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Texas Highways

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS



PLUS »

San Antonio's Southtown PAGE 26 <<

Beaumont—in August? PAGE 6 <<

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© WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Members of the world's largest urban bat colony survived early image challenges and now flutter from beneath Austin's Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge each summer evening.

Battitude

WHEN DESCRIBED AS “furry little mammals,” bats sound adorable. But whether it's too many horror films or unfounded rabies scares, bats have suffered more than their share of PR issues. Fortunately, that's changed dramatically for the better. Even Austin's hockey team took the name of these night-fliers. If you need further proof, Mark Bloschok can set you straight. Bloschok, a retired bridge designer for TxDOT, worked on the 1980s expansion of the Congress Avenue Bridge (now called the Ann Richards Bridge) in Austin.

The bridge's new beams created ideal bat caves and before long, the bridge was home to the world's largest urban colony. Bloschok calls that “a happy accident.” But he adds, “Many of us don't remember that a lot of folks clamored for the removal of the bats.” Enter Merlin Tuttle and Bat Conservation International, the Austin-based organization devoted to conservation, education, and research to protect bats around the world. BCI helped save Austin's bridge-dwelling colony and now also owns about 300 acres around Bracken Cave near San Antonio, protecting the world's largest bat colony.

The outcome is good for us all: The much-loved bats are protected and free to devour tons of problematic bugs every night. In Austin, hundreds of folks appear on (or near) the bridge every evening between March and October to watch the little critters flutter out in search of groceries. Along the way, Bloschok became an authority on bats in bridges (quoted in *National Geographic*) and explains that “we've long since lost track of the number of such purposeful bat colonies that have formed in bridges around the world.”

These days, tourists flock to watch bats, and when you turn to page 40 you'll see a few of the favored sites to visit. It's energizing to know that “happy accidents” can contribute to such an ecologically positive trend.

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Look for our annual “Where in Texas Are You?” contest in the September issue. For details, go to www.texashighways.com.

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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When travelers count the charms of Central Texas, the Highland Lakes are high on everyone's list.

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COVER
STORY

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Chain of Jewels

Six beautiful Hill Country lakes offer R&R in the form of swimming, water-skiing, and scuba-diving, along with enticements from surrounding communities.

Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**
Photographs by **KENNY BRAUN**



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Attractions abound in the Alamo City, but don't miss this exciting district with one-of-a-kind shops, galleries, and eateries.

Text by **SHERMAKAYE BASS**
Photographs by **SARAH KERVER**

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The legacy of a Texas hero imbues the Piney Woods town of Huntsville with history and culture. Festivals and a nearby state park offer fun times, too.

Text by **KAREN HASTINGS**
Photographs by **SKEETER HAGLER**

40 | From Dusk Till Dawn: Batting Around Texas


Bat-lovers celebrate in Austin, and flock to other bat-watching sites to see these amazing mammals emerge en masse for nightly forays.

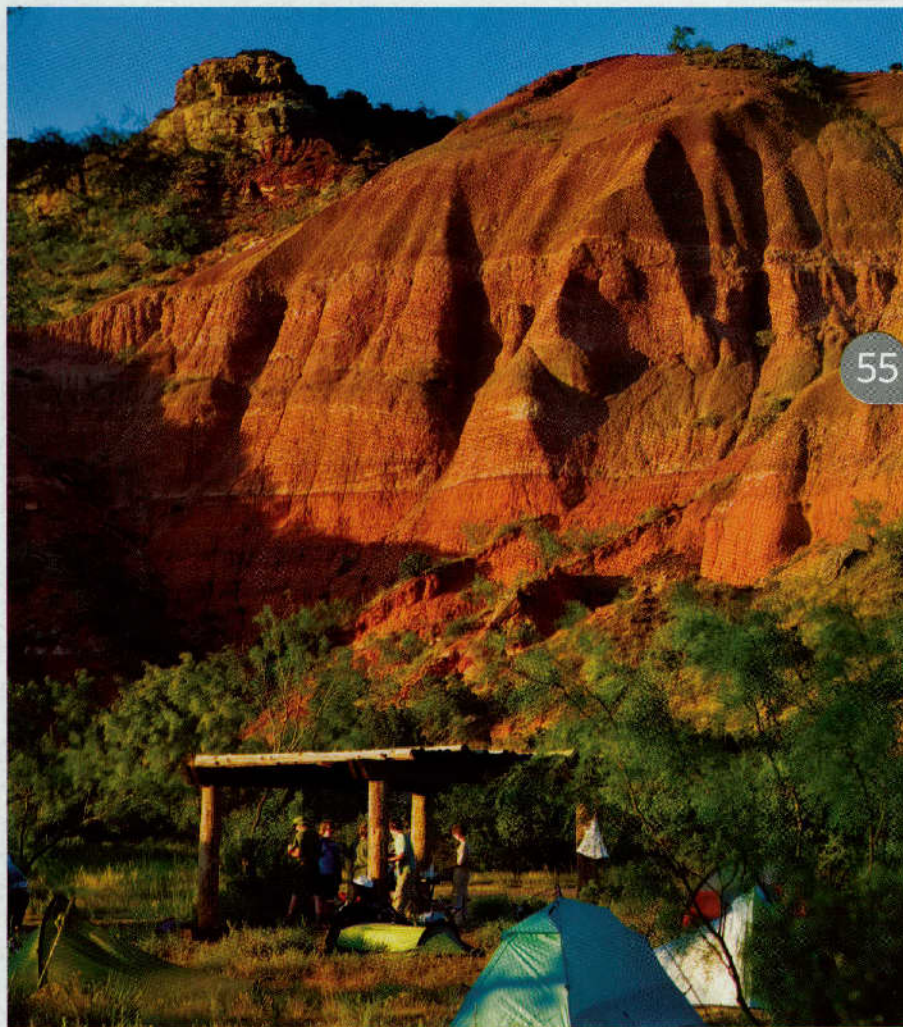
Text by **NOLA McKEY**
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48 | Fly Me to the Moon

Who knows when ordinary citizens will be able to fly in space? Until then, sample a taste of the distant horizon on a special tour of NASA's Johnson Space Center.

Text by **HEATHER BRAND**
Photographs by **KIRK WEDDLE**

Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information 



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About Our Covers

FRONT: Certified divermaster Carl Balzen of Liberty Hill bobs in the waters of Lake Travis, off Windy Point, just before his first dive of the day. **Photo © Kenny Braun**

BACK: It's sunrise in downtown Huntsville, and the breakfast rush at Cafe Texan is about to begin. **Photo © Skeeter Hagler**

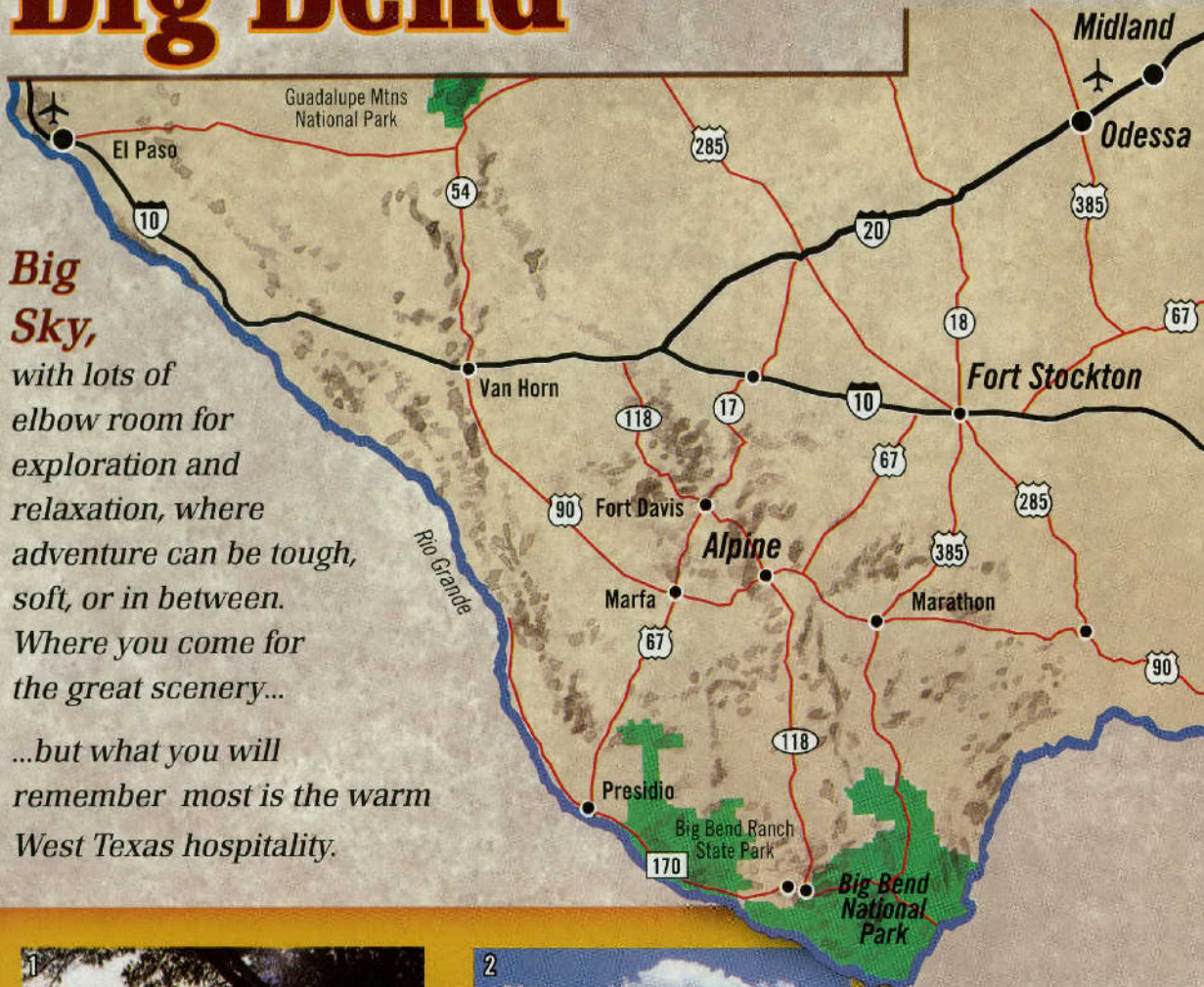
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Big Bend & Texas Mountain Country

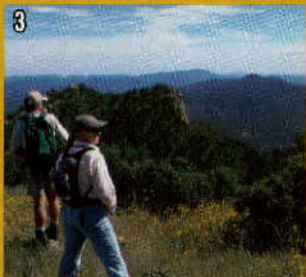
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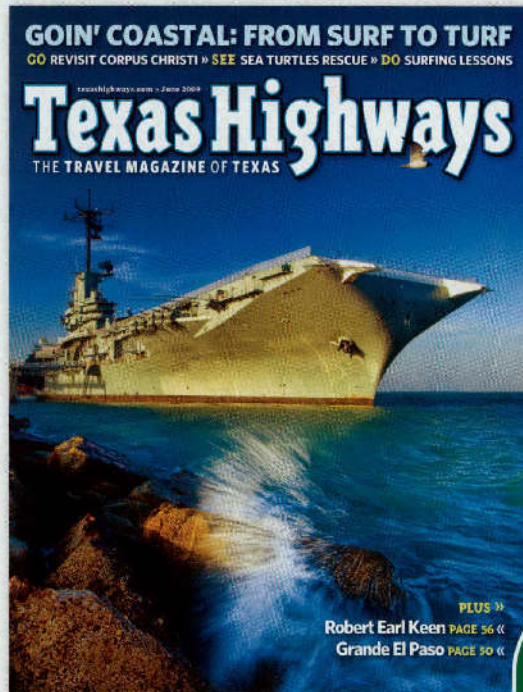


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I love this state
and would not
want to be from
anywhere else.
—MARY E. MARSHALL,
Magnolia



the University of Texas Marine Science Center in Port Aransas, has been devoted to sea turtles and other marine creatures for many years and has been recognized by organizations worldwide for their work. When Dr. Shaver and her staff rescue a turtle, they send it to the ARK for rehab. The ARK has provided the Texas State Aquarium and other aquariums and zoos with nonreleasable turtles.

JOHN RAY
Port Aransas

Viva El Paso!

Thanks for the feature on El Paso in the June issue. In the article, Marty Lange asks, “Why is El Paso one of my favorite Texas cities?” As a onetime resident of the wild, West Texas town, I suggest that Marty’s attraction may be related in part to the city’s unique architectural “feel.”

This border city evokes a strangely powerful sense of place. It is subtly communicated to us and reinforced through the interplay of the natural and built environments.



Name Game

Regarding June’s Up Front: Jerry Fore, the post-Michigander, obviously needs help. When I was growing up in Dallas, where everybody in my day used perfect spoken Texan, we were immune to the strange pronunciations of our brothers in such waysides as Ysleta, Nacogdoches, and, Mr. Fore’s favorite, Boerne.

My world was torn asunder when we moved to San Angelo eight years ago. We suddenly had to deal with Bronte, Christoval, Mertzon, and others that seemed harmless enough. That is, until you spoke them and the locals’ eyes glazed over. Seems it’s “Bront,” “Christ-TOW-vaul,” and “MERT-zun.”

My secret for Texas-town pronunciations, though, is found in the *Texas Almanac*’s “Texas Pronunciation Guide,” created in the late 1940s by George Mitchel Stokes, a graduate student at Baylor University (and later director of the speech division in the university’s Communications Studies department).

PAUL MANSFIELD
San Angelo

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Thanks to everyone for the fun feedback on Texas-place-name pronunciations (or should it be mis-pronunciations?). Turns out we’re mangling language from Montague (mahn-TAYG) to Refugio (re-FURY-oh) and beyond! Find more responses at www.texashighways.com/talk.*

Believe It or Not!

I have lived on the “other” Gulf Coast for 18 years, and when I read Melissa Gaskill’s “Ridleys Believe It or Not!” [June], I couldn’t put it down. Imagine my surprise when the 11 p.m. news announced that a Kemp’s ridley sea turtle was spotted laying her eggs on one of the keys of Sarasota, Florida. It was the first time one had been seen on this coast since 1999.

GERI LEAKE
Clearwater, Florida

I was really excited to see an article about sea turtle rescue on the Gulf Coast. I want to add that the Animal Rehabilitation Keep (ARK), located at

TH READER
RECOMMENDATION

Square Meal

JUST WANTED to let folks know about a great restaurant in **Abilene**: **Square’s Bar-B-Que**. Best brisket, pulled pork, ham, sausage, grilled chicken, homemade potato salad, and all the extras. There’s a great atmosphere and fine, friendly wait staff. Give it a try!

CHERYL DALEY
Abilene

Square’s Bar-B-Que Pit & Grill is at 210 N. Leggett Dr.; 325/672-6752; www.squaresbarbque.com.

For this effect, we must acknowledge the contributions of architect Henry C. Trost (1860-1933). From around the turn of the 20th Century to the early 1930s, Trost lived and worked in El Paso. He was instrumental in shaping El Paso's skyline and is responsible for many of the city's most distinctive buildings. H.C. Trost's body of work includes the very hotel from which the article's opening picture was taken, as well as buildings that appear in the same picture.

In his role as principal designer of the architectural firm Trost & Trost, Henry C. Trost created structures for a wide range of purposes, public and private. He was also at work in other cities across Texas and the desert southwest.

Unfortunately, too many of Trost's buildings have succumbed to the bulldozers—we are all much the poorer

for it. [But] the proof of his talent lives on in El Paso.

DENISE SIGNS
Denver, Colorado

Back at the Ranch

I was pleasantly surprised to see the article on Double J Hacienda ["Postcards," May]. About 40 years ago, Texas Electric Service Company had a conference there at the then-Seybold Guest Ranch. One of the entertainment [offerings] was target shooting with .22-caliber rifles. A rabbit made the mistake of hopping across the target range during the activity, and one of the managers, Roy, shot it. Mr. Seybold made the "proper" show of indignation and anger, proclaiming that the rabbit was the ranch pet. (How he knew the difference between that rabbit and the multitude of others [continued on page 64] ©

➔ **TH READER**
RECOMMENDATION

Remember the Alamo

WE HIGHLY recommend **Alamo Springs Cafe** outside of **Fredericksburg**. The burgers are to die for, especially with optional green chiles. Try the bacon-egg-and-cheese sandwich, crusty fries, and German chocolate cake for dessert. The staff is friendly and funny.

BARBARA WAGNER
Nacogdoches

Alamo Springs Cafe is at 107 Alamo Rd.; 830/990-8004; www.alamospringscafe.com.

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08
09

Postcards

INSIDE: A SUMMERTIME HANGOUT ON THE GUADALUPE RIVER...10 GET TO KNOW GRANBURY...13



Rao's Bakery now has four locations in southeast Texas; the original on Calder Avenue dates to 1941.

Go!

More tales from
Beaumont at [texas
highways.com/
postcards](http://texashighways.com/postcards)

I ♥ Beaumont

It's easy to gush about this friendly city in southeast Texas. Text by **LORI MOFFATT**

WHEN I READ THAT A 252-ACRE botanical garden in Orange, Texas—Shangri La Botanical Gardens & Nature Center—had recently been honored for its environmentally sound design, I started to plan a trip to southeast Texas to see it myself. I figured I'd stay in Beaumont, a city I remembered for its spicy barbecued crabs, surprising

museums, and the sparkly refineries on the outskirts, which glittered at night like sci-fi cityscapes.

As I planned my trip, I found more reasons to visit: I learned that the Big Thicket National Preserve had just received the largest land donation in its history—a 6,600-acre addition of hardwood forest and cypress-tupelo swamp that provides

new opportunities for both recreation and preservation. Then someone told me that Beaumont's Texas Energy Museum had recently added new exhibits, and also that the Art Museum of Southeast Texas was really coming into its own with an increased emphasis on contemporary regional artists. And if my gluttonous last trek to the area were any indication,

I *knew* the food would be excellent.

Beaumont claimed its spot on the world stage in January 1901, when the Lucas gusher at the nearby Spindletop salt dome came in, kicking off the Texas oil boom and ushering in the Petroleum Age. The population here grew from 9,000 to more than 30,000 in a month, with everyone from prospectors to promoters scrambling for a piece of the action. And while crude oil and petrochemicals still dominate the financial headlines in this part of southeast Texas, I'd argue that *another* inky substance brings the community together these days: coffee.

