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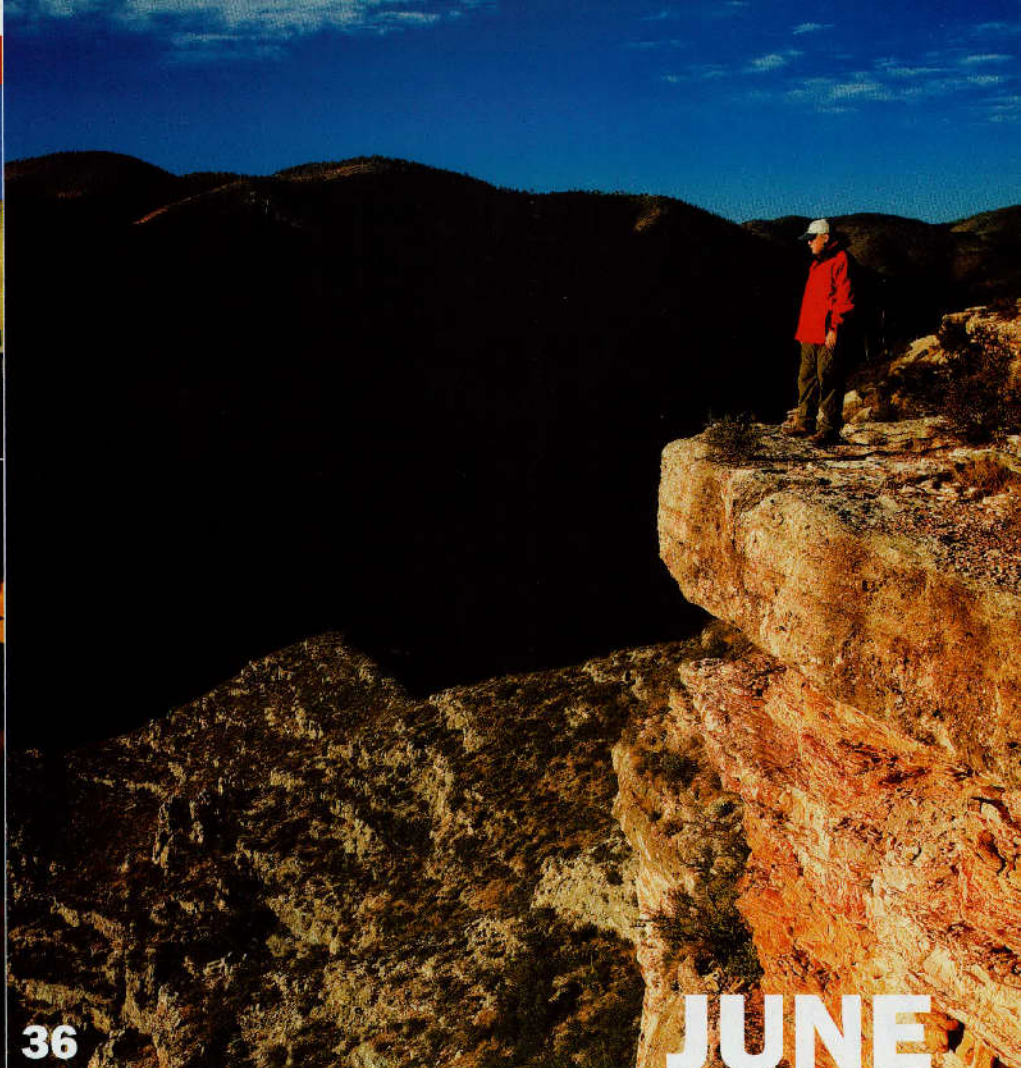
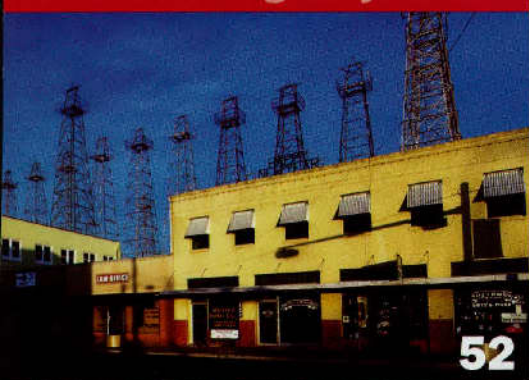


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BY HELEN BRYANT, PHOTOGRAPHS BY SKEETER HAGLER

ABOUT OUR COVERS FRONT: Worlds away from crowds and concrete (and convenience stores), the Chinati Mountains of West Texas offer stupendous vistas. This lofty scene was shot along FM 2810, which runs from Marfa to Ruidosa. Photo © Laurence Parent. BACK: Mango, an African penguin, captures the attention of a young visitor at the Dallas Zoo, and vice-versa. Photo © Louis DeLuca.

PHOTOS FROM TOP LEFT, CLOCKWISE: © SKEETER HAGLER; © LAURENCE PARENT; © RICK PATRICK

COURTESY EL PASO MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY/JASON JURGENA



Adapting to a harsh landscape: Desert poppies cloak the grounds of the El Paso Museum of Archaeology with bright color during the annual Franklin Mountains Poppy Festival, held each spring.

WE HEAR A LOT of talk about “sense of place” and often we’re the ones doing the talking. The notion that a place has its own “sense” is a complex one that encompasses subjective as well as objective truths.

I enjoyed the perfect chance to consider the topic on a spring trip to **El Paso**, where I was invited to speak at the **El Paso Museum of Art**. Even though the museum asked me to talk about the exhibit of American Indian trade blankets and Dale Chihuly’s glass art, I also enjoyed my time with the museum’s permanent collections, especially Tom Lea’s landscape paintings of the region.

The paintings—stark and compelling—combine an artist’s sensibility and a sense of the region’s history—the railroad, the Rio Grande, and the Chihuahuan Desert. The paintings communicate a sense of place, but this was the artist’s response to the environment, not an adaptation to it.

I visited the **El Paso Museum of Archaeology**, where the **Franklin Mountains Poppy Festival** was about to start. I was amazed at how the swaths of yellow poppies cloaked the desert with vivid color. Museum director **Marc Thompson** explained the ways the native people adapted to the desert.

“The message we communicate is that people have been living in this environment for a long time, certainly since the last Ice Age, when the Paleo-Indians, the big game hunters, inhabited the region,” he explained. “The animals of that period have become extinct, but people adapted and survived. Water was always a precious resource in the region. The Rio Grande was always here, but people have had to adapt their housing, their clothing, and their ways of living to fit in this arid environment.

“These people learned ingenious ways of surviving—not evolving, but adapting—and that’s a hallmark of our species: that we’re able to adapt, to make pottery, to use grinding stones, and to work with stone tools. Many of these adaptations are simple and straightforward, but ingenious.

“Now, of course,” Thompson continued, “we’re members of a larger, worldwide community, and technology helps us adapt.” Not that I romanticize an earlier way of life, but I was glad to see the centuries-old artifacts in the museum. They gave me a better sense of how people adapt to the desert.

They gave me a sense of the place.

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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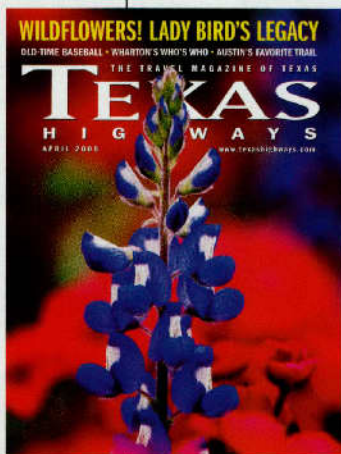
Palacios
del Guadalupe

Wildflowers Worth A Thousand Words

REGARDING the April issue: When I first glanced at the photographs of [artist Malou Flato's] wildflower paintings ["Spotlight on ..."], I thought they were the real thing. And when I turned to the photographs in "Dance of the Wildflowers," I thought they could have been paintings! Great issue, as always. God Bless Texas (and Lady Bird).

BRENDA WOOD
Marshall

FOR THE wildflower poems and beautiful photographs in April's "Wildflowers! Lady Bird's Legacy," thank you from one of that great lady's many admirers. Your pages brought to mind a little book called *The Wildflower*. It has



an introduction by Lady Bird Johnson, a foreword by actress Helen Hayes, and poems by Bette Castro. Some of Bette's lines include:

"We call these magic flowers wild—
Because they scorn man's power/
And live and thrive without his care/
Wild because through drought and storm/
They ride the winds to bring the seasons/
That lift the heart."

Bette is the wife of Nash Castro, the first president of the Lady Bird Johnson

Wildflower Center in Austin, to which Bette still gives all royalties. See www.wildflower.org.

MARYBETH W. LOBDELL
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida

YOU BLEW it with the April issue. I expected to see Lady Bird in a green dress and hat standing in the bluebonnets on the cover. I also expected to see pictures of the snow on the bluebonnets (from last spring). Also,

the blurry bluebonnet photograph [on pages 30-31] is terrible. I'm a faithful reader of TH.

MRS. ROBERT SHIVERS
Colleyville

ED. NOTE: *Thanks for writing, Mrs. Shivers. As a loyal reader, you know that spring wildflower issues are a Texas Highways tradition (bluebonnets first appeared on a TH cover in 1979). So stay tuned—we hope you like what you see next year!*

Inspiration Afoot

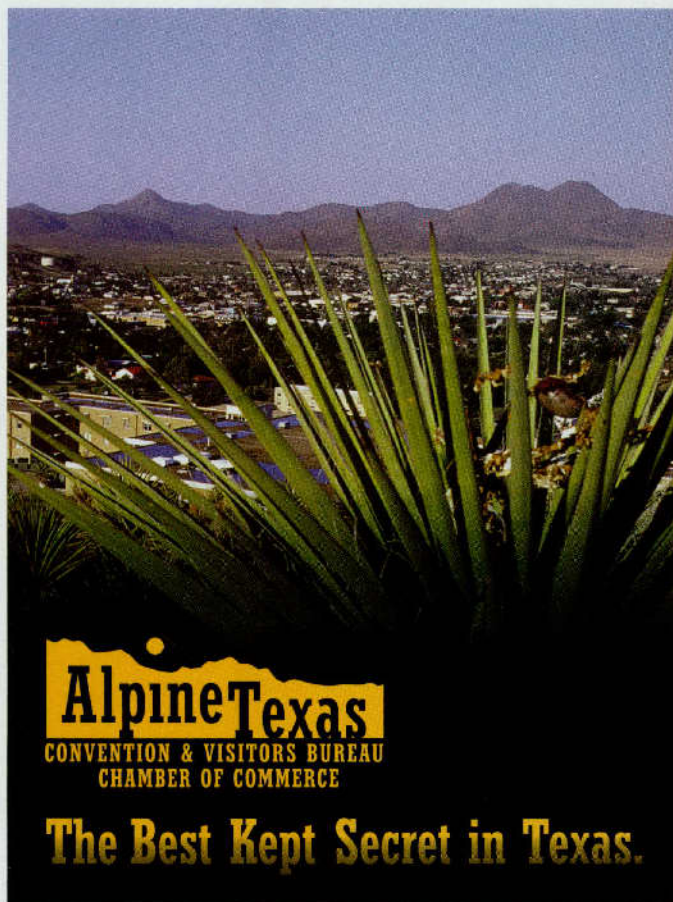
WHAT an inspiration Gilbert Tuhabonye's story is [see "Trail of a City," April issue]. We in the United States take so much for granted! With stories like these, we should realize what a great nation we live in and what a privilege freedom is. Mr. Tuhabonye is truly a blessing to everyone who hears this amazing story.

Thank you for sharing.

RUTHIE ROLLER
Lubbock

The Old Ball Game

THANK YOU for Randy Mallory's excellent article about vintage base ball [April]. I love the way he worked the language of the game into



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Silent Auction, Live Auction and Dance. *Info: Rose, (432) 837-8201*

August 2008

August 8-9 BIG BEND RANCH RODEO - Alpine
Info: Chachi Hawkins, (432) 364-2696

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June 8

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June 13

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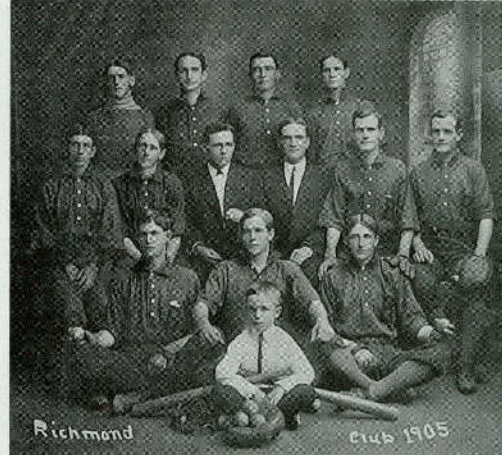
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TALK to TH

COURTESY GEORGE RANCH HISTORICAL PARK



In response to Randy Mallory's April story on vintage base ball, Terri Stuart at George Ranch Historical Park in Richmond sent this archival photograph of the 1905 base ball club founded by Thomas William "Bud" Davis, Mamie George's brother. Home of the Richmond Giants, George Ranch Historical Park hosts a vintage base ball game during the living history center's annual Fourth of July celebration. For more information, go to www.georgeranch.org.

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the article, which will hopefully open additional avenues as we try to grow the sport here in Texas. Hope to see your readers at our games and tournaments this season!

JEFF "PARSON" SCOGGIN
The Colony

Tee-Peepers

AROUND 1950, I was part of an oil-well service crew being transferred from south Louisiana to the Rio Grande Valley. We came to Wharton rather late at night and the Tee Pee Motel was a welcome sight. The lasting impression for me was, in addition to the architecture, a sign on the back of the door that read: "Do not steal. We have your license number!"

DOW HARLESTON
Gilmer

Where Uke From?

HEATHER Brand's "Uke Salute" [April] was very interesting, but I must disagree on the origin of the ukulele. I first visited Hawaii as a young sailor during World War II and have made numerous visits since that time. I also married a beautiful girl from the Islands some 61 years ago.

The ukulele was introduced to the Hawaiians

by Portuguese sailors in the 1800s. The Hawaiians loved the instrument and immediately adopted it as an instrument that blended well into their music style. There is a ukulele manufacturing business on the island of Oahu that is open to the public.

Love *Texas Highways* and never throw it away.

DEWITT MOODY
Orlando, Florida

ED. NOTE: *Thanks for the information, Dewitt. Writer Heather Brand correctly stated that the ukulele was "developed" in Hawaii, but you're right about the instrument's origins in Portugal. The Hawaiian word "ukulele" means "jumping flea," which is, according to one account, a testament to a uke player's speedy fingering.*

Trash vs. Treasure

KEEP UP the fantastic work! I am a native Texan and lived in southern California for two years. My wife and I found a stack of *Texas Highways* magazines next to a dumpster outside our tiny, crowded apartment, and flipping through those sealed our resolve to make it back to Texas (as well as to become subscribers!). Great to be back home.

VINCENT SHEA SELLERS
Austin

Time Marches On

THE MARCH issue is so wondrously beautiful; I am overwhelmed! "Clint: In a Special Light" is more than special; photographer Joel Salcido is an artist of rare aptitude. Clint is a lucky place, and Mr. Salcido caught the town in the best manner.

Also, we did not know about the nature treasure of Nacogdoches [at the gardens of Stephen F. Austin State University]. Randy Mallory's article makes us want to see it.

And Lubbock photographer Artie Limmer has shown Muleshoe (so close to us) in ways we have never seen it. That grain elevator is awesome. And the Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge is most likely the best of all the Texas refuges.

