET A SENSE OF THE SCOPE and grandeur of the 180-acre Forbidden City in Beijing or the 8,000-plus Terra Cotta Warriors standing ready in their burial pits in Xi'an, you can either spend a lot of time on an airplane—paying \$6 for a bland ham sandwich and worrying about deep vein thrombosis—or you can drive to Katy and visit the 40-acre Forbidden Gardens. On a recent sunny weekend, I chose the latter.

Opened in 1996 by Chinese-American

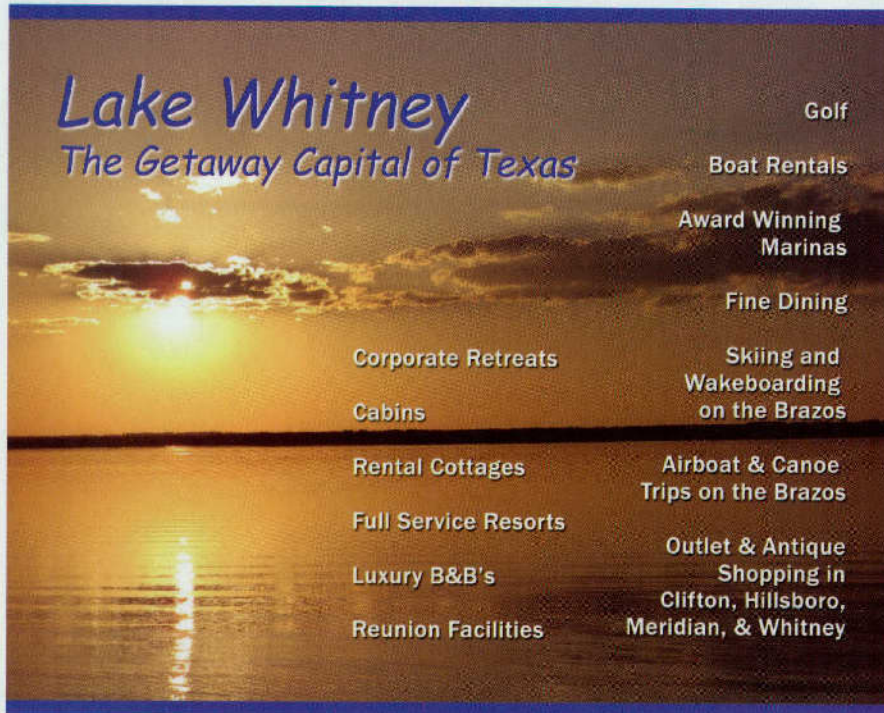
businessman Ira Poon as an outdoor, family-friendly museum of Chinese culture, Forbidden Gardens' location in the Houston suburbs makes sense, given the metropolitan area's booming Asian community.

I pulled into a quiet parking lot, strolled across a moat via a stately, red bridge with ornate latticework, and bought my ticket to China; no visa required. I had been fortunate to visit the real Forbidden City in Beijing about six months before, so this was a chance to step back into that

experience without the stinging eyes and scratchy throat from the appalling Beijing air pollution.

Tinkling chimes in the central courtyard lent a peaceful vibe during the short wait before the next guided tour. The compound is built to resemble the original Forbidden City, with swooping, pagoda-style roofs but minus the giant

This Katy attraction features 6,000 1/3-scale replicas of the Terra Cotta Warriors that stand in the Chinese city of Xi'an.



Lake Whitney
The Getaway Capital of Texas

Golf

Boat Rentals

Award Winning Marinas

Fine Dining

Skiing and Wakeboarding on the Brazos

Corporate Retreats

Cabins

Rental Cottages

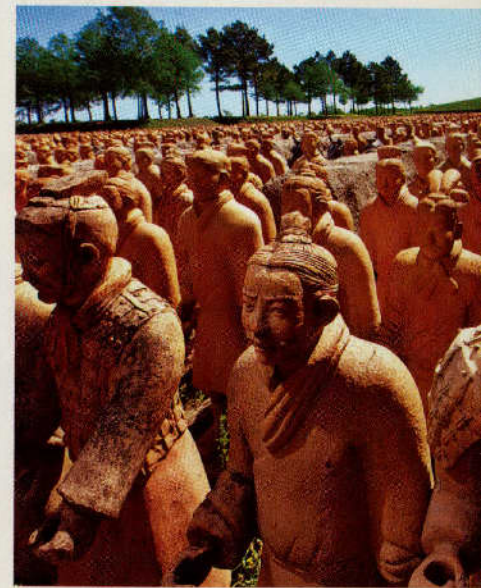
Full Service Resorts

Luxury B&B's

Reunion Facilities

Airboat & Canoe Trips on the Brazos

Outlet & Antique Shopping in Clifton, Hillsboro, Meridian, & Whitney



portrait of Chairman Mao Zedong, founder of the People's Republic of China, that hangs on the exterior. Instead, two large white statues of Chinese guardian lions (Fu dogs) keep an eye on the entrance.

Distinctive details characterize each "warrior," just as they do in Xi'an, contributing to the formation's powerful effect.

Our tour guide, longtime employee Kim Stevens, appeared, and the dozen people in my group began an hour-long tour that would explore thousands of years of Chinese history. Stevens kept us moving along at a brisk pace as she shared anecdotes and information about various architectural periods, emperors, battles, and tools of warfare.

First, we studied the 1/3-scale replicas of the famous Terra Cotta Warriors, an "army" commissioned some 2,000 years ago by Emperor Qin Shi Huang to protect him in the afterlife. Six thousand of these replicas are arranged in battle formation east of the courtyard. In a "willing suspension of disbelief," I tuned out the backyard fences of a nearby housing development and marveled at the detail of the clay faces, hairstyles, and uniforms.

Stevens regaled us with stories of the emperor whose combat skills and diplomatic prowess unified most of China for the first

PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Memories That Last A Lifetime
Begin in the Texas Hill Country

www.txhillcountrytrail.com

TEXAS HILL COUNTRY TRAIL
TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
TEXAS HERITAGE TRAILS PROGRAM

Go!

To the ITC's
Asian Festival
in February



time. The emperor championed massive public works projects, but he also had some odd personality quirks and paranoia. For example, he was focused on obtaining immortality, continually looked for elixirs of life, and had maniacal health concerns. One of the wags in the tour group commented that he sounded as if he were “a little off the deep end—like a Chinese Howard Hughes.”

I strolled across a moat via a stately, red bridge with ornate latticework, and bought my ticket to China; no visa required.

At the battlefield exhibit room, Stevens told us about the origins and uses of various weapons and explained how kites, drums, and gongs were used by the emperor's troops for communicating on the battlefield. During daylight hours, the kites and other colorful flags and banners gave the troops a visual reference point across large areas, and loud drums and gongs signaled when to advance against the enemy and when to stop or move to the left or right. As we left the room, Stevens gave one of the gongs a satisfying “thwack,” which was a big hit with the children in our group.

We then stepped out of the exhibit room into a large, covered pavilion that protects the other major Forbidden Gardens highlight: a 1/20-scale model of Beijing's Forbidden City—the Chinese royal home

Texas Heritage on Display

The ITC has broadened horizons for more than four decades

THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES, built for HemisFair '68, the international exposition that commemorated the 250th anniversary of the founding of San Antonio, celebrates the state's rich cultural history. While the UTSA facility serves as both an historical library and outreach center for schools and other organizations, its most visible public role is that of a museum. The ITC offers dozens of permanent exhibits—many of them interactive—on the cultural heritage of African Americans, Germans, Chinese, Japanese, Tejanos, and other ethnic groups in Texas. Docents are on hand at each display to explain and discuss the content.

The ITC presents two new temporary exhibits in January: *RACE: Are We So Different?* (January 23 through May 16) and *The 13th Annual Da Dun Fine Arts Exhibition of Taichung City* (January 16 through February 28). The latter showcases 110 prize-winning pieces from a field of more than 2,000 international artists, including photographers, sculptors, and painters. According to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, which sponsors the exhibit, the purpose of the exhibit is “to boost the aura of artistic creation, to cultivate artistic talents, and to promote artistic exchanges.” Call 210/458-2300; www.texancultures.com.—Kate Hull



The 13th Annual Da Dun Fine Arts Exhibition of Taichung City includes Dream of Shell, a glue-color painting.

for 500 years, built in the early 1400s. It was impressive to see such an enormous landmark—a UNESCO World Heritage site—completely re-created here in Katy.

I can tell you that a walk around the Texas version is a lot less taxing than tromping through multiple, gargantuan Forbidden City courtyards in Beijing, and it inspired me to start wondering how soon I could return to China to see the real thing.

Soon, we wandered past Lilliputian renderings of the Hall of Supreme Harmony, Palace of Heavenly Purity, Hall of Literary Glory, and more teensy gardens, courtyards, and palaces than you could shake a royal, silver-tipped chopstick at. There was a separate section with a 1/20

scale re-creation of what we call the Summer Palace, known to Chinese royals as the Calming of the Heart Lodge.

The tour concluded with a stroll past an indoor scale model of the Chinese city of Suzhou, best known for its beautiful gardens, canals, and pagodas. The model is lovingly rendered, but it needs some cleaning and better signage to explain the various features.

One highlight of the site is a small room with architectural models that illustrate Chinese building techniques. There is a two-foot-tall Hall of Supreme Harmony that is cut in half to show how the buildings were constructed with-out nails or glue. It's the most lavish set of Lincoln Logs I've ever seen.

Postcards

Oh Boy!

The Fab '50s Return to New Braunfels

START THE NEW YEAR OFF BY HEADING TO NEW BRAUNFELS ON

January 9 and seeing *John Mueller's Winter Dance Party—A Tribute to Buddy Holly*, a live concert that re-creates the final tour of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper (J.P. Richardson) in 1959. The two-hour show includes such hits as "That'll Be the Day," "Peggy Sue," "La Bamba," and "Chantilly Lace." Who says the music died?

John Mueller, the former star of the London/Broadway musical *Buddy—The Buddy Holly Story*, plays Buddy, and according to Travis Holley, Buddy's brother, Mueller "really does Buddy proud...has his mannerisms and sound down pat. The best I've ever seen." Former *American Bandstand* host Dick Clark has similar praise for Jay Richardson, who portrays his father, J.P. Richardson, in the show: "Watching Jay ... is just like watching his dad," Clark says.

Created in 1999 in honor of the 40th anniversary of the original tour, *Winter Dance Party* is the only show endorsed by the Holly, Valens, and Richardson estates and has toured extensively throughout the United States and Canada. If the response at New Braunfels' Brauntex Performing Arts Theatre is anything like that reported at other venues, '50s fans will literally be rocking in the aisles. For tickets and other information, call 830/627-0808; www.brauntex.org. —Nola McKey

Do!

Dance at nearby Gruene Hall



Stevens said that it's a constant battle to keep the tiny, painted buildings and stalwart Warriors preserved and repaired. The upkeep is labor-intensive, partially because the models are fragile. "We can only use toothbrushes and dish soap to clean them," she said.

Before she came to work here in 2003, Kim Stevens was typical of many who have no idea that Forbidden Gardens sits just off the interstate among strip malls and concrete. She's now added world history to her college psychology studies, thanks to this small peek at China. Don't be surprised if visiting this intriguing site has a similar effect on you. **TH**

Stevens said that it's a constant battle to keep the tiny, painted buildings and stalwart Warriors preserved and repaired. The upkeep is labor-intensive, partially because the models are fragile. "We can only use toothbrushes and dish soap to clean them," she said.

Forbidden Gardens

is at 23500 Franz Rd. in **Katy**. Hours: Fri-Sun 10-3 (call in case of inclement weather). Guided tours start in the courtyard at 11 a.m. and noon. Self-guided tours, with printed information about each exhibit, are also available. Call 281/347-8000; www.forbidden-gardens.com. At press time, the Gardens were under new management; check the Web site for updates.

A pair of statues called "man dogs" (half man and half dog) guard the entrance to one of the pagoda-style buildings.

ARTS & CULTURE Music, dance and theatre come alive on stage.

Victoria Ballet, Bach Festival, Theatre Victoria, Victoria Symphony

HISTORIC CITY Home of the original six flags over Texas, rich in history and charm.

Museum of the Coastal Bend, Historic Continents, Fessati's - Oldest Diner in Texas, Historic Homes Inn

SPORTS & OUTDOORS Perfect weather for year-round outdoor recreation.

Canoeing & Paddling, Three Golf Courses, Fishing & Hunting, Competitive Sports

VICTORIA-TX

FAMILY FUN Activities for everyone.

The Texas Zoo

Where past and present are perfect neighbors.

VisitVictoriaTexas.com
800.926.5774



PHOTO: J. GRIFFIS SMITH

Uncovering Houston's Chinatown

Dorothy Huang's dim sum- and-Asian-market tours demystify Chinese cuisine

Text by **JANE WU**



See!
 "Thousand-year-old" duck eggs at Hong Kong Food Market

Dim sum, which translates as "touch the heart," originated a thousand years ago in the teahouses of southern China.

IF THE ESSENCE OF A CULTURE CAN BE DISCOVERED THROUGH ITS FOOD, no ethnic cuisine fits this notion better than Chinese. The consummate guide to all flavors Chinese—at least in Texas—is Dorothy Huang, who has hosted food tours of Houston's Chinatown, along with her legendary cooking classes, for more than 35 years.

Chinatown, an eight-mile section along Bellaire Boulevard between US 59 and Texas 6, originated downtown in the early 20th Century as a tiny, three-block section with a few restaurants, grocery stores, and curio shops. The area later migrated to the southwest suburbs. These days, businesses from acupuncture clinics to video stores add to the mix, with Hong Kong City Mall as the flagship. The restaurants have multiplied, and small grocery stores are now supermarkets. In addition, the population has expanded to include more Asian cultures, especially Vietnamese, who now outnumber Chinese-Americans here.

Born in Canton, China, and raised in Taiwan, Huang came to Houston with her husband in the late Sixties, when the city's Asian population was small but growing. Trained as a nutritionist, Huang worked for a year as a hospital dietitian.

Classic dim sum from Ocean Palace restaurant, clockwise from top left: steamed shrimp-with-chives dumpling, chicken feet with black bean sauce, and pork-and-shrimp dumpling.

Instructors with the University of Houston's adult-education program convinced her to teach Chinese cooking, which quickly caught on with Houstonians hungry for more diverse culinary experiences. At the urging of her students, Huang started her first Chinatown tour in 1974, in "old Chinatown" downtown. The tour moved to Hong Kong City Mall on Bellaire Boulevard after the center opened in 1998. Ten years later, Huang expanded her tour-guide expertise to Austin's Chinatown Center, where I took in a tour last fall.

The Houston tour meets on a Saturday at Ocean Palace restaurant (adjacent to the mall) for *dim sum*, the traditional Cantonese weekend brunch. Dim sum, which literally translates as "touch the heart," consists of an assortment of mostly steamed dumplings or fried pastries, generally filled with pork, chicken, or shrimp, and is served with hot tea. The dim sum ambiance is usually boisterous. Groups of mostly Asian families or friends often meet to catch up, and servers circle the tables with rolling carts filled with different varieties of dim sum for diners to choose from.