In the city's restored historic district, a spot called the Barking Dog Coffee Lounge

At Rao's Bakery, Beaumont businessmen shoot the bull with university professors and AT&T linemen.

brings in the evening crowd with cappuccinos and espresso, poetry readings and art openings, live music and free Wi-Fi access. Nearby, another coffee hotspot, the Early Bird Café, finds patrons sitting elbow-to-elbow at the counter as the sun rises, drinking bottomless cups and reading the paper as fleet-footed cooks maneuver bowls of raisin-studded oatmeal and plates of scrambled eggs and battered bacon.

But Rao's Bakery—which opened its first shop in 1941 on Calder Avenue, still Beaumont's main drag—may be where the town's stickiest issues are resolved. "People will get up an hour early to spend an hour at Rao's before work," says owner Jake Torrice Jr. Over cherry strudel and cinnamon rolls, ham-and-egg croissants and mugs of stout French roast, Beaumont businessmen and county workers sidle up to AT&T linemen and Lamar University professors, shooting the bull about everything from the ongoing construction on I-10 to the recent statewide fee increases

theMcNay

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A Summer of Pure
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Tom Slick
International Art Collector

June 10 | September 13

Works by Georgia O'Keeffe, Pablo Picasso, Barbara Hepworth and more. From the collection of Tom Slick, a legendary explorer, inventor, businessman and philanthropist.

This exhibition was organized by the McNay Art Museum.

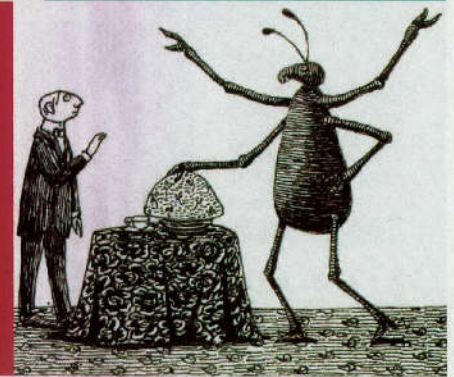
Elegant Enigmas
The Art of Edward Gorey

June 10 | September 13

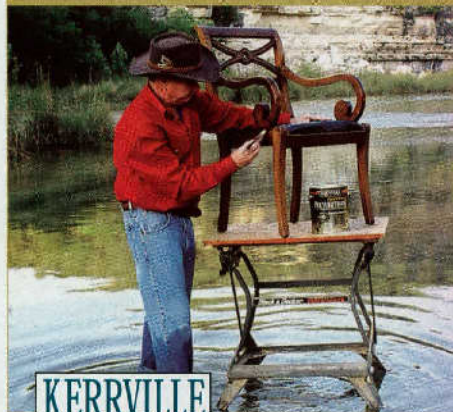
Carnivorous plants, falling masonry, and uninvited guests fill the unique, imaginary world of American author and illustrator Edward Gorey (1925–2000).

This exhibition was organized by the Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania.

Images: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Sun Water Moine*, 1922, Collection of the Slick Family, © Georgia O'Keeffe Museum; Edward Gorey, *Tom the Bohemian Boy*, "I declared: 'I am here to diffuse the interest of idiosyncrasy'." 2006. Courtesy of the Edward Gorey Charitable Trust.



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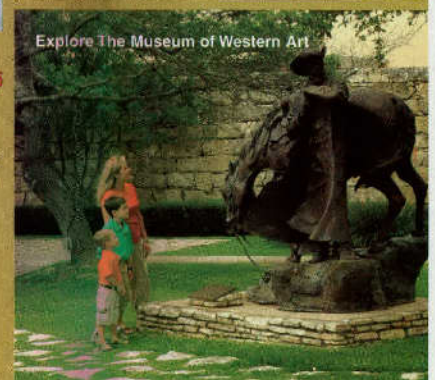
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The Art Museum of Southeast Texas focuses on works by regional artists.

The original Rao's occupies a stretch of Calder in the Old Town District, where most buildings date to the 1930s and '40s. This strip, like the rest of historic Beaumont, is seeing signs of urban renewal: Soon, bike trails will connect Old Town to a scenic trail along the Neches River and to downtown, and brick sidewalks will make it easy to stroll to the area's antiques shops, boutiques, and restaurants. Here on Calder, at a former tea room now called Easy's Tapas & Martinis, I spend my first Beaumont evening sipping wine (though the martinis look tempting) and sampling dishes like fried artichoke hearts, tenderloin medallions with tarragon, and feta-stuffed phyllo from the restaurant's *tapas* menu. When Beaumont's first tapas bar opened for business in 2003, this shared-food concept was new for most people here.

"When we were applying for our liquor license," says co-owner Wayne Ingwersen, "the TABC guy asked us, 'What are you serving?' And I said, 'Tapas and martinis.' And there was a long pause before he said, very seriously, 'Sir, is this a sexually oriented business?'"

"The shared-plate, relaxed style of eating—it took a while to catch on," says Ingwersen's wife, Karen. "But now our customers run the gamut. We see city officials, doctors, people in the art

crowd, students at Lamar University.”

Those same students are the lifeblood of a resale boutique across the street called IZ Funky Resale, a brightly painted space packed with theatrical displays of furniture and clothing both vintage and contemporary—mod Lucite lamps, boomerang-shaped coffee tables, vintage snakeskin belts, modern Betsey Johnson necklaces, Michael Kors heels. Day and night as I explore the city, I notice lots of women wearing high heels—pretty, spindly shoes that seem suited for the runway—and I ask manager Kayla Harper about that. She thinks awhile. “In some

In one month in 1901,
Beaumont's population
grew from 9,000
to more than 30,000.

ways,” she tells me, “Beaumont is a city of the classic south. And when a southern woman gets dressed up, she goes all out.”

I'm wearing sneakers the next day when I explore a secluded, cypress-shaded stretch of the Big Thicket by kayak, and later when I tour the magnificent Shangri La in nearby Orange. It's raining—a turbulent spring downpour that somehow imbues the refuge with both electricity and a sense of calm. At the heronry, I stand in a covered blind and watch transfixed as hundreds of egrets hunker down in twiggy nests, sheltering their chicks from the wind and rain.

It's still thundering when we return to Beaumont, so it's an easy decision to go museum-hopping. A dozen museums here illuminate topics ranging from the inventions of Thomas Edison to the athletic accomplishments of Beaumont native Babe Didrikson Zaharias, but I spend the afternoon meandering the galleries of the Art Museum of Southeast Texas and the adjacent Energy Museum of Texas. Exhibits at

Crockett Street Revival

Beaumont's former red-light district

WHEN OIL WAS DIS-

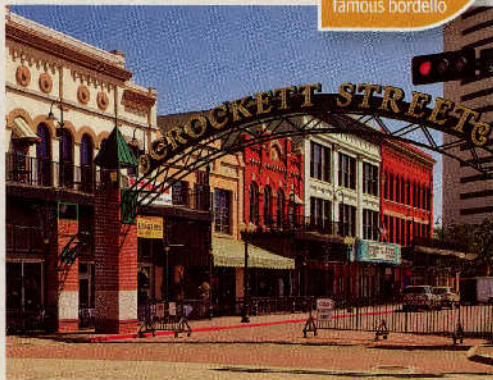
covered on the outskirts of Beaumont in 1901, fortune-seekers of all stripes flocked to town to do business with the exploding population. Today, some 45 structures—most built between 1901 and 1940—near downtown Beaumont contribute to the town's restored National

Register District. Here, you'll find attractions such as the Jefferson Theatre, the Barking Dog Coffee Lounge, Suga's Deep South Cuisine & Jazz Bar, and the Quality Café, a restaurant that dates to the 1920s.

Among the oldest buildings in the district is the former Dixie Hotel, home of madam Rita Ainsworth's notorious bordello, which was finally shuttered in 1961 by the James Commission. Reinvented as the Dixie Dance Hall, the building today anchors Beaumont's Crockett Street Entertainment District, where restaurants and bars draw an eclectic crowd.

“We're kind of progressive,” says Dixie manager Billy Lynch. “We'll play the ‘Cotton-Eyed Joe’ and then go straight into ‘Pour Some Sugar on Me’ by Def Leppard or something by Lady Gaga.”

The former red-light district still kindles Beaumont's nightlife. —Lori Moffatt



See!
The Dixie Dance Hall,
once home of a
famous bordello

The Crockett Street district offers restaurants, nightclubs, and a dance hall.

the art museum reveal an almost palpable sense of place, from the serpentine, towering wooden sculptures of Vidor artist Charlie Stagg in the foyer, to the installation dedicated to the late Beaumont folk artist Felix “Fox” Harris, whose totem-like sculptures of found objects mystified and intrigued Beaumonters in the 1970s and '80s.

Next door at the Texas Energy Museum, I learn a little about how a refinery works, get a sense of what it's like to drive a tanker up the Neches River, and marvel at the many ways oil has changed the world. Before long, I'm considering my lipstick, my cell phone, the soles of my shoes, my contact lenses—all made possible by an

industry that has taken its share of lumps in the court of public opinion. “At any museum,” says Executive Director Ryan Smith, “what you want is for people to converse with each other, to talk about the painting or the historical artifact, to see how it relates to their lives.”

There's a lot to talk about in this intriguing southeast Texas city. **TH**

Beaumont

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Go!
For more on Dave's Place: texashighways.com/thtaste

No Place Like Dave's Place

A getaway on the Guadalupe boasts food, drink, and sunset views

Text by **ROB McCORKLE**

IT'S A TYPICAL SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT A MOST ATYPICAL TEXAS Hill Country haunt—Dave's Place in Center Point. An eclectic clientele of bikers, couples, tourists, and families has gathered to watch sports on TV, chow down on burgers and barbecue, sip cold beer, and wander through this funky hangout overlooking the Guadalupe River. Out front, rabbits scamper through the grass and a lone peacock struts about, preening its rainbow plumage before fluttering onto the metal roof.

Proprietor David John eyes the unfolding scene from a high-backed bar stool in the corner, exhorting new arrivals to “come on in, get a beer, and look around.” With thinning white hair and full beard framing a weathered, tanned visage, David looks like a wayward seafarer on shore leave.

The scent of oak-and-mesquite-smoked ribs, chicken, and brisket wafts in from the blackened smoker in the nearby courtyard. Back in the kitchen, David's wife, Shelley, flips burgers and keeps the fryer busy with onion rings, sweet-potato fries, catfish, frog legs and shrimp, and an array of veggies.

A small sign in front of Dave's Place advertises not only

A deck at Dave's Place in Center Point provides a pleasant promontory next to the Guadalupe.

David's Backdoor Pottery shop and Shelley's catering business, but also "beer and ice, food, live bait, tube rentals, a bird aviary, a botanical garden, and wheel-thrown pottery and casting classes." But that only skims the surface of what you'll find here. What started as a modest, wood-frame studio and greenhouse has morphed into a rambling retreat.

Today's visitor can wander from the front patio and restaurant area into the enclosed botanical gardens, peruse a row of outdoor cages populated by more than 100 different kinds of birds, including colorful macaws, chickens, and pigeons,

After floating the Guadalupe or cruising the Hill Country, stop at Dave's in Center Point.

and continue out back to the jukebox/pool-table room, shaded hillside decks, and stairs leading to the riverbank.

When Shelley began cooking at Dave's Place, she expanded the menu and added daily specials like grilled rib eye, shrimp, English-style fish and chips, and pizzas featuring fresh ingredients.

What butters my bun at Dave's is the chance to build my own burger. Choosing from a sideboard of fixin's—ripe tomatoes, crisp lettuce, thinly-sliced sweet onions, and assorted condiments—I build my personal, all-star burger atop a lightly seasoned, griddle-cooked patty. The fries prove crisp and non-greasy, just as I like 'em.

On Sundays—barbecue time at Dave's—I opt for a plate of succulent brisket and fall-off-the-bone baby back ribs served with well-prepared, not-overly-doctored potato salad and pinto beans.

Another visit finds me pigging out on a bison burger accompanied by sweet-potato fries. While the burger proves satisfy-

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Taste



ing, it's the semi-sweet, pumpkin-colored fries that carry the day.

Oak-and-mesquite-smoked barbecued ribs —a Sunday specialty at Dave's Place.

"My intent was to have a little place where I could throw my pottery and sell a few beers because you can't be artistic without people," David confides. "If you don't interact with people, you lose focus."

In the past year, John has expanded his offerings to include a hot tub room with a deck overlooking the river, and bed & breakfast accommodations for those who wish to extend their stay. Occasionally on a Saturday night, Dave's Place features live music. Stairs lead to the riverbank below, and a multilevel deck offers a fine sunset view.

Dave's Place rents tubes for \$8 a day, but it's free to go swimming or fishing on the property, tour the botanical hot-house and grounds, or watch the sun set over the Guadalupe.

As the evening winds down, a group from Boerne who had spent the afternoon floating the Guadalupe, strolls through, all smiles.

"We drank some cold beer, floated for four hours, and ended up here for dinner," says one of the group, with a wide grin. "What better day can you have than that?" **TH**

Dave's Place

is between Comfort and Kerrville at 170 Center Point River Road, just a few blocks off Texas 27, in Center Point. Closed Mon. Call 830/634-3166 or 830/634-DAVE.



FUN FINDS ALONG THE ROAD



See!

Programs at the
Langdon Center
www.tarleton.edu/~langdoncenter

Historic Moment

A weekend in Granbury combines sumptuous lodging and Victorian architecture

Text by **CHARLES LOHRMANN**

PHOTO: CHARLES LOHRMANN

GRANBURY'S LOCATION, LESS THAN AN HOUR'S DRIVE SOUTHWEST OF Fort Worth on US 377, makes the town an easy weekend destination for Metroplex denizens. And because Granbury lies within another half hour's drive of Glen Rose, Hico, and scenic driving tours, the town draws travelers from farther afield for a longer visit.

I'm typically more interested in Granbury's historic district than the outdoors activities offered by Lake Granbury, so a late-spring invitation to speak at a writers' conference had me anticipating a drive through Clifton, Meridian, and Walnut Springs.

The conference, called Writing Down the Brazos, is sponsored by the Dora Lee Langdon Cultural and Educational Center, an outreach facility of Tarleton State University. The two-story, columned, Victorian house that now serves as The Langdon Center's office had long attracted my attention because of its unexpectedly abbreviated dimensions. The house seems too tall for its depth, and I assumed it was constructed according to an unusual Greek Revival design.

When I asked Langdon Center Director Janice Horak about the house, she explained that descendants of the original owners implemented a radical form of downsizing by literally reducing the footprint of their rambling house. They sliced off the back half and rebuilt the front section, creating a visually memorable result. The building, named The Gordon House for its original owner, now anchors a five-building, city-block compound near Granbury's courthouse square.

Before arriving at the welcoming reception in the Gordon House on Friday afternoon, I have a few minutes to check in to the Iron Horse Inn B&B, where I'll spend two nights. Owner and

One of the largest historic homes in Granbury, the Iron Horse Inn B&B offers accommodations that are both luxurious and relaxing.

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Weekender

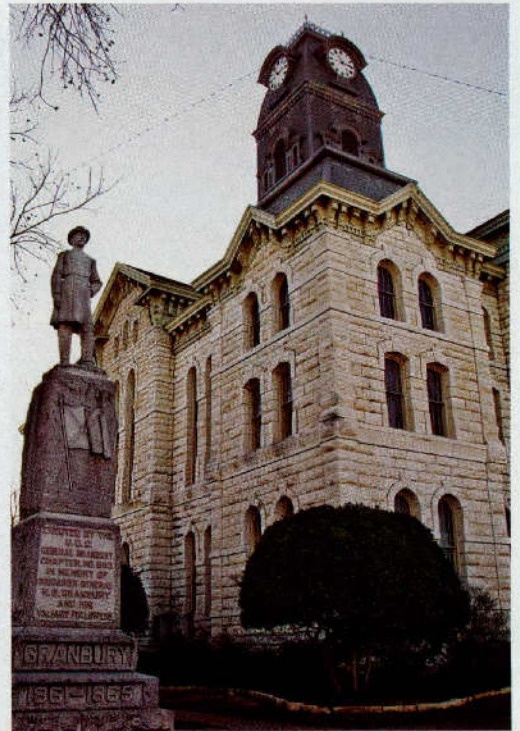
host Therese Martin, who operates the B&B with her husband, Paul, guided me on a quick tour of the two-story building, one of the larger historic homes in Granbury. Each of the spacious rooms, sumptuously appointed, connects to a private bath. I settle into the two-room Cogdell Suite, named for the house's original owner, Granbury banker and businessman Daniel Cogdell.

By the time the conference's networking reception winds down that evening, a surprisingly blustery cold front has chilled the air. I notice that, in the brisk wind, a scattering of early daffodils around town seem to shiver as if they've forgotten their jackets. I join a group of my conference friends and walk the two blocks to Stringfellow's restaurant on one corner of the square. A traditional menu here includes steak *au poivre*, a personal favorite. Our crowd quickly warms the room with lively conversation. In a few minutes, Stringfellow's owner Dianne Rawls Davis joins us to share observations about local lore that suggests John Wilkes Booth survived attempts

Local lore suggests John Wilkes Booth took up residence in Granbury as a bartender, living under the name John St. Helen.

on his life after the Lincoln assassination and took up residence in Granbury as a bartender, living under the name John St. Helen.

The conference starts early on Saturday, but Therese Martin breaks the Iron Horse Inn house rule of 9 a.m. breakfast to construct an omelette. After breakfast, I start a meandering drive through the center of Granbury, detouring to take a look at the new convention center with its nearby



The monument to Confederate General H.B. Granbury stands guard at the Hood County Courthouse.

beach, designed to entice warm-weather visitors to take a dip. A few Canada geese have drifted into town with the cold front, and they're well-suited to the frosty temperatures. I can't help noting the irony of a literary conference near Lake Granbury because the lake is the result of the very dam that John Graves lamented when he made his 1957 canoe trip on the Brazos. That trip culminated in the Texas literary classic *Goodbye to a River*.

After the morning's session, we break for lunch at the Inn on Lake Granbury, an eight-room bed and breakfast sited on well-tended grounds that feature a flagstone-lined pool. A capacious meeting space accommodates our group, and while the lunch arrangements are completed, there's time for a stroll around the grounds. From the property's edge, I enjoy a sunny view across the lake to Comanche Peak, the prominent geographic and historical landmark. After the salad, sandwiches, and dessert, Inn on Lake Granbury owners Cathy Casey and Jim Leitch offer a tour of the

property along with a glimpse at a couple of the luxurious rooms. The owner explains that the Langdon Center also sponsors cooking classes each month in the same meeting room where our group dines.