MARGIE JAKOBSMEIER
Lubbock

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FOR THE ROAD

THIS MONTH'S TOP PICKS AND PLACES

Impressive at the Kimbell

ACCORDING TO DR. MALCOLM WARNER, the acting director of the **Kimbell Art Museum** in **Fort Worth**, the Impressionists—the renowned revolutionaries of the 19th-Century art world—were keen observers of modern life. So when we look at their paintings, it's easy to construct stories based on what we observe. What are the people wearing and doing? How are they interacting? "This is why the works are so appealing to us now," Dr. Warner says.

But you can evaluate this theory for yourself: From June 29 through

COURTESY OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, HELEN BIRCH BARTLETT MEMORIAL COLLECTION



One of 92 artworks on loan to the Kimbell Art Museum from the Chicago Art Institute, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *At the Moulin Rouge* (1892-95) depicts the dancers and denizens of Paris' famous cabaret.

November 2, the Kimbell hosts *The Impressionists: Master Paintings From the Art Institute of Chicago*, a collection of 92 masterworks by such painters as Cézanne, Degas, Gauguin, van Gogh, Manet, Monet, Renoir, and Toulouse-Lautrec. The Kimbell is the only place you can see this collection; the works are on loan while the Chicago Art Institute undergoes an expansion by architect Renzo Piano, who will coincidentally oversee the Kimbell's own planned expansion.

Make your plans now, and visit during the week, if you can: Museum officials say that *The Impressionists* rivals the Kimbell's Barnes Collection exhibition in 1994, which drew more than 400,000 visitors and topped all previous Texas art-show attendance records. Call 817/332-8451; www.kimbellart.org. —L.M.

NEW AT THE McNAY

SINCE 1954, WHEN THE MARION KOOGLER McNay Art Institute (now the **McNay Art Museum**) opened in an elaborately tiled Spanish Colonial Revival mansion a few miles north of downtown **San Antonio**, art-lovers have relished the opportunity to view the works collected by one of Texas' most influential philanthropists, the late Marion Koogler McNay. Beginning in the 1920s, McNay collected modern art—pieces by Gauguin, van Gogh, Cassatt, Matisse, and oth-

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ers—before these artists' works became widely popular, and thus amassed a collection that was cutting-edge then and seems preternaturally foresighted now.

On June 7, the McNay Art Museum hosts a weekend-long celebration of its new **Jane and Arthur Stieren Center for Exhibitions**, a sleek, low-slung, light-filled building designed by European urbanist Jean-Paul Viguier, whose contemporary aesthetic is responsible for some of the most stunning aspects of modern-day Paris. The Stieren Center nearly doubles the museum's size. Outside, a new sculpture garden, set off by gray-green stone walls, offers surprise glimpses of the McNay's art and architecture, and unites exterior and interior spaces.

The center's inaugural exhibition, **American Art Since 1945: In a New Light** (June 7-August 24), marks the first time the McNay has been able to showcase the extent of its contemporary artworks. With more than 100 paintings, sculptures, and photographs on view, *American Art Since 1945* picks up chronologically where Marion Koogler McNay's collection left off. "Although she did not live to see the experimentation of the second half of the 20th Century," says William J. Chiego, director of the McNay, "I believe she would appreciate and admire this exhibition, particularly in light of her preference for bold forms, strong color, and evidence of the artist's touch." Call 210/824-5368; www.mcnayart.org. —L.M.

TIME-TRAVELING IN SOUTH TEXAS

YOU'VE TOLD US AGAIN AND AGAIN THAT you love to explore interesting, off-the-beaten-path places in Texas. If that passion extends to **South Central Texas**, set aside some time this month for the 5th annual **Back Thru Time History Trail**. Designed to showcase the area's rich heritage, the "trail" is really a series of roads that wind through seven rural counties within a "triangle" formed by the metro areas of **San Antonio, Victoria, and Corpus Christi**. More than a dozen towns are on the tour, which rotates to a different cluster of communities each weekend in June.

Many of the buildings on the trail feature historic markers, and some—like the Farris Family "Bank" (a restored bank building that's used as a residence) in **Kenedy**, and Picklesmith (a pickle factory housed in a former mercantile) in **Taft**—will be open for tours only during this event. Some of the sites have scheduled special history-related activities in addition to tours. Mission Espíritu Santo in **Goliad**, for example, will present demonstrations of Spanish Colonial



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life and crafts, such as spinning, weaving, basketry, and candle-making.

Other activities include a Juneteenth celebration in **Refugio** that features jazz bands, gospel singers, and a barbecue lunch; and a farmers market in **Yoakum** that offers fresh produce, works by local artisans, barbecue, and live music, all under the rafters of the 100-year-old Yoakum Gin & Feed building. Hosts at many sites will dress in period costumes and offer period refreshments. Most activities are free. Call 361/358-1550; www.backthru time.com.
—N.M.

PRIME TIME

AMID TALK OF HOSTAGES IN IRAN, BOYCOTTING the summer Olympics in Moscow, and the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, Americans in 1980 also indulged in less weighty topics of discussion thanks to the March cliffhanger of CBS' primetime television series *Dallas*. All around the water cooler, people speculated, "Who shot J.R.?"

Dallas, which glorified big hair, big oil, big intrigue, and big betrayal, endured 14 seasons and aired in more than 130 countries. And this summer, the **Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum** in **Austin**, which continues the audience-expanding mission it accomplished with screenings of the recent U2 and Rolling Stones concert films, brings us *Dallas: Power and Passion on Primetime TV*, a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the series that launched a million stereotypes. Along with props, artifacts, costumes, scripts, television clips, and even a re-created set, the exhibition also includes viewings of the short film *Southfork Pilgrims*, in which viewers from around the world share their stories (and songs!) about *Dallas* and what the show meant to them. *Dallas* runs May 31-September 14. Call 512/936-8746; www.thestoryoftexas.com.
—L.M.

HOLY MOLY

WITH THE RELEASE OF HIS NEW NOVEL, *Holy Moly* (St. Martin's Minotaur Press), Texas writer Ben Rehder is drawing a six-book mystery series to a close. Rehder's cult of loyal readers will miss the notably deranged cast that populate his fictional-yet-recognizable Hill Country

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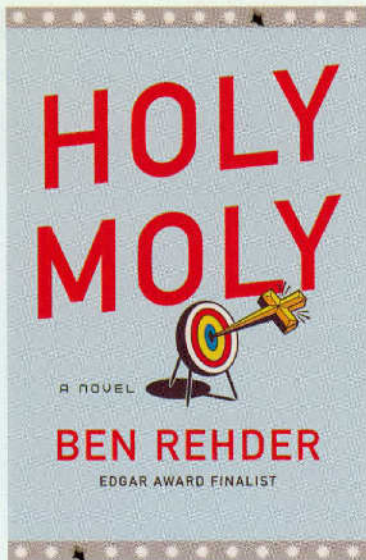
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landscape. We checked in with Rehder to get the backstory.

"One thing I try to do with the books is to give readers a glimpse of the people who inhabit the rural areas of the Hill Country. We have an amazing mixture of people out here: wealthy landowners, weekend ranchers, authentic cattlemen, tree-huggers, old hippies, people fleeing the city, rednecks and bubbas, retirees, trophy-hunters, poachers and other outlaws, and, of course, ethical outdoorsmen. Granted, my characters are largely caricatures of all of the above."

And who are these characters? "I've got a couple of poachers named Red and Billy Don in the series," Rehder explains. "These guys essentially have good hearts but bad intentions. The number-one comment I get from readers all across the nation is, 'Hey, I know those guys!' So it appears we don't have a



corner on the market when it comes to redneck poachers. They're all over the nation, but with different accents."

But should the books offer more urban Texas settings? Rehder suggests otherwise: "I set the series in a rural area because, in my opinion, the big cities aren't quite as Texan as they used to be. The bigger cities are becoming homogenized and diluted. If you want to experience 'real' Texas, you have to get

in your car (or truck) and drive out past the city limits."

What's next? "Right now I'm working on a semi-comic novel that takes place along the border near Laredo. I can't imagine setting my books anywhere but Texas. We already have enough fiction that takes place in New York or L.A., don't we?"

—C.L.

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Spotlight

ON EARLY TEXAS SCHOOLS

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Back to the Classroom

AS AN INVETERATE BACKROADS rambler, I enjoy a particular affinity for mysterious derelict buildings and out-of-the-way communities that are bricks-and-mortar ghosts of a time long past. In most cases, these looming, sometimes frightening, wrecks represent faded memories or dreams and aspirations either outgrown or abandoned. When I spot these re-purposed or unpurposed buildings along the sometimes unmarked and often unpaved roads, I know many of them

were once schools that embodied the ambition of the long-missing occupants. Each time I approach the always-open windows or never-open doors, I inevitably sense the presence of teachers and children drifting through the halls.



Opened in 1912 and closed as a school in 1949, the native-stone Clairette school building lives on as a community center. Its WPA-built, star-shaped fountain stands sentry in the foreground.

When I recently discovered the book *Early Texas Schools: A Photographic History* (University of Texas Press), I realized I had found a guidebook that tells the stories of many lost communities now languishing at backroads intersections. Because it touches the far reaches of the state, the book photographically documents more schools than I'll probably ever vis-

it. But even though I don't know all the communities represented, I enjoy reading the history and imagining from the photographs what the schools were like in their heydays.

Writer Mary S. Black and photographer Bruce F. Jordan searched diligently to find the institutions included. And while the word "institution" is appropriate for the abandoned Mary Allen Seminary in Crockett or the WPA high school building in Yoakum, it's far too grand for Kimbell County's modest Ivy Chapel and School, the crumbling adobe schoolhouse in Terlingua, or the Junction School on the Pedernales River, where Lyndon Johnson studied as a child and to which he returned in 1965 to sign the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

As they gathered the stories for this book, Black and Jordan focused on Texas schools built between the 1850s and 1930s. This is the period when the quest to offer education was an outgrowth of a general passion for a better life in

FOR MORE information about *Early Texas Schools: A Photographic History*, go to www.utexas.edu/utpress/books/blaeer.html.

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tough, often unforgiving, country. After that period, folks began to shift away from the rural settings and into larger towns and cities, leaving the rural school districts to consolidate among themselves and, in many cases, to slowly decline.

The stories of these schools, and the people who built them, resonate so clearly today because they are the personal stories of struggle, commitment, and survival against powerful odds.

Some of the schools, such as Austin's Huston Tillotson, started small, but laid the groundwork for important institutions that continue to play a role in education today.

The stories of these schools resonate so clearly today because they are the personal stories of struggle, commitment, and survival against powerful odds.

Others were built and maintained, and then redirected to another use for the community, just as San Antonio's Ursuline Academy is open today as the Southwest School of Art and Craft.

I'm particularly taken by the Clairette school (locals pronounce it with three syllables: Clare' - e - ette) that sits beside Texas 6, just off U.S. 281 between Hico and Dublin. Or if you'd rather be even more obscure, between 281 and Alexander. Built in 1912, the two-story, native stone school building survives as a community center and polling place. In 1939, Works Progress Administration workers added a star-shaped fountain when they built a recreation building nearby. Even though the old school building is still in use, the recreation building is just a shell, and the authors aptly compare its foundation posts to headstones in a cemetery.

The stories of these schools are inspirational, but it is still the abandoned buildings themselves that speak most provocatively. I believe the buildings are haunted by hopeful spirits. And the scrape of a broken door against an out-of-kilter frame recalls the energetic youngsters busting in to sit down and get to work.

For all its dreams faded and promises not delivered, an old school building still embodies a very real aspiration. Perhaps by seeing where these institutions started folks on a path to larger community, it's possible to gain insight into how we relate to education today.

—CHARLES LOHRMANN

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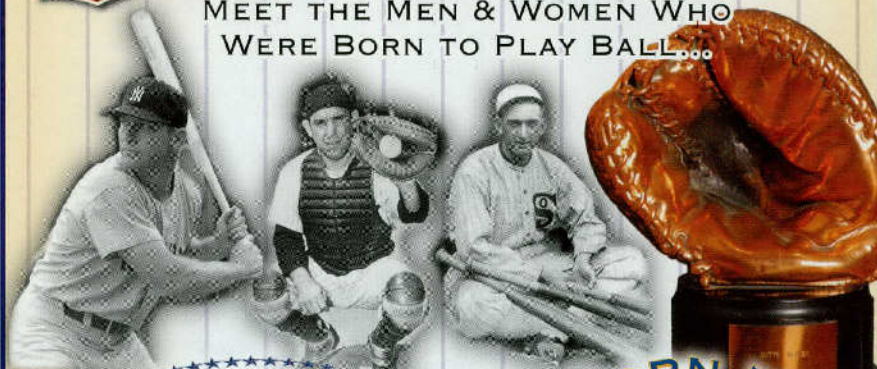
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TOP Tables

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STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY RANDY MALLORY

Rib Run

WHEN FOLKS in the Piney Woods of northeast Texas crave smoked pork ribs, they make a beeline for a little place five miles west of Kilgore called the Country Tavern.

Over the past 30 years, I've made countless rib runs from my Tyler home to this legendary eatery where meat falls easily from the bone. Recently, I'd heard rumors of changes at the barbecue mecca, changes that made it less of a beer joint with food and more of



Country Tavern waitress Mary Stuart hustles a tray of barbecue plates to eager customers. Opened in 1939, the family-run business is famous for its succulent ribs and brisket and also offers tasty sausage and turkey.

a family restaurant with honky-tonk flair. As I open the front door of the Country Tavern, I aim to find out.

Hanging on the wall inside are the framed photos that have greeted me many times before—autographed pictures of such famous patrons as actors Larry Hagman

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and Robert Duvall, country musician Toby Keith, and former President George H.W. Bush. As on previous visits, a half-dozen young waitresses in blue jeans and polo shirts are shuttling trays of steaming-hot barbecue to 200 or so diners.

A pert young greeter gives me a warm "Howdy" and shows me to my seat in one of the red-vinyl booths that line two walls of the main room. At one end, there's the familiar bar, swivel stools, and a pool table; at the other, a jukebox still blares country tunes, though the music is digital, not from vintage vinyl. In the

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middle of the room, tables are packed together, leaving only a hint of a dance floor. But something about the scene seems fresh and new—sort of like a historic photograph that's been retouched.

Overhead, large, exposed air-conditioning ducts pipe in cool, fresh air, and gone is the once common honky-tonk haze (smoking is allowed only at the bar). New lighting brightens the space. Off to one

seekers on a pilgrimage to barbecue heaven.

Waitress Linda Stuart, who has worked here for nearly 20 years, appears out of nowhere to take my order. Country Tavern once offered only platters of pork ribs or beef brisket accompanied by mustard-laced potato salad, dill pickles, a round of onion, and slices of white bread. Those platters remain the house favorites by a long shot, but now you can

I'd heard rumors of changes at the Country Tavern, changes that made the barbecue mecca less of a beer joint with food and more of a family restaurant with honky-tonk flair.

corner there's a new 60-seat banquet room—with a horseshoe-shaped bar—for private parties or overflow seating.

That's all well and good, but what about the food? What about the legendary ribs and brisket and that sweet-spicy table sauce? My culinary angst subsides as I watch some people in the boisterous crowd lick their fingers and voraciously gnaw ribs to the bone. They seem like succulence-

also choose platters of smoked turkey or smokehouse sausage, or a mixed platter, with sides of coleslaw, beans, or chips.