Huang orders for us, selecting typical favorites like *har gow* (shrimp dumpling) and *char sui bao* (pork bun), and lesser-known items such as stuffed fried eggplant with shrimp, and sticky rice-and-sausage wrapped in lotus leaves—sometimes referred to as a "Chinese tamale." We sit at two round tables, and Huang holds court at both, carefully describing the ingredients of each dim sum item as it is served, explaining how it was prepared. "This is shrimp rice noodle," says Huang. "The steamed noodle, in sheet form, is filled with cooked shrimp, then rolled up and served with soy sauce and sesame sauce."

We sample about a dozen dim sum delicacies. Huang also orders two heaping platters of *chow fun*, flat, wide noodles topped with beef, bean sprouts, and green onions. The distinctive flavors of ginger, star anise, and sesame, mingled with black bean sauce, create a seamless segue from dumpling to bun to rice noodle. Between nibbles, we sip steaming cups of jasmine tea.

The World of Dorothy Huang

Learn to cook Chinese from a globe-trotting expert

"IF YOU BLINK, YOU'LL MISS IT,"

chides Dorothy Huang as she tosses cellophane noodles into a sizzling wok. She's showing her enthusiastic (and hungry) class how to make chicken in lettuce wraps in the kitchen of Hollandaze Gourmet, a cookware shop near Lake Georgetown. "You can make sauces, chop, and marinate ahead of time. Throw it in a wok, and you have 'Chinese fast food.'"

Huang's amiable manner keeps her students coming back for more—many are repeat customers. "Dorothy *always* takes the time to tell you about each ingredient as well as how to prepare it," says

Peggy Rush, a devoted fan.

Huang's classes can be found in several Texas cities and towns, including Austin, Clifton, Cuero, Fort Worth, and Georgetown, as well as in Houston, where Huang resides. Word of mouth has taken her as far

as McAllen. "I love going to new places," she says. In 2001, Huang helped launch China Stars, an upscale Chinese restaurant in Bogotá, Colombia.

On February 16 at Fung's Kitchen in Houston, Huang teams up with Martin Yan (of *Yan Can Cook* on PBS) and the restaurant's owner and head chef Hoi Fung to host a nine-course Chinese New Year Feast, which includes wine pairings, a lion dance, and cooking demonstrations. For reservations and information, call 713/779-2288; e-mail fungskitchen7738@sbcglobal.net. For information on Huang's classes, call 281/493-0885; e-mail chinesecuisinedh@aol.com. —Jane Wu



Dorothy Huang enjoys boiled coral shrimp, with Chinese broccoli and steamed shrimp dumpling at Ocean Palace restaurant.

Do!

Potsticker recipe at texashighways.com/taste

After an hour of noshing and socializing, we go into the bustling mall, and to Hong Kong Food Market. We stroll by shops and kiosks selling women's fashions, electronic gadgets, toys, and jewelry, interspersed with Vietnamese sandwich cafés, noodle shops, and bubble tea emporiums.

As we enter the market, Asian tchotchkes as well as everyday kitchen essentials line the front counters; among the items are shiny Buddhas of varying sizes and stances,

finely-detailed Bruce Lee figurines, and lucky bamboo plants. There's also a bakery, not common in Chinese markets but popular in Vietnamese cuisine. Next to the bakery, the roasted-meats section displays the calling card of Chinatowns everywhere—crispy ducks hanging in the glass warming-enclosure. We skim through these areas to explore the mammoth produce section. "Bok choy—did you know it translates to 'white greens' in English?"

Huang quizzes me on what few Chinese words I know. "Here—this is *ong choy*, Chinese water spinach. Easy to wash, unlike regular spinach. Use it in stir-fry," Huang instructs. With each selected item—"Tong ho (edible chrysanthemum leaves)—good for soups. *Gai choy* (Chinese mustard greens)—you blanch this"—we get a mini-cooking lesson as we shop.

Rows of rice, wheat, cellophane, and egg noodles—fresh or dried—as well as numerous variations of dumpling wrappers and dozens of oyster, hoisin, and fish sauces can be daunting, particularly when labels contain few English words. Huang comes to the rescue and makes recommendations for the bedazzled but bewildered students, some who have shopping lists, and now carts filled with new discoveries.

The seafood section also impresses by sheer size and variety. Long rows of tanks brim with lobsters, blue crabs, and clams, as well as many types of fish, from amberjack to tuna. Huang's tips for buying fresh: "Make sure the fish's eyes are clear, not cloudy or recessed. Clams should close tight. Crabs are good if you see them moving." The tour continues through canned goods, beverages, and household products, and winds down at the cookware and utensils section.

En route to the checkout line. I spot a three-cup rice cooker, sale-priced at \$13.99. "That's a good price," says Huang, as I consider it. Many Asians believe no kitchen is complete without a rice cooker. Having done without one for years, and despite perfecting the saucepan-cooking method, I give in to a good bargain—and to Chinese tradition. **TH**

Chinatown Dim Sum and Market Tour

In **Houston**, the tour starts at Ocean Palace restaurant, 11215 Bellaire Blvd. The **Austin** tour begins at Fortune Chinese Seafood Restaurant, 10901 N. Lamar in North Austin. Each tour meets on a Saturday in alternating months (11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.). Admission: \$40. For details or registration, call Dorothy Huang at 281/493-0885, or e-mail chinesecuisinedh@aol.com.

EL PASO.

MORE THAN YOU IMAGINED.

The Da Vinci Experience

January 16, 2010, El Paso Museum of History

Come and see working replicas of the mechanical devices designed and described by Leonardo da Vinci.

Bill Maher

January 28, 2010, The Plaza Theatre

The comedian and host of HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher."

El Paso Marathon

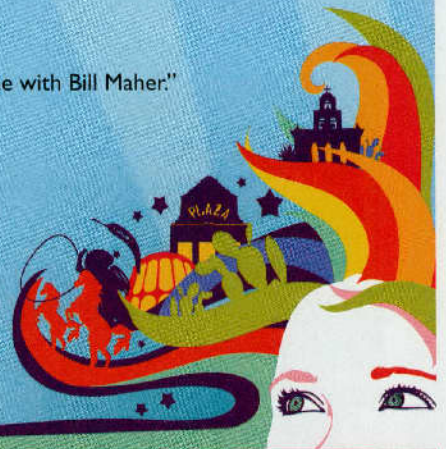
March 7, 2010, USATF-certified course

Runners race through historic El Paso in a mixed-terrain event.

Bedazzled: 5,000 Years of Jewelry

March 27, 2010, El Paso Museum of Art

The exhibit features examples of stunning jewelry from 3000 B.C.E. through the early 20th century.



Call 800-351-6024 or log on to www.visitelpaso.com for your free 70-page adventure guide. El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau

EL PASO

American Presidents:

- What kind of students were they?
- What were their classrooms like?

Learn about our presidents' early years in this family-friendly exhibit!

You're guaranteed an **A+**

**School House
to
White House**
THE EDUCATION OF THE PRESIDENTS

EXHIBIT OPEN
THROUGH
FEBRUARY 15TH

MUSEUM HOURS:
9-5 DAILY

FREE! ADMISSION
& PARKING



LBJ at Johnson City High School - 1924

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON
LIBRARY & MUSEUM

WWW.LBJLIB.UTEXAS.EDU



Go!

Eat a plate-sized stuffed tortilla at Manuel's, 313 E. Maxan St.

Good Afternoon, Isabel

Across the bridge from South Padre Island, treasures await

Text by HELEN BRYANT

I WEAR A PATH TO SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, WHERE I LIKE TO READ, walk the beach, and be a sea slug. Yes, I'm a *coastaholic*. But today I'm taking a break from the sand and surf to drive over the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge to Port Isabel on the mainland.

As I cross the bridge—at 2.6 miles it's Texas' longest—I notice a barge headed toward the Port of Brownsville, 17 miles to the south. Barges and ships take this path daily, traversing the Laguna Madre, the local part of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, on their way to and from Mexico or to the East Coast. On a typical day, the bay, as we all call the Laguna Madre, is also filled with fishing boats, dolphin-watching crafts, and the odd ski boat pulling a parasailing tourist. Today, though, the winds are high in advance of a cold front, and the barge is the lone vessel I see.

The bridge descends into Port Isabel (originally *Point Isabel*), and I park in Lighthouse Square, where shops and restaurants surround a small hill topped by the famous Port Isabel Lighthouse. There's plenty of free parking behind the lighthouse and in a lot next to Pirate's Landing.

At one of the square's restaurants, a dark-paneled Italian/seafood place called Marcello's, I start my afternoon. Opened in 1988 in the Old Lighthouse Grocery building, Marcello's meanders through several rooms, yet retains an

Venturing to the top of the Port Isabel Lighthouse rewards with a panoramic 360° view.

intimate feel. I order the lunch special—all-you-can-eat fried flounder served with a garden salad, a hot basket of focaccia, and spaghetti topped with a slightly spicy marinara. Between bites, I eavesdrop on Rotary Club members holding court in the next room. Always a good sign.

Sated, I make my way across Texas 100 to take in a little history. Port Isabel has three museums, and you can see them all for a combined \$7 ticket. I start with the Port Isabel Historical Museum, where exhibits tell of wars, settlers, and the shrimping industry. Port Isabel once called itself the “Shrimping Capital of the World”; shrimp-

See the 71-foot fly fishing rod between Pirate’s Landing Restaurant and the pier.

ers here harvested 12 million pounds annually during the mid-20th Century. Foreign competition, shrimp farming, and legislation, coupled with the high cost of fuel and labor, have severely trimmed operations in recent years.

Much of the museum is devoted to the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-48, which won this nation 529,017 square miles of land. Displays include flintlock and percussion pistols, swords, buckles, buttons, bullets, cannon balls, and a timeline of Laguna Madre history. My favorite museum artifact, though, is a 30-inch-long sawfish bill (it does, indeed, look like a saw) that hung in the lighthouse back in the 1950s.

A ramp behind this collection leads to the Treasures of the Gulf Museum, which focuses on the shipwreck of three of four vessels that set sail in 1554 from Veracruz, Mexico, headed to Spain. Instead, they ran aground off Padre Island about 30 miles north of Port Isabel. The sunken ships carried 87,000 pounds of gold and silver. Mexican divers and salvage crews recovered

IN THE HEART OF TEXAS BETWEEN SAN ANTONIO AND AUSTIN

GET TO KNOW OUR MANY FLAVORS

Restaurants, kayaks, and classic cars—San Marcos offers this and so much more. Stay awhile, explore the flavors and get a taste of what you’ve been missing.



CITY OF SAN MARCOS
CONFERENCE CENTER

SAN MARCOS
A TEXAS NATURAL

888-200-5620 ★ www.toursanmarcos.com

THIS WINTER AT HOUSTON CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY CRAFT

Iron: Forged, Tempered, Quenched

January 16 – May 16

eXtreme Tea

January 16 – March 21

TRANSMUTATIONS: Material Reborn

January 16 – March 21

Unique Shopping | Artists at Work
Tours & Workshops | Innovative Exhibitions

Houston Center For Contemporary Craft | In the Museum District | 4848 Main Street
713.529.4848 | Accessible Parking Behind Building | www.crafthouston.org

Continental
Airlines

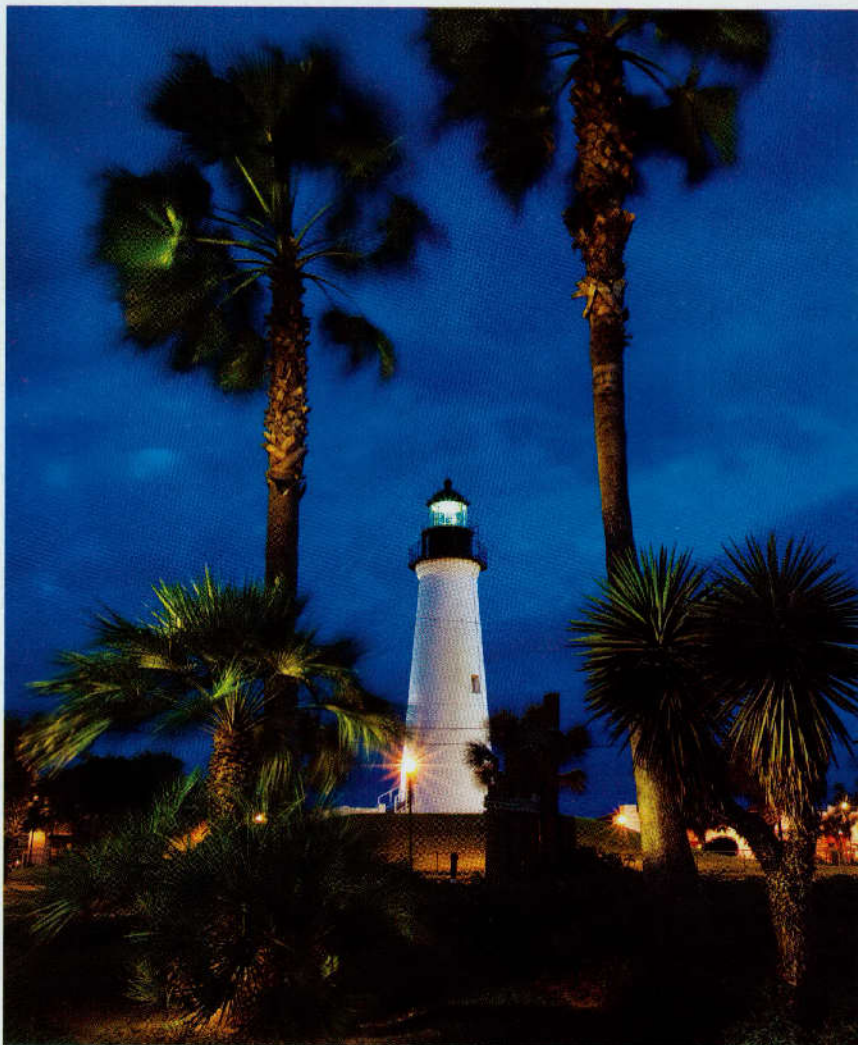
Official Airline of Houston Center for Contemporary Craft

about half the payload, and some silver coins, along with sea-ravaged cannons, are here. But much of the loot is, apparently, still in the sea. Displays and videos tell the tale of 16th-Century ships and the dangers the sailors faced (storms, fire, and pirates, for starters). I learn that 300 people survived the shipwrecks, but once ashore, only two lived to tell the tale.

Next, I cross the street to the Sealife Nature Center, a delightful, little aquarium whose mission is to educate the public and promote the wellbeing of local sea life, including the native bottlenose dolphins.

At a petting tank, you may pick up a jellylike anemone, a sea cucumber (equally slimy and fuzzy), a lightning whelk (the official state shell), and hermit crabs, which recycle abandoned shells after their original inhabitants die. Other tanks here are filled with stingrays, along with a big-mouthed, spiny scorpion fish, a five-pound grouper, a guitar fish (tail like a shark, head like a ray), and seahorses. And that guy eerily peering out from the rocks in the big tank? That's a moray.

In a blue, plastic pool, Spike, a spiny, three-pound lobster with big purple antennae that was rescued during the area's unusual cold spell several years ago, crawls out from under a rock to glare at me. I'm surprised to learn that Texas has the same sort of lobsters that live off



A tiny seahorse propels itself through the viewing tank environment at the Sealife Nature Center.

the coast of Florida—but not enough to warrant commercial harvests.