Later that afternoon, we have more free time and, willing to challenge the gusty wind, I visit the Hood County Courthouse. The Historic Nutt House Hotel anchors one corner of the square and invites folks in. I browse through a bookstore and an antiques shop, and am tempted to stop in to D'vine Wine and take advantage of the proprietors' offer of a tasting, but I have one more session left at the conference and the timing is not propitious. A sign on The Downtown Store assures me "there's something for everyone," but I'll have to take a rain check on fulfilling that promise.

After the conference, I have a few minutes to relax on the porch of the Iron Horse Inn, where Paul Martin offers a glass of wine and I quiz him about his career in the U.S. State Department. As he describes posts in Italy, Russia, and Africa, I wonder if the quiet life of a B&B owner will hold his interest. He assures me he's had enough of armored cars, fenced compounds, and security guards, and that he prefers the peaceful side streets of Granbury.

Sunday morning: Time for a visit to the square. The main highways around town are heavily trafficked, but the old town is quiet. A hand-lettered chalkboard outside The Nutshell Bakery announces blueberry pancakes, but I decide to wait for breakfast at the Iron Horse. At the breakfast table, I chat with Elise and Paul Porras of Arlington, who are celebrating their anniversary. They're on their way to Dublin, 40 miles away, to stock up on the original-recipe Dr Pepper. That's something I could do on the way home. **TH**

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CHAIN *of* JEWELS

OUR SIX HIGHLAND LAKES SPARKLE
IN THE HILL COUNTRY SUN.

Text by **MELISSA GASKILL**

Photographs by **KENNY BRAUN**

THE LEGENDARY HIGHLAND LAKES—Buchanan, Inks, LBJ, Marble Falls, Travis, and Austin—wind like a meandering blue ribbon through the green canvas of the Central Texas hills. These waters also wind tranquilly through my memories. For four decades beginning in the 1950s, my aunt and uncle ran a motel on Lake Buchanan, where I spent many childhood holidays and summers fishing and swimming. In high school, I learned to scuba dive in Lake Travis, and later camped with college friends at Inks Lake State Park and at Black Rock Park on Buchanan. When I moved to Austin, I swam and picnicked at City Park on Lake Austin. And shortly after marrying, my husband and I purchased a Hobie Cat and spent countless weekends sailing from Windy Point on Lake Travis. When kids arrived, we traded the catamaran for a more stable fishing boat, which proved adequate for teaching them to water ski.

These six lakes were created by the Lower Colorado River Authority between the 1930s and 1950s to supply water and electricity and minimize the effects of flooding on the Colorado River—projects made possible thanks to supporters like Lyndon Johnson. Obviously also a recreational draw, each boasts a distinctive personality and variety of activities. On these pages, we only hit the lakes' highpoints, but you won't want to stop there.

Come on in, the water's fine! A secluded cove at Inks Lake State Park shelters Devil's Waterhole, a heavenly Highland Lakes highlight. The park lies on the lake's east shore.



› Don't miss THE HILL COUNTRY VISTAS
FROM RATTLESNAKE POINT AT LAKE BUCHANAN



LAKE BUCHANAN

The river first spreads behind Buchanan Dam, built in 1938. As a child visiting Lake Buchanan from the big city, I spent nights marveling at the splash of Milky Way across the black sky, a sight many gather to enjoy during stargazing events (Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, weather permitting) at Canyon of the Eagles Lodge & Nature Park (at the end of FM 2341). Established by the Lower Colorado River Authority, the privately managed lodge sits on 940 acres on the northeast shore. In addition to the 62-room lodge, it includes campgrounds, a pool, a beach, fishing piers, and the Canyon Room restaurant, which serves gourmet cuisine seasoned with breathtaking views. Don't miss the Hill Country vistas at sunset from Rattlesnake Point, a promontory near the restaurant. Miles of hiking trails traverse wooded lakeshore and rugged hills, and people also come for excellent birding (including bald-eagle sightings from November to March) and wildlife watching. The 120-passenger Vanishing Texas River Cruise vessel offers a variety of outings (lake levels permitting), including one that crosses the lake for a tour and tasting at Fall Creek Vineyards, founded by Ed and Susan Auler in 1975 and winner of too many awards to list. You can also arrive by car on County Road 222 (near Tow) for winery tours and picnics on the patio.

From panoramic promontories to quiet, wooded cabins, Canyon of the Eagles Lodge & Nature Park, on the north shore of Lake Buchanan, offers awe- and ahh-inspiring moments.

Family-owned lodges dot the shores of Lake Buchanan, from Thunderbird Lakefront Resort on the east side to Cedar Lodge Resort—actual log cabins—on the west. Camping and limited-use cabins (beds, electricity, AC, but no

CHAIN *of* JEWELS

bathroom or kitchen) are available at LCRA's Black Rock Park. When water levels are up, this park offers a nice swim beach and a spot to launch your boat, too. Cast for striped bass and catfish on your own, as my grandfather and I did, or with a guide. Many guides serve both Buchanan and Inks lakes.

INKS LAKE

Inks Lake State Park occupies the better part of the east shore of this slim lake (created in 1938) with activities that include fishing, hiking, swimming, and boating. Campsites fill up quickly, as do the park's limited-use cabins, many of which sit just a short hop from the water. My vote for best swimming spot: Devil's Waterhole, an inlet at the far end of the park surrounded by a jumble of granite boulders. Travel there by kayak—available for rent at The Park Store, and scan the shoreline for turtles, herons, and jumping fish on your way. A kayak also provides a great vantage point to watch daredevils leap several stories from a cliff into the water. While I did this way back when—answering in the affirmative that age-old question: If your friends jumped off a cliff, would you?—do so at your own risk. Or paddle to the far end of the waterhole and splash around in the picturesque waterfalls. While the campground and shoreline attract summer crowds, the park's miles of scenic trails seldom do. Pick up a trail map from park headquarters and explore routes that traverse pecan flats, granite ridges, lakeshore, and brush-covered hills with panoramic views.

LAKE LBJ

The Colorado and Llano Rivers and Sandy Creek flow into Lake LBJ, completed in 1951. Private homes line most of LBJ's shoreline, though, so it's best enjoyed by boat. If you don't own a boat, rent one. Guests at Horseshoe Bay Resort can choose from WaveRunners or pontoon or ski boats, and also arrange guided fishing tours.

Anyone 21 and older can rent personal watercraft and ski or



Jack, a member of the Watson family, enjoys cruising Lake LBJ.



› Dine on burgers, SEAFOOD,
OR OTHER ENTRÉES AT RIVER CITY
GRILLE, ON LAKE MARBLE FALLS.



NOTABLE RESTAURANTS

- > Canyon Room at Canyon of the Eagles, Lake Buchanan. *View.*
- > Travis Restaurant at Lakeway Resort, Lake Travis. *Gourmet cuisine.*
- > The Oasis, Lake Travis. *View.*
- > Ski Shores Waterfront Cafe, Lake Austin. *Live music, boat access.*

Regulars arrive at River City Grille by land and lake for the varied menu, views, and live music three days a week.



> Lake LBJ's SMOOTH WATER MAKES FOR GREAT WATER SKIING AND WAKEBOARDING.



For more on Highland Lakes resorts, see texashighways.com/webextra.

Who says you have to get gritty? Indulge in Highland Lakes luxury at one of three resorts, including Lake Austin Spa Resort (left).

pontoon boats at LBJ Yacht Club and Marina at Granite Beach, right next to Wirtz Dam. But you don't need a boat to enjoy the swim beach, water park, or well-appointed waterfront cabins. The club's Granite Beach Grill, open weekends, overlooks the water park and serves hamburgers, wraps, and more, indoors or out.

LBJ himself had a lake house on the Sandy Creek arm, where today, the Lake LBJ Resort and Marina rents boats and serves lunch and dinner—the latter by reservation only. An Austrian-inspired menu includes filet mignon, lobster, and a variety of domestic and international wines. Skip the drive home by booking one of the suites, which sleep from two to 12. This area's smooth water makes for great water skiing, as does the Colorado arm up from Kingsland, where dozens of small resorts line the shores.

LAKE MARBLE FALLS

Also completed in 1951, this small lake is accessible through two public parks operated by the City of Marble Falls. Pecan trees shade the picnic tables and barbecue pits at Johnson Park, which also has a boat ramp, a beach-volleyball court, restrooms, and a leash-free area for dogs. Lakeside Park, on the north shore just a few blocks off US 281, offers a swimming pool and tennis and basketball courts in addition to picnic tables, a boat ramp, and restrooms.

If you'd rather not grill your own lunch, dine on a burger, sandwich, seafood, or one of a variety of entrées at River City Grille restaurant, on the north shore of the lake right next to the US 281 bridge. Pull up a chair on one of the outdoor decks and enjoy live music on Saturdays from Texas artists such as Shelley King and The Band of Heathens (there's also live

music indoors a couple of other nights during the week). Save room for the homemade desserts, including the spicy and delectably gooey carrot cake.

LAKE TRAVIS

A number of public parks scattered along 286 miles of shoreline provide easy access to the waters of Lake Travis. These include Grelle Recreation Area, with a swim beach, campsites, and a two-mile hiking trail climbing a plateau with lake views, and Muleshoe Bend Recreation Area, where mountain bikers love the 6.5-mile, rugged trail. Others include Arkansas Bend Park, with primitive camping, hiking, picnic tables, and a boat ramp convenient to Lago Vista, and Pace Bend Park's rocky cliffs and gentle shoreline, campgrounds, and trails for hiking and horseback riding. Ramps at these and many other parks contribute to Travis' popularity for sail, ski, and party boats.

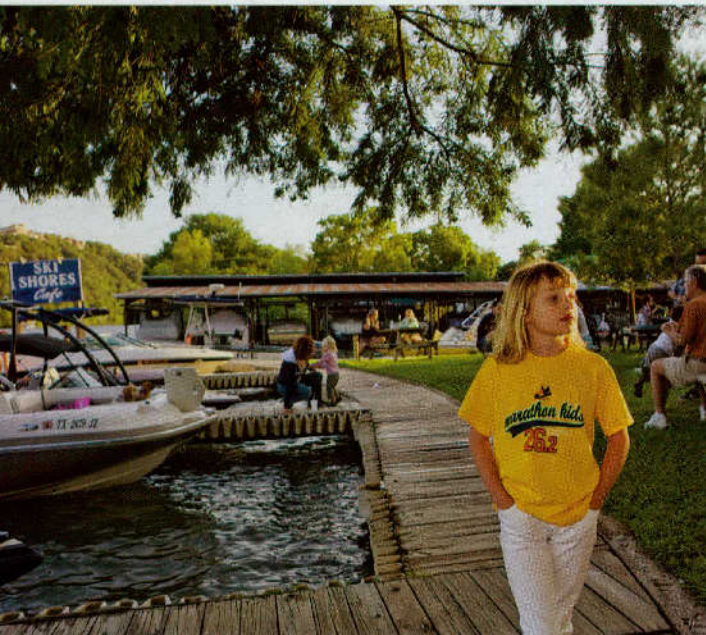
Windy Point Park caters to scuba divers with on-site air fills and gear carts. Below the surface, you can swim through a tunnel, sit on a motorcycle, and search for other unusual items sunken for your diving pleasure. Divers and non-divers alike can camp or picnic here, too. Bob Wentz Park, a Travis County facility next door, attracts windsurfers, sailors, and swimmers.

Some eight miles north, on FM 2769, experience Volente Beach Waterpark's whiplash-inducing Sidewinder and giant Twister waterslides, or more serene chills in its Lazy Lagoon, a waterfall-cooled pool, or on the sandy beach.

BEST SWIM SPOTS

- > Black Rock Park Beach, Lake Buchanan
- > Devil's Waterhole, Inks Lake
- > Yacht Club Beach at Horseshoe Bay Resort, Lake LBJ
- > Bob Wentz Park at Windy Point, Lake Travis
- > Emma Long Metropolitan Park Swim Beach, Lake Austin

Wakeboarder Wes Keller gets air on Lake LBJ. Check out area wakeboarding clubs and events online.



Harness up for a parasail ride over the lake, or order a tall, cold drink and listen to an eclectic selection of live music (Fridays and Saturdays) at The Blu Parrot restaurant.

Sunset at The Oasis restaurant, off Comanche Trail on Lake Travis' east side, deserves its far-reaching reputation. A series of open decks facing west over Lake Travis make

Juliet Braun stroll the expansive dock at Ski Shores Waterfront Cafe, a Lake Austin favorite since 1954.

the circadian phenomenon hard to miss, and frozen concoctions and piled-high nacho plates help you bide the time until that big yellow orb paints the sky with a flaming palette. Patrons have been known to cheer a particularly impressive display. Don't forget your camera.

LAKE AUSTIN

Just minutes from the bustle of Austin sits Emma Long Metropolitan Park (also known as City Park), an 1,100-acre lakeside oasis. Camp out—the restrooms have hot showers—or just spend a day enjoying the picnic area, sand volleyball courts, fishing pier, swim beach, motorcycle and mountain bike areas, and the almost three-mile-long Turkey Creek hiking trail. The Civilian Conservation Corps established this park on a hilly swath of oak, ash, and juniper woodlands back in 1939.

Arrive at nearby Ski Shores Waterfront Cafe by car or boat to enjoy a variety of burgers, catfish, pizza, and live music by local musicians. On a covered deck overlooking the glassy surface of Lake Austin, sip a cold beer while an evening breeze caresses your face. It's a good spot to contemplate your exploration of the Texas treasure that is the Highland Lakes, and decide: Which one will you return to tomorrow? **TH**

Austin-based writer MELISSA GASKILL is enjoying another summer on the Highland Lakes. Her son and youngest daughter now dive in Lake Travis. Austin-based photographer KENNY BRAUN especially enjoyed the "incredible views and calm, peaceful feeling" while parasailing above Lake Travis.

TH ESSENTIALS

Highland Lakes

WATER LEVELS in the individual **Highland Lakes** vary according to rainfall and demand for water. Low levels may curtail some activities—check with your destination or the **Lower Colorado River Authority** (800/776-5272; www.lcra.org) for current levels. For details on **LCRA parks**, go to www.lcra.org/parks. For Highland Lakes information by lake, go to www.highlandlakes.com and www.highlandlakes.net. Check with local chambers of commerce and CVBs for more details. Following is information for sites mentioned in the story.

Lake Buchanan

Canyon of the Eagles Lodge & Nature Park, at the end of FM 2341, 512/334-2070; www.canyonoftheeagles.com.

Vanishing Texas River Cruise (at Canyon of the Eagles), 512/756-6986 or 800/474-8374; www.vtrc.com.

Fall Creek Vineyards, 1820 CR 222, Tow, 325/379-5361; www.fcv.com.

Inks Lake

Inks Lake State Park, 3630 Park Rd. 4 West,



512/793-2223, reservations 512/389-8900; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Lake LBJ

Horseshoe Bay Resort, 6 miles southwest of Marble Falls, 877/611-0112; www.hsbresort.com.

LBJ Yacht Club and Marina, 200 S. Wirtz Dam Rd., Horseshoe Bay, 830/693-9172; www.lakelbjmarina.com.

Lake LBJ Resort and Marina, 667 Sandy Mountain Dr., Sunrise Beach, 325/388-9393; www.lakelbjfun.com.

Lake Marble Falls

Lake Marble Falls parks, http://ci.marble-falls.tx.us/city_parks.html.

River City Grille, 700 1st St., Marble Falls, 830/798-9909; www.rivercitygrilletx.com.

Lake Travis

Travis County parks, www.co.travis.tx.us/tnr/parks.

Windy Point Park, 6506 Bob Wentz Park Rd., Austin, 512/266-3337; windypointpark.com.

Bob Wentz Park, end of Bob Wentz Park Rd. off Comanche Trail, 512/854-7275; www.co.travis.tx.us/tnr/parks/bob_wentz.asp.

Volente Beach Waterpark, 16107 FM 2769, Leander, 512/258-5109; www.volentebeach.com.

The Oasis, 6550 Comanche Trail, Austin, 512/266-2442; www.oasis-austin.com.

Lake Austin

Emma Long Metropolitan Park, 1706 City Park Rd., Austin, 512/346-1831; www.ci.austin.tx.us/parks/emmalong.htm.

Ski Shores Waterfront Cafe, 2905 Pearce Rd., Austin, 512/346-5915; www.skishores.com.



➤ **Harness up** FOR A PARASAIL RIDE AND
A SPECTACULAR VIEW OF LAKE TRAVIS.





way

which is SOUTHtown?

Just beyond San Antonio's celebrated attractions waits a vibrant community, where artists and visitors mingle amiably

Text by **SHERMAKAYE BASS**
Photographs by **SARAH KERVER**

San Antonio entices travelers from around the world with splashy attractions like the River Walk and SeaWorld, as well as such popular sites as the Alamo and the historic mission trail. But what many visitors—even native Texans—don't realize is that San Antonio shelters a thriving bohemian district just beyond downtown. Three overlapping neighborhoods (King William, Lavaca, and Blue Star), known collectively as Southtown, harbor a welcoming vibe that dovetails centuries of history with modern art-house culture.



FACING PAGE: Shopping the eclectic treasures at the Jewelry Box on South Alamo. **TOP:** Mata Ortiz pottery becomes sculptural at Inter-Artisan Gallery. **ABOVE:** Savory fish tacos delight diners at La Tuna Grill.

which way is SOUTHtown?

Bounded loosely by South Flores and South Presa on the west and east, Durango and Lone Star to the north and south, Southtown is rich with galleries, coffeehouses, hipster dive bars, artists' compounds, vintage clothing stores, crafts ateliers, family-run taco joints, and chic new bistros (Oloroso, a hottie of the moment). All draw loyal customers, as do longtime favorites Rosario's, El Mirador, and the state-ly Guenther House. The result: a vibrant "arts underground" that invites exploration.

Southtown is sophisticated, welcoming, and sprawling: A day-long walking tour isn't enough to see it all. So, unless you have the legs of Lance Armstrong, it's wise to employ a combination of transport modes: perhaps a pedicab for King William, the 150-year-old National Historic District founded by German émigrés; your own vehicle for St. Mary's and South Alamo; and a tram or taxi from downtown to enjoy South Flores.