My order soon arrives—my standard hot ribs and a cold beer—and my heart sings. It's déjà vu all over again. My tried-and-true Tavern technique starts with devouring one or two of the ribs dry, without sauce. These loin-back pork beauties have been basted with a savory sauce

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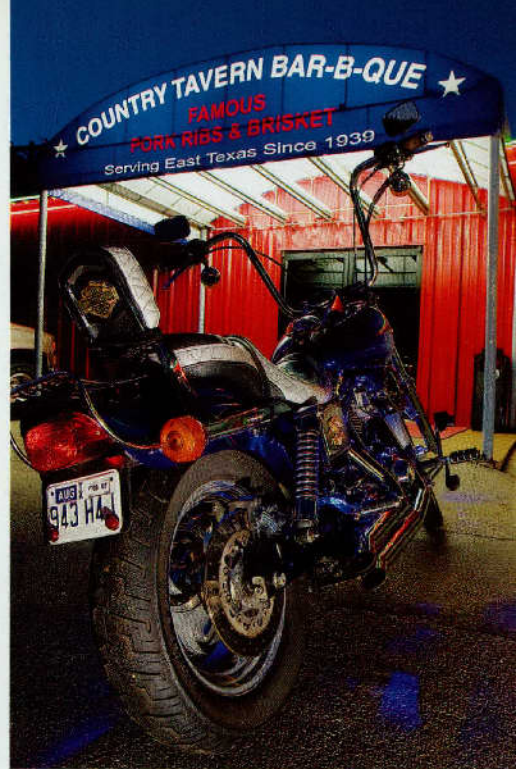
TOP Tables

(ketchup and vinegar, for the most part), then slow-cooked over hickory at around 230 degrees for more than four hours. The smoky, spicy flavors fire up my taste buds like a light brightens a dark room.

The remaining ribs I slather liberally with the Tavern's signature table sauce (similar to the basting sauce, but thicker, with more spices), then I get down to busi-

ness. Once the inevitable pile of picked-over bones reaches its apex, I transform a slice of white bread (the only time I eat the stuff) into a platter-cleaning device to sop up what's left of the drippings and sauce. Mercifully, my waitress shows up with a moist, warm cloth for cleanup. She asks if I'd like homemade peach or blackberry cobbler topped with Blue Bell vanilla ice cream. My answer—despite a creeping sense of satiation—is an emphatic “Oh yeah! Gimme blackberry.”

This is my first visit to the Country



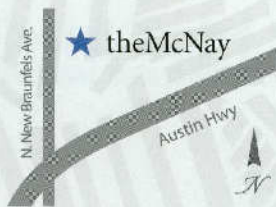
Though recently remodeled, the legendary eatery retains its honky-tonk roots. Neon lights and a jukebox with country-western tunes await inside.

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Tavern since the untimely death several years ago of its beloved longtime proprietress, Lois Pilgrim Mason, who was known for greeting customers at the door with a smile and a hug. Her grandson Toby Pilgrim is now at the helm, so I talk with him to get the lowdown on the changes.

Pilgrim tells me that in 1939, Roger and Ivy Lee Sloan opened the original Country Tavern Café beside their liquor store (the building that once housed it still stands). Then and now, the property sits near several honky-tonks and liquor stores clustered at the Gregg County line, just across from “dry” Smith County.

The original Country Tavern burned down and was replaced with a similar structure in the early 1960s, shortly before Mason became a waitress here. A friendly, hard-working woman, she saved up her earnings and bought the place in 1972. By then, the Country Tavern had developed a following among barbecue fans.

Some came for more than the food. When Mason took over, there was still a mysterious door in the men's restroom that led to a hidden parlor (now taken in by the new banquet room) where locals played clandestine hands of poker.

One of the Country Tavern cooks was Maxey Thomas (*continued on page 66*)

R.I.P., OLD RIP

With its thick, reptilian skin, two horns pointing from its head, and a back and tail speckled in spikes, the Texas horned lizard or “horny toad” has, over time, gained a reputation for its durability and longevity. In 1897, Earnest Wood, the justice of the peace for the town of Eastland, took it upon himself to test the reptile’s fortitude by placing a live lizard in the cornerstone of the newly built Eastland County Courthouse to see what would happen.

More than 30 years passed before the cornerstone was reopened. Thousands gathered to see the spectacle and, sure enough, were greeted by the dusty lizard, which County Judge Ed Pritchard held up to the cheering crowd. According to witnesses’ accounts, the horned lizard’s hind leg began to twitch and, after a long slumber, the creature came back to life.

Named for Rip Van Winkle, a folk-tale character who awoke from a 20-year-sleep only to discover the world had changed, Old Rip gained celebrity status and embarked on a national tour that included a meeting with former President Calvin Coolidge. However, Rip’s good luck wouldn’t last long. Within a year of his miraculous rebirth, Old Rip died of pneumonia. His embalmed body now lies in a miniature coffin, which is on display at the Eastland County Courthouse.

Posthumously, Old Rip made headlines again in 1955, when Warner Brothers created a cartoon character named Michigan J. Frog, who burst into song and dance when he was pulled from a cornerstone. In 1962, Old Rip’s remains experienced a close encounter with gubernatorial candidate John Connally, who was accused of breaking Rip’s hind leg. And 11 years later, controversy arose when an anonymous person “toad-napped” Old Rip, who was even-



tually returned unharmed.

Durable and enduring indeed—perhaps this explains why, in 1993, the Texas Legislature named the horned lizard the state reptile.

—Bobby Lynn Shehorn,
Austin

Back in the saddle: Old Rip, Eastland’s legendary horned lizard, reportedly sprang to life after being entombed for more than 30 years.

CULTURE CLUBS

For Mexican-Americans in the 1920s and ’30s, social clubs didn’t involve apple martinis or strobe lights, but rather, young adults gathered in exquisite ballrooms for themed dances, dinners, and athletic events that raised money for local charities.

One of the Mexican-American social clubs that hosted ravishing events was Houston’s Club Cultural Recreativo México Bello. Founded in 1924, it recruited mainly first-generation-immigrant men under the age of 50 who were respected citizens in the community. The club’s philanthropy included helping new immigrants, raising money for the poor, and uniting people from Latin America and the United States. Its emphasis on Mexican culture unified members, bringing together the

Mexican consul and influential journalists and scholars at plush events like the “Black and White Ball.”

Members of México Bello often attended programs held by other local clubs, including Club Terpiscore. Begun in 1937, membership consisted of 13 single women, each in her late teens or early 20s. The group organized themed dances, such as “A Night in Old Mexico,” and hosted various programs to raise money for the Salvation Army and other organizations.

Capturing the athletic side of Mexican-American women, Club Femenino Chapultepec provided social and recreational activities, which enabled young women to network within the community. The club also sold government bonds and provided sugar stamps during World War II. Through the sponsorship of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), the club emphasized acquiring U.S. citizenship and advocated having careers, according to the book *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History* by Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten.

Although few of the social clubs remain in existence, they did break



Círculo Femenino México Bello, shown here in 1936, was the women’s chapter of Club Cultural Recreativo México Bello, a men’s social club.

ground for many young Mexican-Americans in Texas and beyond, and helped develop confidence and community for future generations through charity, elegance, and culture.

—Regina Philip, Austin

Because of the **Wind**

MOST MUSICIANS REGARD TOURING AS A NECESSARY EVIL, a mere means to the glorious end of standing up on stage and sharing their souls with an adoring crowd. You have to have a special constitution to endure a life ruled by flight delays, unforeseen traffic jams, bad directions, and other kinks that happen along the way. But if you're smart, or restless, you learn to embrace the experience, to find the romance. If you're Joe Ely, you craft indelible songs from it, with titles like "Time for Travelin'," "Highways and Heartaches," "Drivin' Man," or "I'm on the Run Again." Or you borrow tunes of wanderlust from Butch Hancock ("Lord of the Highway") and Jimmie Dale Gilmore ("Tonight I Think I'm Gonna Go Downtown"), your running buddies in the Flatlanders—a band named for the Lubbock vista you left, but never truly escaped.

Almost every one of Ely's songs contains a location, a destination, a place to be going to or coming from. Methods of travel are often mentioned as well, from pickup trucks and Cadillacs to rusty freights and silver birds, on desolate roads, swollen rivers, or wide runways. Rain, wind, and dust often figure in his vivid stories. And the sky ... that almost infinite Texas sky.

Even his paintings and digital renderings (he's a visual artist, too) are filled with images of travel—telephone poles, tires, and cracked, dry earth—sights you might see from a tour-bus window. Or a DC-9 (though these days, he says he could do without seeing Dallas at night from inside any kind of plane). Ely also keeps jour-

We still
don't know if the
road goes on forever,
but considering how
many hours of his life
Ely has spent on it,
I knew he'd have a few
insights on how to
get from here to there.

The wind may have blown Joe Ely to the four corners of the world, but he's Texan through and through.



nals—written in verse, punctuated by drawings—some of which were released last year as a book titled *Bonfire of Roadmaps*. The title has nothing to do with Tom Wolfe or *Bonfire of the Vanities*, except that, as a child of the '60s, he's as informed by New Journalism and liberal politics as he is by Buddy Holly's rockabilly and the Tex-Mex, country, rock, R&B, and blues he absorbed while parked in some West Texas cotton field, slugging beers and tuning in to the almost-scandalous sounds emanating from those powerful south-of-the-border radio stations.

BORN ON FEB. 9, 1947, AQUARIAN Ely fed his traveling jones early on. He was 11 when his family moved from Amarillo to Lubbock, and 16 when he thumbed his way out. Ely soon took to hopping trains, bound for wherever the rails would take him. They led to New York, where he scraped around before landing a gig playing music in the original production of *Stomp*. Later, every Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico town that welcomed a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus tent was part of his itinerary. Ely managed to last through three states as an animal tender before a horse's kick knocked him unconscious. He hitchhiked back to Lubbock with a pair of broken ribs.

Since then, he's played with the Clash, opened for the Rolling Stones, won a Grammy as a member of the all-star amalgam known as Los Super Seven, and recorded and performed with fellow road gypsy Bruce Springsteen. Ely has often been called Texas' answer to the Boss. Ely's fans—some of whom claim membership in an unofficial troupe known as the



Ely revisits songs from his extensive catalog on *Live Cactus!*, a thrilling new CD with accordionist Joel Guzman.

*Time to part must always come
Time when trade winds sing.
Time to hit the road again
Time for travelin'.*

—from "Time for Travelin'" by Joe Ely



Chihuahuas (inspired, no doubt, by his song “I’m Gonna Teach My Chihuahua to Sing”)—swear the Austin-area resident rocks harder and hotter, even at 60-something, than that Jersey boy (who happens to be 2½ years younger). Last year alone, Ely released his book and two albums: *Happy Songs from Rattlesnake Gulch* and *Silver City*, both on his own Rack ’Em Records label. He hit several festivals with the Flatlanders, took an acoustic swing through the U.K. and the Netherlands, did a minitour with Austin band Reckless Kelly, and rounded the states and Canada with fellow singer-songwriters John Hiatt, Guy Clark, and Lyle Lovett. In November 2007, the Americana Music Association gave Ely a Lifetime Achievement Award for Performing. The tireless troubadour is now touring in support of his latest release, *Live Cactus!*, recorded with accordionist Joel Guzman.

We still don’t know if the road goes on forever, but considering how many hours of his life Ely has spent on it, I knew he’d have a few insights on how to get from here to there. And, most importantly, back again.

MARGOLIS: So, tell me, what’s your favorite way to travel?

ELY: Well, actually, if I was gonna pick a favorite way of just kind of meandering, it would be by bicycle. I ride a bicycle every chance I get. Being 30 miles outside of Austin, sometimes I ride into town just because I like the feeling of being on a bicycle.

I love airplanes because they get you there quick, but I cannot stand airports. Last year, my band rented a bus. And we saved over 500 flights. Airports have gotten to be really painful, and I just don’t like ’em *at all*. Same with cars. I love cars, but I can’t stand interstates. The trucks have taken over the interstates, and they’re too crowded. I take the backroads whenever I can. Whenever I’m going to Dallas, I take US 281 instead of I-35, even though it’ll take me an extra hour-and-a-half, because it’s a beautiful road. Basically, I’m always looking for a slower, more pleasurable way to get somewhere.

MARGOLIS: When you were wandering with no direction, when—or how—did you decide to pick one?

ELY: Well, it kind of picked me. I grew up in Amarillo; half of my family worked on

the Rock Island Railroad, and the other half worked on the highways. My dad worked with a moving-van company, so he was up and down Route 66 and all the Texas highways. When I started playing

“I’ve spent a lot of time in other places, but I just have always felt at home in Texas because it has such variety of landscapes and people, and there’s so much music here, too.”

music and traveling around, I used to jump freight trains and went coast to coast several times, and of course, you pretty much have to go where the train goes. You can’t really pick your destination. A lot of times I’d just take off, and I’d hear about something along the way; someone would say, ‘Oh, you should check out this spot, or you should go there.’ One time we went to New England just to watch the leaves change color—Lubbock to New England. Unfortu-

nately, by the time we got there, the leaves had already fallen off.

MARGOLIS: Were you seeking some of the Woody Guthrie hobo experience? Was it music related?

ELY: Yes. It was all music related. At the time, I didn’t think it was, because I guess I just didn’t know that I’d spend all my life chasing songs. But when I look back, it was all related because I just wanted to find out where songs came from, as if there was a well somewhere that I could drink from. I found many wells, but they were all just temporary. What is really at the core of it all is what’s inside yourself. Tom T. Hall, a great Nashville songwriter, told me one time, ‘Some people can go around the world and not see a single thing, and some people can walk around the block and see the whole world.’ And that’s pretty much what I’ve found from going

off and looking to find out the spot where songs come from—that it was really down inside myself all along.

MARGOLIS: What do you think coming from Texas has provided in terms of informing your searching and your writing?

ELY: For me, it was everything. When I was growing up, I had a sense of where I came from. I had a sense of sky and space and air, and growing up in West Texas, it was a big old empty sky. About

The country life—Ely spends time with his dog, Bruno, at home in the Hill Country near Austin.



the only thing that would fill it up was music. And so, I carried that with me. In fact, every time I'd start a new record, I'd always go up into the High Plains, just go and drive up and down some of those little two-lane farm roads, like FM 400, east of Lubbock, and FM 2111, west of Ballinger and Winters.

MARGOLIS: So what are some of the stranger things you've seen in your travels? What sticks out as something that still boggles your mind?

ELY: A sunset still boggles my mind, and so does a sunrise. Texas has some magnificent sunsets, especially after there's a bit of wind in the day and it whips up a little dust, and then the light comes through it in the afternoon. It can really be spectacular. When you think of this state ... places like Big Bend ... just the hugeness of it all, and there's nothing to mar the emptiness of it. [When you're in one of those places,] you feel like it could be a million years ago.

I was in London recently and drivin' all over England; everything is very

well cared for there, but everything is so crowded. It's hard to get off into a spot where you're by yourself or where there's the emptiness. And I guess that's why I've always stayed in Texas. I've spent a lot of time in other places—some really gorgeous places—but I just have always felt at home in Texas because it has such variety of landscapes and people, and there's so much music here, too.

ELY: (Laughs.) You know, I never have. I have thousands of roadmaps, and we are talkin' about makin' a bonfire of roadmaps, but I never have yet. The title came from a little passage in the book. We had done this tour, and we noticed this danger wrought in everything behind us. Like this ferry that we took sunk the next day, and then there was a big crash on the autobahn at a place we'd just passed, and

“Texas has some magnificent sunsets, especially after there's a bit of wind in the day and it whips up a little dust, and then the light comes through it in the afternoon.”

MARGOLIS: Where's your favorite place to see a sunset?

ELY: I'd say somewhere along the line between Laredo and Dalhart, and anywhere west of that.

MARGOLIS: Is your fondness for bicycling what inspired your efforts to collect bicycles for the people of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina?