Across the street, I refresh my lighthouse history at the Point Isabel Light, completed in 1853. Its early keepers made \$500 to \$700 a year for turning the light on and off to warn incoming ships as they approached shore. The landmark beacon guided ships in the Laguna Madre until 1905, when it was permanently decommissioned.

A climb to the top of the 73-foot lighthouse involves 74 steps and three 8-rung ladders. It doesn't sound like much, but it's stuffy in there. At the top, it's windy, but it's worth the bluster to be able to see all the way to the Gulf of Mexico to the east and many miles in all directions.

I clang back down the lighthouse steps

and meet a friend a block away at Pirate's Landing restaurant for a piece of dulce de leche cheesecake. This kitschy place—it's shaped like a fort and is festooned with pirates, flags, and skulls—is one of my favorite area restaurants, offering consistently good local seafood (snapper, flounder, shrimp, and such) along with steak and fajitas. My typical order is a shrimp po'boy on a soft, warm homemade roll with a side of either crispy waffle fries or homemade potato chips; it's hard to decide.

Right now, though, I'm indulging in my perfect caramel-infused cheesecake while I trade gossip with a Port Isabellian and

See the light. Port Isabel offers a perfect place to enjoy the Texas Gulf Coast.

See!

The 2010 NBA All-Star Game in Arlington, February 14.



Nothing but Net

Courtside or Mezzanine, It's a Ball!

PRO BASKETBALL'S NBA SEASON

continues to fast break forward at full speed. Hopes for the playoffs and a championship trophy resound with the Mavericks, Spurs, Rockets, and their many fans. Modern, spacious arenas (American Airlines Center, AT&T Center, and Toyota Center) and exciting, winning teams in Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston make attending a game a real thrill. International stars (Dirk Nowitzki, Tim Duncan, Luis Scola), dancing cheerleaders, funny mascots (the Coyote!), and a sport filled with hyper-athletic action present a compelling entertainment package. For tickets, call Ticketmaster at 800/745-3000; www.nba.com. —Marty Lange

TOP: Not just for football, Cowboys Stadium in Arlington hosts the 2010 NBA All-Star Game.

watch a weather front whip up whitecaps in the bay. The locals here have a way of making me feel like I'm one of them, and that's part of the town's charm. I know it's hard to leave the beach, but I highly recommend this sojourn. **TH**

Port Isabel

is on Texas 100 about 30 miles north of Brownsville, just across the bridge from South Padre Island. Call the Port Isabel Chamber of Commerce at 956/943-2262 or 800/527-6102; www.portisabel.org.

PHOTO: KEVIN STILLMAN



MARDI GRAS

SOUTHEAST TEXAS



Featured Texas Music Artist
"Kevin Fowler"
in concert Friday, February 12th.



Featured Texas Music Artist
"Randy Roger Band"
in concert Saturday, February 13th.



Famous Zydeco Artists
"Wayne Toups and Zydecajun"
in concert Sunday, February 14th.

Downtown Port Arthur, TX • Feb 11-14, 2010

"A Family Friendly Event"

parades • concerts • carnival • street entertainment • arts & crafts • food vendors

mardigras.portarthur.com • 409-721-8717



Laredo invites you to come and savor the experience!



Call for free visitor information

Laredo TEXAS

Rediscover our flavor

Laredo Convention and Visitors Bureau

800.361.3360

www.visitlaredo.com

High Plains Vintners *Panhandle grape-*



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

growers combine passion and science

Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**
Photographs by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**



Viticultural consultant Bobby Cox, who planted some of the Panhandle's first grapevines in 1972, says the area's cool nights, high altitude, soil composition, and dry climate help produce excellent winemaking grapes.



Good wine starts with good grapes. Good grapes start with the right kind of dirt. And the Texas Panhandle, it turns out, has that in spades.



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

On a visit to Lubbock, among undulating fields of tall sunflowers or cotton, you might be surprised to spy neat rows of carefully tended grapevines winding along miles of trellis. You may find it even more surprising that those grapes end up in some of the state's finest wines.

During a recent exploration of several Lubbock area wineries, I learned why. Good wine starts with good grapes. Good grapes start with the right kind of dirt. And the Texas Panhandle, it turns out, has that in spades.

"The soil here is excellent for growing quality grapes," says grower Bobby Cox, who first planted grapes here in 1972 and now works as a viticultural consultant to West Texas farmers. Sandy clay over a caliche base, he explains, means the vine roots reach deep into the soil to seek moisture. This creates a skimpy leaf canopy, allowing more sun to reach the grapes for flavorful ripening. Today, on 162 acres of this amenable soil, Cox grows Merlot, Chenin Blanc, Orange Muscat, Muscat Blanc, Marsanne, Syrah, and Nebbiolo grapes, which he sells to wineries across the state. Other Panhandle attributes that create heavenly grapes include cool nights, high altitude, and a dry climate, which combine to limit vine diseases and improve fruit quality.

"The High Plains is an enchanting place to grow grapes," agrees Gregory Bruni, winemaker at Lubbock's Llano Estacado Winery. Llano Estacado, which produces more than two million bottles of wine annually, purchases most of its winemaking grapes from vineyards in the High Plains and Far West Texas. "Ninety percent of the quality of a wine is determined by the grapes," Cox says. "If we have good grapes, we can make good wines."

Panhandle grape-growers and winemakers form a tight-knit community united by experience and shared history. They also share an appellation, wine-speak for specific areas where grapes are grown. Roughly 8.9 million acres around Lubbock represent the High Plains American Viticultural Area, one of eight federally designated AVAs in Texas. For a winemaker to include an appellation such as High Plains on its label, 85 percent of the grapes used to make it must have grown within the region. Winemakers would love to tout Texas appellations on more of their labels, but even with Texas farmers planting grapevines as fast as they can, they don't yet grow enough to meet the demand.

Texas Tech professors Clint "Doc" McPherson and Bob Reed started growing grapes around Lubbock in 1968. "They had no idea what would grow here," says Doc's son, Kim McPherson, who has followed in his father's footsteps. "They tried vines from back East, native stuff from South Central Texas, varieties from California." The duo planted dozens of varieties, learning which ones could survive the Panhandle's cold winters, and which ones could handle the heat of its summers.

Texas grape-growers and winemakers still benefit from those early observations even as efforts continue to determine which varieties work best in what areas of the state. This ongoing experimentation makes it fun to be a winemaker right now, Bruni adds. "We feel like pioneers."

LEFT: Texas is the nation's fifth leading wine-producing state, with more than 130 wineries and eight designated appellations of origin. Most vintners agree that it's more difficult to grow grapes in Texas than in, say, California—but the rewards are worth the effort.

Great Grapes!

GRAPE GROWERS in the Texas High Plains report success with many types of grapes, including varieties like Merlot and Dolcetto, but wine consultant Bobby Cox highlights five grapes as Texas superstars: Viognier, Vermentino, Muscat, Tempranillo, and Sangiovese—all Mediterranean-area grapes that tolerate the High Plains' temperature swings and benefit from the region's high altitude. "Most of our grapes are grown between 3,500 and 4,000 feet," he says. "When you grow a grape at a high altitude, the wine has better flavor, aroma, and color. Think about it this way—the light has an easier time getting to our grapes." Cox provides this guide to exploring these five varieties. —Lori Moffatt

WHITE

Viognier. "Viognier grapes make a floral, aromatic wine that pairs well with anything you might serve with a butter sauce. If you like Chardonnay, you'll love Texas Viognier."

Vermentino. "This is aromatic, too, but herbaceous instead of floral. I'd call it crisp, like a Sauvignon Blanc. Pair it with grilled fish, or anything that goes well with a slice of lemon."

Muscat. "This is typically sweet, honeyed, extremely aromatic, and refreshing. I like to make a sabayon sauce with Muscat and serve it with berries or peaches."

RED

Tempranillo. "Wines made with Tempranillo grapes are very dark in color, have low tannins, and have a flavor profile that suggests cherries or blackberries. They pair well with grilled meats."

Sangiovese. "Wines made with pure Sangiovese are rich, medium-bodied, and assertive. Sangiovese grapes are often blended with Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grapes to make what we call 'Super-Tuscan' blends—excellent with tomato-based Italian foods."

High Plains Vintners

Kim McPherson founded McPherson Cellars in 2000, and makes wines from Sangiovese and Cabernet grapes grown in his father's vineyards, as well as Viognier, Syrah, and Grenache grapes grown elsewhere in Texas. The winery occupies a circa-1930 Coca-Cola bottling plant, an airy building with weathered brick walls and soaring ceilings in Lubbock's historic Depot District. Next door, his wife, Sylvia McPherson, operates La Diosa Cellars, a cozy, bustling bistro that serves area wines by the glass and bottle. Some bear the La Diosa label, including varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, as well as several house blends.

Kim McPherson notes that when individuals first start drinking wine, they often favor sweet, light varieties—and for those beginners, the winemaker usually recommends his Hook, Line and Sinker label of slightly sweet, blended wines. But more visitors to McPherson Cellars' tasting room these days are asking for drier, medium-bodied red wines. "Our Sangiovese is the number-one seller in my tasting room," he says, an indication that the Texas palate is maturing.

"Anything you could want in a wine you can find in a Texas wine," says Bobby Cox. "People who like Chardonnay will probably like Texas Viognier. If you're a fan of Sauvignon Blanc, you might like Vermentino. And if you normally drink Pinot Noir, try Texas-grown Sangiovese—it has the varietal's characteristic expansive flavor."

Viognier wines are aromatic and fruity, he adds. "They have what we would call a tropical fruit flavor, a refreshing taste. They're especially good if it's hot outside, and they complement foods such as grilled chicken, cream-based pastas, and mild cheeses like Provolone and Gruyère. Sangiovese grapes, most commonly used to make Italian Chianti, create a medium-bodied red wine with a little more acid—think



Explore wine and food pairings at www.texashighways.com/webextra.



Panhandle grape growers and winemakers form a tight-knit community united by experience and shared history.



ABOVE: After a tour of McPherson Cellars, you can buy a bottle of wine to enjoy in the winery's tranquil, open-air courtyard. LEFT: Llano Estacado's gift shop not only offers wine, but also accessories like corkscrews and barware.





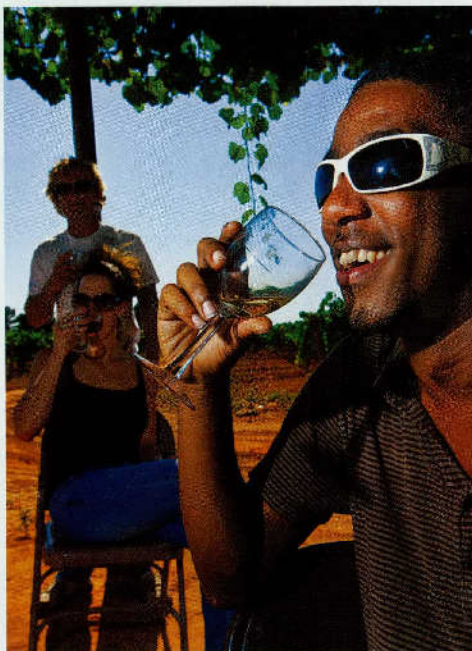
If you ask for a recommendation, he'll ask what wines you have enjoyed in the past. "It's not about what I like, it's about what you like."

‘brightness’—than your typical Merlot. I recommend drinking Sangiovese with foods made with tomatoes, such as pizza, or what the heck, hamburgers.”

Tempranillo, a big purple grape native to Spain, make wines with pronounced fruit flavor that Cox likes to pair with steak, grilled meat, and barbecue.

Llano Estacado Winery, founded in 1976, today occupies a sprawling complex of low buildings crouched among rows of grapevines on the windswept outskirts of Lubbock. If you ask Llano Estacado President and CEO Mark Hyman for a wine recommendation, he’ll ask what wines you have enjoyed in the past. “It’s not about what *I* like, it’s about what *you* like. If you’ve been drinking White Zinfandel, I’ll suggest one of our sweeter and fruitier wines, like our blush or Chenin Blanc. If you tell me you enjoy Merlot or Pinot Noir, I’ll encourage you to try our signature M \acute{e} lange, a very supple, C \acute{o} tes du Rhone-style red wine made from grapes grown in far West Texas. It’s fruity, yet still dry.”

Llano Estacado currently produces 28 types of wine, including the winery’s newest, an aromatic white wine called Viviana, a companion to its popular Viviano, the latter an award-winning, Super Tuscan-style blended red wine made in small batches from Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese grapes. Viviana excels in showcasing the High Plains terroir and climate, Hyman says. “It smells like it’s going to be sweet, but it’s not. The intense sun drives the grape sugars up to a perfect level.”



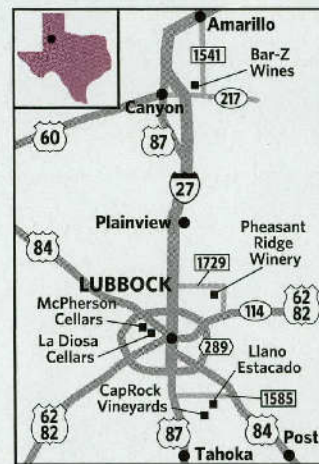
ABOVE: Terry Harris and friends sample wines in the vineyards of Pheasant Ridge Winery in Lubbock.

LEFT: Llano Estacado Winery currently makes 28 types of wine, some of which you can sample in the tasting room after a tour of the production facilities.

Grapes grown on the High Plains end up not only in the bottles of local winemakers, but also in bottles made across the state, including wines from Mandola Estate Winery and Becker Vineyards, both in the Hill Country. In fact, Becker’s popular Viognier contains grapes from the Bingham, Reddy, and Martin vineyards, all High Plains growers.

“We make wine in a climate of extremes—we have extreme heat, cold, and wind, and it’s oftentimes very arid. To grow grapes in the High Plains requires application of good science,” says Gregory Bruni. But, he says, Texas farmers, and those in the High Plains in particular, definitely grow quality fruit. “As the Texas wine industry continues to evolve, grapes are getting better and wines are getting better,” Bruni says. “I like to say the best wine in the state hasn’t been made yet.” **TH**

“Right now,” says Austin writer **MELISSA GASKILL**, “my favorite Texas wine is Viognier, which I especially enjoy out on the patio.” Photography Editor **J. GRIFFIS SMITH** toured several High Plains vineyards with wine consultant Bobby Cox and gained new appreciation for the challenges of Panhandle farming.



➔ TH ESSENTIALS

High Plains Wineries

Llano Estacado Winery, on FM 1585, 3.2 miles east of US 87 in Lubbock, offers tastings and a gift shop. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-4, Sat noon-4. Call 806/745-2258; www.llanowine.com.

McPherson Cellars, at 1615 Texas Ave. in Lubbock, offers tastings and tours Mon-Sat 10-6 (expanded hours in summer). Call 806/687-WINE; www.mcphersoncellars.com.

La Diosa Cellars, at 901 17th St. in Lubbock, includes a tasting room, gift shop, and bistro. Hours: Tue-Fri 11- midnight, Sat noon-midnight. Call 806/744-3600; www.ladiosacellars.com.

Other High Plains wineries that offer tours and/or tastings include **Pheasant Ridge Winery** in Lubbock (806/746-6033; www.pheasantridgewinery.com), **CapRock Winery** in Lubbock (806/686-4452; www.caprockwinery.com), and **Bar Z Wines** near Canyon (806/488-2214; www.barzwines.com).