If you start a Southtown ramble from La Villita, as I did recently, it's a pleasant three-block stroll across Durango/Garcia Boulevard to the border of the King William Historic District. En route, stop by the tiny, über-hip Vintage House—a storefront shop spun off the owner's original in Monterrey, Mexico—lined with affordable vintage garments. Once in the historic district, pick up a walking-tour map from the San Antonio Conservation Society headquarters at 107 King William Street. Southtown encompasses King William, a diverse residential collection of Victorian architecture, and the South Alamo Street/South St. Mary's Street Historic District, dotted with more modest, late-19th- and early-20th-Century houses. The development of this area parallels San Antonio's 19th-Century growth, and these days, many structures are beautifully restored and carefully maintained, with styles ranging from Italianate, Neoclassical, and red-tiled-roof Spanish Revival to classic Victorian and Central Texas limestone. Some houses, such as the Ogé House, built

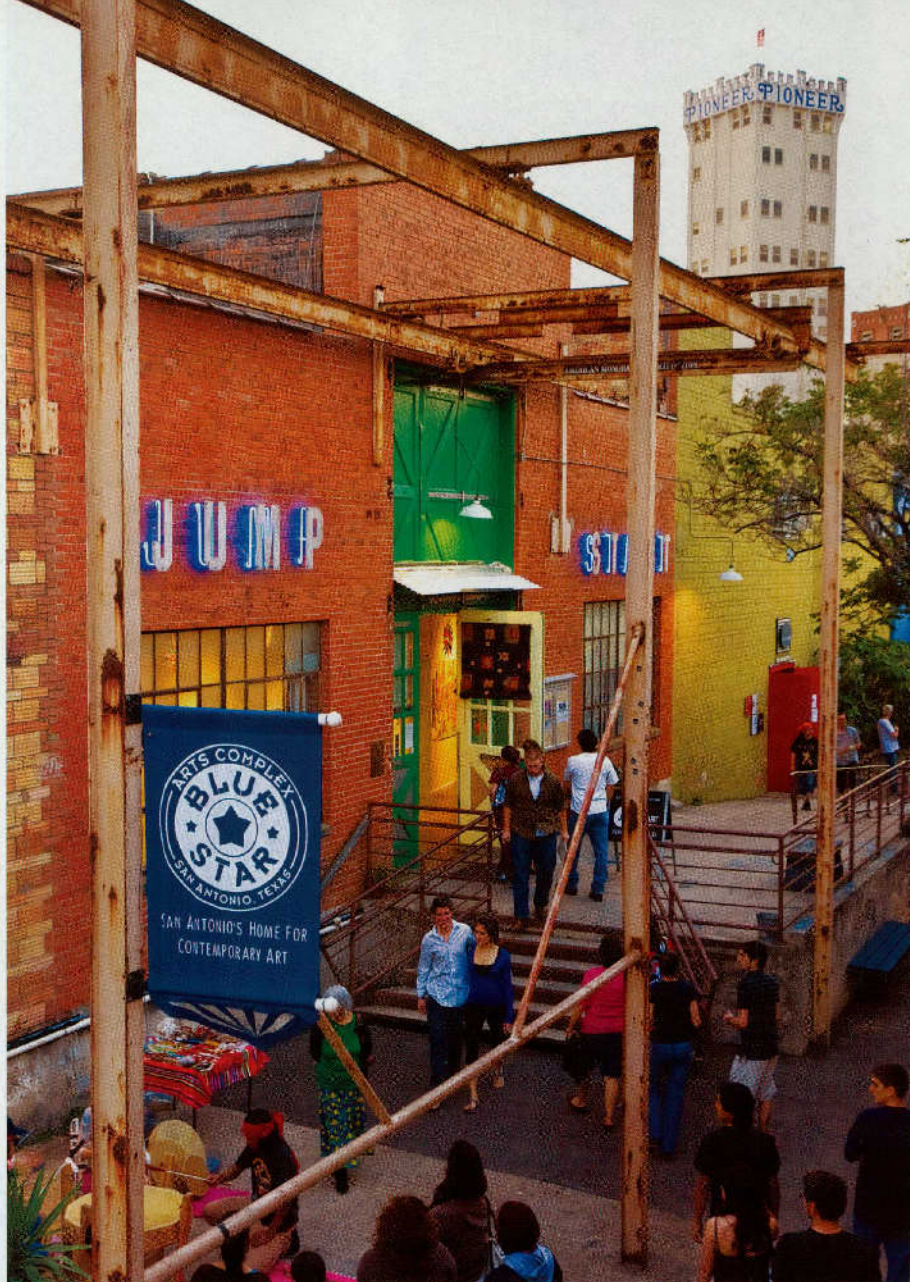
in 1857 by Texas Ranger/cattle rancher Louis Ogé, double as bed and breakfasts.

If you're not up for walking the whole way (as I ultimately was not), hail one of the human-powered pedicabs that circulate in this area.

After we toured King William, I chose to have my rickshaw deposit my husband and me at The Guenther House restaurant/museum. Completed in 1860, this is the original site of German transplant Carl Hilmar Guenther's still-prospering Pioneer Flour Mills. We stayed for brunch, and I particularly enjoyed the homemade preserves that accompanied my husband's breakfast platter, which included the signature, flaky Pioneer biscuits. And, following a sample of the biscuits, I thoroughly enjoyed my own champagne chicken enchiladas.

We departed from The Guenther House happily satisfied, and ready to walk. First, we forged a diagonal path across South Alamo to the Blue Star Arts Complex. In addition to the namesake gallery, Blue Star Contemporary Art Center (local,

San Antonio's landmark Pioneer Flour Mills tower looms over the Blue Star Art Complex, which becomes a human beehive the first Friday of each month.





ABOVE: Tea for two. Maggie Segura and her mom, JoAnn Saldana, at MadHatters Tea House. RIGHT: It's hard to beat the stately Guenther House when it's time for brunch.

national, and international exhibits—always thought-provoking), the renovated warehouses house artist studios, a micro-brewery, galleries, lofts, a bike shop, print shops, sundry arty retailers and non-profits, along with Jump-Start Performance Co., a groundbreaking theater company that has produced more than 500 performances for 300,000 visitors since it was founded in 1985.

If you prefer more conceptual, two- and three-dimensional visual art, visit Joan Grona Gallery, which presents local, national, and international contemporary work, as well as Three Walls, an art space that encourages artists to explore more daring expressions. For an equally pleasing, but very different experience, stop in and see San Angel Folk Art Gallery, which is packed with craft arts from around the world, including textiles, vintage ceramics, jewelry, and striking outsider art, some of which is crafted from found objects.

As Hank Lee, owner of the San Angel, says, “The whole Southtown area is the quintessential old, small-town San Antonio. Out-of-towners who stay on the River Walk can get a whole other sense of San Antonio down here. The trolley is only 50 cents, and there’s a stop right at Blue Star.” Lee adds that the area’s bohemian feel is amplified “by locally owned establishments, like Jive Vintage, MadHatters, and La Tuna. You won’t find chain stores or franchise operations down here.”

San Angel itself is celebrating its 20-year anniversary at the Blue Star honeycomb, which began as a grassroots movement by local artists and now lures more than 300,000 visitors each year.

“This is an old warehouse space that was basically renovated starting in 1986,” Lee says. “It has galleries like the University of Texas at San Antonio Satellite Space and Stone Metal Press, which work with all these local groups. Then there are studios that are also residences.”

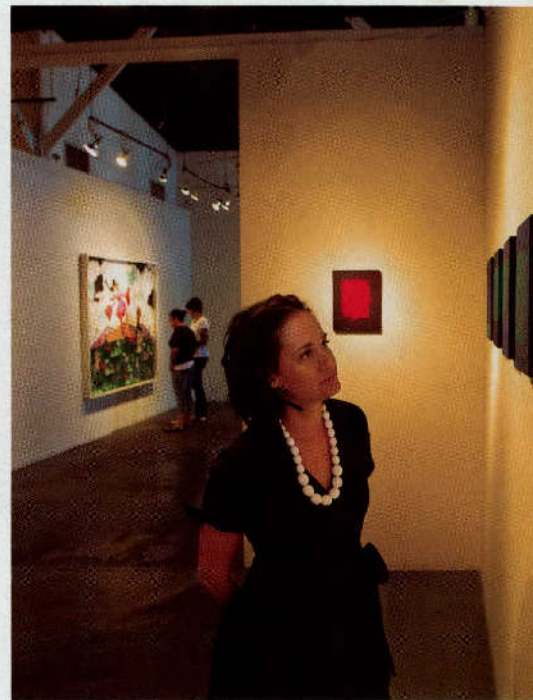
Before I leave the Blue Star compound, I breeze by Blue Star Brewing Company and grab a taster of the brewpub’s Wheathead White, an aromatic Belgian beer with hints of coriander and orange peel. Only a taste, though—I’m still on the prowl.

A bit north of Blue Star compound, at Southtown’s easternmost boundary, is an edgy pocket where a close-knit kibbutz of artists, including musician/installationist John Mata, live and

Whether you visit Southtown by car, on foot, or by pedicab, don’t hurry. This is an area where relaxed rambling is the norm.



show their work in a two-block stretch of modest duplexes on Stieren Street (between Cedar and St. Mary’s)—including the experimental spaces Unit B and Sala Diaz. The folks from “the compound,” as they call it, participate heartily (like the operators of most Southtown galleries) in San Antonio’s First Friday gallery night—an arts-driven street fair that engulfs Southtown’s galleries and bars each month. It’s a diverse social experience I’ve enjoyed several times through the years, and invariably I stop by Bar America afterward for an icy Lone Star with local friends. Or if it’s a leisurely afternoon, I’ll sit down over soup (roasted red pepper and Gouda, for example) at MadHatters off South Alamo, a rambling teahouse with a crazy-eclectic menu of sandwiches, salads, soups, teas, and



ABOVE: Energetic customers thrive in the colorful atmosphere of neighborhood favorite Rosario's.

ABOVE RIGHT AND RIGHT: Multidimensional: Joan Grona Gallery rewards visitors with the work of local, national, and international artists.

coffees, a grocery-to-go, and dozens of pastries and homemade desserts, including sublime, latticed fruit pies.

If you're headed to Southtown by car on I-35, as I've done in the past, a good launching point is South Flores, just east of the interstate. In SoFlo, the 1906 S. Flores complex, LoneStar Studios, and Gallista Gallery & Art Studio anchor the intersection of Flores and Lone Star streets. Artist/designer and 1906 co-owner Andy Benavides has operated Benavides Picture Framing in this renovated warehouse for 14-plus years, as well as 1906, a sleek, spacious gallery hosting monthly shows by contemporary regional artists. The art spaces and frame shop back up to a decommissioned loading dock, which is guarded by a vocal squadron of Benavides' Chihuahuas. Also inside the 1906 complex is the small but vibrant Flight, run by "celebrity pet photographer" Justin Parr and his pal Ed Saavedra, who share a studio across the way. The property

is complete with an herb garden and ramshackle half-pipe for skaters.

This little corner of San Antonio is bohemian at its most pure. (As Parr says: "It's all about the art.") Elsewhere in the adjoining LoneStar Studios, artists' spaces often double as once-monthly galleries, such as the space of Bill FitzGibbons, president and executive director of Blue Star Contemporary Art Center.

"This really is a close-knit community," says the charming, slightly disheveled Parr, who gives me a block tour. He tells me SoFlo locals often hang in backyards together or host joint exhibits. He also mentions the continuing gentrification on SoFlo street, which has introduced a flurry of upscale, converted-loft condos a few blocks north of 1906. "All that development is happening right now,



and people are starting to move in.”

I ask if the lofts are the latest extension of SoFlo hipsterism, and he winces gamely, then stage-whispers, “Well ... they’re kind of *expensive*, and most folks don’t have that kind of money around here.” Parr adds that he’d gladly purchase a fancy loft, could he afford it, but I get the sense he’s content right here, with his skateboard half-pipe and fresh produce out back.

At this point in my automobile visit, I drive to La Tuna Grill, just across the railroad tracks off Probandt Street. As Southtowners will tell you, La Tuna is a staple, a bonafide locals’ haunt. Itself a mini-compound of two funky tin structures linked by a tree-shaded gravel and cacti courtyard, it’s a great place to hang out and nosh on a great lamb hoagie sandwich, or a hefty fish taco. But remember that La Tuna closes between 2:30 and 5 p.m. every day, so go for lunch—or dinner, when the chef adds more upscale specials.

No matter where you dine or lounge, dedicate a couple of hours to meandering South Alamo, from the Blue Star/La Tuna area up to Durango. You’ll find shops like Casa Margarita, a cool little store that sells folk art and textiles along with other curiosities, and the ever-popular Jewelry Box, which specializes in estate jewelry and antiques. Or enjoy the dramatically lit Inter-Artisan boutique, which offers exquisite jewelry, glass, pottery, and wood-carvings, as well as folk art from Mexico.

But most important, whether you visit Southtown by car, on foot, or by pedicab, don’t hurry. This is an area where relaxed rambling is the norm.

Who knows, if you’ve arrived in town with your skateboard, you may cajole Justin Parr into letting you try out his battered wooden half-pipe. And chances are, if you linger around Southtown long enough, somebody will tip you to an art opening that night or a communal backyard barbecue. You might even get a personally guided block tour. In this SA neighborhood, the arts scene is refreshingly chill. **TH**

➔ **TH ESSENTIALS**

Southtown

SAN ANTONIO’S SOUTHTOWN area extends roughly from South Flores to South Presa (west to east), and from Durango to Lone Star (north to south). Find **King William District** walking tour information at the San Antonio Conservation Society, 107 King William, 210/224-6163; www.saconservation.org. For more on San Antonio, contact the **San Antonio Convention and Visitors Bureau** at 800/447-3372; www.visitsanantonio.com, or stop by the Visitor Information Center at 317 Alamo Plaza, across from the Alamo. *Following is contact information for sites mentioned in the story.*

Dining

Oloroso, 1024 S. Alamo, 210/223-3600; www.oloroso.biz.

El Mirador, 722 S. St. Mary’s St., 210/225-9444; www.elmiradorrestaurant.com.

Rosario’s Mexican Restaurant, 910 S. Alamo, 210/223-1806; www.rosariossa.com.

Bar America, 723 S. Alamo, 210/223-1285.

Blue Star Brewing Company, 1414 S. Alamo, Ste. 105, 210/212-5506; www.bluestarbrewing.com.

The Guenther House, 205 E. Guenther St., 210/227-1061; www.guentherhouse.com.

La Tuna Grill, 100 Probandt, 210/212-5727; www.latunagrill.com.

MadHatter’s Tea House and Cafe, 320 Beaugard, 210/212-4832; www.madhatterstea.com.

Lodging

The Oge House, 209 Washington, 210/223-2353; www.ogeinn.com.

Galleries/Shops

Blue Star Contemporary Art Center, 116 Blue Star, 210/227-6960; www.bluestarart.org.

Casa Margarita, 730 S. Alamo, 210/222-8444.



Flight, 1906 S. Flores, 210/872-2587; www.turnitoff.tv.

Gallista Gallery & Art Studio, 1913 S. Flores, 210/212-8606; www.gallista.com.

Inter-Artisan, 1036 S. Alamo, 210/807-3582; www.inter-artisan.com.

The Jewelry Box, 734 S. Alamo, 210/270-0333.

The Jive Refried, 919 S. Alamo, 210/257-5132; www.jiverefried.com.

Joan Grona Gallery, 112 Blue Star, 210/225-6334; www.joangronagallery.com.

Jump-Start Performance Co., 108 Blue Star, 210/227-5867; www.jump-start.org.

LoneStar Studios, 107 Lone Star Blvd., www.107LoneStar.com.

1906 Gallery and Benavides Picture Framing, 1906 S. Flores, 210/227-5718; www.1906gallery.com.

San Angel Folk Art, 110 Blue Star, 210/226-6688; www.sanangelfolkart.com.

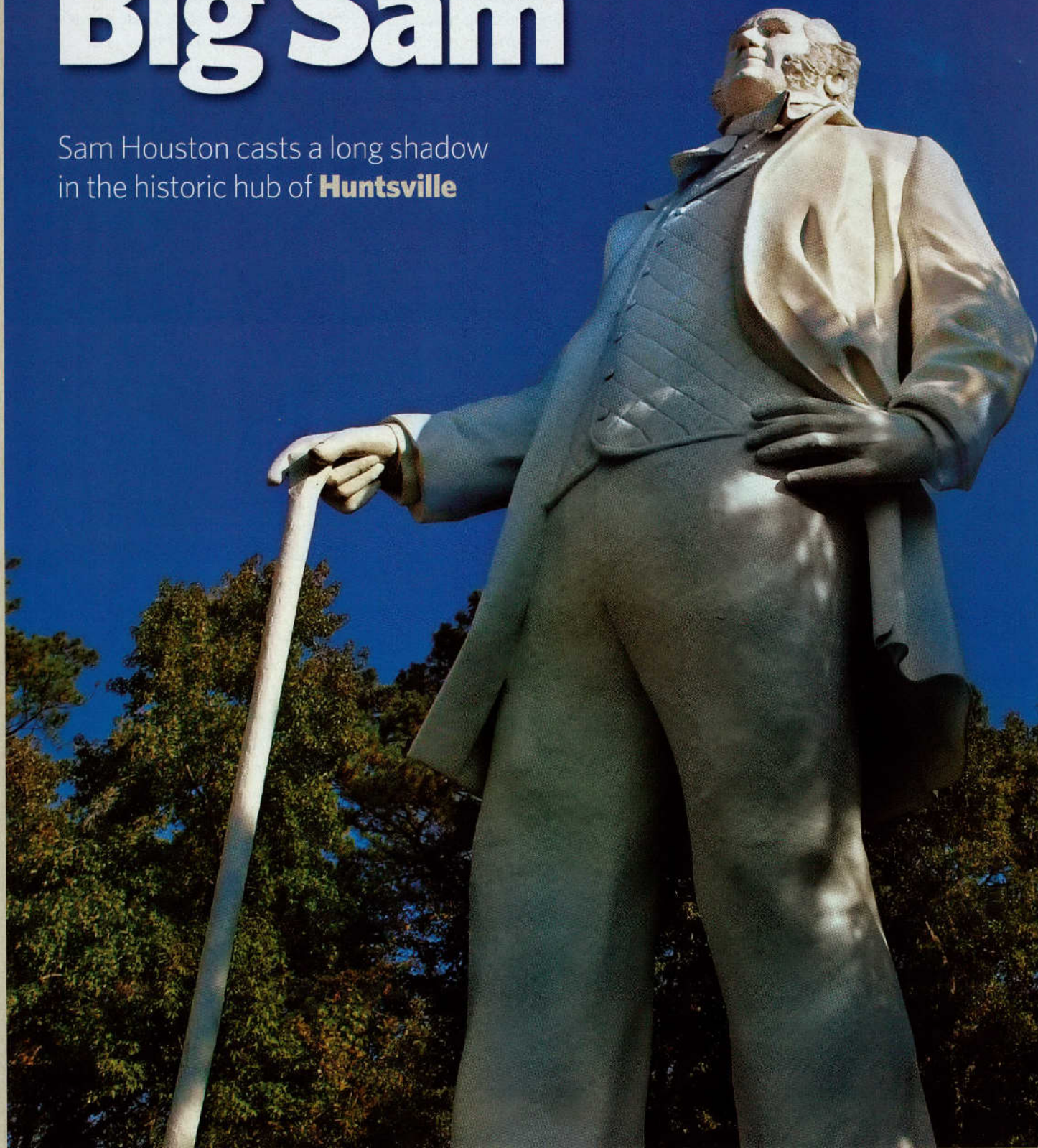
Unit B, 402 Cedar, 312/375-1871; www.unitbgallery.com.