ELY: Yes, that was one reason. My wife [Sharon] got together with some of our friends in radio here, a local bicycle shop, mechanics, and volunteers, and a couple thousand bicycles were collected in, like, a weekend. Everybody pitched in. It was an amazing effort. And I'm sure a lot of people appreciated those bicycles ... I'd like to see more bicycle roads in Texas. In Holland, there are highways just for bicycles that go completely across the whole country.

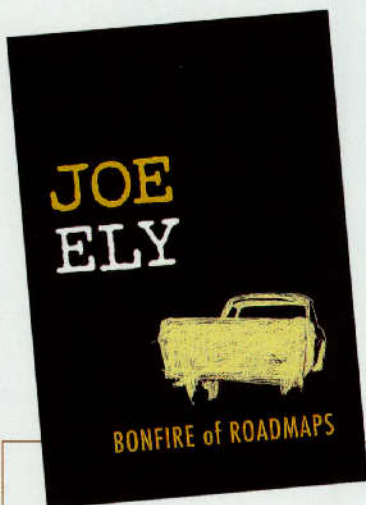
MARGOLIS: One more question: Have you ever made a bonfire of roadmaps?

when we left Oslo, Norway, the hotel burned down where we had stayed the night before. So at the end of one of the chapters, when the hotel burned down, I said it was just some poor bastard dryin' his socks with a bonfire of roadmaps in the bathroom. It's kind of tongue-in-cheek, but the title stuck because the whole book is about travelin' and tryin' to keep up with day-to-day livin' in a moving world. ★

It took becoming a Texan for LYNNE MARGOLIS to truly appreciate just what an asset Joe Ely is to American music—and to the Lone Star State. As a former resident of Connecticut and Pennsylvania, she loves the idea that Ely would jump a train to see autumn leaves.

Joe Ely's *Musta Notta Gotta Lotta* is one of photographer RICK PATRICK's favorite recordings, especially Joe's version of Jimmie Dale Gilmore's "Dallas." Patrick says, "It's perfect traveling music, and since I love the road as much as Joe, that means many highway miles with a great Texas music soundtrack."

From rocking electric guitar to evocative acoustic, Joe Ely's recordings and live performances touch major chords with fans worldwide.



Read. Listen. Enjoy.

For more information on Joe Ely, and to purchase a copy of his book, *Bonfire of Roadmaps*, or his new CD, *Live Cactus!*, go to www.ely.com.





A PILGRIMAGE TO ONE OF THE LAST NATURAL HOT-SPRINGS



By Dale Weisman

Photographs by Laurence Parent

I'm basking

in a hot-springs pool, soaking it all in: the immense desert solitude, serrated mountains ablaze in the morning light, and a trio of high notes—babbling water, rustling cottonwood leaves, and sprightly birdsong.

This is my heart's destination: Chinati Hot Springs, a rustic resort tucked away near the U.S.-Mexico border in the wilds of Presidio County.

I traveled here to satisfy two desires: wanderlust and tranquility. My "inner Cabeza de Vaca" wanted an adventurous West Texas road trip, a journey beyond where the pavement ends. On the other hand, wouldn't it be delightful to turn off the ignition and kick back at a secluded hot-springs oasis?

The road to Chinati begins in Marfa, where I head southwest on FM 2810, a blue highway that winds 54 miles to the tiny border village of Ruidosa. Also called Pinto Canyon Road, FM 2810 is one of the most spectacular drives in Texas. The blacktop cuts across mile-high desert grasslands rimmed by the Davis, Del Norte, and Chinati mountains. If the stark scenery looks familiar, you might have seen this big country in recent films like *There Will Be Blood* and *No Country for Old Men*, or in the 1955 classic *Giant*—all shot around Marfa.

Mary Baxter immerses herself in the restorative waters and serenity of Chinati Hot Springs, southwest of Marfa. The geothermal springs gurgle forth at an ahh-inspiring 109 degrees.

Road to Chinati

RETREATS IN TEXAS **SOOTHES BODY AND SOUL**

ROAD TO CHINATI

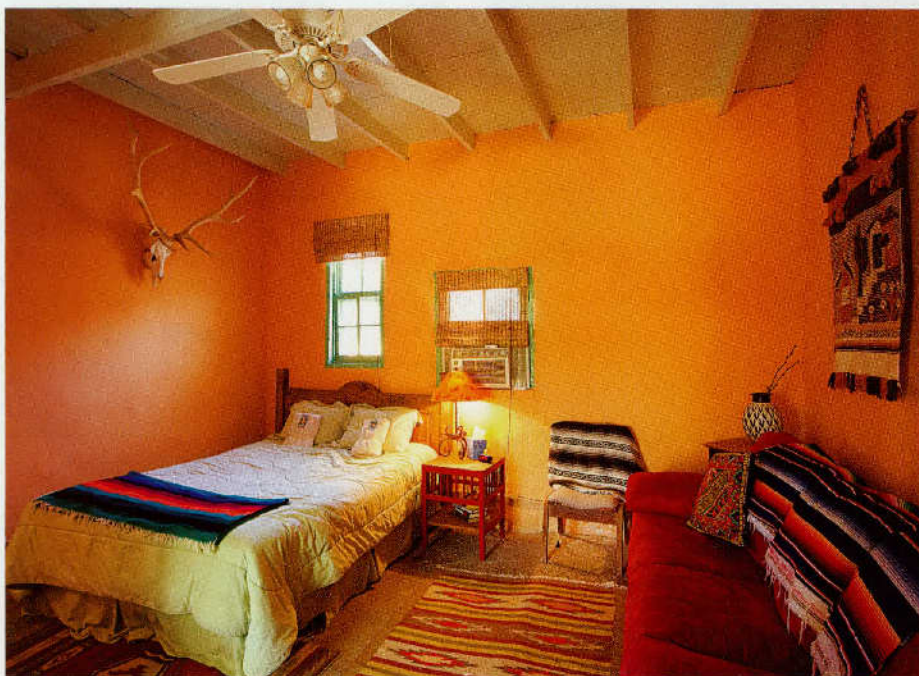
Most maps show FM 2810 petering out 32 miles south of Marfa. Indeed, the pavement ends. But the road goes on—a rough, unpaved track that slices through Pinto Canyon and the forbidding Chinati range and rolls toward Ruidosa on the

Rio Grande. The stretch plunges into a chasm awash in ochre and amber hues, hence the name “Pinto” (Spanish for painted). The rust-colored rimrock of the Chinati Mountains—a tossed salad of igneous intrusions, uplifted lava flows, and metamorphic and sedimentary rock—towers overhead. The massif tops out at 7,728-foot Chinati Peak, one of the Big Bend region’s loftiest.

Chinati, or *chinate*, means “black bird”

in this region. Why the mountain range bears that avian name is as much a mystery as the bobbling Marfa Lights, said to arise near the Chinatis at night.

Private ranch land borders both sides of Pinto Canyon Road. Mindful of trespassing, I stop here and there to gather colorful rocks at stream crossings, photograph javelinas and free-range horses, and ponder some adobe ruins built for the 1950 Western *High Lonesome*.



STEEPED IN HISTORY

“The hot springs have an intriguing, compelling history,” says Chinati owner Jeff Fort.

Much of that history is steeped in lore. Native Americans frequented the springs for thousands of years. Cabeza de Vaca passed this way around 1535, and by some accounts, Spanish explorers visited the springs in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The hot springs’ first known owners were members of the Kingston family, who bought the acreage around 1898 so that they could take advantage of the springs’ healing qualities. One Kingston clan member purportedly bathed in the spring water to cure his arthritis, and was eventually able to walk without a cane.

“We don’t know if the stories are true,” admits co-manager David Sines. However, the book *Taking the Waters in Texas*, by Janet Valenza, confirms some of the lore. The author recounts how the Kingstons piped the spring water into bathhouses, built cabins, and opened the resort to the public in 1937 as Kingston Hot Springs, which operated until 1990.

Donald Judd, the artist who put Marfa on the minimalist map, acquired the land in the early 1990s. Following his death in 1994, the resort remained closed and fell into disrepair. Photographer Richard Fenker bought the property from the Judd estate and reopened it in 1998 as Chinati Hot Springs. Operating the springs as a nonprofit retreat, Fenker hosted photography, nature, and New Age workshops. In 2004, rancher and businessman Jeff Fort bought the property.

Nowadays, Jeff’s vision for Chinati Hot Springs is simple: “Keep it the way it is.” —DALE WEISMAN



Nearly two hours after leaving Marfa, I reach Chinati Hot Springs as dusk falls. A passel of barking dogs greets my arrival. Four of them belong to the amiable caretakers, David and Krissy Sines, who have managed this canine-friendly place since March 2003.

David shows me to my room, El Patron, an adobe cabin with a private courtyard and hot-springs tub. Its decor

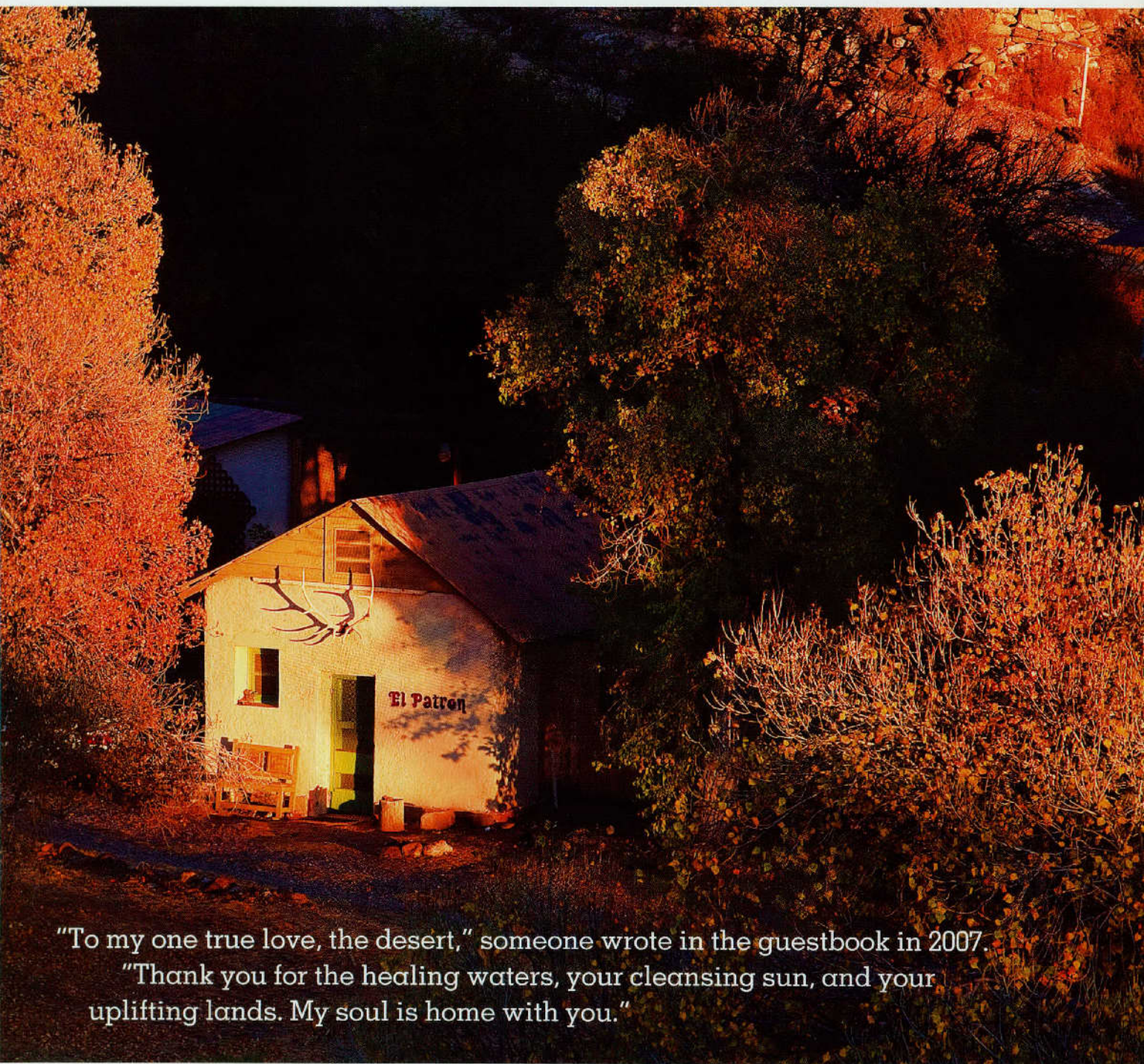
blends Old with New Mexico: elk antlers above a green door, whitewashed walls, and rustic Mexican furniture, blankets, and pottery.

That evening, I join the Sineses for chicken enchiladas in the retreat's spacious kitchen and dining room, construct-

ed of Mexican adobe bricks. Built a couple of years ago, the welcoming kitchen is an essential guest amenity since the nearest restaurant is an hour away in Presidio.

"The kitchen creates a communal spirit, a place for people to cook and hang out," says David, whose dread-

Hot springs-seekers can choose from Chinati's seven lodging options. **LEFT:** The Numero Uno room, with a queen-size bed and foldout couch, sits next to an outdoor hot tub. **RIGHT:** Tucked among the trees, El Patron is one of four adobe cabins built in the 1930s by the resort's original owners.



"To my one true love, the desert," someone wrote in the guestbook in 2007.

"Thank you for the healing waters, your cleansing sun, and your uplifting lands. My soul is home with you."

ROAD TO CHINATI

locks befit his artistic calling: metal sculptor. David and Krissy, a muralist and an art historian, moved here from Dallas on a phone-message dare from a Marfa buddy: "I've got a life-changing proposition for you."

Although Big Bend was terra incognita for the couple, they decided to check out the hot springs—in need of caretakers—in late 2002. The evening they arrived, they sat in a communal tub of steam-

Across the creek, a hiking trail loops across the Chihuahuan Desert. The birding is exceptional. "We get all kinds of birds—painted buntings, cardinals, and elf owls," says David, "and also have sightings of javelinas, coyotes, foxes, mule deer, and wild burros."

"This place has become my vision of art," says David. He helped construct the stone-lined, communal hot tub and laid rock for stairs, trails, and retaining walls. In turn, Krissy spiced up guestroom decor with bright colors and objets d'art. Her favorite room is El Presidente, dubbed "the Elvis room" by guests who love the velvet painting of "The King" and other

and communal baths. The water emerges from the pipes at around 109 degrees Fahrenheit, perfect for whatever ails you. Eventually all the spring water trickles into a series of acequias (irrigation ditches) used to water shade and fruit trees, shrubs, and vegetables.

David and Krissy drink the mineral water now and then, believing it to be safe for occasional consumption. I try the water as well, finding it soft, tasteless, and odorless.

According to a Texas Water Development Board report, the water has been dated back more than 21,000 years, and has traces of dissolved solids rang-

Most maps show FM 2810 petering out 32 miles south of Marfa. Indeed, the pavement ends. But the road goes on—a rough, unpaved track that slices through Pinto Canyon and the forbidding Chinati range and rolls toward Ruidosa on the Rio Grande.

ing mineral water while sleet rained down on them. The magical moment hooked them.

"We fell in love with the place," says David. "This was one of those opportunities that only comes around once in life."

Now into their fifth year as hosts, the Sineses have outlasted previous caretakers, who came and went every few months. According to Krissy, when West Texas rancher and businessman Jeff Fort bought the 640-acre hot-springs property in 2004, it "made a world of difference."

"When the property came up for sale, I thought it would be something I'd like to get involved in to have it done right—more of a restoration than a rebuild," says Jeff.