For more information about Texas wines, vineyards, tasting rooms, and winery tours, call 866/4TX-WINE; www.gotexanwine.org.





TWICE as NICE!

**An historic northeast Texas point of entry,
Texarkana remains a preeminent portal**

Text by **MARTY LANGE** *Photographs by* **PARK STREET**

Long a fun, familiar gateway to the Lone Star State, Texarkana partners a fascinating history with multiple modern attractions to make a distinctive destination. Though metro Texarkana overlaps the border of Texas and Arkansas, nearby Louisiana and Oklahoma create a geographic, jigsaw-puzzled, four corners. Elements as disparate as Native American trails, the nearby Red River, railroads (check out old Union Station), cotton and all things commerce (agricultural to industrial, oil and natural gas, transportation, medicine, education, and show biz) have all shaped this two-towns-for-the-price-of-one. No other twin cities compare with this particular pair. The convergence is unmistakably Texarkana, and as the water tower proudly proclaims: Twice as Nice.

The state line of Texas and Arkansas splits Texarkana's Federal Courthouse/Post Office down the middle. It's a popular spot for tourist snapshots.

While becoming more acquainted with this city over the years, I've acquired a fondness for its assorted pleasures and divertissements. Simply hearing the name "Texarkana" sounds lyrical to me. Let me share some of its highlights and my favorites.

This is the place where composer Scott Joplin was raised, and I was reminded on several occasions of his native-son status. A colorful mural honors Joplin near the corner of Third and Main.

Music fills the air here, and has for generations. Arts impresario Nita Fran Hutcheson of the Italian Renaissance-style Perot Theatre (opened as the Saenger in 1924 and renovated in 1979-80) recalls an impressive number of appearances by stars such as Harry Belafonte, Cary Grant, Misha Dichter and the Warsaw Philharmonic, and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble. The building dates to the heyday of vaudeville, while it continues to stage modern musical and theatrical acts of all genres.

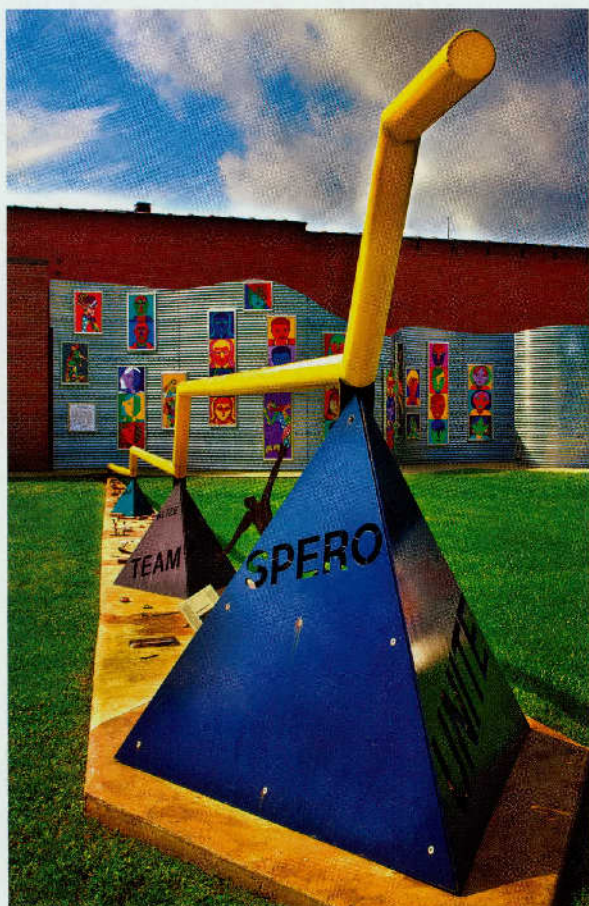
Across the street from the Perot, the Ragland Piano Company (owner Howard Gustafson's piano restoration studio) is well worth a look. His dedicated staff painstakingly returns old, forlorn keepsake keyboards to their original splendor. I don't play, but I found the internal intricacies of the instrument during the repair process most interesting.

On the Arkansas side of town, the historic Municipal Auditorium (now a City Hall/Fire Station) once hosted the likes of Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash in their primes. It's part of the "Texarkana USA Driving Tour." Pick up a CD guide at the Chamber of Commerce office at 819 North State Line Avenue. You'll be welcomed by a congenial staff, a Zen water garden/fountain, and a circular, engraved-in-stone, civic logo. The easy driving tour, taken at your own speed, includes the State Line Federal Courthouse/Post Office, the Museum of Regional History (with a piano that Scott Joplin played), the Perot Theatre, the Joplin mural, and the Regional Arts Center (marvel at the beautiful arched windows and working antique elevator). There's also the Discovery Place Children's Museum, the shamrock-configured, 1885 Draughton-Moore Ace of Clubs House (make time for curator Melissa Nesbitt's informative tour and see 500 pairs of Olivia Moore's shoes from Neiman Marcus!), numerous additional noteworthy historic homes and churches, the Tex-Ark Antique Auto Museum, and more.

Tiger Stadium at Grim Park, home to Texarkana Texas High football, captivated my *Friday Night Lights* fascination. Originally built in 1954, this quintessential venue for high school sports remains classic. A freshman game in progress reflected all the positive aspects of family and community.

Other engaging outdoor activities close at hand include the U.S. Corps of Engineers' beautiful Wright Patman Lake, Atlanta State Park (a secret jewel on the lake's south bank, where I took an inspirational walk in the woods), Spring Lake Park in town, the walking trail loop and old gazebo at Bobby Ferguson Park next to the Four States Fairgrounds, and Arkansas' largest magnolia tree. This towering beauty, which grows just over the state line at Chapel Ridge Apartments on 4700 County Avenue, stands more than 60 feet tall and is nearly 200 years old.

Though metro Texarkana overlaps the border of Texas and Arkansas, nearby Louisiana and Oklahoma create a geographic, jigsaw-puzzled, four corners.



ABOVE: Colorful outdoor art installations welcome visitors to the Regional Arts Center. RIGHT: The ornate Perot Theatre hosts pianist Mary Scott Goode and the Texarkana Symphony on January 23, and the Grammy Award-winning vocal ensemble Take 6 on January 29.



For info on the Mansion on Main, and Texarkana events, go to www.texashighways.com/webextra.



See 500 pairs of Olivia Moore's shoes from Neiman Marcus at the 1885 Draughton-Moore Ace of Clubs House.

For eats, I'm old-school, so I pledge allegiance to the menu at Shorty's Southern Maid Donuts & Diner, and I love Sue & Carol's Restaurant for breakfast (and lunch). Have one of their daily specials. Lunch and dinner? You can't go wrong with comfort food at Dixie Diner or one of my favorite restaurants in all of Texas, Bryce's Cafeteria (a local landmark since 1931). Pizza and brews at Hopkins Icehouse are a tempting recent option. Good barbecue? You better believe it. Try Smokey Joe's and Big Jake's.

Thanks to a tip from my hosts at the lovely Mansion on Main, I discovered Tom and Keri Rostek's IronWood Grill, whose delightful offerings include appealing appetizers, soups, popular pizzas, salads, fresh vegetables, oven-baked sandwiches, burgers, tasty tacos, sweet-potato fries, steaks, grilled seafood, signature desserts like vanilla-bean bread pudding, beer, margaritas, and wine. My artisan spinach/tomato/mushroom pizza with a house salad was delicious. With



its striking, modern exterior, inviting interior, and first-rate service, the IronWood rules.

And, for excellence in fine dining, I heartily recommend Timothy's, where I savored pecan-encrusted grilled tilapia, asparagus, mashed sweet potatoes, and a Grand Marnier/strawberry cr me br l e.

I've traveled to Texarkana many times, and there's no doubt I'll return again. I never fail to smile, and make new friends and nifty discoveries on every occasion. This comfortably down-home destination delivers with a singular Southern United States/Northeast Texas/Southwest Arkansas style. Indeed, it's twice as nice. **TH**

ABOVE: Owner Danny Whitt presides over Shorty's, a breakfast and lunch favorite for more than 40 years. RIGHT: A classic Goth set piece, the grand foyer of the 1885 Ace of Clubs House awaits its Hollywood close-up.

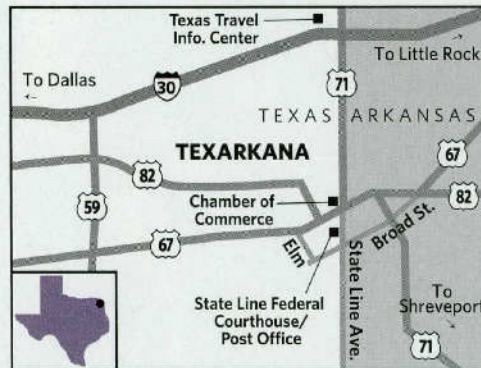




TH ESSENTIALS

Texarkana

TEXARKANA is on Interstate 30, and US 82, 59, 71, and 67, approximately halfway between Dallas and Little Rock, Arkansas. For more information, contact the Texarkana USA Chamber of Commerce at 903/792-7191; www.texarkana.org; or the TxDOT Travel Information Center, 1200 W. Interstate 30, at 903/794-2114.



Restaurants

Big Jake's Bar-B-Q, 2610 New Boston Rd., Texarkana, TX; 903/793-1169; and 1521 Arkansas Blvd., Texarkana, AR; 870/774-0099; www.bigjakesbbq.net.

Bryce's Cafeteria, 2021 Mall Dr. (I-30 at Summerhill Rd., Exit 222), Texarkana, TX; 903/792-1611.

Dixie Diner, 3200 N. State Line Ave., Texarkana, AR; 870/773-4943.

Hopkins Icehouse, 301 E. 3rd, Texarkana, AR; 870/774-FEED; <http://hopkinsicehouse.com>.

IronWood Grill, 4312 Morris Lane, Texarkana, TX; 903/223-4644; www.ironwoodgrill.com.

Shorty's Southern Maid Donuts & Diner, 115 Main St., Texarkana, TX; 903/791-8432.

Smokey Joe's, 5205 West Park Blvd., Texarkana, TX; 903/223-8227; www.smokeyjoesbar-b-q.com.

Sue & Carol's Restaurant, 938 N. State Line Ave., Texarkana, AR; 870/774-0859.

Timothy's, 4115 N. Kings Highway in the 989 Plaza, Texarkana, TX; 903/831-5999; www.timothysgrill.com.

Accommodations

The Mansion on Main, 802 Main, Texarkana, TX; 903/792-1835 or 877/535-5380; www.mansiononmain.com.

Attractions

State Line Federal Courthouse/Post Office, 500 N. State Line Ave., Texarkana USA.

Perot Theatre (formerly the Saenger), 219 Main St., Texarkana, TX; 903/792-4992; www.trahc.org.

Regional Arts Center (formerly 1909 U.S. District Courthouse), 321 W. 4th St., Texarkana, TX; 903/792-8681; www.trahc.org.

Museum of Regional History (city's oldest brick building), 219 N. State Line Ave., Texarkana, TX; 903/793-4831; www.texarkanamuseums.org.

1885 Draughton-Moore Ace of Clubs House, 420 Pine St., Texarkana, TX; 903/793-4831; www.texarkanamuseums.org.

The **Scott Joplin mural** is at the 300 block of Third St. near the corner of Main in Texarkana, TX.

Arkansas' largest magnolia tree is at 4700 County Ave., Texarkana, AR.

Wright Patman Lake is just south of Texarkana, off US 59. Call 903/838-8781; www.swf-wc.usace.army.mil/wrightpatman.

Atlanta State Park, a few miles southwest of Texarkana off US 59, FM 96, and FM 1154, is on Wright Patman Lake at 927 Park Rd. 42, Atlanta; 903/796-6476; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Tex-Ark Antique Auto Museum, 217 Laurel, Texarkana, AR. Hours: Sat 10-4, Sun 1-4. To arrange special tours, call 870/772-2886; www.texarkaam.org.

Tiger Stadium at Grim Park, Summerhill Rd. and W. 12th St., Texarkana, TX.

Associate Editor **MARTY LANGE** loves that northeast Texas is so green. Photographer **PARK STREET** (that's his real name) was amazed to cross the state line so many times in one day. He found Texarkana to be one-of-a-kind and friendly on both sides.



I WAS PARKED alongside a marsh at the Peach Point Wildlife Management Area on the upper Texas coast in Brazoria County, watching some ducks, when I saw this Northern Harrier approaching me, seemingly intent on hunting. As the bird made a pass within about 100 feet of me, I was able to get a few quick shots.

wildwildLife

GREG LASLEY'S PORTRAITS OF TEXAS CREATURES GIVE US A CLOSER VIEW OF NATURE

Text by **JOHN and GLORIA TVETEN**

TEXAS HARBORS AN ASTONISHING ARRAY OF WILDLIFE and is often called a biological crossroads because the state blends eastern flora and fauna with representatives from the west. Northern species reach the southern limits of their range in Texas, while many others venture no farther north than South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley. The Piney Woods of East Texas, the grasslands of the Panhandle, the scenic Hill Country of Central Texas, the mountains and deserts of the Trans-Pecos, the Coastal Prairie,

OPPOSITE: I SPENT several mornings in a blind on a Kenedy County ranch photographing vultures as they fed on the carcass of a feral hog. On the second morning a pair of coyotes cautiously approached. After more than an hour, one of the coyotes approached the carcass to feed. I got several shots, but my favorite was this shot as he licked his chops.

EXCERPTED FROM GREG LASLEY'S TEXAS WILDLIFE PORTRAITS BY GREG LASLEY, PUBLISHED BY TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESS, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS; WWW.TAMUPRESS.COM.





AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS are common winter residents of the Texas coast, and a number of them remain to breed in the summer as well. This bird was resting on a pier along the Texas City Dike in Galveston County. While I was watching, the pelican yawned, and in doing so, turned its pouch inside out to give me a rather unusual photo opportunity.

and the remaining thorn-scrub forest tracts along the Rio Grande all contain their own complement of wildlife, some found nowhere else in North America.

Texas also claims an ample supply of avid naturalists who study these treasures. Local birders search the fields and forests year-round for resident species and the occasional vagrants that add excitement to their quests. Countless others venture out in ever-increasing numbers in search of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies, mammals, or reptiles and amphibians. Many carry cameras and document their discoveries. More and more naturalists have now become ardent photographers as well.

In our minds, one Texan best personifies the combination of expert naturalist and consummate wildlife photographer. That person is Greg Lasley. Indeed, Lasley is widely known for his photography and for his encyclopedic knowledge of birds.

In his own words, Lasley first began to photograph birds as a novice, but enthusiastic birdwatcher. His interest lay in documenting appearances of rare birds through photographs and sound recordings, a discipline sadly lacking at that time. When our paths crossed through the years, at High Island on the upper Texas coast in spring, along some clear stream in the Hill Country, or at a refuge in the Rio Grande Valley, a camera and long telephoto lens always hung from Lasley's shoulder. They were as much a part of his persona as the ever-present binoculars. If an unprecedented bird species wandered across the Rio Grande or appeared in the Davis Mountains, Lasley was there to document it as a new state record. Lasley shared our love of watching birds, but he also approached his quarry from a scientific perspective.