Vintage House, 628 S. St. Mary’s, #102, 210/299-4774.

which way is SOUTHtown?

Land of **Big Sam**

Sam Houston casts a long shadow
in the historic hub of **Huntsville**



Text by **KAREN HASTINGS**
Photographs by **SKEETER HAGLER**

Historic Capitol Hill, one of the highest points in Huntsville, is a good place to start if you want to really understand this cultured and prosperous Piney Woods town that has long set its sights on greatness. Energized by the spirit of Lone Star general and statesman Sam Houston, the hometown hero of Texas Independence, town fathers once imagined a capitol dome atop this prominent rise. Today, Capitol Hill is serenaded by the clock tower chimes of Sam Houston State University, one of the state's oldest institutions of higher education.

Large legacy. Big Sam. Sculptor David Adickes' colossal statue of Sam Houston greets travelers to Huntsville from miles away on Interstate 45. An attractive, helpful visitors center is at its base.



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

True to its earliest ambitions, the surrounding Huntsville community thrives both as a center of Texas tradition and history, and as headquarters for the nation's second-largest prison system.

I'd been to Huntsville many times as a newspaper reporter covering the prison system before I actually got to know the place. Like many true Texans, I didn't realize that Huntsville owes much of its prominence, as well as its place on any Texan's travel itinerary, to the influence and legacy of Sam Houston. The mythic soldier, politician, and adventurer made his home here and forever linked the town to pivotal events in Texas independence and statehood. Houston's larger-than-life, ripe-for-a-Hollywood-movie persona casts long shadows—from the prison system and university he helped establish to the 67-foot "Big Sam" statue that now

overlooks the Interstate 45 freeway into town. Even before Huntsville became synonymous with the prison farms that dot the surrounding countryside, this community was a vibrant, ambitious center for education and government. It shows in gracefully restored homes and buildings, the bustling college campus, and Huntsville's many other cultural and historic attractions—all of which I discovered when I had the opportunity to slow down and really explore Huntsville for the first time.

My Huntsville re-discovery tour started at the giant concrete-and-steel statue of Sam Houston that artist David Adickes presented to the city in 1994. Visible from northbound I-45 for nearly seven miles, *A Tribute to Courage* has a well-stocked visitor's center at its base, where I picked up brochures and useful driving maps, and

After Austin won the 1850 referendum as state capital, Huntsville turned its ambitions to becoming "the Athens of Texas."



ABOVE: Visitors fill Huntsville's historic downtown during Fair on the Square in October. LEFT: A mother and daughter stroll past Sam Houston's law office on the grounds of the Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

chatted with knowledgeable volunteers.

Armed with directions, I headed straight for the Sam Houston Memorial Museum (just south of Huntsville's town square, on the Sam Houston State University campus), home to the largest collection of Houston artifacts anywhere.



The only man to serve as governor of two states—Tennessee and Texas—Sam Houston became the first elected president of the Texas Republic in 1836, and held office as both senator and governor after Texas joined the Union. The museum compound is set on 18 park-like acres that once formed part of the statesman's homestead, and includes Houston's beloved Woodland Home, where he lived with his wife, Margaret Lea Houston, and most of his eight children. Also set

here is Steamboat House (moved from its original location just northeast of town), the rented house where the out-of-favor ex-governor finished his days quietly, after refusing to support the Confederacy.

During the General Sam Houston Folk Festival, held each year on the first weekend in May, the compound comes alive with history exhibits, craft displays, and military reenactments—not to mention music and food. Shouts of “Fire in the hole!” and cannon explosions greeted

me as costume-clad volunteers told the story of General Houston's victory at San Jacinto to rapt student groups.

Don't miss the 20-minute introductory film at the museum's education center, where you'll learn how Houston received his Cherokee name, Colonneh (the Raven), and how he led the fight for Texas independence. Artifacts at the main museum like Houston's jaguar-skin vest and the tiny gavels, hearts, and hatchets he loved to whittle and



give away, fed my newfound fascination.

From museum volunteers, I learned that Houston never publicly explained the brief marriage and scandalous breakup that drove him from the Tennessee statehouse—and to his Texas destiny. (Even his former wife left instructions to burn her diaries upon her death, I was told.) And when I asked whether the hero of San Jacinto was wounded in his left leg—as the museum diorama shows—or in his right leg—as depicted in the famous painting of his confrontation with Mexican General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna that hangs in the Texas Capitol—museum

volunteers were ready with an answer: left. They showed me copies of Sam Houston's own letters, in which he describes the injury and his recovery from it.

Other stops for those interested in Houston's life and times include tranquil Oakwood Cemetery, where an impressive marble monument of the hero on horseback replaced a simple gravestone in 1911. Both Joshua Houston, the general's trusted former slave, and Joshua's son, educator Samuel Walker Houston—an important figure in Huntsville's

history—also are buried at Oakwood.

Or, take a short trek across the street from the museum and up several dozen steps to Capitol Hill, topped by the 1852 Austin College Building, site of the state's first law school and now an icon of the Sam Houston State University campus. After Austin won the 1850 referendum as state capital, Huntsville turned its ambitions to becoming "the Athens of Texas." Then-Senator Houston himself attended the cornerstone ceremony for what is described as "the oldest educational building in continuous use west of the Mississippi River."

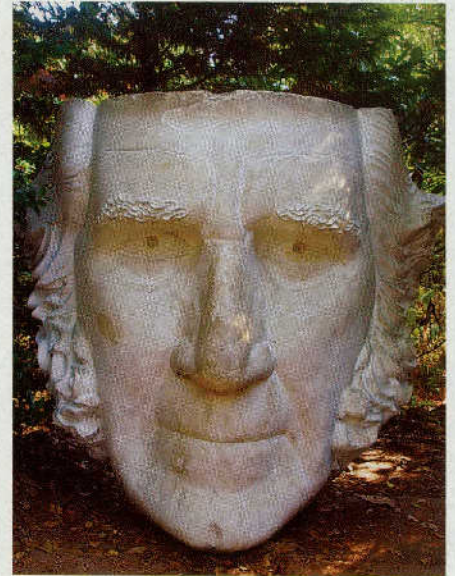
And Huntsville's ambitions didn't stop



Want to know more? At the Texas Prison Museum, where fascinating details come with the price

of a ticket, you can see Old Sparky, the electric chair once used in Texas executions, and have your picture taken inside a replica cell. Displays of inmate art made from matchsticks and toilet paper, as well as more sinister inmate craft—weapons fashioned from sharpened spoons and bits of plastic—speak powerfully of life behind bars. Prison museum docents also can point you to melancholy “Peckerwood Hill,” actually the Captain Joe Byrd Memorial Cemetery, where the unclaimed bodies

Visitors can see an early cast of Sam Houston’s face by sculptor David Adickes at the Sam Houston Statue & Visitors Center.



The Sam Houston Memorial Museum compound is set on 18 park-like acres near the town square that once formed part of the statesman’s homestead.

ABOVE: Picket fence, pond, and shade trees frame the Houston kitchen (center) with stone chimney and Woodland Home (right) on the museum grounds.

RIGHT: Pamela McManus demonstrates spinning at the Sam Houston Memorial Museum’s Woodland Home.

there. Houston’s spirit—not to mention his power and influence—were surely at work in the city’s 1848 campaign for what was then another mark of civilized society: the state’s first prison. Today, there are seven prison units in and around Huntsville—including the red-brick unit nicknamed “The Walls,” which rises only a few blocks from the downtown square.





During the General Sam Houston Folk Festival, held each year on the first weekend in May, the museum comes alive with history exhibits, craft displays, and military reenactments—not to mention music and food.

of inmates who die in custody are buried under simple headstones.

Huntsville's town square was another charming surprise on my reunion tour, with a half-dozen or so antiques shops and several restored historic buildings to visit and admire. Home of the Walker County Courthouse, the square also boasts the Gibbs Center for the Performing Arts in the Old Town Theater, and hosts several major festivals and events during the year. The annual Airing of the Quilts takes over the square on the first Saturday in May, and conveniently coincides with the Sam Houston museum's annual festival. Hundreds of handmade coverlets flutter on outdoor display—and

some are for sale—in a free exhibition sponsored by the Tall Pines Quilt Guild. The square also hosts Fair on the Square the first Saturday in October, with arts-and-crafts vendors, music, and food. And even when there's nothing special going on, you can sip a strawberry-lemonade from the old-fashioned soda shop here, hunt for collectibles, and look for the *trompe-l'oeil* painting techniques by New York muralist Richard Haas that add new architectural charm to several downtown buildings. The courthouse itself dates to 1970, but the square includes the 1890 Gibbs Brothers Building, which has been the site of a store, bank, or other Gibbs family enterprise for nearly 170 years. (Gibbs' business first opened in 1841 on this site, and was replaced by the present brick

structure in 1890.)

Historic Huntsville—founded in 1835 as a frontier trading post—is more than its town square, of course, and a driving tour turned out to be an indispensable introduction to the city's architectural attractions. My meanderings not only took me past restored mansions from the 1800s—like the graceful Wynne Home Arts Center, with its white columns and blue porch ceiling—but also to an intriguing collection of historic fixer-uppers awaiting repair along University Avenue. And while I was house hunting, the mix of gaily painted bungalows and tidy Victorians along Avenue O and “Knowledge Hill,”

Tom Lundquist of Onalaska gives a blacksmithing demonstration during the Sam Houston Folk Festival.

where local college professors once dominated, showed me an equally appealing side to Huntsville.

I ended my architectural tour at The Whistler Bed and Breakfast Inn, an 1859 triple-columned beauty also known as the Eastham-Thomason Home. What a delight to turn up the curving path to this stately residence, formally landscaped and softly lit at night! Innkeeper Mary Mabel Thomason Clegg grew up here, only a few blocks northwest of the town square, and named the inn for a grandfather who loved to whistle. She keeps it decorated with vintage toys, photos, and family antiques, including a lovingly preserved rosewood table where I dined on a baked puff-pancake, fresh fruit, and bacon on my last morning in Huntsville. Clegg says the table was crafted from a piano that survived the Civil War, thanks to her great-aunt Mary from Mississippi. As the family story goes, Mary was only six when she confronted rampaging Union troops and fell to her knees, begging them to spare her beloved piano from destruction.

Sitting in the Whistler's elegant dining room and hearing stories passed down from some of Huntsville's earliest families helped complete a more vivid picture of the town during my trip of discovery. With her own rich history all around her, Clegg turned out to be an eloquent spokeswoman for this Piney Woods center of education, culture, and consequence. Growing up here, raised on the stories of Sam Houston and his ambitions for Huntsville, Clegg was taught that her hometown had always aimed higher than some raw and rambunctious Texas towns. As she put it—and I have to agree—Huntsville was, and still is, “something special.” **TH**

KAREN HASTINGS first visited Huntsville as a young criminal justice reporter.

SKETER HAGLER returned to the scene of the crime, literally. His first major photo assignment was covering a Huntsville prison break attempt. He enjoyed exploring a different side of the city.

A happy camper casts away at Huntsville State Park, where you can hike, bike, fish, go horseback riding, and stay at serene, screened shelters along the shores of Lake Raven.



➔ TH ESSENTIALS

Huntsville

HUNTSVILLE, the Walker County seat, lies about 70 miles north of Houston (and 170 miles south of Dallas) on I-45. The Huntsville/Walker County Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center (1327 11th St.; 936/295-8113 or 800/289-0389; www.huntsvilletexas.com) has information about events, attractions, lodging, and good places to eat. Following is contact information for sites in the story and a few of the author's other favorites.

Restaurants

The Homestead on 19th. 1215 19th St., 936/291-7366; www.homesteadon19th.com. Fine dining in a restored 1834 log cabin next to the Sam Houston Memorial Museum.

Farmhouse Cafe. 1004 14th St., 936/435-1450; www.farmhousecafe.net. American comfort food.

Five Loaves Deli. Midway Plaza, 1329 University Ave., Ste. 1, 936/439-9400; www.fiveoavesdeli.com. Soups, sandwiches, panini, and quesadillas.

Puerto Aventura. 269 Texas 75 N., Ste. C, 936/435-0258. Colombian/Greek/Cuban fare.

Lodging

The Whistler Bed and Breakfast Inn. 906 Avenue M, 936/295-2834 or 800/404-2834; www.thewhistlerbnb.com.

Oakview Manor Bed & Breakfast. 7137 Texas 75 S., 936/295-3352; www.oakviewmanorbnb.com.

University Hotel. 1610 Bobby K. Marks Dr., on the SHSU campus, 936/291-2151; www.shsuhotel.org.

Attractions

Sam Houston Statue & Visitor Center. Take exit 109 or 112 off I-45, 800/289-0389; www.samhoustonstatue.org.



Sam Houston Memorial Museum. 19th St. at Sam Houston Ave., 936/294-1832; www.samhouston.memorial.museum.

Texas Prison Museum. 491 Texas 75 N., exit 118 off I-45, 936/295-2155; www.txprisonmuseum.org.

Oakwood Cemetery and Sam Houston grave site. 9th St. and Avenue I.

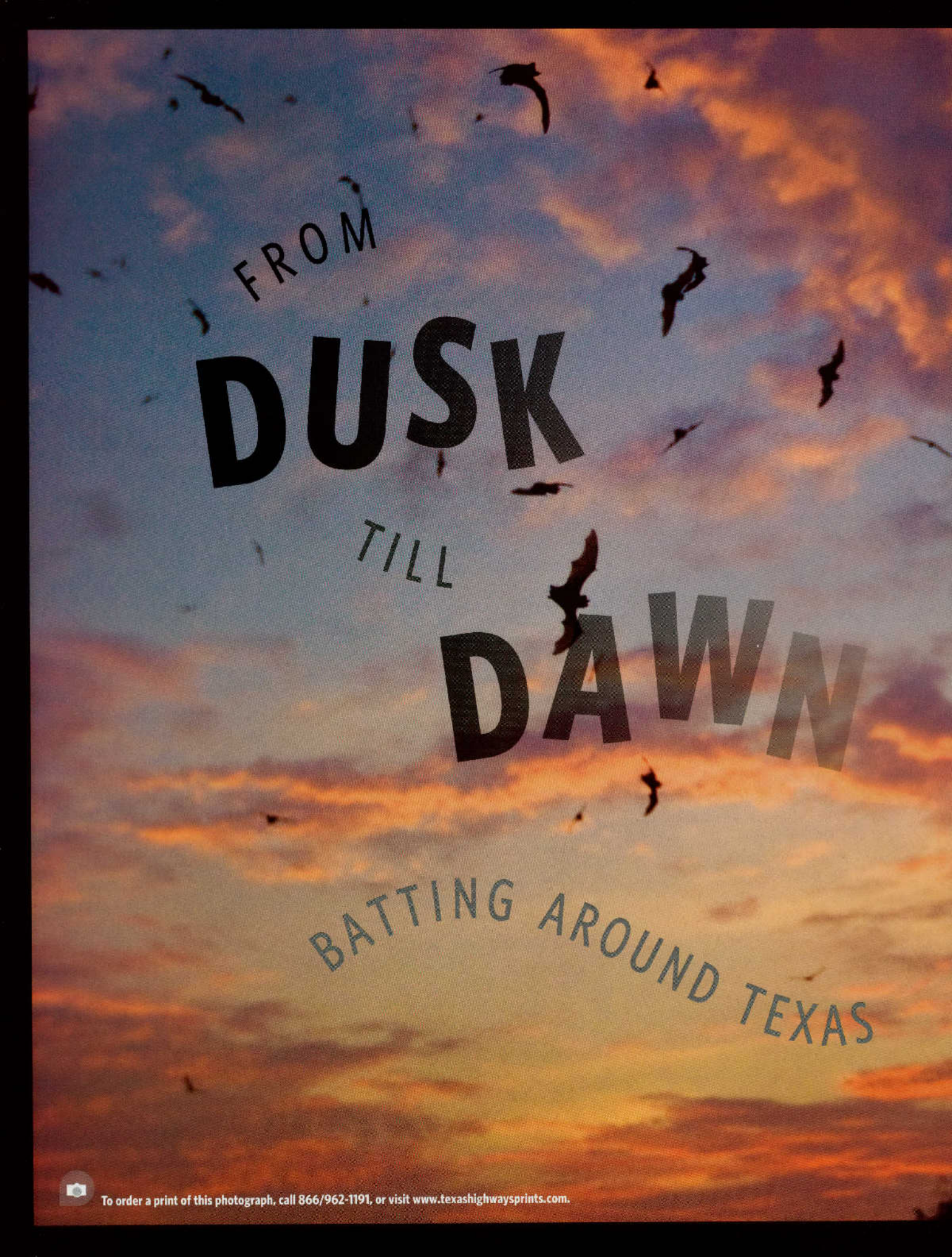
Huntsville State Park is 6 mi. southwest of Huntsville. Exit 109 on I-45, and go west on Park Rd. 40. Campsites and screened shelters along the shores of Lake Raven. Thirteen miles of hiking and biking trails, fishing, horseback riding, and group facilities. For rates and reservations, call 512/389-8900. For information only, call 800/792-1112 or visit www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Events

General Sam Houston Folk Festival. First weekend in May. Visit www.samhoustonfolkfestival.org.

Airing of the Quilts. First Sat. in May. Visit www.tallpinesquiltguild.com.

Fair on the Square. First Sat. in Oct. Contact the chamber.