In addition to building the adobe kitchen, Jeff and the Sineses transformed a hilltop cistern into a swimming pool brimming with spring water cooled by a waterfall. Guests now have a place to chill out during the summer and admire the panoramic views of Hot Springs Creek and the surrounding mountains.

memorabilia as much as the room's sunken mineral bath.

With help from Jeff, the Sineses also turned an old bunkhouse into separate guest quarters and added a new cabin to the existing structures, which date to the 1930s.

"It's nice to keep this place going and help preserve it," says Jeff. "There's nothing better than coming in here on a cold evening and using the hot springs. The water does something for you."

The geothermal water is said to cure everything except laziness. After soaking in the communal pool one sunny morning and then in the evening when a billion stars sparkled overhead, I'd say the hot mineral water actually induces healthy bouts of laziness.

The Spanish term for hot springs is *ojo caliente* ("hot eye"). Once free flowing, Chinati's "hot eye" is now channeled into a concrete box above the outdoor pool. The water is pumped from the springs into a network of pipes feeding into the private

ing from arsenic to zinc. The report calls it "old groundwater, possibly part of a deep-flow system unaffected by modern recharge."

"We don't know if the springs are being replenished," says David. "The flow has gone way down. In the 1970s, it produced about 25 gallons a minute. Now we're getting about 15 gallons a minute."

I hope this fountain of youth flows forever—for countless guests to come.

"To my one true love, the desert," someone wrote in the guestbook in 2007. "Thank you for the healing waters, your cleansing sun, and your uplifting lands. My soul is home with you."

Beyond the reach of cell phones, traffic, and worldly woes, Chinati Hot Springs is my soul's home, too.★

For details on planning a trip to Chinati Hot Springs, see page 33.

Big Bend enthusiast DALE WEISMAN loves hot springs and excursions off the beaten track.

While working on this story, LAURENCE PARENT not only enjoyed long soaks in the hot springs, but also "being in an area with no cell-phone service."

A pool with a view: Soak and admire the setting moon over the Chinati Mountains in Mexico.





The rust-colored rimrock of the Chinati Mountains—a tossed salad of igneous intrusions, uplifted lava flows, and metamorphic and sedimentary rock—towers overhead.



essentials SUPER SOAKING

CHINATI HOT SPRINGS is about 50 miles southwest of Marfa, via FM 2810 (Pinto Canyon Rd.). From Marfa's main street (Highland Ave.), drive west a few blocks on US 90 to Moonlight Gemstones (432/729-4526, www.moonlightgemstones.com). This first-rate rock shop marks the left turn south onto FM 2810. The last 20 miles of FM 2810 are unpaved, and portions of the road through Pinto Canyon are steep and rough, with several stream crossings. *Avoid this route during heavy rains.* While you don't need 4-wheel-drive, it's best to use a high-clearance vehicle with good tires. Allow about an hour and 45 minutes for the drive. See the Web site (listed below) for an alternate route.

Chinati Hot Springs opens year round. *Reservations are a must.* Rates range from \$75 for rooms with shared baths to \$115 for the deluxe El Patron Cabin and El Presidente Suite. The entire resort (7 rooms) is available for reunions and group retreats for \$650 per night. Camping is available for \$15 per person. Guests have free use of the mineral baths. Day use of the baths is \$12.50 per person. The swimming pool is closed during winter. Guests have full use of the communal kitchen, picnic areas, and grills, and should bring their own groceries for meals.

For details, contact Chinati Hot Springs, Inc., 432/229-4165; www.chinatihotsprings.com.

For more on attractions in the area, see "Head on Down the Road" on page 35.



A long-abandoned panel truck punctuates the pristine mountain scene along FM 2810.

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

ROAD TO **CHINATI**



HEAD ON DOWN THE ROAD



Be a “Marfadite”: Marfa boasts a story-book main street anchored by the Presidio County Courthouse. Browse the shelves at the **Marfa Book Company** (432/729-3906; www.marfabookco.com). Treat yourself to a stay at the 1930 **Hotel Paisano** (866/729-3669; www.hotelpaisano.com). Check out the **Marfa Lights** at the viewing site, 8 miles east of town on US 90. Add an “I ■ Judd” bumper sticker to your car, and tour the **Chinati Foundation** (432/729-4362; www.chinati.org), an art museum showcasing the large-scale works of Donald Judd. Learn more about Marfa at www.marfacc.com.

Discover La Junta: The historic border towns of Presidio, Texas, and Ojinaga, Chihuahua (Mexico), are the center of La Junta de Los Rios (Junction of the Rivers)—one of North America’s oldest continually cultivated regions. **Ojinaga** (www.ojinaga.com) is billed as “the most unspoiled town on the border,” with good restaurants and great shopping at **Fausto’s Art Gallery**.

See Ruidosa: Ruidosa means “noisy” in Spanish, and the tiny Texas town is anything but that. The attraction here is the picturesque **1914 Sacred Heart of Jesus Church**, one of the last arched adobe structures in Texas. Next door is **La Junta General Store**, owned by the loquacious Celia Hill. To see where the pavement *really* ends, drive the last 12 scenic miles of FM 170 (**River Road**) to **Candelaria**, the most remote town in Texas.

Explore Big Bend parks: Four miles east of Presidio on FM 170 stands the 1848 adobe compound of **Fort Leaton** (432/229-3416, www.tpwd.state.tx.us), now a State Historic Site. River Road traces the Rio Grande through a scenic slice of **Big Bend Ranch State Park** (432/358-4444, www.tpwd.state.tx.us). Next stop is **Big Bend National Park** (432/477-2251, www.nps.gov/bibe), a sprawling swath of desert-mountain wilderness. If you want to try another geothermal springs, soak in the riverside ruins of a bathhouse that once served guests of the historic Langford Hot Springs resort. —DALE WEISMAN

Undulating grasslands line the road to Ruidosa.

CANYON QUEST

A seasoned hiker discovers a little-known trail
full of spectacular surprises.



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURENCE PARENT

AS WE WATCHED our only vehicle disappear out of the parking lot at the Dog Canyon trailhead in Guadalupe Mountains National Park, we felt a thrill of anticipation. After all, my companions—Larry Henderson and Steve Kennedy—and I now had no choice. Our cars were waiting for us 15 trail-miles over the mountains at the McKittrick Canyon parking area. Short of a long hitchhike on remote roads, there was only one way to get there. We shouldered our packs—weighted down with food, water, camping gear, and, in my case, camera equipment—and started up the trail.

Larry Henderson and Steve Kennedy pause in awe of South McKittrick Canyon, as they descend the trail along McKittrick Ridge, in Guadalupe Mountains National Park.





Larry, a former superintendent of Guadalupe Mountains National Park, had raved about this trail over the years. “It’s a trail of great surprises—rugged canyons, endless views, fall color, and even a mountain stream,” he’d said. “It’s got everything the Guadalupe have to offer.”

In spite of Larry’s enticing descriptions, somehow this adventure had eluded me until I began revising and expanding my book *Hiking Texas*. The time had come to do the hike.

Here’s how we set the plan in motion: I met Steve in Fort Davis at the Old Schoolhouse Bed & Breakfast, which he owns with his wife, Carla. We headed for the Guadalupe, where we dropped our vehicles at McKittrick Canyon. Larry met us there, and drove us into Carlsbad, New Mexico, where we spent the night with him and his wife, Signe. The next day she dropped Steve, Larry, and me off at the trailhead.

We timed the hike for the end of October to catch the brilliant fall color that the Guadalupe Mountains are famous for. We weren’t disappointed. The vibrant gold, scarlet, and orange leaves of bigtooth maples almost made us forget the weight of our packs as we trudged up Dog Canyon. Although fall is my favorite time for Guadalupe hikes, the mountains are usually lush and green in late summer. It can be hot then, but at the high elevations, the temperatures aren’t unbearable even at midday, and the nights are cool.

Bigtooth maples blaze (and flicker) in South McKittrick Canyon during the fall. The McKittrick Canyon treks to Pratt Cabin and the Grotto are favorites for day-hikers.

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





IT'S A TRAIL of great surprises—rugged canyons,
endless views, fall color, and even a mountain stream.
It's got everything the Guadalupe have to offer.

CANYON QUEST

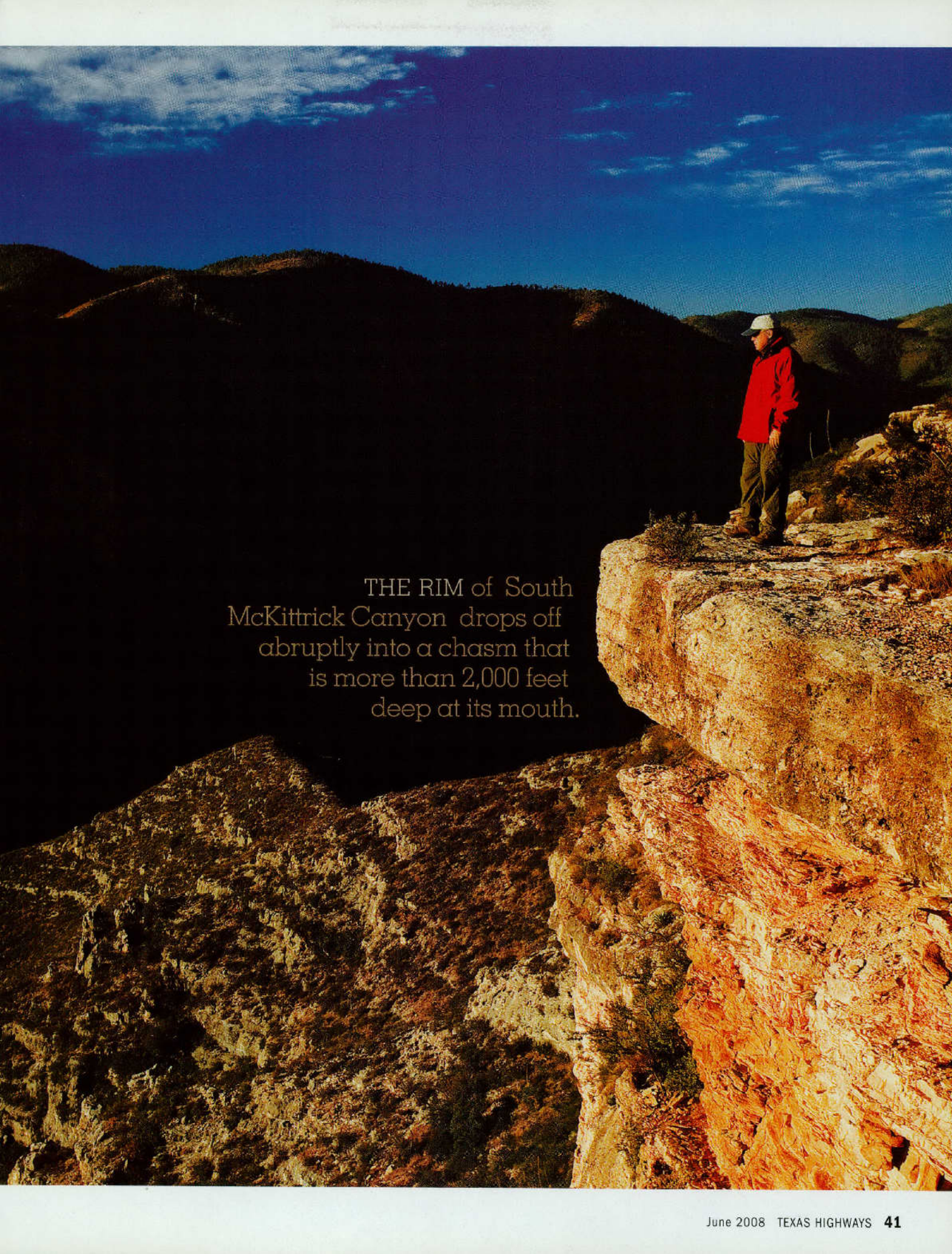
SOON the trail left the canyon bottom and began a steep climb up slopes blanketed with tall grasses and occasional ponderosa pines. When we reached the high ridge just below Lost Peak, three miles up the trail, we were through with the toughest part of the climb. We dumped our packs and admired the flaming colors of the maples far below us in West Dog Canyon, and the endless views across West Texas and New Mexico.

After guzzling some water and resting a bit, we headed about a mile south across the mountain ridges, soon reaching the rim of South McKittrick Canyon. The rim drops off abruptly into a chasm that is more than 2,000 feet deep at its mouth. Sheer cliffs and massive rock fins make it nearly impossible to cross. The trail winds along the rim, alternating between canyon views and dense forest of pine, oak, maple, and Douglas fir. We reached the McKittrick Ridge primitive campsite about an hour before dusk and set up camp in sites protected from the wind and sun by thick woods. Then we walked back out to the rim for the sunset.

While I photographed, Steve and Larry watched the light slowly fade from the canyon walls as the sun sank below the horizon. We soon retreated to camp for a well-earned meal. Even freeze-dried dinners of beef stroganoff and pad Thai tasted pretty good after the long hike. We sat on a log and talked for a while, but when the temperatures fell into the 40s, we slipped into our sleeping bags. Since I hadn't bothered with a tent, I enjoyed the starry sky above before drifting off to sleep. With the dry, high-elevation air and the closest major city (El Paso) some 100 miles west, the sky here is exceptionally dark. Thousands of stars twinkled brightly above.

Steve Kennedy takes in a sunrise view of South McKittrick Canyon from McKittrick Ridge. Guadalupe Mountains National Park has more than 80 miles of hiking trails.





THE RIM of South
McKittrick Canyon drops off
abruptly into a chasm that
is more than 2,000 feet
deep at its mouth.



ALTHOUGH FALL is my favorite time for Guadalupe hikes, the mountains are usually lush and green in late summer.

THE next morning I was up early for photos, catching the sun as it peeked over the plains of West Texas to the east. It rose above the canyon rim, its rays slowly reaching toward the canyon floor. After a breakfast of granola and reconstituted powdered milk, we hit the trail again. By now we'd drunk most of our water and eaten most of our food, so we reveled in our much lighter packs. Soon we began the descent from 7,700 feet

down to 4,900 feet at the canyon entrance. Most of the drop was in the first four miles, a vertiginous plunge down knife-edge ridges and along the rims of sheer limestone cliffs. We marveled that a trail could be built through such steep, rugged terrain.

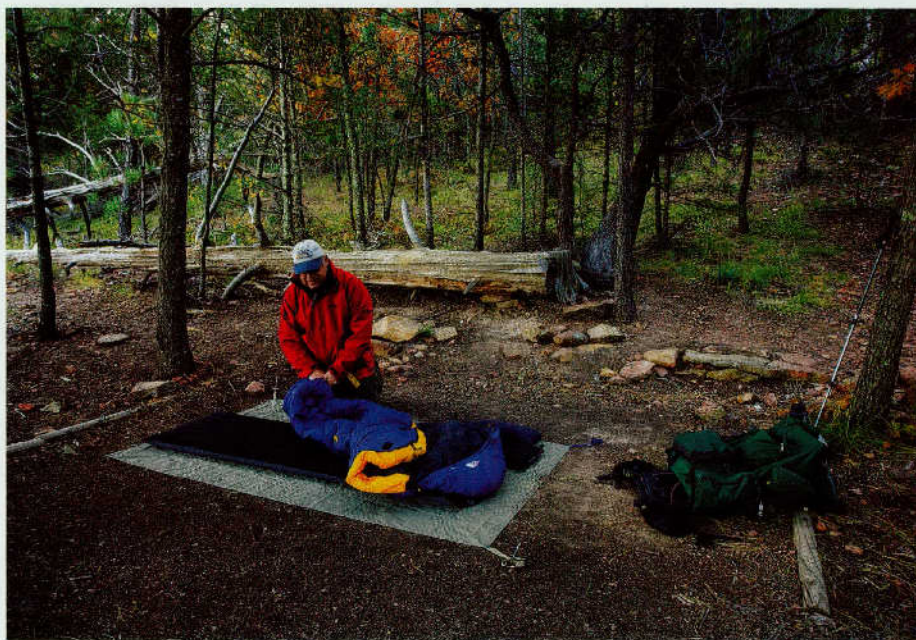
As Steve warily eyed a place where the trail seemed to disappear over a cliff, he asked, "Where does the trail go?"