Lasley used his photographs in countless programs for Audubon societies and other nature groups throughout Texas, teaching others about bird [continued on page 36]

AMERICAN BITTERNS are known for their ability to "freeze" when they perceive a threat. While driving along the edge of Shoveler Pond at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in Chambers County early one morning in March, I spied this bittern hiding in some cane stalks. The bird stayed in this position without moving for several minutes in an attempt to convince me it was not there at all.





ON A COOL EARLY MORNING in November, I came across this large American Alligator warming itself in the sun at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Aransas County. There was absolutely no wind, and the motionless water's surface mirrored the alligator's body. The photo seems almost like a pastel and somehow just says "Texas!"





THE HARRIS'S HAWK is an aerial predator of South and West Texas. The species is known to hunt in family groups, whereby several individuals will cooperate to flush quarry from a thicket so other members of the group can capture it. The Harris's is one of our most beautiful hawks, distinctly colored with its rusty shoulders, chocolate brown breast, back, and wings, and black and white tail. This subadult Harris's Hawk was making a banking turn at the edge of mesquite woodland in Hidalgo County near Edinburg.

Ⓞ continued from page 321

identification and the thrill of birding, always encouraging his audience to document each find, if not with a camera, at least with detailed notes and sketches. On this point, he proved relentless, and Texas ornithology is the richer for it. Before his effort, most rare birds were either accepted or rejected for the state list by reason of brief and often vague descriptions. Lasley insisted on credible documentation.

During this time, Lasley worked in law enforcement with the Austin Police Department, retiring as a lieutenant in 1997 after twenty-five years. From 1985 through 1997, he led birding tours part-time for Austin-based Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, one of the most prestigious of the many tour companies, and upon his retirement from police work, he divided his efforts between wildlife photography and the birding tours. In that capacity he covered much of the Western Hemisphere, from Hudson Bay through Central and South America to Antarctica.

In spite of extensive international travel, Lasley's work remains rooted in Texas, and he has visited every county in the state in pursuit of wildlife. A lightened tour load now leaves him free to concentrate on his photography. Continually upgrading his equipment and perfecting his skills, he remains in the forefront among bird photographers.

When we were working on our own book of the birds of Texas several years ago, we turned to Lasley for many of those hard-to-get photographs we did not have. We also consulted him on his specialties, the state bird list and Texas rarities, as well as on other aspects of bird distribution. There was no better authority. We would do the same for almost any facet of natural history today, for Lasley has traveled widely to observe and photograph the state's resources, and he shares his knowledge willingly with all who ask.

In recent years, Lasley has turned from color film to digital photography. The medium may be different now, but the skills and techniques remain much the same. Knowledge of the subject proves invaluable, and in that, Lasley has few equals. Here he exposes his audience to wildlife large and small, from every corner of the state. As readers, we need only sit back and enjoy the view. **TH**

GLORIA TVETEN, working with her late husband, **JOHN**, has written extensively about the natural world, including the book *Our Life with Birds*. Award-winning photographer and naturalist **GREG LASLEY** has traveled the world both as photographer and birding-tour leader, and Greg Lasley's *Wildlife Portraits* is available at www.tamupress.com.



EASTERN SCREECH-OWLS are fairly common and widespread over the eastern half of Texas and may be found in a variety of habitats. The species is a cavity nester and may take advantage of any hole in a tree large enough to accommodate it. This owl glared at me from its nest hole in a dead palm trunk in South Texas in Hidalgo County.

QUIRKY **H** TOWN

A collection of Houston's



oddball attractions—mostly inside the Loop.

Text by **CAROL BARRINGTON**
Photographs by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**



Houston always wows

with its sleek skyline, world-class sports venues, myriad cultural options, and revitalized downtown—overall, a very “Now” showcase of energetic sophistication.

But it’s the more elusive, quirky stuff that gives the nation’s fourth largest city its true personality.

Only here can one marvel at a house covered in flattened beer cans and a jungle gym-style tribute to the orange that spreads across two residential lots. Only here are funerals fodder for museums. And only here does a 36-foot-tall sculpture of a cellist serenade passersby with classical music on a downtown sidewalk.

Today’s Houston thrives as an entrepreneurial heaven, the roots of which go back to the city’s founding in 1836 as part of a 6,600-acre real estate promotion. The come-on ad that developers John K. Allen and Augustus Chapman Allen placed in the *Texas Register* on August 30 of that year trumpeted Houston’s location “at a point on

Sculptures of several former presidents (Eisenhower in the foreground and Van Buren at left) line the grounds of David Adickes’ Sculpturworx Studio. The behemoth heads of state measure up to 20 feet tall.





the river which must ever command the trade of the largest and richest portion of Texas.”

That “river” was sluggish and muddy Buffalo Bayou, and that “richest portion of Texas” was mostly piney thickets and salt grass prairie barely 60 feet higher than the Gulf of Mexico—potential flood territory for sure.

Exhibiting a second stroke of marketing genius, the Allen brothers named their pie-in-the-sky settlement after the hero *du jour*, Sam Houston, and never looked back. Within a year Houston had become (temporarily) the capital of the Republic of Texas, and (permanently) a mecca to individualists eager to follow their own stars.

That basic civic trait has not changed in the ensuing 174 years. Entrepreneurs and outright characters of all stripes still thrive here, and you’ll both grin and puzzle as you explore their continuing contributions to the city’s zany Zeitgeist. Save for one, all of the following sites fall inside the (I-610) Loop—perfectly proximate for a “tour de bizarre.”

There Goes The Neighborhood

Just approaching the pseudo-chrome entrance to **The Art Car Museum** sets the pace for a Quirky Houston day. Two blocks south of I-10 and immediately west of downtown on the fringes of residential Houston Heights, this privately owned showcase of mobile contemporary art is affectionately known as the “Garage Mahal.” Don’t worry about missing this smallish place—just watch for a silvery-looking building topped by sculptures that look like common auto parts and tools on steroids. Designed by car artist David Best, the building’s exterior visually proclaims this museum’s inside punch.

Drawing from both a permanent collection and temporary loans from Houston’s

Mark “Scrap Daddy” Bradford’s Tomson will be at the Art Car Museum until December 18, 2009. The museum incorporates cars into larger art exhibits.

Begin your
“tour de bizarre” at the Art Car Museum, which features show cars that won prizes in Houston’s annual Art Car Parade. Nearby, 50,000 cans of beer line the walls of John Milkovich’s Beer Can House.

OPPOSITE: Not your ordinary aluminum siding, some 50,000 beer cans cover the exterior of the late John Milkovich’s Beer Can House. Early-morning and late-afternoon light especially set off the metallic artistry.



“Love oranges and live!” was a motto of Jeff McKissack, who created The Orange Show’s maze of statues, whirligigs, farm implements, and other found objects.

numerous car artists, the museum’s exhibits usually change every three months. Rampant imagination as applied to anything that rolls—Caddies, VWs, trucks, vans, Jeeps, lowriders, bikes, bathtubs on wheels, lawnmowers, and more—is the rule. All are operational and gussied up almost beyond recognition (think elaborate paintjobs and glued-on items, from musical instruments to Legos to sinks). Many of these show cars have won prizes in the city’s popular pinnacle of quirkiness, the annual Art Car Parade. (The 23rd edition of same rolls May 8, 2010.)

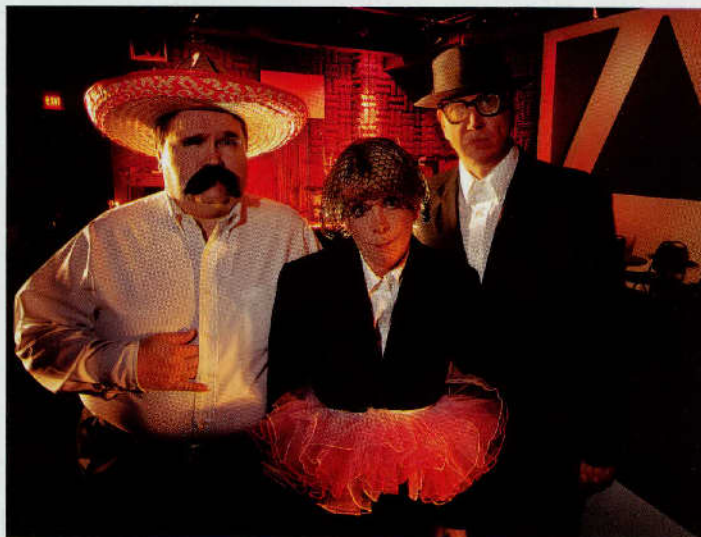
If you are in this west-of-downtown area on a Friday or Saturday afternoon, consider stopping in at the **Texas Junk Company**. Last year, owner Robert Novotney celebrated 30 years in business in what was originally an auto repair shop, and you never know what you will find.

“I have a shop full of objects I pick up from all around the city and state,” notes Novotney, who adds that “Artists come in and buy them for assemblages.

“Most folks come here looking for picture frames or cowboy boots,” he continues. Indeed, frames hang almost everywhere and an estimated 1,500 pairs of “experienced” boots (average price \$50) fill one end of his shop, many of the latter garnered on his



Read about
DiverseWorks and
the Aurora Picture
Show at [www.
texashighways.
com/webextra](http://www.texashighways.com/webextra).



Rich Mills, Vicki Farrell, and Steve Farrell portray multiple comic characters (and play various musical instruments) for their sidesplitting Radio Music Theatre shows. The Farrells started RMT in 1985.

annual driving loops through the high west of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana. From old cow bones to doorknobs, vintage wooden doors to vinyl phonograph records, rotary phones to colored pencils, Novotney's maze of items defies organization or full description. Come prepared to muck about a bit—expect dust—and if you've been searching for a specific wing nut, bolt, nail, or widget, bring your specs or sample. It's probably here—somewhere.

Boots To Beer To Oranges

About three miles away from the Texas Junk Company stands John Milkovisch's **Beer Can House**, a simple frame bungalow when it was built

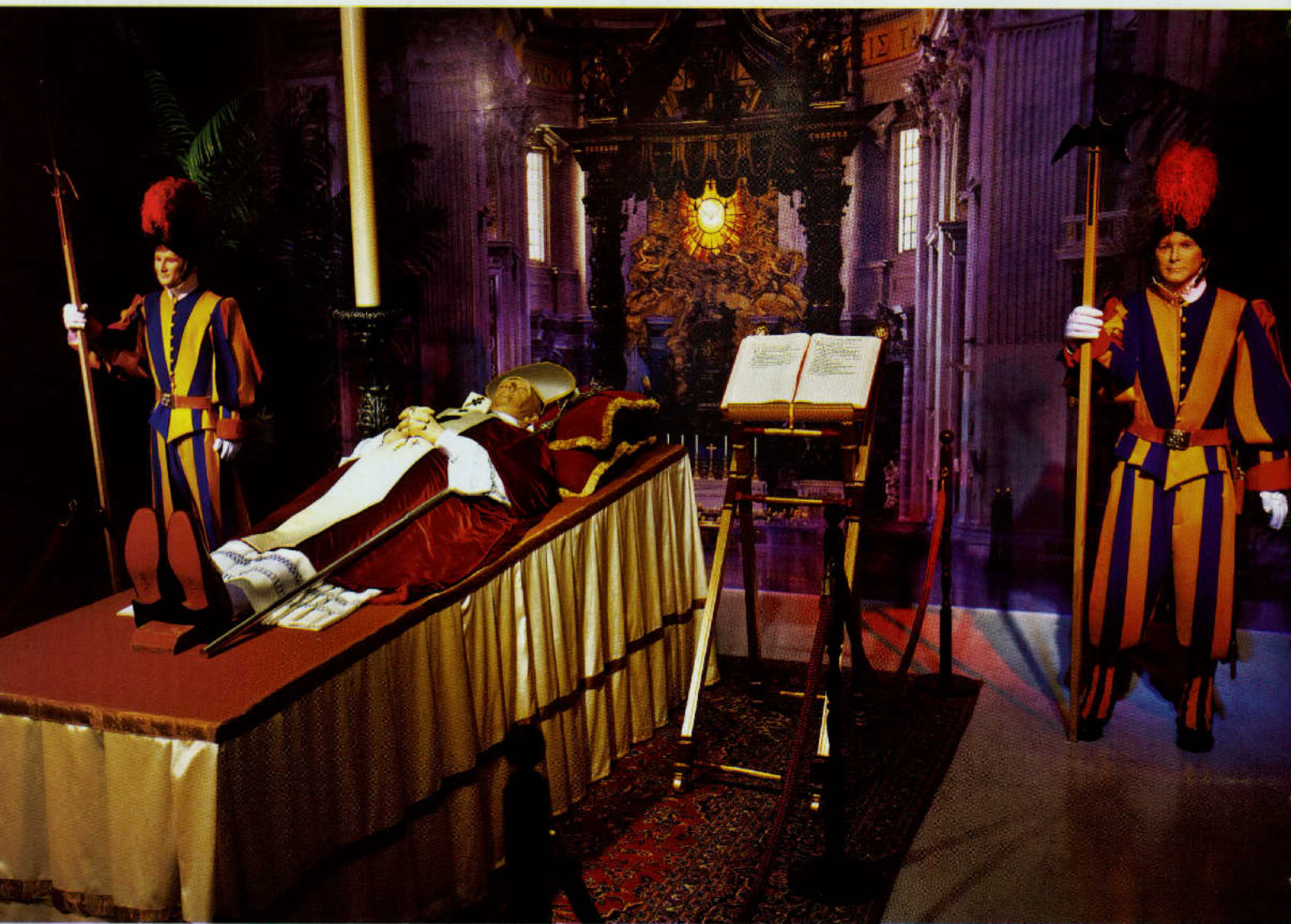
in the 1930s and now one of the country's more bizarre examples of folk art.

For decades, Milkovisch worked nearby as an upholsterer for the Southern Pacific Railroad, picking up whatever he found—rocks, marbles, bits of pottery and metal—on his daily walks to and from work. In 1968 he began setting his finds into cement and redwood, covering first his front and side yards and then the back. Asked why he was “paving” his yard, he responded, “I got sick of mowing grass.”

Milkovisch also liked to drink beer (he said his favorite was “Whatever's on sale”), and, with help from his wife, Mary, and friends, sometimes drank a six-pack a day or more. As the beer cans emptied, John cut off the tops and bottoms, then nailed the flattened remainder—an estimated 50,000 of them eventually—to the sides of his house. The rest of the can (and later, pull tabs) became long strands of tinkling metal suspended as shade curtains from the porch and eaves. Overall, the project was a 20-year labor of libacious love. You can tour the house during the week (by appointment) and on Saturday and Sunday.

Across town, another equally whimsical product of one man's imagination, **The Orange Show**, draws visitors to another residential neighborhood. Created by Jeff

“Controlled chaos” could readily describe Radio Music Theatre's zany repertoire of satire, short sketches, and full-length plays.



The National

Museum of Funeral History, the largest of its kind in the country, houses a massive exhibit on the lives and deaths of Catholic popes.

McKissack, who worked most of his life as a postman, it opened in 1979 after 25 years of McKissack's pattering construction. In his words: "The main purpose of The Orange Show is to encourage people to eat oranges, drink oranges, and be highly amused."