FROM
DUSK

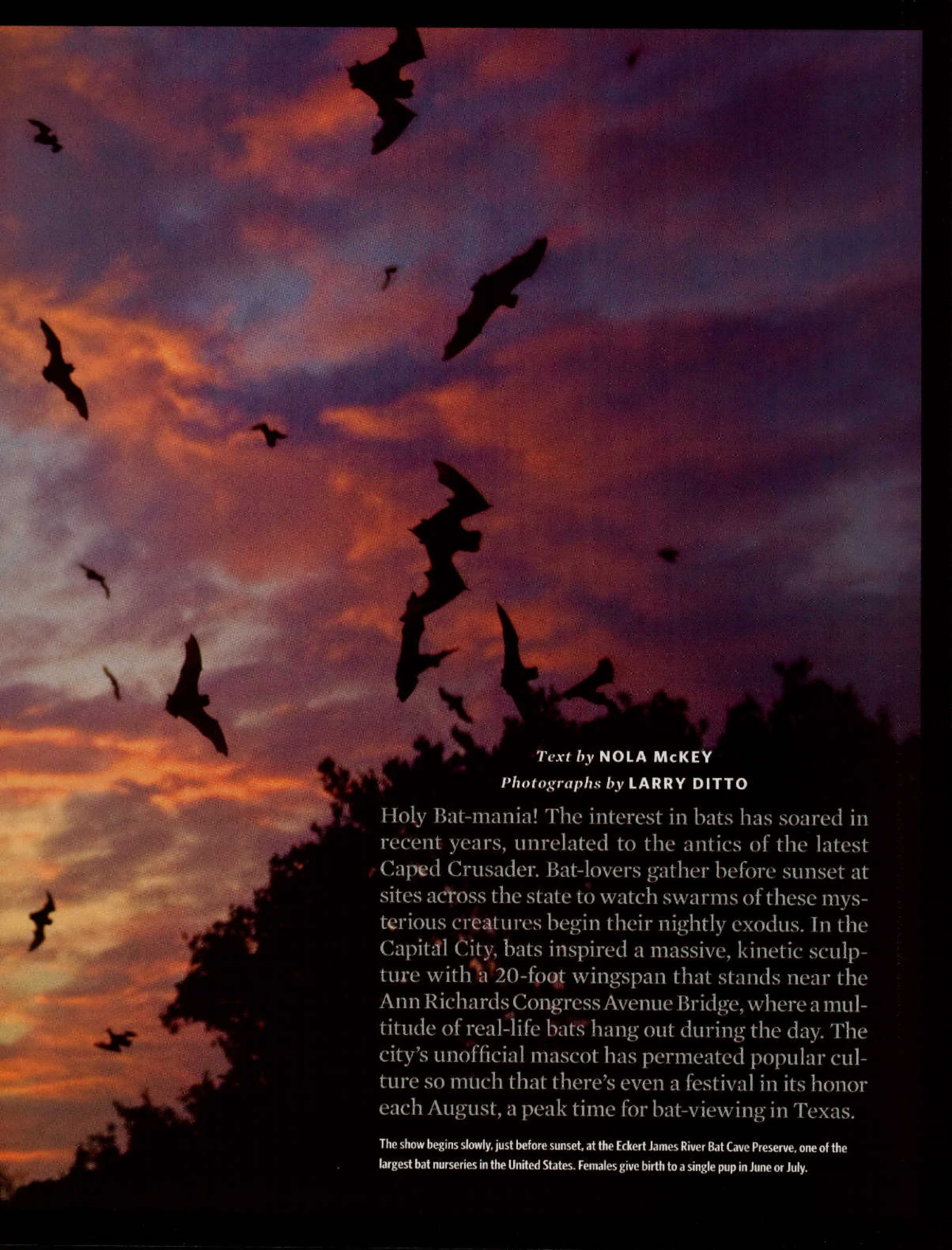
TILL

DAWN

BATTING AROUND TEXAS



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



Text by **NOLA McKEY**

Photographs by **LARRY DITTO**

Holy Bat-mania! The interest in bats has soared in recent years, unrelated to the antics of the latest Caped Crusader. Bat-lovers gather before sunset at sites across the state to watch swarms of these mysterious creatures begin their nightly exodus. In the Capital City, bats inspired a massive, kinetic sculpture with a 20-foot wingspan that stands near the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, where a multitude of real-life bats hang out during the day. The city's unofficial mascot has permeated popular culture so much that there's even a festival in its honor each August, a peak time for bat-viewing in Texas.

The show begins slowly, just before sunset, at the Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve, one of the largest bat nurseries in the United States. Females give birth to a single pup in June or July.

FROM
DUSK
TILL **DAWN**



Why all the fuss about these small, furry creatures? Part of the answer probably lies in



A 60-foot-wide column of Mexican free-tailed bats rises nightly from the signature cave at the Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area, northeast of Rocksprings.

bats' reclusive nature, which piques our curiosity. But scientists have also discovered that these flying mammals are highly beneficial to humans, and the word is getting out. Bats eat mosquitoes, tons of them. And they devour an even greater number of insects that attack crops—pests like corn earworm and armyworm moth, whose respective diets include dozens of vegetables, as well as forage plants and cotton. According to Dr. Merlin Tuttle, who founded the Austin-based Bat Conservation International, bats' voracious appetite for harmful insects results in their most important contribution. "Bats greatly reduce our reliance on pesticides," he says. Bats also pollinate or disperse seeds for hundreds of plants, such as dates, figs, and agaves.

A steward at the Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve, southwest of Mason, gently exhibits a Mexican free-tailed bat.



Bats at Risk

Despite the increased awareness of bats' importance, Dr. Merlin Tuttle says American bats are in jeopardy. "We're currently losing a large portion of them because of wind turbines and White-nose Syndrome," he explains. "We're collaborating with the American Wind Energy Association to find answers to the first problem. Preliminary research has shown that shutting off the turbines during periods of low wind results in 70 percent less bat mortality with less than a 1 percent loss in energy production. With further research, we hope to save more bats at even less cost."

Tuttle says White-nose Syndrome (WNS), which already has killed more than a million bats in the northeastern United States, is potentially a much greater problem. Named for a white fungus found on

the noses of affected bats, the disease has killed 95 to 100 percent of the hibernating bat populations it has infected, and it is spreading rapidly, covering nine states in just three winters. While the Mexican free-tailed bat, the most conspicuous bat species found in Texas, doesn't hibernate, Tuttle says it's not clear which bat species are at risk. "Without major research to identify potential causes and solutions, we're facing a devastating situation," he adds. "Some of America's most abundant species could become endangered or even extinct."

To support BCI research and/or learn more about bat conservation, including buying or building a backyard bat house, visit BCI's Web site, www.batcon.org, or call 512/327-9721.

—Nola McKey

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN



Setting aside the benefits to agriculture, bats eat vast numbers of night-flying insects (just as birds eat vast numbers of insects that fly during the day), helping keep nature in balance. “It’s hard to even imagine what Texas would be like without bats,” says Tuttle. “Just one species, the Mexican free-tailed bat, eats hundreds of tons of insects a night.”

Texas boasts 32 species of bats—more than any other state—as well as the site of the world’s largest bat population. Owned by BCI, Bracken Cave, near San Antonio, is home to more than 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats. While the site is off-limits to the

general public, BCI hosts frequent viewing nights for its members during the summer, with basic membership starting at \$35 a year.

Humans haven’t always appreciated the advantages of having bats around. Tuttle says when he founded BCI in 1982, polls showed that bats were among the world’s

Young visitors enjoy the evening bat flight from the top of a hill near Frio Cave, south of Concan.



Frio Cave, owned by Hill Country Adventures, hosts the second-largest bat population in the world, as well as hundreds of tourists March through September.



To learn how some Texas bridges are encouraging bat habitation, see texashighways.com/webextra.



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





To the Bat Bridge!

Austin's 5th annual Batfest will take place on August 22, from 1 p.m. to midnight, at—where else?—the Ann Richards Congress Avenue Bridge—where thousands of spectators already gather nightly during the summer to see 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge en masse from beneath the bridge. The lineup includes live music (20 bands on two stages), children's activities, food, arts and crafts, educational displays, and, of course, bat-watching. The party benefits Bat Conservation International. Call 512/441-9015; www.roadwayevents.com. —Nola McKey

© MERLIN D. TUTTLE, BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL





LEFT: Dr. Merlin Tuttle, President Emeritus of Bat Conservation International, delights in a flurry of bats at Bracken Cave, home of the world's largest bat colony.

The policy results in attracting millions of bats to agricultural areas. Key natural roosts, such as Bracken Cave, have also been protected, thanks to the efforts of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Nature Conservancy of Texas, and BCI. Best of all, there are now a number of sites where you can witness one of nature's most spectacular phenomena: the mass emergence of a bat colony as it begins its nightly foray. If you've never had this experience, plan to remedy that soon. The show starts at dusk, at a bat hangout near you. **TH**

Senior Editor **NOLA McKEY** thanks Dr. Merlin Tuttle, who recently stepped down as BCI's executive director, for a fascinating ecology lesson. "I knew bats ate mosquitoes," she says, "but I had no idea they were so important in the overall scheme of things." Longtime photographer **LARRY DITTO** is always in pursuit of the perfect bat photo.

LEFT: The Stuart Bat Cave at Kickapoo Caverns State Park, north of Brackettville, boasts impressive formations and summer habitat for up to a million Mexican free-tails.

least-popular animals. "They ranked right between rattlesnakes and cockroaches," he says. "People associated bats with rabies, and they were terrified of them."

Thanks to educational efforts by BCI and other organizations, this perception is changing. "People are beginning to get the message that as long as you leave bats alone, there's little to fear," says Tuttle. "For example, thousands of people come into close contact with bats at Austin's Congress Avenue Bridge each summer, and in more than 25 years, no one has been harmed."

Some state organizations have begun playing a role in bat conservation. Starting in 1996, the Texas Department of Transportation has designed bridges with bat habitat in mind, often including features conducive to roosting at no extra cost.

FROM
DUSK
TILL **DAWN**



TH ESSENTIALS

Bat Hangouts

WHILE SOME of the 32 bat species found in Texas stay year round, most of the bats are Mexican free-tails, which migrate to Mexico in the winter and return in the spring. Peak-viewing months for bat flights are July and August; the most spectacular flights take place in hot, dry weather. Bat colonies usually emerge from their shelters around dusk, but during periods of drought, they may emerge earlier. Contact information for some bat-watching sites follows. For information about other bat sites, visit BCI's Web site, www.batcon.org, and check out the Web Extra mentioned on page 44.

1 Ann Richards Congress Ave. Bridge, in downtown Austin. Call the *Austin American-Statesman's* Bat Hotline at 512/416-5700, ext. 3636, or Austin CVB at 800/926-ACVB; www.austintexas.org.

2 Frio Bat Cave, south of Concan. Call 830/966-2320; www.friobatflight.com.

3 Kickapoo Caverns State Park (Stuart Bat Cave), north of Brackettville. Call 830/563-2342; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

4 Old Tunnel Wildlife Management Area, between Fredericksburg and Comfort. Call 830/990-2659; www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

5 Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area, northeast of Rocksprings. Call 830/683-BATS; www.devilssinkhole.org or www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

6 Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve, southwest of Mason. Call 325/347-5970; www.nature.org/texas.

7 Bracken Cave, north of San Antonio. Although the cave is off-limits to the general public, Bat Conservation International, which owns the site, hosts viewing nights during the summer for its members. For details, call 512/327-9721, or visit www.batcon.org.





FLY ME to the MOON

AN EXCLUSIVE TOUR OF NASA'S JOHNSON SPACE CENTER

Text by **HEATHER BRAND**

Photographs by **KIRK WEDDLE**

Forty years ago, on July 20, 1969, millions of Americans sat riveted to their television sets as they watched astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin set foot on the moon and speak those memorable words, "The Eagle has landed." This "giant leap for mankind" would not have been possible without Houston's own Johnson Space Center, which coordinated the historic Apollo mission.

Created in 1963 to fulfill President Kennedy's ambition for the United States to reach the moon before the close of the decade (and before the Russians), this center has been at the heart of NASA operations since the early days of the space race. Lyndon Johnson, a senator at the time of the 1957 Soviet launch of *Sputnik*, had spearheaded legislation to bring the project to Texas, and had suggested Houston as an ideal location, due to the city's mild climate, status as a major port, and established university research facilities.

While it's impossible on Earth to experience the zero-gravity challenges of space, astronauts can get pretty close in the 6.2 million-gallon pool known as the Neutral Buoyancy Lab, the centerpiece of NASA's Sonny Carter Training Facility. Astronauts train for seven hours in the water for every hour they'll spend spacewalking.

FLY ME to the MOON

THE JOHNSON SPACE CENTER became NASA's hub for astronaut training and the home of Mission Control. Over the years, the center has developed, guided, and monitored numerous crucial missions, such as the early Mercury

public access to the site is limited due to security issues. To make the space program more accessible to the general public, the Space Center Houston opened here in 1992 to offer visitors hands-on experiences and space-themed exhibits.

Yet, as I recently discovered, you can still experience the "real" Johnson Space Center by signing up for a Level 9 Tour, a five-hour, behind-the-scenes look at the sprawling NASA campus. These weekday tours, limited to groups of 12 people age 14 and older, are essentially field trips for grownups.

The tour begins at Space Center Houston, where my fellow tour-goers and I meet Georgene Harris, a peppy NASA expert who has made a second career as a part-time Level 9 Tour guide. Donning our VIP badges, we follow Harris through a security checkpoint and pile into a van, which whisks us away to our first stop, the NASA cafeteria, where we enjoy lunch among astronauts, mission-control officials, physicists, and other employees. Harris serves as a celebrity-spotter of sorts, pointing out the important players in the space program, nodding discretely in the direction of three astronauts sitting just two tables away. There's a heightened

sense of possibility even in the employee mess hall, and we can't wait to see more.

Back in the van, we wind through a maze of nondescript beige buildings lining a meandering drive. Some sites are still off-limits, even to VIPs like us, for security reasons. Harris indicates where the pyrotechnics are tested, where Space Shuttle flight simulations take place, where astronauts are quarantined prior to space travel, and where 800 pounds of moon rocks are stored for research.

We pull up at the Sonny Carter Training Facility, where astronauts learn how to maneuver in weightless conditions. The building is home to the Neutral Buoyancy Lab, a 40-foot-deep swimming pool that measures 102 feet wide and 202 feet long; it holds 6.2 million gallons of water. Harris leads us along an enclosed catwalk overlooking the immense pool, where we observe two astronauts in spacesuits



EARTH is blanketed in a swirling mass of clouds as it gradually passes from daylight into darkness.

and Gemini projects to put astronauts in orbit around the Earth, the Apollo moon missions, the subsequent Space Shuttle flights, and the construction of the International Space Station. Currently, the center is in the planning phases of its next big project: the Constellation program, a new initiative to return to the moon by 2020.

The Johnson Space Center's campus of about 100 buildings stretches across 1,620 acres in the Clear Lake area, southeast of downtown Houston. Approximately 18,000 people work there, including private contractors, government employees, and a corps of about 110 astronauts, but

ABOVE: Flight controller Bill Foster surveys data from the Space Shuttle *Endeavour* and the International Space Station from one of NASA's two active mission-control rooms.



Visitors to Space Center Houston can see the actual Gemini craft that carried astronauts Gordon Cooper and Pete Conrad into space in 1965.



THE MASSIVE SATURN V rocket rests on its side; upright, it would stand as tall as a 30-story building.

practicing to make repairs on a full-scale model of the space station. They're at the bottom of the pool, surrounded by a team of support divers, one of whom transmits live video footage to monitors mounted in our walkway. We watch in fascination as one of the astronauts struggles with an underwater drill. Harris informs us that the astronauts train in the pool for six hours at a time, without a break, in order to prepare themselves for the rigors of an actual spacewalk. "These are the people blazing the trail for future generations in

space," she declares, before dragging us reluctantly back to the van.

Astronaut training is one of the Johnson Space Center's main endeavors, but ground-crew training is just as essential to the space program. For our next stop, Harris brings us to the first of the center's three mission-control centers, where NASA staffers practice simulated Space Shuttle missions to test their emergency responses and hone their problem-solving skills. The room is filled with state-

!
What's it like to work at NASA? See www.texashighways.com/webextra.



A three-stage Saturn V rocket like this one (third stage shown here) put the first men on the moon.

of-the-art equipment and banks of computer monitors, and when it is not being employed for training, it functions as mission control for Space Shuttle flights. Today we

are in luck, because we arrive just minutes after the shuttle has returned to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. From a viewing chamber at the back of the room, we watch televised footage of the shuttle being guided down the runway as the mission-

control crew interprets vast data streams.

We proceed down a hallway to see the second mission-control center, which is used for monitoring the International Space Station (ISS)—an Earth-orbiting research facility constructed and manned cooperatively by NASA, the European Space Agency, and the space agencies of several other nations,

including Russia, Canada, and Japan. Unlike the first control room, this one is in constant operation. Because the ISS is in continual orbit, the mission is ongoing, and the ground-control staff work in shifts to monitor the data coming in. A screen at the front of the room shows a real-time map tracking the ISS's progress as it orbits the earth. Two

FLY ME to the MOON



Astronauts at the Outpost

YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET a behind-the-scenes tour of NASA to catch a glimpse of an astronaut. Just head over to the Outpost Tavern, a red, ramshackle building down the road from the Johnson Space Center, and you'll see NASA employees of all stripes decompressing after a long day's work. This unassuming watering hole has been a favorite local hangout for years, and the decor proves it; the place is festooned with astronaut memorabilia, including signed photographs of John Glenn and other NASA notables, along with commemorative posters and even a decommissioned spacesuit.

Among its humble charms, the tavern is known for its juicy burgers and for its sliced-and-fried-on-site French fries. Rolls of paper towels serve as centerpieces for the tables around the bar, and they do come in handy. At the Outpost, the grease is hot, the beer is cold, and the pool table is free. But its biggest draw is the company—and the chance to rub shoulders with those involved in the space program. NASA employee Bill Foster, who works in mission control, hails the Outpost Tavern as home to the best burgers in town. "Just driving up, you might think twice about going inside," he admits, "but you'll be glad you did."

The Outpost Tavern is at 18113 Kings Lynn St. in Houston. Call 281/333-1235; www.outpost-tavern.net.

—Heather Brand

FLY ME to the MOON

flanking screens display views from the space station, one of which shows the Earth blanketed in a swirling mass of clouds as it gradually passes from daylight into darkness.

Our next stop brings us to Apollo Mission Control, now a National Historic Landmark. Unlike the other two mission-control rooms, this one, which monitored the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions, is no longer operational. With its minuscule computer monitors, rotary phone dials, and push-button module, it appears untouched by the intervening years of technology. Tour guide David Cisco, a 40-year veteran of NASA, joins us, sharing firsthand stories of the groundbreaking events that took place in that room. Here's the desk, Cisco tells us, where flight-control personnel heard the words "Houston, we have a problem" during the nearly doomed Apollo 13 mission. He holds up a slide rule, impressing upon us the fact that it was really people doing work "north of the eyebrows" who made those first forays into space possible. Despite the size of those early computers, Cisco says, they had a capacity of only about 400 kilobytes: "There's more technology under your car's dashboard these days than what we used to send 12 astronauts to the moon."