"Don't worry," Larry replied. "It's Park Service trail-building magic."

Sure enough, the trail did get us down through the cliffs. The gurgling sound of McKittrick Creek welcomed us and our tired knees to the canyon bottom at the Grotto picnic area. As we strolled the easy trail for three-plus miles down McKittrick Canyon, we enjoyed more fall color, although many of the leaves had yet to turn here in the lower elevations. Steve and Larry soon left me behind as I slowly photographed my way downstream for two or three hours. We rejoined at the parking lot.

"My stamina was challenged," Larry said dryly. Steve had more colorful language to describe his physical condition. But it was worth it, we all agreed.

Steve headed home to Fort Davis while I returned to Carlsbad with Larry for a real meal, a shower, and a bed. Larry was right. The hike rates up there with the South Rim at Big Bend National Park and Guadalupe Peak for sheer spectacular scenery. It's now one of my favorites. ★



ABOVE: After a chilly night at the McKittrick Ridge primitive campsite, Steve Kennedy packs up in preparation for another day in hikers' paradise. FACING PAGE: Jaw-dropping views (like this craggy South McKittrick Canyon scene) await explorers in the rugged wilderness.

essentials A HIGH-COUNTRY HIKE

THE ENTRANCE to Guadalupe Mountains National Park is on US 62/180, about 110 miles east of El Paso. The 15-mile hike from Dog Canyon to McKittrick Canyon is strenuous, but poses no problem for a fit hiker. The trail is well-marked and maintained.



Because Dog Canyon is considerably higher in elevation than McKittrick Canyon, it's much easier to start the hike in Dog Canyon. You need a car shuttle to avoid retracing your route. With an early start, the trail can be hiked in a day by strong hikers, but it's much more relaxing to camp for a night at McKittrick Ridge campground. Take clothing and gear appropriate for the weather. Even in summer, it can get chilly at night in the mountains. For a one-night backpacking trip, take 1.5 gallons of water per person, possibly more in summer.

Park entrance fees are \$5 per person. A free permit is required for primitive camping. For more information, contact Guadalupe Mountains National Park, 915/828-3251; www.nps.gov/gumo.



The new edition of LAURENCE PARENT's *Hiking Texas* (Falcon Press) is due out this fall. His revised *Official Guide to Texas State Parks* (University of Texas Press) will also be released this year.



generations of fun!

A FAMILY REUNION TO-GO IN DALLAS

BY KITTY CRIDER PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOUIS DELUCA

It was a different trip to Dallas. No fine dining. No Cowboys game. No opera. No conference. No symphony. No shopping.

Instead, I recently journeyed to Big D for a family-friendly weekend, a cool adventure with educational elements that would keep three generations entertained, exercised, and amazed.

Call it a modern-day minireunion. As empty nesters, my husband and I want to keep family bonds strong, so, at least once a year, we organize a weekend road trip with our older son, his wife, and their two little boys, and together, we visit the other son, who's single and lives in Dallas. None of this sitting around and shelling peas and just talking, like our ancestors did during family visits, though. Today's multi-tasking families—mine included—want *action*. So we research our destination each year, seeking out activities that everyone will enjoy.

ABOVE: Caribbean flamingos at the Dallas World Aquarium invite speculation: Are these guys having a serious discussion or just comparing the size of their beaks? FACING PAGE: A four-inch thickness of seamless acrylic separates a bonnethead shark from visitors as they walk through the aquarium's 40-foot-long shark tunnel. Natural light shines through a greenhouse above and illuminates the 400,000-gallon exhibit.





None of this sitting around and shelling peas and just talking, like our ancestors did during family visits. Today's multitasking families—ours included—want *action*.



For instance, have you ever walked through a sunlit tunnel of live sharks? It was a highlight for our young grandsons, ages four and six, at the Dallas World Aquarium.

Have you ever ridden a mile-long monorail over acres of African animals? It was a thrill for my daughter-in-law, a nature-loving former schoolteacher, at the Dallas Zoo.

Can you remember the *first* handheld calculators? A collection dating to the late 1960s at the Museum of Nature & Science sparked memories for my husband, the electrical engineer in our group.

Mixed in with these finds were interactive exhibits for all ages and great photo ops (dare you to stick your head in the mouth of a life-size gator statue!), not to mention an indoor dino dig. Air-conditioned spaces and places are a bonus during Texas summers, and we found them.

Kids—and adults—need some down time, so we usually plan one enlightening activity a day, arriving at the opening hour when places tend to be less crowded and it's easier to maneuver a stroller or keep your party together. We also make sure we choose a hotel with a swimming pool. Balance pool time with something educational, and everyone wins.

We'll spare you our vacation videos, but here's a snapshot of what you might see on one of these family-friendly outings.

The Dallas World Aquarium is a favorite destination of ours—and of 600,000 other guests annually—and not just because you can walk through the aforementioned tunnel with sharks swimming overhead. Opened in 1992 by caterer and animal-lover Daryl Richardson, the site has expanded from one 8,000-square-foot aquatic area to 110,000 square feet of gallery space that includes a number of nonaquatic exhibits, too.

A winding, inclined pathway takes visitors through six creature-inhabited regions. One of the most spectacular is the multistoried Rainforest, where great efforts have been made to replicate the residents' natural habitats. The animals here are particularly popular with visitors, according to Paula Branshaw, director of husbandry for the facility, which is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. "Guests love the sloth exhibit, for example," she told me.

The sloths, which look something like fuzzy Sesame Street Muppets, hang out in a tree in the open, where visitors can

FACING PAGE, LEFT: Kissing cousins? The unicorn (left) and the bristletooth are both surgeonfish, which have sharp spines on both sides of their tails. ABOVE: In another aquarium exhibit, a giant river otter entertains a family from Little Rock, Arkansas.

■ To order a print of the photograph on the facing page, call 866/962-1191, or visit www.texashighwaysprints.com.



Kids—and adults—need some down time, so we usually plan one enlightening activity a day, **arriving at the opening hour when places tend to be less crowded.**

get an up-close view—a plus since these animals are not seen live in many places. Visitors also flock to the Rainforest to see poison dart frogs, emerald boas, vampire bats, anacondas, crocodiles (feedings on Saturdays only), red-bellied piranhas, and many, many species of birds.

Some of the aquarium's stars are downright adorable. The little blue penguins, for example, are less than a foot tall. They swim

playfully in a pool in the Mundo Maya region, an eight-story exhibit that focuses on the habitat of the ancient Mayas.

The presence of all these animals surprises many visitors. "Some people say

it's like a zoo," said Branshaw, "and it is; everything just centers around water. It's often referred to as an aqua zoo."

During our family's visit, the mailman arrived with 20 boxes of live crickets, a delivery he makes every other day so that aquarium staff can feed the lizards, fish, frogs, birds, and monkeys. It was a reminder that the exhibits in the aquarium are living exhibits. In fact, feedings are popular times. A crowd of people, many snapping pictures with their cameras, gathered in front of a 40-foot viewing panel to watch divers toss lettuce to the turtles and manatees in a 20-foot "river"

ABOVE: Open wide! These menacing-looking jaws are part of a 40-foot-long cast of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* at the Museum of Nature & Science. **FACING PAGE:** A diver at the Dallas World Aquarium cleans the Fiji exhibit, which features sea anemones, live coral, and a giant clam.

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

Natural History, which merged with the Dallas Children's Museum in 2006. Since the three organizations combined, the new museum has invested more than \$1 million in installing new and upgraded exhibits, including a Texas Dinosaurs-Fossil Dig. Unlike other dino digs we have visited in Austin and Fort Worth, this one is indoors. Reigning over it is a life-size cast of a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, which once lived in Big Bend and weighed as much as seven tons.

Staffers encouraged the children to look for casts of dinosaur leg bones in the huge "sandboxes" on either side of the *T. rex*, while a cast of the *Quetzalcoatlus northropi*, a giant, bird-like creature with a wingspan of up to 40 feet, "flew"

overhead. In a separate room, we saw a huge footprint—the actual mud print—of a *Paluxysaurus* found in Glen Rose and dug up in 1938 that was big enough for an adult human to sit in.

Next, we explored interactive science exhibits that made our heads spin with optical illusions, challenged us to experience gravity, and explained how cell phones work. After a crash course in the science of tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes, we found our inner-weatherman personalities and stood in front of a screen superimposed with a weather map while a working TV camera "broadcast" our predictions to a nearby monitor. And the calculator display left us shaking our heads at how large and staid the early

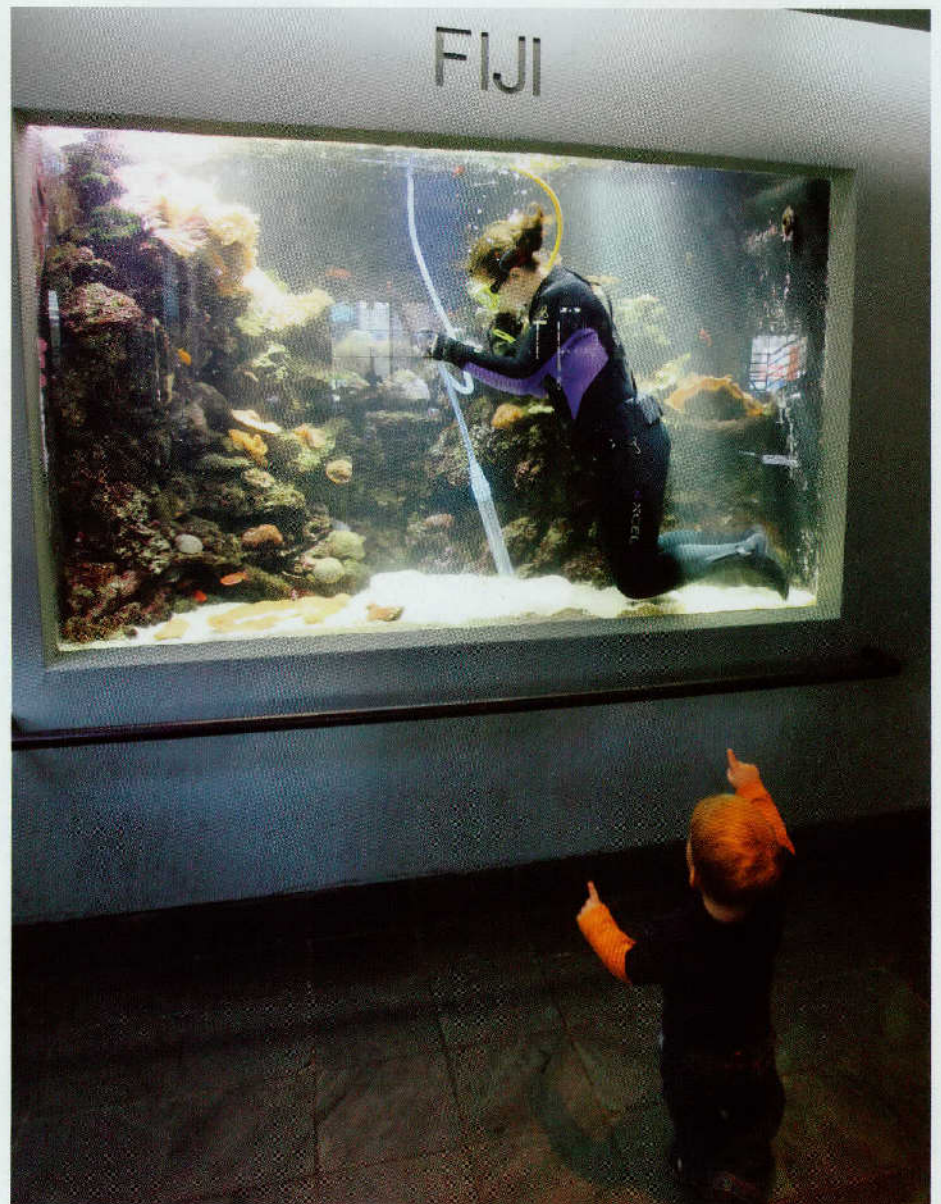


exhibit that holds 200,000 gallons of fresh water. The playful manatees—marine mammals related to elephants—eat 100 pounds of food a day.

With an admission of \$19 for adults and \$11 for kids, the aquarium is pricier than some other Dallas attractions, but it is funded solely by attendance and catering events. On the weekend of our family's visit, there was a wedding, bar mitzvah, birthday party, and corporate promotion booked for the facility's special-entertainment rooms. A friendly Starbucks barista across town told us later, "Oh, I had my prom there."

From live animals, we journeyed to prehistoric ones at the **Museum of Nature & Science** in Fair Park. This attraction occupies buildings of the former Science Place and the Dallas Museum of



From the moment we entered the gates and spotted the carousel of endangered animals and the signs to the mile-long safari monorail, we knew we would have a good visit.



ones were, compared to the stylish and colorful models of today.

Following the mooing sounds we heard from downstairs, we came upon the large farm area where the preschool crowd can “milk” a life-size model of a cow, gather eggs, and pretend to harvest crops. Next to it is a backyard area with live bugs and snakes. Also nearby stands a new interactive fire station exhibit, complete with hats, gear, and a firetruck playscape. Older kids enjoy the exhibit halls with dioramas of Texas birds, mammals, bison, and wetland animals in the building next door. We ran out of time before we got to the IMAX and the planetarium on the grounds. Another trip.

If you’ve ever driven I-35 East to Dallas, you’ve probably seen the 67-foot giraffe statue heralding the Dallas Zoo, a 95-acre park south of downtown. From the moment we entered the gates and

spotted the carousel of endangered animals and the signs to the mile-long safari monorail over the “Wilds of Africa,” we knew we would have a good visit.

But expect the unexpected. Animals, like kids, provide their own special entertainment. Take Excrement Alley. That was our label, not the zoo’s, after an African elephant let one drop right in front of us, and a lowland tapier shot a stream of urine like a fire hose as we neared its cage. “That was worth the trip right there,” quipped my daughter-in-law, as her little boys roared.

Earlier we had visited Bug U, a stone building that offered close-up views of tarantulas, roaches, ants, bees, and other crawling things. But it all paled when we came

across those big animals and their natural functions.

Reticulated giraffes sleep a half-hour a day, usually in five-minute naps, said the sign at the giraffe pen. But why did the long-necked creature keep licking a tall pole, we wondered. (Even the folks at the zoo couldn’t say for sure.) Meanwhile, the small klipspringer antelopes, which walk on their toes like ballerinas, and the okapi—donkey-size animals with 18-inch-long blue tongues and striped legs, faces, and rumps—prompted all sorts of comments, as did other animals. “Is this the result of a one-night stand between an owl and an eagle?” asked my older son, as he peered at a harpy eagle, with its crest of upright feathers looking like a messy hairdo.

Most of the zoo, which also is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is outdoors with wide-open spaces, a great place for kids to run and run and run.

In fact, the zoo offers good exercise for all ages. Here’s proof: Back at the hotel, we were all ready for bed—the kids included—by 9 p.m. It was a peaceful, perfect ending for our minireunion. ★

Austin writer KITTY CRIDER and her family have gathered in Dallas/Fort Worth for five family-friendly weekends. She says the next time they may branch out and hit some Houston attractions.