His personal views on health and life in general pepper this 3,000-square-foot structure, a maze of stairs, steps, paths, pipe, rock, wheels, concrete, statues, whirligigs, tractor seats, and other "found" things—whatever piqued his imagination. Deluded by the intensity of his mission, McKissack believed that his creation would rival the Astrodome as a major tourist attraction. However, the tremendous crowds he had hoped for did not materialize, and he died a disappointed man eight months after the show opened. In the ensuing 30 years, however, more than half-a-million visitors have prowled his bizarre structure, now preserved as a monument to idiosyncratic artists everywhere.

The 5,000-square-foot Papal exhibit at the National Museum of Funeral History includes a full-scale replica of Pope John Paul II's crypt, and the Popemobile he used during a 1982 visit to the United Kingdom.

Family Fun, Necco Wafers, and Funerals

Only Houston has **Radio Music Theatre**, a trio of performers who bring back the clean fun of yesteryear's radio shows via what they call "controlled chaos." From satire and short sketches to full-length original plays—DVDs of several RMT classics, including *A Fertile Holiday*, *Wiener Day at the Rollercoast*, and *Just Shut Up and Drive*, can be ordered online—RMT's zany characters always leave their audiences laughing. Coming up in 2010: "Fear of Ducks," a Houston satire, and "Birthday From Hell," a take-off on soap-opera angst.

No exploration of quirky Houston should exclude a stop at the **Variety Fair 5 & 10** in Rice Village, little changed since it opened in 1948. One step in the door, and many folks teleport back to childhood with a 50-cent allowance in hand. Want Necco Wafers, penny candy, or a metal Roy Rogers lunch box? How about SenSen, hair nets, or Teaberry Gum? All are here plus more, mixed in with inexpensive sundries of today. Timely hint: This old five-and-dime's Victorian Valentines remain favorites, year after year.

Vintage finds of another kind fill the **National Museum of Funeral History**, just off I-45 north of town. It's the largest exhibit of its kind in the country. With the motto "any day above ground is a good one," this collection exhibits one-of-a-kind hearses (including a sleigh and a funeral bus); information and artifacts relating to funerals of the rich and famous; and (among other things) a massive exhibit on the lives and deaths of Catholic popes, produced with extensive assistance from the Vatican. The latter focuses specifically on the death of Pope John Paul II, including an authentic reproduction of his crypt.

Oddities often come into view as you drive Houston's surface roads and freeways. There's the sculpture of a half-peeled banana alongside I-45 just north of downtown (Quitman Street exit); a massive Ferris wheel that seems close enough to touch as you swing around downtown's skyscrapers on I-45; and the *Tribute to American Statesmanship* sculptures viewable from the far right lane of I-10 east, just before that highway joins I-45

One of the few true five-and-dimes left in Texas, *Variety Fair* lives up to its name, whether you need *Lady Esther Face Powder* or a rubber chicken.

south. Each of these four historic "heads" by Houston-based artist **David Adickes**—George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Sam Houston, and Stephen F. Austin—stands 22 feet tall, and collectively they have been nicknamed "Mount Rush-hour." Adickes also created the aforementioned banana, the towering sculpture of Sam Houston on I-45 south of Huntsville, and *The Virtuoso*, a 36-foot-tall sculpture of a cellist, which plays classical music in front of the Lyric Centre downtown.

Keep a sharp lookout—more quirky stuff pops with regularity in the nation's fourth largest city and its suburbs. Come ready to explore, laugh, and discover the real Houston. **TH**

CAROL BARRINGTON has been exploring Houston's distinctive personality for more than three decades. Photo Editor **GRIFF SMITH** says if he still imbibed, he would cover his house in beer cans.



TH ESSENTIALS

Quirky Houston

FOR INFORMATION on lodging, restaurants, events, and other attractions in Houston, contact the **Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau** at 713/437-5200 or 800/4-HOUSTON; www.visithoustontexas.com. Following is contact information for sites mentioned in the story. Call ahead for directions, hours, and admission prices.

The Art Car Museum, 140 Heights Blvd., 713/861-5526; www.artcarmuseum.com.

Texas Junk Company, 215 Welch (at Taft), 713/524-6257.

Beer Can House, 222 Malone St., 713/926-6368; www.beercanhouse.org.

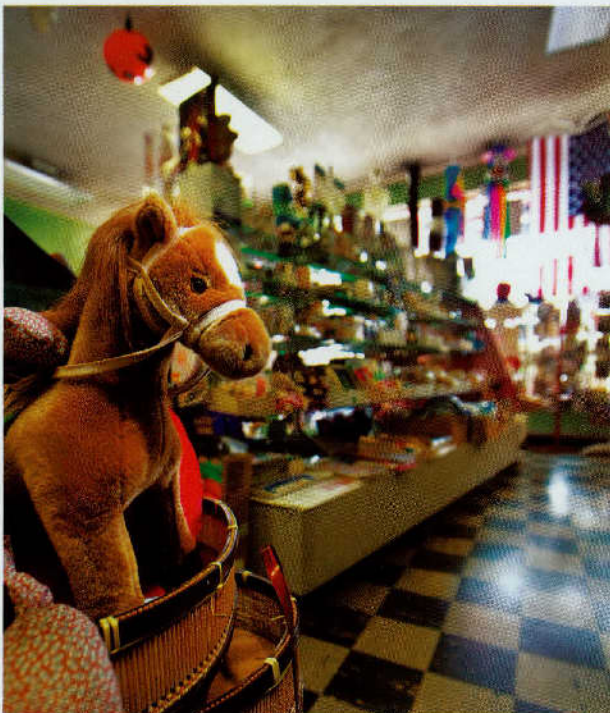
The Orange Show, 2401 Munger St., 713/926-6368; www.orangeshow.org.

Radio Music Theatre, 2623 Colquitt, 713/522-7722; www.radiomusictheatre.com.

Variety Fair 5 & 10, 2415 Rice Blvd., 713/522-0561; www.varietyfair.com.

National Museum of Funeral History, 415 Barren Springs Dr., 281/876-3063; www.nmfh.org.

David Adickes Sculpturworx Studio, 2500 Summer St., is not open to the public, but you can drive by/walk around the grounds and view sculptures.



Save the Date

EAGLES IN EMORY, MUSIC IN MERCEDES—





KEVIN STILLIGAN



COLORFUL, SHOW-STOPPING KITES billowing in a Gulf breeze ... costumed folk dancers performing the spirited *Zorba* and other traditional Greek dances ... the scent of lavender filling the air at an outdoor market. These are just a few of the things you can expect at small-town festivals across the state in upcoming months. But these events happen only once a year; if you don't plan now, you could miss out on the fun and the chance to try something new.

We can't tell you about all of Texas' homegrown celebrations—there are literally hundreds, promoting everything from ethnic heritage to artistic expression—so we're highlighting some of the best, starting with an exuberant event this month on South Padre Island. It's a sure way to put some wind in your sails.

South Padre Island Kite Fest,

Jan. 30-31. When Bill Doan starts talking about quad-line exhibitions, indoor flies, and other kite-festival highlights, you can hear the excitement in his voice. And even if you can't remember the last time you flew a kite, his enthusiasm is contagious.



"You see all kinds of kites at the festival," says Doan, "from traditional, single-line kites to stunt kites. Some of the single-line kites are 150 feet long and cost as much as \$6,000. They're drop-dead gorgeous and put on quite a show, especially with the beautiful beach backdrop. Stunt kites, or performance kites, are usually quad-lines—kites controlled

PREVIOUS PAGE: Whimsical kites enthrall spectators at the South Padre Island Kite Fest. ABOVE: A Chevrolet Bel Air convertible awaits admirers at the Night in Old Pecos & Cantaloupe Fest in Pecos. OPPOSITE: Picking lavender at one of the farms on tour at the Blanco Lavender Festival, and costumed dancers at the Clear Lake Greek Festival in Webster.

PHOTO: STAN WILLIAMS



For festival tips, go to www.texashighways.com/webextra.

with four lines. Experienced pilots can make them fly backward as well as forward, dive toward the ground, or loop across the sky."

Doan and his wife, Susie, own B&S Kites on South Padre Island, and sponsor the two-day event, which features kite displays and performances by individuals and teams from as far away as Canada. The pre-festival lineup includes a class on kite-making and an all-day clinic on flying a Revolution kite (the original quad-line design) by the well-known iQuad kite team, as well as something new this year: an indoor fly.

"With an indoor fly, all fans and air conditioning are turned off inside the building," explains Doan. "The kites are extremely light and the performer walks backward to add air. With classical music or soft jazz playing, the effect is something like a ballet."

Kite ballets notwithstanding, most of the action still takes place on the beach, where about 3,000 spectators gather in lawn chairs six deep around the performance field. "Everyone is welcome to come and join in the fun," says Doan. "And anyone age 12 and younger receives a free kite. We also offer a free lesson to anyone who wants to learn to fly a stunt kite. It's the perfect chance to be a kid again." Call 956/761-1248; www.bskites.com.

Rains County Eagle Fest, Emory,

February 6. What would possess hundreds of people to take early-morning boat tours on a remote East Texas lake in February? The chance to see bald eagles roosting, flying, fishing, and hunting in their native



habitat! Boat tours on Lake Fork are the highlight of a nature festival based in Emory, which lies between Lake Fork and Lake Tawakoni. The area is surrounded by the nesting and feeding grounds of these majestic birds. Other features include demonstrations with live birds of prey and other educational presentations.

Call 903/473-3913 or 903/473-2465, ext. 112; www.eaglefest.org. Organizers are considering extending the festival to two days and adding boat tours on Lake Tawakoni; check the Web site for updates. Note tips on dressing for outdoor weather, and call ahead for possible cancellation in case of inclement weather.

Rio Grande Valley Music Festival, Mercedes, February 16-21.

Five stages present music from professional musicians in a wide variety of genres, from old-time country to mariachi. Folkloric dancers also perform. A "jamming tent" provides a place for musicians of all levels of ability to play in an unstructured manner. The six-day celebration, which also includes a biscuits-and-gravy breakfast, food booths, and arts and crafts, raises money for local youth-music programs (about \$10,000 last year). Call 956/373-0130; www.rgvmf.com.



Out of the Loop Fringe Festival, Addison, March 4-14.

If you're drawn to thought-provoking, edgy entertainment, you'll want to check out the diverse offerings at this unusual, 10-day festival. It features performances by national, regional, and Dallas-based artists in theater, dance, music,



comedy, puppetry, and poetry. This year's headliners include Mike Daisey, whose acclaimed monologues tell hilarious and heartbreaking stories that expose secret histories and unexpected connections; Broadway maestro Seth Rudetsky, who deconstructs what's vocally amazing and what's a vocal travesty; and The Three Redneck Tenors, singing cousins who stampede their way through Broadway's greatest hits. *Most performances not appropriate for children.* Call 972/450-6232; www.watertowtheatre.org/outoftheloop.asp.

Clear Lake Greek Festival, Webster,

May 7-9. *Pastitsio, souvlaki, spanakopita, tyropita, dolmathes, gyros, baklava,* and other delicious Greek foods highlight this annual feast. Members of the St. John the Theologian Greek Orthodox Church in Webster cook for weeks ahead of time, just preparing the pastries for this three-day event.

The entertainment is also steeped in ethnic flavor, with Greek dancing topping the list. Children and teens from the congregation present traditional dances, and local dance groups and the Infamous Yianni the Table Dancer also perform. (It's not what you might think; this solo artist lifts a table with his teeth, among





other amazing feats.) You can even learn how to do some of the popular Greek dances, such as the *kalamatianos*, or handkerchief dance. This dance involves men and women forming a large, open circle around the leader, who waves a handkerchief and performs acrobatic maneuvers, never missing a beat. *Opa!*

"We began the Greek Festival 17 years ago as a way to share our culture and heritage with our neighbors," says Mariam Campbell, a longtime festival volunteer. "My favorite part of the event is the camaraderie among the workers and the people who attend. We're all like a big family sharing food and fun together."

The festival also includes a presentation on Greek culture; children's activities; gift shops that offer imported items and collectibles (vases, wall hangings, gold and silver jewelry); and an *agora*

(market) with imported pasta, calamata olives, olive oil, and feta cheese.

You may not master the *kalamatianos* at the Greek Festival, but it's a sure bet that you'll learn something, perhaps the difference between *spanakopita* (spinach pie) and *tyropita* (meat pie). It helps to know what to ask for when you go back for seconds. Call 281/554-7223; www.clearlakegreekfestival.com.

Funtier Day, Santa Anna, May 15.

The organizers of this rollicking annual event certainly have the food covered. The World Championship Bison Cook-off, which includes categories for beef brisket, beef ribs, and chicken, leads the festival, and there are cooking contests for ice cream and homemade pies, as well as a junior cake bake-



off. Food vendors sell barbecue, gorditas, funnel cakes, and fried shrimp and catfish. The entertainment is just as varied—volleyball and horseshoe tournaments, a water polo contest, a country and western band, mariachis, folkloric dancers, line dancers, and karaoke. Call 325/348-3535; www.santaannatex.org.

"Horseracing" excitement at St. Louis Downs, a popular booth at Castroville's St. Louis Day Celebration.

Blanco Lavender Festival, June 11-13.

Even though the Texas Hill Country could hardly be mistaken for the hills of Provence, there's a definite similarity in June, when local lavender farms are awash in purple. For the past five years, Blanco has celebrated the burgeoning lavender industry with a





For a comprehensive list of statewide festivals, visit www.traveltex.com, click on "Events," and search for "Festivals."

multifaceted lineup that includes tours of six area farms.

"Each farm is a little different," says Tasha Brieger, who chairs the farm tours. "At one, the fields are wrapped around a hillside, so wherever you stand in the lavender, you also get a 360° view of the countryside. One of our growers is a caterer, so she and her husband usually have some kind of cooking demonstration." Last year, they also offered lavender lemonade and lavender ice cream. Brieger's own farm, Hill Country Lavender, sells more than 75 lavender products, including a full line of culinary items, such as lavender-citrus sugar and lavender-herb salt.

In Blanco, an outdoor market on the grounds of the Old Blanco Courthouse also beckons. The wares here include lavender-infused soaps and lotions, pottery, jewelry, and other arts-and-crafts items. Inside the former courthouse, speakers offer tips on starting a lavender farm, growing lavender in the garden, and cooking with this aromatic herb.

For more culinary inspiration, don't miss the GO TEXAN Wine, Beer, and Gourmet Food tent, where you can sample Texas-produced wines and beers, artisan breads and cheeses, mustards, jellies, salsas, and olive oils. The big hit last year was a drink called the Lavender Lizzie, made with lavender margarita mix.

Blanco merchants also get into the spirit, offering lavender merchandise and foods such as lavender sugar cookies and lavender-chocolate cupcakes. Local bands perform in two venues, and a street dance takes place on Friday evening. The lively music is right in step with this vibrant Hill Country celebration. **Call 830/833-5101; www.blancolavenderfest.com.**

Texas' Last Frontier Heritage Celebration, Morton, June 26-27.