With a renewed sense of wonder, we pile back into the van to see what Harris refers to as the "big toys" in the Space Vehicle Mock-up Facility. This vast, open building is packed with space contraptions, including full-size mockups of the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station. Here, robotics experts test prototypes, engineers refine design plans for ISS components, and astronauts familiarize themselves with various equipment and space vehicles. Although we aren't permitted to venture inside any of these incredible "toys," we can gawk to our hearts' content as we wander about the room, which is littered with an unbelievable assortment



Blast off! The Saturn V's five engines, fueled by liquid oxygen, liquid hydrogen, and kerosene, together produced 7.5 million pounds of thrust.

Writer **HEATHER BRAND** grew up in Morgan's Point and first visited Johnson Space Center on a grade-school field trip. She has fond memories of freeze-dried ice cream. Photographer **KIRK WEDDLE** dreams of someday exploring the moon.

of tools, spare parts, spacesuits, and lunar rovers. Harris draws our attention to several robots, including the Robonaut Senetor, which looks like an oversized Transformer toy (part astronaut, part four-wheeler) and will collect soil samples on future missions.

We look forward to our final stop: a Saturn V rocket, identical to the ones used to launch astronauts into space during the Apollo missions. Housed in a protective hangar at NASA's Rocket Park, this magnificent rocket rests on its side; upright, it would stand as tall as a thirty-story building. This particular rocket is one of only three Saturn Vs in existence; its predecessors were destroyed during the course of the missions, and this one was spared only because the program was cancelled before it could be launched. We walk the length of the rocket, admiring its enormous size, the know-how that went into creating it, and how far we have come in our explorations of space since that time. Now, 40 years after that first lunar landing, NASA is once again setting its sights on the moon, and the Johnson Space Center stands ready to guide the footsteps of those making that next giant leap forward. **TH**

→ TH ESSENTIALS



Johnson Space Center

THE JOHNSON SPACE CENTER and its visitor center, **Space Center Houston**, are at 1601 Nasa Parkway in the Clear Lake area of Houston, 25 miles south of downtown. Level 9 Tours (\$84.95) of the Johnson Space Center are offered by Space Center Houston Mon-Fri to guests age 14 and older by reservation only; tours take approximately five hours. Space-related exhibits and programs take place at Space Center Houston year round, without reservations; ask about discounted summer admission.

Call 281/244-2100; www.spacecenter.org.

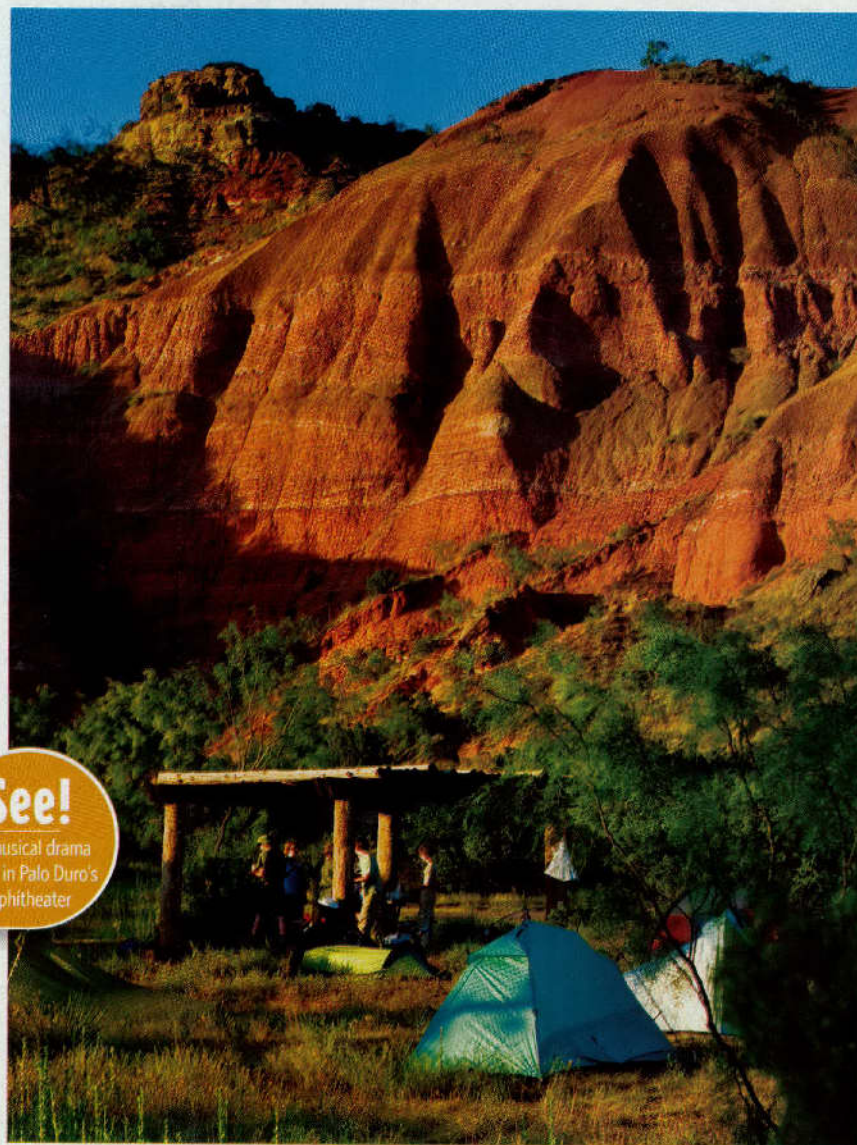
Lost Gold of the Palo Duro

Rumors of buried treasure in the Panhandle

Text by **CLAY COPPEDGE**

VISITORS TO PALO DURO Canyon State Park, south of Amarillo, might marvel at its splendid isolation and tranquility, but the setting was not always so serene. Palo Duro was the last Comanche battleground and a favorite hideout of the notorious Comancheros. Hundreds of sensational stories have rolled out of this rugged land, some of them true. One story revolves around thousands of dollars worth of gold and includes greed, murder, revenge, and grim irony—all the elements of a rip-roaring, Old West yarn. It appears to have originated with the legendary cattleman Charles Goodnight.

Bill Green, curator of history at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon, says the tale is typical of the lost-treasure stories that abound in Texas history and folklore. “Goodnight was a good storyteller, and this is a good story, perfect in that everybody who would have known where the gold was had died,” says Green. “There was no one left to



See!

The musical drama *TEXAS* in Palo Duro's amphitheater

dispute it.” He credits J. Evetts Haley’s 1936 biography of Goodnight with introducing the tale to a wide audience.

Goodnight’s account—via Haley—forms the crux of the story as told here. The gold in question belonged to William and Daniel Casner who, along with their father, John Casner, and their brother Lew, struck it rich early in the California gold rush. When the family left California in 1876, John and Lew began prospecting in New Mexico and Arizona. William and Daniel headed for the upper reaches of Palo Duro Canyon with some sheep and, supposedly, a thousand 20-dollar gold pieces.

That same year, about two dozen sheep ranchers from New Mexico brought their flocks to the wide-open grazing lands along the Canadian River in present-day Oldham County. One of the herdsman was Nicolas Martinez, a former Comanchero who knew the country, and had worked with Goodnight as a guide when the cattleman made his first forays into the Palo Duro.

Goodnight expressed concern about one of the new arrivals, Martinez’s

Campers in Palo Duro Canyon State Park wake up to panoramas that seem straight from the Old West.

Speaking of Texas

brother-in-law, Sostenses L'Archevêque, who had supposedly killed 23 people. Martinez assured Goodnight that he would take care of L'Archevêque himself if the outlaw caused trouble.

Soon afterwards, L'Archevêque rode into the Palo Duro and killed William and Daniel Casner and their Navajo shepherd in a futile attempt to find their gold. True to his word, Martinez lured his brother-in-law to a small adobe house and helped slay him in what was viewed by his neighbors as more a community service than a murder.

After hearing of William and Daniel's death, John and Lew Casner arrived in the Panhandle in the spring of 1877 to lay claim to the brothers' possessions, which to their dismay did not include any gold. In looking for it, they murdered Martinez because they thought he knew where it was, or was in possession of it himself.

The Casners eventually left the Panhandle, but rumors that the gold is buried

Exploring Palo Duro

START YOUR explorations of Palo Duro Canyon State Park at the visitor center (12 miles east of Canyon on Texas 217), which provides trail maps and information about the area.

The park offers activities such as hiking, camping, and horseback riding, and in the summer, presents *TEXAS*, an outdoor musical drama about Panhandle history. The drama's 2009 season ends August 15. Call 806/655-2181; www.texas-show.com. For park information, call 806/488-2227; www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/paloduro. —Clay Coppedge



somewhere in or around the Palo Duro persist. Bill Green doubts them. "We don't even know for sure that anybody buried it," he says. "It's always been assumed that they did, I guess, because people love stories about buried treasure." **TH**

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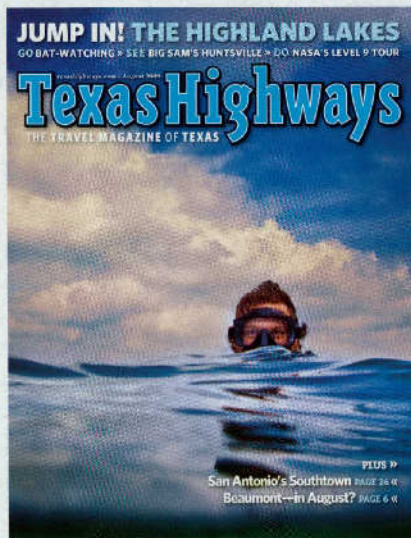
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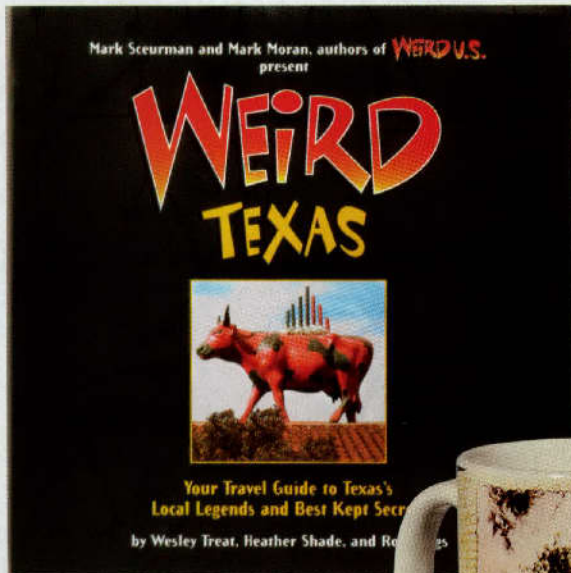
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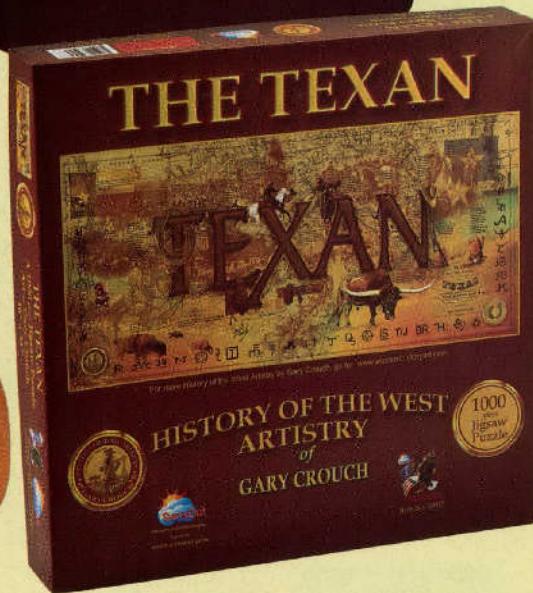
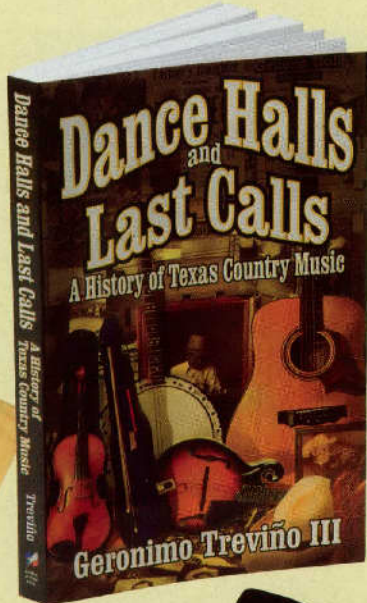
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A TOP O' TEXAS HIGHLIGHT for sure this month is the 90th **Wheatheart of the Nation Celebration**, August 14-22, in the pleasant High Plains community of **Perryton**. Hometown of *Hank the Cowdog* author John R. Erickson, Perryton pulls out all the stops and welcomes one and all for this once-a-year farming fete with a rodeo, Big Brothers/Big Sisters 5K, free breakfast, Main Street parade, golf tournament, free watermelon feed, and Museum of the Plains' Pioneer Days. For details, contact the Perryton-Ochiltree County Chamber of Commerce at 806/435-6575; www.perryton.org.



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BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE: Way Out West Texas Book Festival August 1. Sul Ross State University. www.wowtxbookfestival.com 432/837-3360

ALPINE: Big Bend Intertribal Powwow August 8-9. Kokernot Park. 432/371-2195

EL PASO: Music Under the Stars August 2, 9, 16. Concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. Amphitheater at Chamizal National Memorial. www.elpasoartsandculture.org 915/541-4481

EL PASO: Alfresco! Fridays August 7, 14, 21, 28 Live concerts at Arts Festival Plaza. www.theplazatheatre.org 915/534-0689

FORT STOCKTON: Summer Off the Patio: Andy Wilkinson August 5. Annie Riggs Memorial Museum. 432/336-2264

MIDLAND: Summer Sunday Lawn Concerts August 2, 9, 16, 23. Free one-hour concert every Sunday. Begins at 7:45 p.m. Museum of the Southwest, 1705 W. Missouri Ave. www.museumsw.org 432/683-2882

PECOS: 24th Annual Cantaloupe Fly-In & Lions Club Pancake Breakfast August 2. Pecos Air Center. 432/445-2309

GULF COAST

BAYTOWN: Grape Stomp at Yepez Vineyard August 1. Yepez Vineyard, 12739 FM 2354. www.yepezvineyard.com 281/573-4139 or 281/804-3401

BEAUMONT: Downtown Jazz Fest August 22. www.beaumont-tx-complex.com 409/838-3435, ext. 1

CORPUS CHRISTI: Live Music Bay Cruise August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29. Captain Clark's Flagship. 361/884-8306

CORPUS CHRISTI: Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, & John Mellencamp August 5. Whataburger Field. www.ticketmaster.com 800/745-3000

CYPRESS: Bridgeland Triathlon August 9. USA Triathlon-sanctioned event. 482-meter swim in Lake Bridgeland, 3.28-mile run through the Bridgeland community and along the Cypress Creek Nature Trail, and a 14-mile bicycle course on Fry Road. www.bridgelandtri.com 832/334-6362 or 866/232-0270

HARLINGEN: Blues on the Hill August 15. Live music at McKelvey Park. Free admission. Lawn chairs/beach towels/blankets welcome. www.visittharlingentexas.com 956/423-5440 or 800/531-7346

HOUSTON: George Strait August 8. Reliant Stadium. www.ticketmaster.com 800/745-3000

HOUSTON: Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro August 28-29. Houston Ebony Opera. Miller Outdoor Theatre. www.milleroutdoortheatre.com 281/373-3386

KEMAH: Salsa on the Boardwalk August 1. Enjoy great food and the sounds of salsa and Latin jazz. Kemah Boardwalk. www.kemahboardwalk.com 281/334-9880

PALACIOS: Shrimporee August 2. 361/972-2664

PORT ARANSAS: Texas Legends Billfish Tournament August 6-9. Boats may leave from any Texas port. Activities include captain's party, memorial dinner, and awards brunch. www.txlegends.com 281/474-4000

ROSENBERG: Festival of Glass & Antique Show August 14-16. Fort Bend County Fairgrounds. www.houstonglassclub.org 281/342-4876 or 713/729-4267

SANTA FE: Czech Festival August 2. Music by the Accordion Cowboy. Haak Winery, 6310 Ave. T. www.haakwine.com 409/925-1401

WHARTON: My Fair Lady August 7-9, 14-16, 21-23. Henry Higgins falls in love with Eliza Doolittle in this triumphant show about a cranky linguistics professor's efforts to turn a Cockney flower girl into something like a lady. The Plaza Theatre. www.whartonplazatheatre.org 979/282-2970

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Ottmar Liebert August 7. Popular nuevo flamenco guitarist plays One World Theatre, 7701 Bee Caves Road. www.oneworldtheatre.org 512/329-6753

AUSTIN: Austin Ice Cream Festival August 8. Waterloo Park, 1400 Trinity. www.roadwayevents.com 512/441-9015

AUSTIN: Wicked August 12-30. Long before Dorothy drops into Oz, two girls meet. One with emerald-green skin is smart, fiery, and misunderstood. The other is beautiful, ambitious, and very popular. This show tells how the two grow up to become the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch. Bass Concert Hall. www.broadwayacrossamerica.com 800/731-SHOW

AUSTIN: Austin Chronicle Hot Sauce Festival August 30. Waterloo Park. www.austinchronicle.com 512/454-5766

BANDERA: BR Lightning Ranch Rodeo August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29. www.lightningranch.com 830/535-4979

CASTROVILLE: 127th Annual St. Louis Day Celebration August 23. Celebrates the feast of St. Louis IX of France. Giant barbecue beef and Alsatian-style sausage

dinner. Bingo, horseshoes, and many other games. Live entertainment, silent auction, and a quilt raffle, too. Koenig Park. www.stlouisdays.com 830/931-2826 or 210/287-2642

FREDERICKSBURG: Gillespie County Fair August 20-23. Features livestock, agricultural, and home-skills displays. Includes horse racing, concerts, dances, carnival, and mid-way. Parade begins at 10 a.m. Friday. Gillespie County Fairgrounds. www.gillespiefair.com 830/997-2359

FREDERICKSBURG: Harvest Wine Trail August 21-23, 28-30. Enjoy special events, tastings, tours, food, and live entertainment. Twenty-four Hill Country wineries participate. www.texaswinetrail.com 866/621-9463

INGRAM: Greater Tuna August 7-9, 13-15, 20-22. Point Outdoor Theatre. www.hcaf.com 830/367-5121

INGRAM: The Great Escape August 8-September 5. Hill Country Arts Foundation. www.hcaf.com 830/367-5121

JOHNSON CITY: Blanco County Fair & Rodeo August 13-15. Blanco County Fairgrounds. www.johnsoncitytexaschamber.com 830/868-7684