LOUIS DeLUCA, senior staff photographer of *The Dallas Morning News*, remembers taking his now-grown children to two of these sites. “Between that and having covered all of them for the paper,” he says, “I had a few ideas about what would work for this shoot.”

essentials MINIREUNION IN BIG D

CONTACT information for the attractions covered in the story follows; call or visit the Web sites for directions, admission fees, and parking information. All 3 sites are accessible via DART (Dallas Area Rapid Transit); call 214/979-1111, or visit www.dart.org.

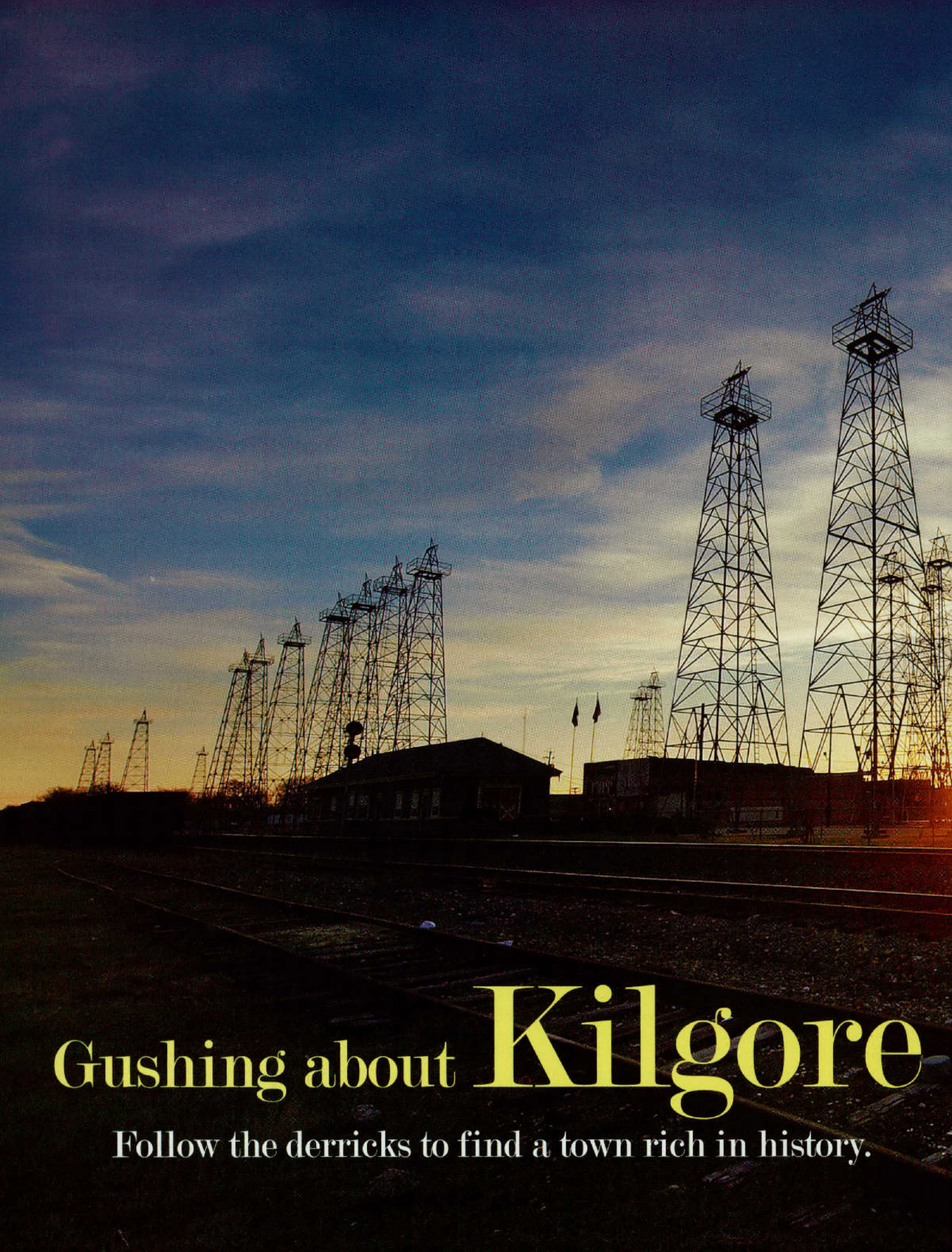


The Dallas World Aquarium, 1801 N. Griffin St., 214/720-2224; www.dwazoo.com. Hours: Daily 10-5 p.m.

Museum of Nature & Science, 3535 Grand Ave. in Fair Park, 214/428-5555; www.natureandscience.org. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun noon to 5.

Dallas Zoo, 650 South R.L. Thornton Freeway (I-35 E), 214/670-5656; www.dallaszoo.com. Hours: Daily 9-5 (9-4 Dec-Feb).

FACING PAGE: At the Dallas Zoo, a little girl checks out the enormous nest in a new playscape, where children can also hide in giant eggs, climb on a rope “spiderweb,” and crawl through a “caterpillar.” **ABOVE:** Zoo visitors get to know a lorikeet, one of some 20 species of friendly birds at Travis & Zach’s Birds Landing.



Gushing about **Kilgore**

Follow the derricks to find a town rich in history.



BY HELEN BRYANT PHOTOGRAPHS BY SKEETER HAGLER

WHEN OIL roared skyward from the Lou Della Crim No. 1 well on December 28, 1930, Kilgore went a little crazy. Virtually overnight, the Depression-battered cotton town became the busiest anthill in East Texas. Men swarmed in by the thousands to look for oil and to work for those who had already found it. Eventually, more than 1,100 oil wells pumped away within the city limits, including a plot

Testing ground for cell-phone towers? Nope. You're looking at many-splendored oil derricks in historic Kilgore. Some 200 pumping wells remain here, and tall titans like these number around 60, each lit with a star during the holidays.

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



Restored derricks looming over Kilgore testify that oil is still the center of the universe here.

Gushing about Kilgore

called the World's Richest Acre because it had the greatest concentration of derricks in the world. Currently, one original and 12 restored derricks punctuate the tract of land.

NOW, nearly eight decades after the boom, restored derricks looming over Kilgore testify that oil is still the center of the universe here. About 200 pumping wells remain in the town, sprinkled everywhere from golf courses to schoolyards. Most of the city's jobs are still oil-related, as are the attractions that bring in visitors.

Oil built Kilgore College, the city's centerpiece, and the college gave birth, with the help of the legendary Hunt family, to the East Texas Oil Museum, whose dioramas, films, and fascinating oral histories "capture a moment in time," as director Joe White puts it.

The college also created the world-famous Kilgore Rangerettes (see sidebar, page 57), the best-known college high-kick team in the nation, along with a museum telling the team's history. It's also responsible for the popular summer Texas Shakespeare Festival, whose first production, 22 years ago, was about—what else?—the oil boom.



Dozens of derricks are scattered throughout Kilgore—downtown, along the railroad tracks, just about everywhere—testimony to the preposterously profound pool of petroleum found in the ground here in 1930. John Ross gives young Cade Silvertooth a haircut at Kilgore's Main Street Barber Shop.



Depictions of Kilgore's oil-boom days are found in the central diorama at the East Texas Oil Museum.

Oil is even the reason Kilgore can claim classical pianist Van Cliburn as a favorite son. Cliburn, who was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, moved to Kilgore as a child, because of his father's job with Magnolia Petroleum.

About the only aspect of Kilgore's history without an oil connection is its Elvis Presley sightings. The King came over from his Louisiana Hayride gigs in the mid-1950s to occasionally sing on KOCA radio, with local girls paid to scream in the background.

A modern-day visit to Kilgore should begin with a look

at its skyline: restored oil derricks stand like sentries off Commerce Street near Kilgore's 1872 rail depot. There are approximately 60 derricks scattered about town, each topped with a big star, lit during the holidays.

Kilgore's oil story is illustrated at the East Texas Oil Museum, which tells how this area was changed forever in October 1930, starting with a gusher at the Daisy Bradford No. 3 well in Rusk County, 13 miles south of town. Two months later, the Lou Della Crim No. 1 came in.

Helen "Pudge" Griffin, who was a child living in nearby

The East Texas Oil Museum portrays early days of the oil boom with a detailed diorama.



Longview at the time, heard all about the influx of men from her late husband, James H. Griffin, who grew up in Kilgore. "Everybody rented every spare room they had. They were living in boxes, anything they could find," Griffin says.

Kilgore's population of some 800 people swelled to more than 10,000 within days. Oil rigs and derricks sprouted up everywhere there wasn't a building. And then, everywhere there *was* a building.

During the oil-boom days, oil companies "would tear down churches, grocery stores, [and] schools to get to the oil. It didn't matter," says Mike Coston, president of the Kilgore Chamber of Commerce. Kilgore soon had to rebuild all that and more as the thousands of men pouring into the city became thousands of families, populating not only Kilgore's schools, but Longview's as well.

"We sat double in the seats and put children in the windowsills [because there weren't enough desks in the schools]," Griffin says.

Kilgore wouldn't get its first paved street for another year. Depictions of the overcrowded town are found in the central diorama at the oil

museum, with trucks, wagons, and horses shown plowing deep ruts into the muddy roads.

The museum also offers a glimpse at the more civilized part of 1930s Kilgore, with replicas of a general store, barbershop, and a pharmacy. A 22-minute film chronicles the oil boom, and throughout the museum, visitors can listen to oral histories. An "elevator" simulates a descent 3,800 feet into the earth, where oil is found. (You don't really move, but it's a convincing jostle.)

As often happens when a population surges, a crime wave floated into Kilgore during the early '30s. When the Texas Rangers showed up to keep the peace, Captain

The Rangerettes: Kilgore's Other Legend



IN 1939, Kilgore College Dean Dr. B.E. Masters figured there were two things the college needed more of: female students and school spirit at football games. So he called Gussie Nell Davis, who had founded a dancing high-school pep squad in Greenville in 1929, to solve the problem.

The result: the Kilgore Rangerettes, a group of high-kicking, big-smiling cowgirls that not only kept fans glued to their seats, but quickly became an international phenomenon. Today, young women still apply to Kilgore College with hopes of becoming a Rangerette.

Ronnie Spradlin, a former Rangerette manager and close friend of Davis, says Davis was a strict guardian of the Rangerettes' image.

"I remember when we were up at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas and she was telling the girls, 'Don't you let a man buy you a steak dinner or even a Coca-Cola; you'll wind up paying for it one way or another,'" says Spradlin.

As the Rangerettes toured Texas—and the world—Davis carried around anything the girls might need, from toilet paper to bloomers.

Davis retired in 1979 and died in 1993, and now the 34 Rangerettes continue the tradition under the direction of Dana Blair.

On the Kilgore College campus, the Rangerette Showcase Museum tells their story with a film, photos, magazine articles, a display of their uniforms, and a tribute to Davis. The biggest tribute, of course, is the Rangerettes themselves.

"You go anywhere in the nation," says Spradlin, "and people know who they are." —HELEN BRYANT



M.T. “Lone Wolf” Gonzauillas wound up living in Lou Della Crim’s dining room.

Griffin remembers hearing about the day the Rangers closed the “bawdy houses” down. According to reports, the Rangers “ran the girls down the street like cattle and put ‘em on boxcars and took ‘em out of town on the rails.”

Wild Kilgore eventually tamed down, but the oil wells kept pumping, even after the boom officially ended with the arrival of World War II, when the major oil companies purchased a majority of the independent oil wells.

For children of Kilgore, oil was a way of life. “The first time I went to Dallas [as a child], I looked around and asked, ‘Where are all the derricks?’” says Ronnie Spradlin,





who runs East Texas Lumber in Kilgore, a store established by his grandfather.

Spradlin's father, Sonny, arrived in Kilgore in 1931 and remembers "seeing the streets go from mud to concrete." He also recalls, as a teenager, dating the same girl as future star pianist Van Cliburn, who was known by fellow students as the guy who was excused from physical education so that he wouldn't hurt his hands.

Sonny used to see movies at the 1939 Crim Theater, the only cinema between Dallas and Shreveport that had air conditioning at the time. It was packed with Kilgore residents for the premiere of *Strike It Rich* (1948), a movie partially filmed in Kilgore starring Rod Cameron and Bonita Granville. The theater closed soon after.

Neither the Crim nor the 1931 Texan Theater across the street shows movies now.

The 1931 Texan and 1939 Crim theaters light up Kilgore Street. Three cast members perform as dance-hall girls during *Boom*, a Kilgore Historical Preservation Foundation production about the aftermath of the 1930s oil boom, staged at Kilgore High School Auditorium.

essentials KILGORE

KILGORE is in Gregg County, about 120 miles east of Dallas, on US 259 just south of I-20. For more information, call the Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, 903/984-5022; www.kilgorechamber.com (click on "Community").

ATTRACTIONS

East Texas Oil Museum, US 259 at Ross St. on the Kilgore College campus, 903/983-8295; www.easttexasoilmuseum.com.

Rangerette Showcase Museum, Ross St., one block west of US 259, 903/983-8265; www.rangerette.com/showcase.asp.

One original oil derrick and 12 restored derricks stand at the site of the **World's Richest Acre** at Main and Commerce streets. Historical markers tell the story of the boom. Other restored derricks are sprinkled throughout town.

Lou Della Crim Home, 201 Longview St., not open for tours.

Dean-Keener-Crim House, 101 E. Lantrip St., tours by appointment; 903/615-0050.

The Crim Theater, Texan Theater, and 1930s post office are along Kilgore St.

The **Texas Shakespeare Festival** is Jul 3-Aug 3 at the Van Cliburn Auditorium inside the Anne Dean Turk Fine Arts Building on the Kilgore College campus. For tickets, call 903/983-8601; www.texasshakespeare.com.

LODGING

Best Western Inn, 1411 N. US 259, 903/986-1195.

Holiday Inn Express, 3298 N. US 259, 903/986-3533.

FOOD

Bodacious Bar-B-Q, 7180 TX 42, 903/983-1421.

Boomtown BBQ, 11859 US 259, 903/988-2600.

Country Tavern, Texas 31 West at FM 2767, 903/984-9954.



The Kilgore Historical Preservation Foundation has restored the exteriors of both (along with a majority of the derricks seen around town), but they're currently vacant. The foundation has plans to turn the nearby 1938 post office into a museum.

For now, you can only drive past those Kilgore Street buildings, as well as Lou Della Crim's home on Longview Street, built in 1920. Another home once owned by a Crim family member, the 1876 Dean-Keener-Crim Home on Lantrip Street, can be toured by appointment.

But you don't have to be an oil-history buff to enjoy Kilgore.

This summer's Texas Shakespeare Festival will feature two of the bard's best, *Twelfth Night* and *Julius Caesar*, along with Sherman Edwards' musical 1776 and Peter Shaffer's play *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*.

Although other towns may get more attention for their barbecue, Kilgore is a darn good place to eat the smoky delicacy. Darrell Royal, the University of Texas'

legendary football coach, used to look forward to East Texas recruiting trips specifically so he could eat the sweet-spicy ribs at Country Tavern (see Top Tables, pg. 14). Boomtown BBQ's ribs are a favorite of actor Robert Duvall, who has hired the restaurant to cater parties at his Virginia ranch. Bodacious Bar-B-Q, just off Interstate 20, also has won a lot of fans with its ribs, brisket, and turkey.

So, explore Kilgore's oil history, go to a play, and eat some barbecue, but don't fail to drop by the Rangerette Showcase Museum on the Kilgore College campus, a block behind the oil museum. Oil may be Kilgore's lifeblood, but its heart belongs to the Rangerettes.★

Austin writer HELEN BRYANT has family in Kilgore and likes exploring the history of the stuff that makes her car's engine run.