Cochran County celebrates its frontier heritage with a variety of events, including a Buffalo Soldier encampment in Cochran County Park, near Morton. The reenactors tell stories and demonstrate what life was like



on the frontier. Other activities include a parade in downtown Morton, performances by gospel and patriotic singers, a clown show, a free dance with a live country and western band, an antique car show, a barbecue-brisket lunch, a hamburger supper, and a

campfire sing-along. On Sunday, a community worship service takes place at the park, followed by a barbecue and soul-food lunch. **Call 806/266-5038, or e-mail pclayton@windstream.net.**

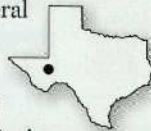
St. Louis Day Celebration, Castroville, August 22.

The St. Louis Catholic Church held its first church picnic more than 125 years ago under the pecan trees in Koenig Park on the banks of the Medina River. Only a handful of people were at the first picnic; today, more than 10,000 festival-goers gather at the same location. Parishioners cook some 3,000 pounds of Alsatian-style sausage for the feast, which also includes barbecued brisket, potato salad, coleslaw, pinto beans, Alsatian bread, and homemade cake. Entertainment includes local



Night in Old Pecos & Cantaloupe Fest, Pecos, July 24.

Several years ago, the legendary Pecos Cantaloupe Festival evolved into a one-day event that focuses less on the area's signature fruit and more on family entertainment. (You'll still see cantaloupes at the Cantaloupe Food Show, a cooking contest held at a local bank the day before; you can taste the entries in the afternoon, after the judging.) The festivities include arts and crafts, a cakewalk, a car show, and children's games. Food vendors sell barbecue, hamburgers, turkey legs, curly fries, funnel cakes, snow-cones, and candied apples. A street dance features a deejay on one street and a live band on another. **Call 432/445-2406; www.pecostx.com.**



groups performing Alsatian and Flemish folkdances, cloggers, a 50-piece community band, horseshoe and washer-pitching tournaments, a "horseracing" booth (empty horse-pill capsules loaded with ball bearings "race" down a slope), children's games and rides, arts and crafts, and bingo. **Call 832/931-2826; www.saintlouisday.com. TH**

Young urbanites experience a quarter-life crisis during a performance of [sic] in Addison's 2009 Out of the Loop Fringe Festival.

Senior Editor **NOLA McKEY** thoroughly enjoyed last year's Blanco Lavender Festival. After researching this story, she's looking forward to savoring spanakopita in Webster and Alsatian sausage in Castroville.

All in the Family

A Gift From Mother Neff

Text by **MARTHA DEERINGER**

As an adult, Pat Neff remembered how his mother, Isabella Neff, insisted he take a dictionary with him to the cotton fields so he could study while the horses rested.



Historic WHARTON

- Out of this world museums.
- Home of Oscar winning and Pulitzer prize winning playwright Horton Foote.
- Historic 1889 courthouse, downtown.
- Dining, shopping, antiques, the Colorado River, historic homes.
- Unique, fabulous lodging.



whartontexas.com

BANDERA, TEXAS

COWBOY CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Saddle up and ride to the beautiful Texas Hill Country
Where The Fun Never Sets.



www.BanderaCowboyCapital.com

1-800-364-3833

TODAY'S TEXAS STATE PARK system, which includes more than 90 state parks, historic sites, natural areas, and visitors centers from Abilene to Washington-on-the-Brazos, offers visitors myriad opportunities to commune with the outdoors and learn about the history of the state. The millions of people who have happy memories of such adventures owe a debt of gratitude to a woman named Isabella Neff (1830-1921), who upon her death donated six acres of family land—a shaded swath along the Leon River near Moody—to “the public, for religious, educational, fraternal, and political purposes.” Isabella's son, Governor Pat Neff, so admired his mother that in 1923 he established the State Parks Board. And in 1934, Mother Neff State Park—augmented by acreage donated by Governor Neff and others—became an official state park of Texas. Some call it the *first* official state park in Texas, though in fact several sites preceded it. Regardless, it's not hard to imagine that “Mother” Neff, a hard-working woman who embodied the

PHOTO: "CABINET PORTRAIT" © THE TEXAS COLLECTION, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, WACO

pioneer spirit, would have been pleased.

Isabella Eleanor Shepherd was born on her grandfather's plantation near Roanoke, Virginia, in 1830. As a young woman, she taught school, then at age 24, married farmer Noah Neff, who owned land in Texas. In 1854, the couple embarked by horse-drawn wagon to begin a new life in Texas, settling for a short time in Belton before moving to a site near the Leon River in today's Coryell County.

Here, the Neffs planted cotton and built a one-room log cabin next to a spring, keeping a constant watch for much-feared raiding parties as they worked. At first, Isabella wasn't so sure about her new home. In an 1855 letter to a friend in Virginia, she wrote, "I cannot

say that I am much pleased with Texas I think this is very pretty country, but like all new countries, has many inconveniences—everything is scarce and high, and nothing but bread and meat to eat, and cornbread at that."

The Neffs raised nine children—including their youngest son, future Texas Governor Pat Neff—in their ever-expanding log cabin. According to Neff biographers Dorothy and Terrell Blodgett and David L. Scott in their book *The Land, The Law, and The Lord: The Life of Pat Neff*, Isabella taught at a "common school," where children from the area met for classes in one of the cabins or under a tree. When the Neffs took in three orphaned children to raise, family, friends, and neighbors began

The Mother Lode

ABOUT 30 MILES SOUTH OF WACO, NEAR the town of Moody, Mother Neff State Park spreads across 259 acres of limestone hills, Central Texas prairie, and riparian ecosystems—an idyllic setting for birdwatching, fishing, and events such as weddings and family reunions, but especially attractive to hikers.



When the Leon River, which flows through the park, flooded in summer 2007, many of the campsites, trails, park facilities, and CCC-built structures sustained damage. The park reopened in spring 2008 for primitive camping, but electricity in many buildings has yet to be restored, and facilities are still limited. For campers who enjoy an authentic wilderness experience, a weekend at Mother Neff can prove the ultimate getaway.

Several 1930s rock-and-wood structures in the park, including the open-sided rock tabernacle and the rock water tower, offer insights into the park's history, and three miles of tree-shaded hiking trails (now fully restored) offer opportunities to study the three ecological zones within the park. While wildlife is plentiful, crowds are not. "Nothing is more conducive to the happiness of a people than to go where the bees hum, the birds sing, and the breezes blow," Pat Neff once observed. Here, in the park Neff dedicated in 1934 in honor of his own mother, Mother Nature delivers a dose of joy. Call 254/853-2389, www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

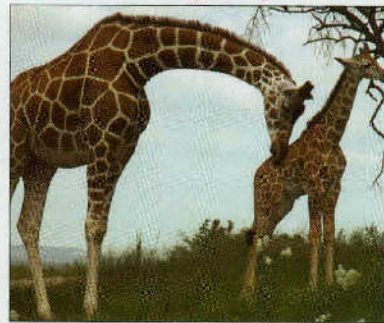
—Lori Moffatt



The water tower at Mother Neff State Park was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Escape to the Wilds of Glen Rose

"Dinosaur Capital of Texas"



- Barnard's Mill Art Museum
- Brazos & Paluxy Rivers
- Creation Evidence Museum
- Dinosaur Valley State Park
- Dinosaur World
- Fossil Rim Wildlife Center
- Historic Courthouse Square

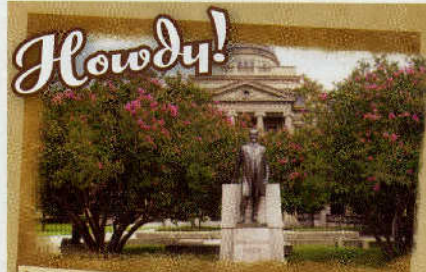
And Much More!!

Unique Lodging Opportunities

Request Visitors' Packet & Coupons

1-888-346-6282

www.GlenRoseTexas.net



IT'S MORE THAN A GREETING...
IT'S A GENUINE SPIRIT NO ONE FORGETS

- The Museum at the George Bush Presidential Library
- Historic Downtown Bryan
- Messina Hof Winery & Resort
- Texas A&M University
- Golf & Recreation
- Fine Dining
- Unique Shopping
- Easy Access

Aggieland, and so much more...

Take a trip to www.visitaggieland.com
or call 800-777-8292 for more information

BRYAN COLLEGE STATION
CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

Speaking of Texas

referring to Isabella as “Mother Neff.”

In 1882, Noah contracted typhoid pneumonia and soon died. During the difficult years following his death, Isabella opened a part of the farm along the Leon River for public gatherings, civic events, and church groups, and the area came to be called “Neff Park.”

As the matriarch of the family, Isabella passed along her love of learning to her children. In an interview for Macklyn Ward Hubbell’s 1953 University of Houston master’s thesis, Pat Neff described how his mother insisted he take a dictionary to the fields with him so he could study while the plow horses rested.

For Pat Neff especially, education paid off. He graduated from Baylor University in 1894, taught school in Arkansas, received a law degree from the University of Texas School of Law in Austin, and eventually turned to politics. As Democratic nominee for governor in

1920, he sent his mother a telegram expressing his admiration and respect. “I am proud of my nomination for your sake,” he wrote. “The people properly ... give you much credit for raising me.” When Pat Neff and his family moved into the Governor’s Mansion in 1921, Isabella came to live there, too. She was 90 years old.

Throughout his career, Pat Neff maintained his allegiance to parks and outdoors education. “The call of the open country is ever a natural one of the human heart, and the massed life in the cities should never cause it to be crucified or become dormant,” said Governor Neff in 1925. Nearly 100 years after Isabella Neff’s death, Mother Neff State Park retains the feeling of hospitality that is a part of Isabella and Pat Neff’s legacy. “We work hard to uphold that tradition,” says Park Superintendent Leah Huth. **TH**

Texas Highways

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

Reader Service Guide to Advertisers

For information from our advertisers, use the forms in this issue, or go to www.texashighways.com.

(Reader service numbers are in bold.)

1. Bandera County Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 52
2. Baytown Chamber of Commerce and CVB, pg. 59
3. Bryan-College Station Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 53
4. El Paso Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 11
5. Glen Rose Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 53
6. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, pg. 13
7. Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 4
8. Lake Whitney Board of Tourism, pg. 6
9. Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 15
10. LBJ Library and Museum, pg. 11
11. Mardi Gras Southeast Texas, pg. 15
12. McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 59
13. San Marcos Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 13
14. Sonora Chamber of Commerce, pg. 58
15. Texas Hill Country Trail, pg. 6
16. Uvalde Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 58
17. Victoria Convention & Visitors Bureau, pg. 8
18. Wharton Chamber of Commerce, pg. 52

HIT THE ROAD

WITH Texas Highways!

12 months of Texas' best

- Great destinations
- Stunning photography
- Roundup of events
- And much more

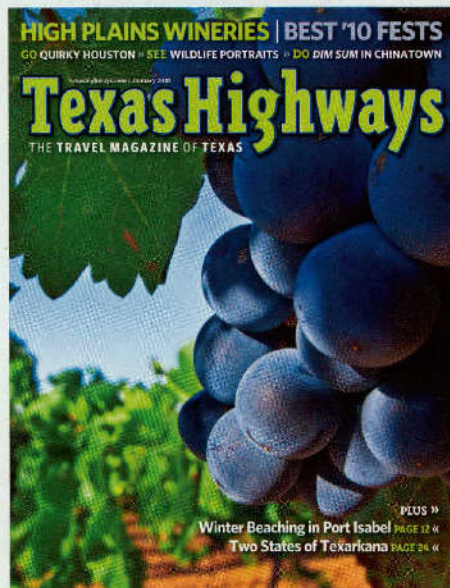
Just \$19.95

for a 1-year U.S. subscription
International subscriptions are just \$29.95.

1-800-839-4997

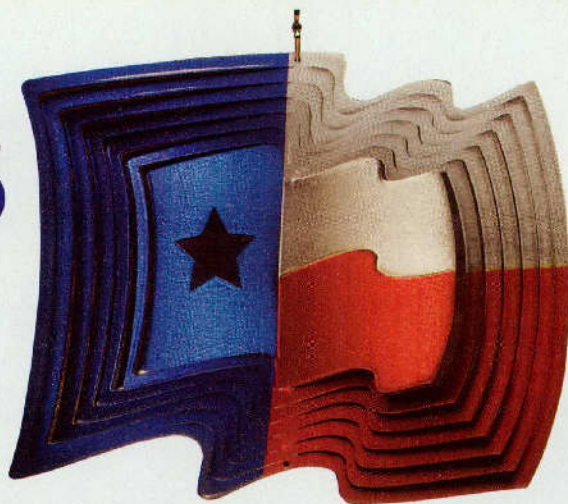
(386-597-4297 from outside the U.S.)
and mention source code AOATHM

www.texashighways.com



AOATHM

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE **Texas** *at home*



View our entire collection at
www.texashighways.com

Texas Flag Wind Spinner

Enjoy the sparkle from the Texas Flag as it spins in the wind. Weather resistant baked-on powder coated. 14" x 10"

Item #37750 \$28.95



Texas Star Table Runner

Enhance your table setting in Texas style. Beautiful colors woven in cotton/polyester blend. Available in two lengths.

12 3/4" x 72"

Item #37801 \$35.95

12 3/4" x 90"

Item #37802 \$42.95



Bluebonnet Throw

Lap throw is a beautiful tapestry of bluebonnets. Roomy enough to keep you warm yet small enough to travel with you. 100% cotton. 52" x 34"

Item #37710 \$32.95



Texas Decorative Pillow

Classic Texas scenes decorate the name. Beautifully crafted in the U.S. 12"x 8"

Item #37800 \$11.95

To order, call **1-800-839-4997** (386-597-4297 from outside the U.S.)

Or visit www.texashighways.com

Wrap up SOME Texas THEY'LL NEVER FORGET



View our entire collection at
www.texashighways.com



Texas Hoodie

Cotton/Polyester blend.
Sizes: S, M, L, XL, 2XL

Item #38257 \$36.95

Texas Public Gardens

By Elvin McDonald

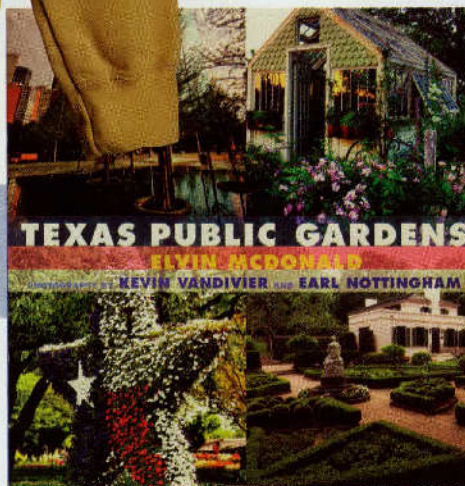
From award-winning rose gardens to architecturally inspired water gardens, McDonald searched to find fabulous public gardens for all to enjoy. Beautiful photography captures these visual delights. 192 pages, hardcover, full color.

Item #36525 \$35.00

Crockett Travel Mug

When his fellow Tennesseans didn't re-elect him to Congress, Davy Crockett announced: "You may all go to hell and I will go to Texas." His feisty words are prominently featured on this stainless steel travel mug, 14 oz., hot or cold beverages

Item #37333 \$11.95



Bluebonnet Polo

Comfort and style are hers in our cotton pique polo. 100% Egyptian cotton. Misses sizes: S, M, L, XL, 2XL

Item #38256 \$36.95

Pink Polar Fleece Jacket

Snuggle into our pink polar fleece long-sleeved ladies jacket. Enjoy the ease of a front zipper and security of zipper pockets. Detailed with embroidered bluebonnets. 100% polyester, machine-washable inside-out. Sizes: S, M, L, XL

Item #48200 \$36.95

Ladies Embroidered Cap

Shade your face or just look great in our cap embroidered with Texas and the iconic bluebonnet. Adjustable buckle in back. Color: Light Denim.