KERRVILLE: Blithe Spirit August 6-9, 13-15, 20-22. Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. www.caillouxtheater.com 830/896-9393

LAKEWAY: Live at the Lake Summer Concert Series August 9. 107.1 KGSR presents Bob Schneider at Lakeway Resort and Spa. www.lakeway.dolce.com 512/261-6600 or 800/525-3929

OZONA: Davy Crockett Festival August 22. Fair Park. www.ozona.com 325/392-2547

STONEWALL: LBJ's Birthday Celebration August 27. Lyndon B. Johnson State Park & Historic Site. www.tpwd.state.tx.us 830/644-2252

STONEWALL: Grape Stomp August 29-30. Celebrating the grape harvest at Becker Vineyards. www.beckervineyards.com 830/644-2681

TAYLOR: 32nd International Barbecue Cookoff August 14-15. www.taylorjaycees.org 512/275-6196

PANHANDLE PLAINS

AMARILLO: Music in the Gardens August 3, 10, 17, 24. Amarillo Botanical Gardens. www.amarillobotanicalgardens.org 806/352-6513

AMARILLO: Bayer Select AQHA World Championship Show August 31-September 6. Amarillo National Center. www.aqha.org 806/376-4811

DALHART: La Rita Theatre XIT Melodrama August 6-8. www.dalhart.org 806/244-5646

DALHART: XIT Rodeo & Reunion August 6-8. Celebrates the cowhands who worked on the famous XIT Ranch. Includes nightly rodeos, dances, free watermelon feed on Friday, World's Largest Free Barbecue on Saturday, queen's contest, street parade, 5K run, tractor pulls, fiddlers contest, and more. Rita Blanca Coliseum & Rodeo Grounds, 1219 FM 281. www.xit-rodeo.com 806/244-5646 or 806/333-5564

DALHART: XIT Arts & Crafts Show August 7-8. www.dalhart.org 806/244-4434

MULESHOE: Mule Days Celebration August 15. www.muleshoe.org 806/272-4248

POST: Post Stampede Rodeo August 6-8. Post Stampede Rodeo Grounds. www.postcitytexas.com 806/495-3461

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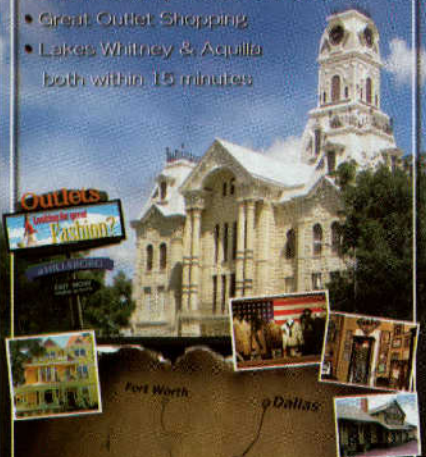
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www.hillsborochamber.org

Traveler



True West

THE WEST TEXAS TOWN OF SONORA hosts its biggest annual event, **Sutton County Days**, August 14-15, featuring a pro rodeo, popular parade, arts & crafts, food booths, live entertainment, and much more. While you're in town, be sure and visit the lovely Caverns of Sonora, Eaton Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, the Old Sonora Ice House Ranch Museum, historic Main Street, the 1891 county courthouse and square, Miers Home Museum, Bank Vault Park, and the Old Santa Fe Depot, and also play a round at the nifty nine-hole Sonora Golf Club. For more information, call 325/387-2880 or 888/387-2880; www.sonoratx-chamber.net.

POST: Post City Celebration Days August 8. www.postcitytexas.com 806/495-3461

POST: Post Stampede Rodeo Parade August 8. Main Street, downtown. www.postcitytexas.com 806/495-3461

QUANAH: 39th Annual Rodeo & Parade August 7-8. Riding Club Arena. www.quanahnet.com 940/663-2222

WICHITA FALLS: Hotter 'N Hell Hundred Weekend August 28-30. Popular USA Cycling event. www.hh100.org 940/322-3223

PINEY WOODS

CARTHAGE: Texas Country Music Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony August 15. New inductees Linda Davis, Michael Martin Murphey, and Neal McCoy enter the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame. www.carthagetexas.com 903/693-6634

HENDERSON: 154th Sacred Harp Singing August 8-9. Community Center, 302 Fair Park. www.hendersontx.us 903/889-3344

NEW BOSTON: 39th Annual Pioneer Days Festival & Rodeo August 12-15. T&P Trailhead Park, downtown New Boston. www.newbostontx.org 903/628-2581 or 903/276-5880

RUSK: Wild West Dinner Train August 1. Enjoy a three-course meal on board the Wild West Dinner Train during a two-hour ride departing from the Rusk Depot. www.TexasStateRR.com 888/987-2461

THE WOODLANDS: Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, & John Mellencamp August 2. The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. www.woodlandscenter.org 281/363-3300

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ATHENS: MDA Rodeo August 20-22. Includes kids rodeo on Thursday and concerts on Friday and Saturday. Henderson County Fair Park Complex. 903/489-2652

BELLEVILLE: 35th Bellville VFD Celebration August 21. Includes family activities and car show. Austin County Fair Convention & Expo Center. 979/865-2456 or 979/865-3407

BRYAN: Damn Yankees August 1-2, 6-9. Tejas Center. www.theatrecompany.com 979/779-1302

CHAPPELL HILL: Lavender Fest August 8. Chappell Hill Lavender Farm, 2250 Dillard Road. www.chappellhilllavender.com 979/251-8114

CLIFTON: Tractor Pull August 15. Includes a judged tractor pull, antique-tractor exhibit, ice cream freeze-off, music, and food. City Park. www.clifontexas.org 254/675-3720

DALLAS: The Fascinating World of Butterflies August 1. Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park. www.texasdiscoverygardens.org 214/428-7476

DALLAS: USA Gymnastics Visa Championships August 12-15. Features the country's best gymnasts at both the junior and senior elite levels vying for national titles and spots on the U.S. National Team. American Airlines Center, 2500 Victory Ave. 214/222-3687

DALLAS: Caterpillar Crawl August 15. This is a great introduction to the world of butterflies. Texas Discovery Gardens at Fair Park. www.texasdiscoverygardens.org 214/428-7476

DALLAS: Mamma Mia August 18-30. On the eve of her wedding, a daughter's quest to discover the identity of her father brings three men from her mother's past back to the island they last visited 20 years before. Smash Broadway musical based on the hit songs of ABBA. Music Hall at Fair Park, 909 First Ave. www.fairpark.org 214/565-1116

DALLAS: Ray Wylie Hubbard August 22. Granada Theater. www.granadatheater.com 214/824-9933

DE LEON: Peach & Melon Festival August 3-8. De Leon Community Park. www.deleontexas.com/chamber 254/893-2083

DENTON: 81st Annual North Texas State Fair August 21-29. Features a world championship rodeo, music, carnival rides and games, fiddling contest, petting zoos, and barbecue cook-offs. North Texas Fairgrounds, 2217 N. Carroll Blvd. www.ntfair.com 940/387-2632

FORT WORTH: First Fridays at the Modern August 7. Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. www.themodern.org 866/824-5566

FORT WORTH: What a Wonderful World—Family Funday August 9. Discover how artworks share stories, connect communities, and inspire imagination. Amon Carter Museum. www.cartermuseum.org 817/989-5030

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra August 28-30. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwsymphony.org 817/665-6000

GRAND PRAIRIE: Maze Featuring Frankie Beverly August 1. Nokia Theatre. www.nokiatheatredfw.com 214/373-8000

HIGHLAND VILLAGE: 22nd Annual Lions Club Balloon Festival & Fair August 14-16. Copperas Cove Park. www.hvballoonfest.com 972/539-0332

HONEY GROVE: Bugtussle Trek August 22. Vintage vehicle show on the square. www.honeygrovechamber.com 903/378-7211

LOCKHART: Music on the Square August 27. Downtown Courthouse Square. www.lockhartchamber.com 512/398-2818

NAVASOTA: Blues Fest August 7-8. Grimes County Fairgrounds. www.navasotabluesfest.org 936/870-3331

ROUND TOP: Shakespeare at Winedale August 1-2, 6-9. Includes performances of *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Richard III*, and *Cymbeline*. Winedale Shakespeare Barn. www.roundtop.org 979/249-4042

SALADO: Salado Legends August 1. Weaves together the legends of the Tonkawa Indians, the dreams of Spanish explorers, and the hopes of Scottish settlers. Tablerock Festival of Salado. www.tablerock.org 254/947-9205

SALADO: 43rd Annual Salado Art Fair August 1-2. Pace Park. www.salado.com 254/947-5040

SEGUIN: Seguin Birthday Celebration August 8. Conservation Society Complex. www.seguintx.org 800/580-7322

WACO: 14th Annual Margarita & Salsa Festival August 29. Heart O' Texas Fair Complex, 4601 Bosque Blvd. www.arthritis.org 254/772-9303

WEIMAR: St. Michael Harvest Feast August 9. VFW Grounds, 503 Park Drive. 979/263-5212

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

BEEVILLE: Farmers Market August 1. Depot Pavilion. www.beevilletx.org 361/362-0063

GOLIAD: Market Day August 8. Courthouse Square. www.goliadcc.org 361/645-3563

SAN ANTONIO: Ford Canoe Challenge August 15. More than 90 canoe teams compete. Chamber of Commerce. www.thesanantonioriverwalk.com 210/227-4262

SAN ANTONIO: Gartenfest August 21. The Beethoven Maennerchor holds German festivals in its family-friendly Garten & Halle. 422 Pereida. www.beethovenmaennerchor.com 210/222-1521 or 210/930-6374

SAN ANTONIO: Crosby, Stills & Nash August 27. Municipal Auditorium. www.artssa.org 210/226-2891 or 800/745-3000

SAN ANTONIO: Jamey Johnson August 28. Cowboys Dance Hall. www.cowboysdancehall.com 210/646-9378

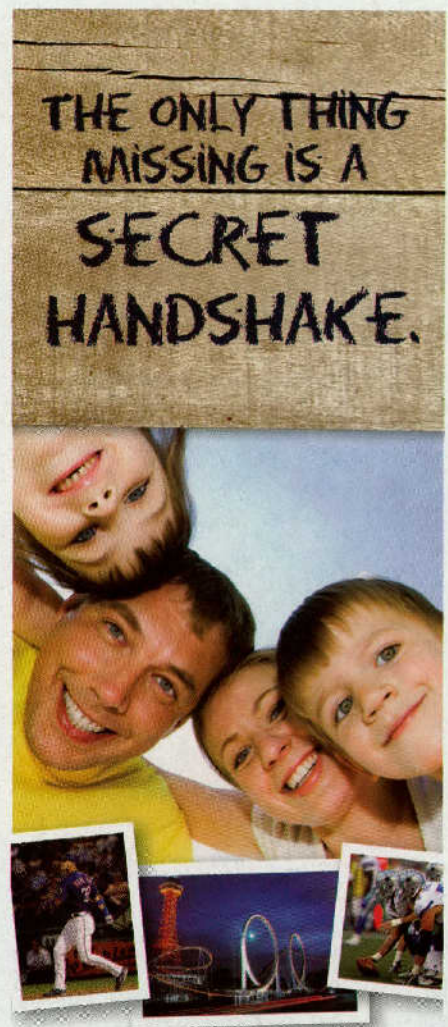
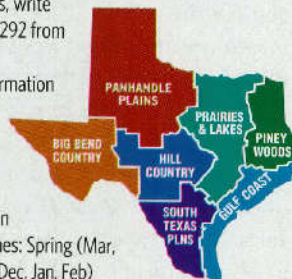
WESLACO: Family Camp-Out August 7-8. Estero Llano Grande State Park, 3301 S. International Blvd. www.worldbirdingcenter.org 956/565-3919

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)



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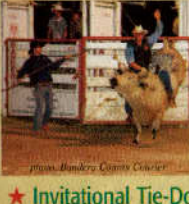

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Talk

continued from page 51

TH READER RECOMMENDATION

Hello, Deli

ON A RECENT trip to the Dallas area, I visited **Ben Franklin Apothecary** in **Duncanville**. I had heard about this family-owned business that reminded my parents of the “good ole days.” Inside the store, there’s an old-fashioned deli called **Kitchens Deli**. The sandwiches were great, and the desserts (I had chocolate pie) were simply amazing! They also serve homemade fudge and fountain drinks.

The entire store was special, with boutique items, a hometown pharmacy, and the great food. It had a small-town feel where everybody knew everybody.

KASEY CHESHIER
College Station

Kitchens Deli is inside the Ben Franklin Apothecary at 302 N. Main St.; 972/298-8698; www.benfranklinrx.com.



Rally 'Round Greenville

September 18, 19, 20

- Texas Music Weekend
- Cotton Patch Challenge Bicycle Race & Tour
- BBQ & Chili Cook-off
- RailFest at KATY Depot
- Kids Alley • Art Show
- Fun for the whole family

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For more information, visit The Greenville Chamber/CVB
www.greenvillechamber.com

This ad paid funded in part with City of Greenville, Hotel/Motel Tax revenues.

that ran around the ranch he never explained.) That night for dinner, Mr. Seybold made a big ceremony out of the “law of the West—what you kill, you eat”—when he served the rabbit cooked up with all the trimmings to Roy. (Turns out the “rabbit” was actually chicken.)

If present-day guests have as much fun at the ranch as I did, they will be very fortunate. My wife and I are planning a return trip.

KEN REESE
Ovilla

Way Out West

“Alpine’s Edge” [by Barbara Rodriguez; May] was a nice boost for our town and for the region. The article did not mention Front Street Books, a successful independent bookstore with a branch in Marathon and the largest collection of Big Bend books outside of Sul Ross State University library. FSB also is a sponsor of the Way Out West Texas Book Festival, and its owner, Jean Hardy Pittman, is a powerhouse of civic involvement.

There’s also Kiowa Gallery. The pre-eminent gallery in Alpine, it also was the founder of Alpine’s annual Gallery Night/Artwalk of many years standing.

JIM GLENDINNING
Alpine

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Thanks for the additional information, Mr. Glendinning. Readers, for more on the Way Out West Texas Book Festival (July 31-Aug. 1, 2009), go to www.wowtxbookfestival.com. Artwalk 2009 will be held Nov. 21-22; stay tuned at www.alpinegallerynight.com.*

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.

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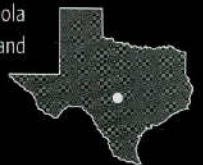


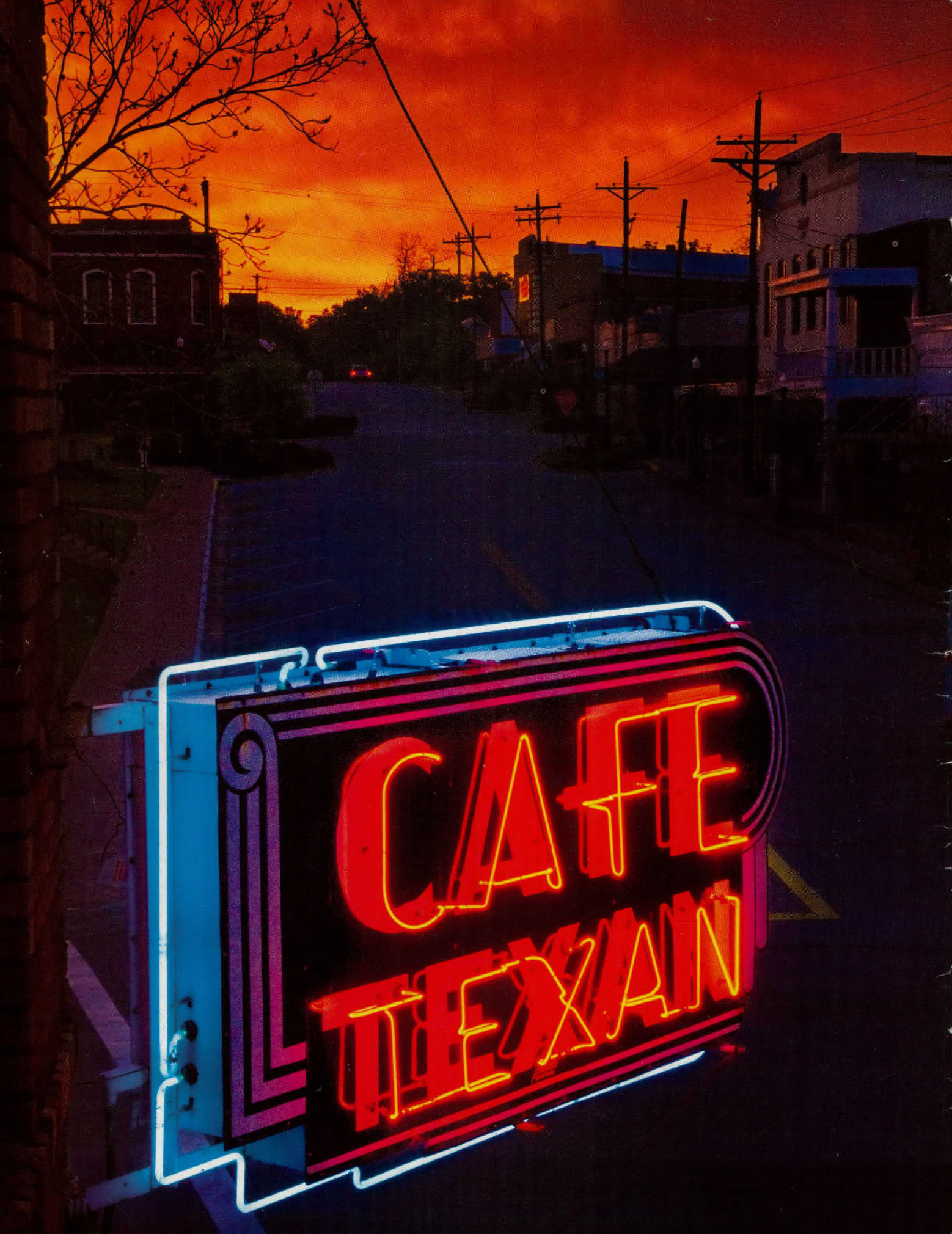


Window on Texas

Photograph by **JULIA ROBINSON**

GOOD TIMES ON THE GUADALUPE On a hot Memorial Day afternoon, Julio Arreola enjoys a powerful shower at the Guadalupe River spillway, near Center Point Drive and Park Avenue in his hometown of Center Point (in Kerr County). Cooling off in the Hill Country's spring-fed rivers and streams is a timeless Texas tradition.





CAFE

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