Item #38721 \$16.95

Texas 1836 Pocket Tee

You'll enjoy casual comfort in our pocket T-shirt. Silkscreen on pocket shows your Texas pride. Preshrunk. 100% cotton. Color: Blue jean. Sizes: S, M, L, XL, 2XL

Item #38255 \$21.95



Three ways to order:

BY PHONE: Call **1-800-839-4997** (386-597-4297 from outside the U.S)

BY MAIL: Please use the **order form** inside this issue. Send completed form, along with your payment, including shipping and handling to: Texas Highways - #748, PO Box 576, Mt. Morris, IL 61054

ONLINE: Go to **www.texashighways.com**

You may also visit the *Texas Highways Magazine Gift Shop* at 150 E. Riverside, Austin.

Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover

Texas Star Key Chain

High quality leather keychain embellished with the Texas Star.

Item #37711 \$12.95

State Seal Key Chain

The Texas State Seal embellishes this high quality leather keychain.

Item #37712 \$12.95

Dancing with the Stars

ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST successful and influential choreographers, Mark Morris remains true to his conviction that dance should be performed with live music played by the best musicians. Morris' creative vision makes for a combination of modern dance at its highest level in concert with a moving and memorable musical score. **Mark Morris Dance Group** plays at the Wortham Center's Cullen Theater in **Houston**, January 15-16. For tickets and more information, call 713/227-4SPA; www.spahouston.org.



See!

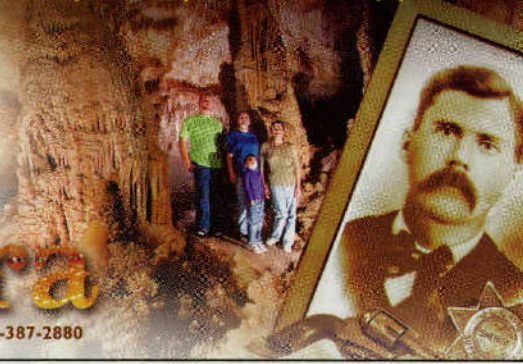
A Chorus Line
in Houston,
January 5-17

Discover Sonora, Texas, where you will find a rich Western heritage, natural wonders, and a wide variety of family activities to enjoy.

Explore the Caverns of Sonora. Walk the trails of Eaton Hill Wildlife Sanctuary. Visit Main Street and three downtown museums. Learn about the death of outlaw Will Carver, and the lives of Sonora's pioneers, cowboys, and veterans.

Sonora

www.toursonora.com 888-387-2880



January Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

EL PASO: El Paso Pro-Musica Chamber Music Festival January 6-31. www.eppm.org 915/833-9400

EL PASO: El Paso Symphony Orchestra January 22-23. Plaza Theatre. www.epso.org 915/532-3776

EL PASO: Bill Maher January 28. At the Plaza Theatre. <http://theplazatheatre.org> 915/231-1100 or 800/745-3000

MIDLAND: Permian Basin String Quartet January 9. UTPB's Center for Energy and Economic Diversification, FM 1788 and TX 191. www.mosc.org 432/563-0928

ODESSA: SandHills Stock Show & Rodeo January 8-16. Ector County Coliseum, 42nd Street and Andrews Highway. www.sandhillsstockshowandrodeo.com 432/366-3951

GULF COAST

BAYTOWN: Chili When It's Chilly Cookoff January 8-9. San Jacinto Mall. www.baytownchamber.com 281/422-8359

CORPUS CHRISTI: Tribute to Gershwin January 16. Performing Arts Center at Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi. www.ccsymphony.org 361/883-NOTE

CORPUS CHRISTI: Coastal Bend Marine Dealers Boat Show January 22-24. American Bank Convention Center, 1901 N. Shoreline Blvd. www.ccoastshow.com 361/991-0369

CORPUS CHRISTI: The Albers String Trio with Pianist Yeol Eum Son January 23. Wolfe Recital Hall, Del Mar College. www.corpuschristichambermusic.org 361/884-5775

GALVESTON: Jerry Jeff Walker January 2. The Grand 1894 Opera House. www.thegrand.com 800/821-1894

GALVESTON: Galveston Symphony Orchestra January 31. The Grand 1894 Opera House. www.thegrand.com 800/821-1894

UPLIFTING

For info on lodging, attractions, events & tours
www.visitualde.com

UVALDE
Surround yourself with adventure.

HOUSTON: Houston Symphony January 7, 9-10, 15-17, 21, 23-24. Jones Hall. www.houstonsymphony.com 713/224-7575

HOUSTON: MLK Grand Parade January 18. Grand Parade originating at Allen Parkway and Taft Street. 713/953-1633

HOUSTON: Tosca January 22, 30, February 3, 5, 7. Houston Grand Opera. Brown Theater. www.houstongrandopera.com 713/228-6737

HOUSTON: The Turn of the Screw January 29, 31, February 6, 10, 13. Houston Grand Opera. Brown Theater. 713/228-6737

PEARLAND: Winterfest January 9. Independence Park, 3919 Liberty Drive. www.pearlandparks.com 281/652-1673

PORT ARANSAS: Port Aransas Garden Club Tour of Homes January 23. Port Aransas Community Center. 361/749-1520

PORT ARTHUR: Krewe of Neptune 12th Night Mardi Gras Party January 9. Bob Bowers Civic Center. 409/962-9860

PORT ARTHUR: Music Hall of Fame Show January 23. Bob Bowers Civic Center. 409/548-4444

PORT ISABEL: 26th Annual Longest Causeway Run & Fitness Walk January 9. The 6.2-mile (10K) course starts at the Port Isabel Community Center. www.portisabel.org/causeway_run 956/943-2262 or 800/527-6102

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Winter Texan Golf Classic January 25-26. SPI Golf Club. www.sopadre.com 800/767-2373

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: Atlantic Brass Quintet January 28. SPI Convention Centre. www.elpaseoarts.org 956/943-4700

VICTORIA: Harlem Gospel Choir January 15. Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts, 214 N. Main St. www.theatre victoria.org 361/570-TKTS

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg with the Austin Symphony January 15-16. A Samuel Barber Centennial Celebration. Long Center for the Performing Arts. www.austinsymphony.org 512/476-6064 or 888/4MAESTRO

AUSTIN: 3M Half Marathon & Relay January 24. Run as an individual or two-person relay team. 9500 block of Stonelake Blvd. www.3mhalfmarathon.com 512/984-6747

AUSTIN: David Stevens and the Morris Nelms Quartet January 29. First Presbyterian Church of Austin, 8001 Mesa Drive. www.stcecilamusicseries.org 512/345-8866

AUSTIN: The Travelin' McCourys January 30. One World Theatre, 7701 Bee Caves Road. www.oneworldtheatre.org 512/329-6753

AUSTIN: The Star January 30-February 7. Austin Lyric Opera production at the Long Center for the Performing Arts. www.austinlyricopera.org 512/472-5992

KERRVILLE: New Orleans Preservation Hall Jazz Band with the Symphony of the Hills January 23. Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. www.symphonyofthehills.org 830/896-9393

KERRVILLE: Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet January 26, 28. Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. www.kpas.org 830/896-9393

WIMBERLEY: The Elephant Man January 22-February 14. EmilyAnn Theatre. www.emilyann.org 512/847-6969

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: The Wizard of Oz January 19. Abilene Civic Center. 800/869-1451

ABILENE: World of Wheels January 29-31. Abilene Civic Center. 325/676-6211

AMARILLO: The Wizard of Oz January 20-21. Civic Center Auditorium. 806/378-3096

AMARILLO: Amarillo Symphony January 22-23. Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts. 806/376-8782

LUBBOCK: Bus Stop January 22-February 7. Lubbock Community Theatre. www.lubbockcommunitytheatre.org 806/749-2416

LUBBOCK: The Wizard of Oz January 22-23. City Bank Auditorium. 800/784-9494

SAN ANGELO: Beto y los Fairlanes January 15. Cactus Hotel. www.sanangeloarts.com 325/653-6793

PINEY WOODS

JEFFERSON: Queen Mab Ball January 23. www.mardigrasupriver.com 903/665-2672

NACOGDOCHES: Oklahoma! January 29-31. Lamp-Lite Theatre. www.lampplitetheatre.org 936/564-8300

TEXARKANA: Take 6 January 29. A cappella vocal group performs at the Perot Theatre. www.trahc.org 903/792-4992

TYLER: The Wizard of Oz January 16-17. UT Tyler's Cowan Center. www.cowancenter.org 903/566-7424

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ARLINGTON: AT&T Cotton Bowl Classic January 2. Postseason college football game at Cowboys Stadium. www.attcottonbowl.com 817/892-BOWL or 888/792-BOWL

DALLAS: Dallas Symphony Orchestra January 7-9, 14-16, 21-24, 28-30. Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. www.dallasymphony.com 214/692-0203

DALLAS: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company January 8-9. Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House. 214/880-0202

DALLAS: Symphonic Brass Spectacular January 10. Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center. www.dallasymphony.com 214/692-0203

DALLAS: Cosi Fan Tutte January 24. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. www.dallasopera.org 214/443-1000

DALLAS: ATP Men's Tennis Tournament January 30-February 6. ATP/USTA international pro tennis event at T Bar M Racquet Club. www.tbarmtennis.com 972/233-4444

DALLAS: Don Pasquale January 31. Winspear Opera House, 2403 Flora St. www.dallasopera.org 214/443-1000

FORT WORTH: Vivaldi's Four Seasons January 8-10. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwsymphony.org 817/665-6000

FORT WORTH: Cliburn Concerts Presents Michael Shih & Friends January 12. Bass Performance Hall. www.cliburn.org 817/738-6536

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo January 15-February 7. Will Rogers Memorial Center. www.fwssr.com 817/877-2400

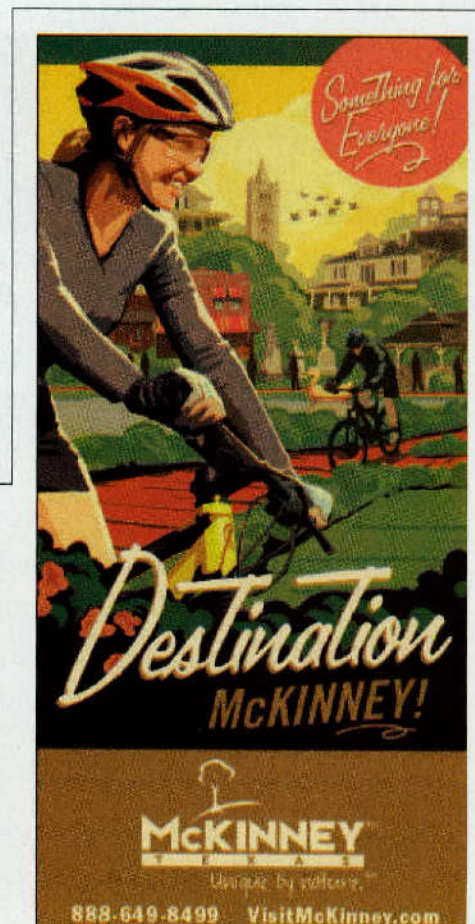
FORT WORTH: Casa Mañana Presents The Color Purple January 26-31. Bass Performance Hall. www.casamanana.org 817/332-2272



DISCOVER Baytown
A FUN PLACE TO BE

discover Baytown

BAYTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AND CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU **281-422-8359**
WWW.BAYTOWNCHAMBER.COM



Something for Everyone!

Destination MCKINNEY!

MCKINNEY TEXAS
Unique by nature.

888-649-8499 VisitMcKinney.com

TH SPOTLIGHT

Nashville Portraits

FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS, Jim McGuire has been the pre-eminent photographer of choice in Music City, USA. Midland's Museum of the Southwest will present *Nashville Portraits*, 60 of McGuire's photographs, in its Southwing Galleries January 26-March 14. The artist's black-and-white images depict many of the most famous country-western musicians of the last half-century, including the late Waylon Jennings (right). Call 432/683-2882; www.museumsw.org.



IRVING: Year of the Tiger January 10-24. Irving Arts Center. www.IrvingArtsCenter.com 972/252-2787

IRVING: Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra January 16. Irving Arts Center. www.irvingartscenter.com 972/252-2787

KILLEEN: KNCT Wine Classic January 16. Killeen Civic & Conference Center. www.knct.org/wineclassic 877/533-5628

PLANO: Dallas Area Train Show January 16-17. Plano Centre. www.dfwtrainshows.com 972/733-4998

RICHARDSON: Richardson Symphony Orchestra January 16. Charles W. Eisemann Center for Performing Arts. www.richardsonsymphony.org 972/744-4650

ROUND TOP: The Synergy Brass Quintet January 30. Festival Concert Hall. www.festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

WACO: Texas Circuit Finals Rodeo January 7-9. Heart O' Texas Fair Complex. www.hotfair.com 254/776-1660

WAXAHACHIE: Martin Luther King Day Parade January 18. Downtown. 972/937-2390

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

MISSION: 73rd Annual Texas Citrus Fiesta January 16, 28, 30. Product Costume Show: January 16. Coronation of King Citrus and Queen Citrianna: January 28. Parade of Oranges and Fun Fair: January 30. www.texascitrusfiesta.net 956/585-9724

SAN ANTONIO: Valero Alamo Bowl January 2. Post-season college football bowl game at the Alamodome. www.valeroalamobowl.com 210/226-BOWL or 210/704-6666

SAN ANTONIO: River Walk Mud Festival January 14-17. River Walk. 210/227-4262

SAN ANTONIO: San Antonio Symphony January 15-16, 29-30. Majestic Theatre. www.sasymphony.org 210/226-3333 or 800/745-3000

Are you sticking up for Texas?



You can tell a Texan a mile away, simply by the vehicle registration sticker in the corner of his or her windshield. By keeping your sticker current, you're helping Texas build and maintain our highways, roads and bridges. So... *Check the date, love your state®* and *Put Texas in your corner.®* You'll not only be obeying the law, you'll be sticking up for all of us.



The *Put Texas in your corner* initiative is proud to be a part of your new Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, which now provides the state's motor vehicle services. Find out more at www.TxDMV.gov.



Put Texas in your corner.®

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at 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).

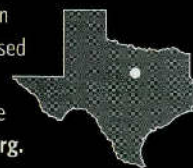
Send future event information to: Texas Events Calendar, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax: 512/486-5879; e-mail: trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us. Listing deadlines: Spring (Mar, Apr, May) Dec 1; Summer (Jun, Jul, Aug) Mar 1; Fall (Sep, Oct, Nov) Jun 1; Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb) Sep 1.



Window on Texas

Photograph by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

RIVETING REFLECTION Designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth produces stunning views from multiple angles. Composed of five long, flat-roofed pavilions situated on a 1.5-acre pond, this iconic complex maintains an important collection of more than 2,600 works within 53,000 square feet of gallery space. Call 817/738-9215 or 866/824-5566; www.themodern.org.



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



HERE'S HOW TO WIN THE UNITED STATES

VITAMIN B-12