Until he was assigned to shoot this story, Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer SKEETER HAGLER had been to, or through, almost every town in Texas, except Kilgore. He plans to return soon.

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

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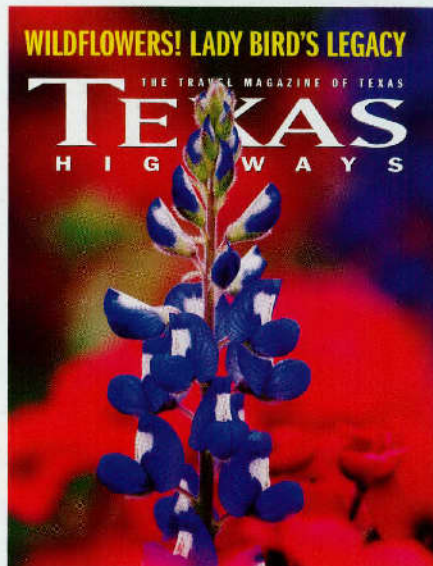
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Just **PASSING** Through

BY DICK HOLLAND

PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

In Search of the Perfect Guayabera

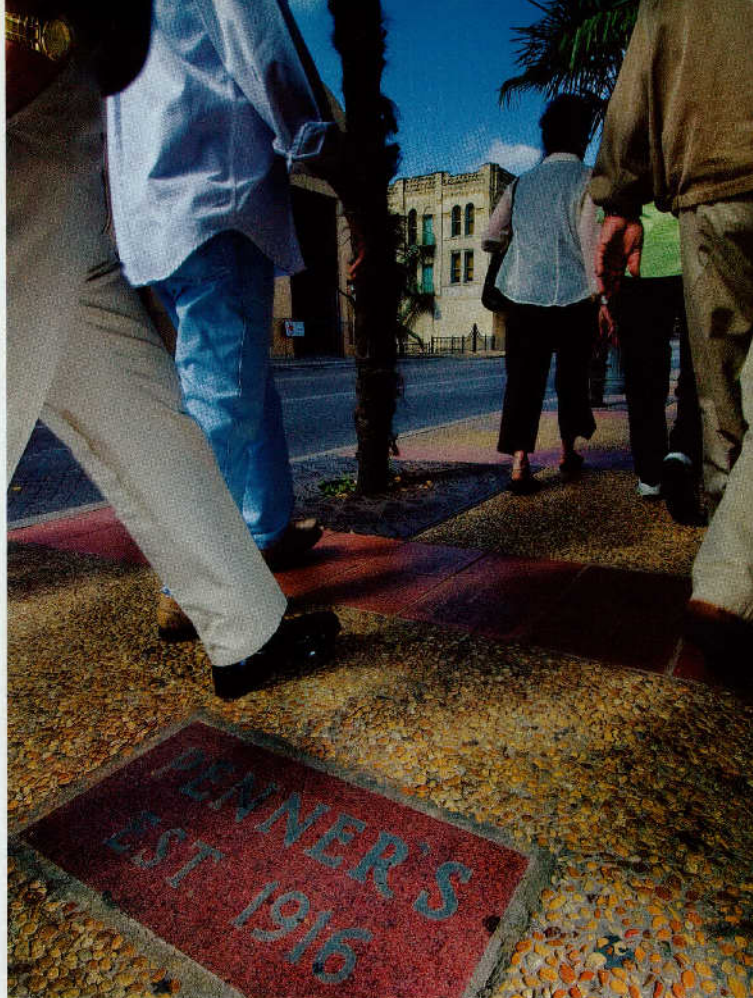
THERE'S an essential, all-purpose shirt that every Texas man should have in his wardrobe. It's one that can be worn casually, with shorts or jeans, or worn more formally with slacks, to weddings—or even to funerals. It's the guayabera, and its origins lie in the Mexican state of Yucatán, or in Cuba, or even in the Philippines, depending on who is trying to sell you one. And since I was trying to *buy* one, I found myself headed to San Antonio, Texas headquarters for all things tropical, and to the venerable Penner's, an Alamo City landmark.

A visit to Penner's to select a guayabera is an easy side trip if you are in San Antonio paying your respects to the Alamo. Just take a two-block stroll from Alamo Plaza down to Commerce Street, and walk west, past the popular Schilo's Delicatessen, established in 1917; past the immense red sandstone Bexar County Courthouse; and almost all the way to historic Market Square, the largest Mexican-style market in the United States. You'll stop two blocks before you reach the market. Here, across the street

from the 1722 Spanish Governor's Palace, you'll find Penner's Men's Store, which has evolved into one of the leading purveyors of Mexico-made guayaberas in the United States.

The store opened on West Commerce in 1916, when a Polish immigrant named Morris Penner started the business as a second-hand clothing store. Before the construction of the River Walk began in 1939, the entire neighbor-

PENNER'S MEN'S STORE is at 311 W. Commerce St., in San Antonio. Closed Sun. Call 210/226-2487; www.pennersinc.com.



San Antonio's Commerce Street bustles today much as it did in 1916, when Polish immigrant Morris Penner started his successful family business.

hood was dominated by open-air food vendors, most notably the "chili queens," who set up makeshift tables where a tamale, a bowl of chili, and a tortilla cost as little as ten cents. Everyone, from city officials to day laborers and shopkeepers, ate lunch side by side in the plaza and the market. Penner's soon became part of the neighborhood landscape, selling clothing to the same downtown citizens who ate lunch just outside the store. After a decade, Penner changed his business model and started selling new clothing, and he moved his store across the street, to the corner it occupies today.

In 1930, Morris Penner's three sons, Sam, Max, and Ben, joined the business. Together, they made a name for the store by stocking clothes, shoes, and hats for men and boys in more sizes and styles than other dry goods merchants. And while the store's selection has always included a wide range of styles, from very casual to very dressy, Penner's has lately become synonymous with a single

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garment that can be both—the guayabera.

Penner's guayaberas adhere to a classic pattern and vary in quality and price according to the fabric. Each side of the shirt front features two rows of very small pleats that run from the yoke on top to the hem on the bottom. Each front side also features four decorative buttons, one on the yoke, one on the hem, and one each on the upper and lower pockets. The back of the shirt has three double rows of pleats anchored by decorative buttons on the yoke and the bottom hem. Because it is designed for a hot climate, the classic guayabera requires only a half sleeve, although long sleeve shirts are available. One story about the guayabera's origin claims that the loose-fitting, four-pocket design was devised by the wives of Cuban farmers so that each man could carry more guavas home from the field during harvest. The bottom hem has a three-inch opening on both sides, adding to the shirt's loose comfort.

These days, Sam Penner's son Mark runs the store, and he showed me some shirts. In the most diplomatic way possible, he walked me upstairs where the store stocks clothing for what I will call the full-grown man. For decades, Penner's sold tropical shirts made in China. But in the early 1990s, the family made an important change, one that has put them in the forefront of the guayabera business: They contracted with shirt makers in the Yucatán city of Mérida, Mexico, to create shirts designed to custom specifications. Penner's



Lavishly embroidered guayaberas are available in luxurious Pima cotton or Irish linen for special occasions.

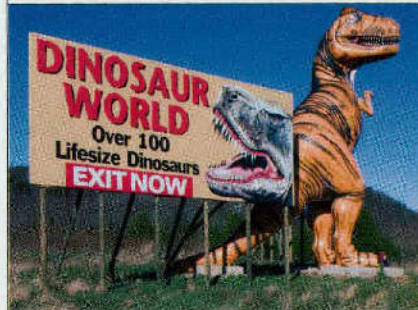
now collaborates with three manufacturers in Mexico, furnishing fabric and buttons so the guayaberas come to Texas in distinctive sizes and colors. The brightly colored and lavishly embroidered Mexican shirts call attention to themselves (and to the wearer), but customers often choose the more sophisticated Pima cotton and Irish-linen shirts for weddings and formal occasions. For those, Penner works with a company in Panama City, Panama.

Mark Penner's son Matt guides Penner's online business, where the majority of today's guayaberas find their owners. In fact, guayabera sales took off after Matt started the Web site in 2001. Customers hail from around the world: from Europe to New York, from New England to Alaska, and from South America to the Rio Grande Valley of



Guayaberas receive the fanfare, but Penner's also specializes in hard-to-find sizes in pants, jackets, and dress shirts—for both men and boys.

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- Honietta
- Hereford
- Hillsboro
- Houston (11)
- Houston Area (Deer Park)
- Houston Area (Humble)
- Houston Area (Stafford)
- Houston Area (Webster)
- Humble
- Ingleside
- Irving
- Jacksonville
- Jasper
- Johnson City
- Junction
- Kaufman
- Kerrville
- Kilgore
- Killeen
- Kingsville
- La Porte
- LaGrange
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- Laredo
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- Lockhart
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Texas. Many businesses, including restaurants requiring staff wardrobes, place large orders. The store is closed on Sunday, and on a typical Monday morning, the Penners find more than 100 orders waiting online.

Worried about fit? Don't be. "I have eight tailors here working full-time," says Mark Penner. "If you buy a suit or a shirt before 11 in the morning, we can have it altered for you before closing time."

So I expressed enhanced appreciation for the guayabera—and for the Penner's tradition—by ordering some shirts. Two of my new guayaberas needed alteration, and one was back-ordered. As I expected, they soon arrived back home in Austin, exactly when Penner said they would, crisp and

meticulously folded. All three are Irish linen, perfectly plain and understated, two of them flat white, and one the color of vanilla ice cream. The capacious cut and hem detail make them natural to wear with trousers or shorts. I am convinced they flatter my figure. Whenever I wear them now, I feel like the coolest guy in the room, but soon I think I'll be needing a flashier one to wear to the beach.

Writer DICK HOLLAND likes to visit San Antonio every so often to eat, shop for records, look at art, and sometimes go to a Spurs game.

Photographer J. GRIFFIS SMITH says of guayaberas, "I like 'em because I don't have to wear a tie. I'm still looking for the perfect one that will make me look hot on stage while I play my steel guitar."

TOP Tables

(continued from page 16)

Henry, a black man. During the days of segregation, the place was essentially two cafés with a common kitchen. Whites ate in the main room. Blacks came around back to a separate dining room, bar, and restrooms; many of them hung out by the open-air cooking pit with Henry, where he basted meat with a rag tied to the end of a broomstick.

Also hanging out at the pit was Mason's son, Garry Pilgrim, who was learning everything he could from Henry about cooking barbecue. Garry and his wife, Jeannie, perfected Country Tavern's secret seasonings and sauce, but in 1992, Garry died. When Mason died in 2003, Jeannie carried on the family tradition. When she died six months later, the job of carrying on the barbecue dynasty fell to Mason's grandson Toby Pilgrim.

"We went through some tough times, and business declined. I wanted to save the place by offering a more family-friendly atmosphere," Pilgrim tells me when I mention the remodeling. Longtime customers might notice another change—smoke no longer rises from a hot pit behind the long, red building. Instead, the meat is perfected inside, in high-efficiency, automated cookers; hickory logs are

added to the equation at just the right time. "The barbecue is as good today as it was when my dad cooked outside at the pit dressed in his overalls," says Pilgrim.

Patrons must agree. Business has doubled since Pilgrim took over—now racking up weekly sales of 3,000 pounds of ribs, 1,000 pounds of brisket, and 450 pounds each of sausage and turkey.

That kind of success allows Country Tavern regulars to carry on their own family traditions. I saunter over and join a jovial foursome knocking down some ribs and brisket. David Newman sits with his teenage son, John David, and two of his son's friends, Evan Russell and John Denman, all of Dallas. "I've been coming here since I was a teenager," explains the 51-year-old dad. "My parents had a lake house near Henderson, and when we came from Dallas on the weekends, we'd often stop at the Country Tavern for good barbecue." Likewise, the group is on its way to that same lake house for a weekend of fishing and now eating that same "good barbecue."

As I waddle back to the car, I feel comforted that—at least when it comes to food and family at the Country Tavern—the old adage holds true: The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Tyler photojournalist RANDY MALLORY has eaten barbecue all over Texas and has never found better ribs than those at the Country Tavern. To sample Randy's other travels (Texas and beyond), visit his Web site, www.randymallory.com.

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More from TH Traveler—

BIG BEND COUNTRY

ALPINE: Fiesta Del Sol June 20-21. Downtown Alpine summer solstice celebration. 432/837-3360

EL PASO: La Que Buena Gordita Festival June 13-15. Find the best Mexican fare in the Southwest at the only gordita festival in the state. Ascarate Park. 915/544-9797

EL PASO: Music Under the Stars June 15, 22, 29. Concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. Amphitheater at Chamizal National Memorial. 915/541-4481

EL PASO: Downtown Street Festival June 27-28. Includes four stages of live entertainment, children's area, fireworks, food, and more. El Paso Convention Center, One Civic Center Plaza. 915/544-8864

FORT DAVIS: Missoula Children's Theatre June 7. Stage production of *The Little Mermaid*. Fort Davis High School. www.fortdavis.com 432/426-3015

FORT STOCKTON: Summer off the Patio June 12, 26. Evening outdoor concerts at the Annie Riggs Museum, 301 S. Main. 432/336-2167

ODESSA: Hot Summer Nights with Cool Music June 6, 13, 20, 27. Noel Plaza. 432/335-4682 or 432/337-1492

PECOS: Old-Timers Reunion June 25. West of the Pecos Museum. www.westofthepecosmuseum.com 432/445-5076

PECOS: West of the Pecos Parade & Reeves County Sheriff's Posse Barbecue June 25. www.pecostx.com 432/445-2406

PECOS: 126th West of the Pecos Rodeo June 25-28. Buck Jackson Arena. Nightly dance at the

Reeves County Sheriff's Posse Barn. www.pecostx.com 432/445-2406

GULF COAST

ALVIN: Tour de Braz June 8. Five bike rides of 10, 30, 50, 62, and 100 miles. Alvin Community College. www.alvintexas.org 281/585-3359

ARANSAS PASS: 60th Annual Shrimporee June 6-8. Public Park Grounds (Johnson and TX 361). www.aransaspas.org 361/758-2750

CORPUS CHRISTI: Water Street Music, Art & Surf Fest June 6-8. Water Street Market. www.texassurfmuseum.com 361/882-2364 or 361/888-7873

CORPUS CHRISTI: C-101 C-Sculptures June 14. Enjoy live music, sand sculpting competition, bikini contest, and horseshoe tournament. North Padre Island. www.c101.com 361/289-0111

CORPUS CHRISTI: Passion for Plumeria June 21. South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center. www.stxbot.org 361/852-2100

EAST BERNARD: Czech Kolache-Klobase Festival June 14. www.kkfest.com 979/335-4827 or 979/335-7907

GALVESTON: Art in the Park June 7. Saengerfest Park. www.galveston.com


GALVESTON: Juneteenth June 7-19. Includes a Jubilee parade, picnic, prayer services, musicals, educational exhibits, demonstrations, and more. www.galveston.com 409/744-1491

GALVESTON: Great Texas Catamaran Race June 11-14. 300-mile beach catamaran race sailed in four separate legs starting in South Padre Island and ending on Galveston Island. East Beach. 512/844-0160

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Bach to Victoria

THE VICTORIA BACH FESTIVAL RETURNS **June 15-20** to the Coastal Bend community of **Victoria** with a varied and compelling program of classical music and more at several city venues. Concerts include classical guitarist Paul Galbraith, Grammy-winning gospel vocalist Cynthia Clawson, violin concertos of Bach and Vivaldi, the songs of Eric Clapton on harpischord, and Giuseppe Verdi's *Requiem* with a combined orchestra and chorus of 280 musicians conducted by Craig Hella Johnson (at left). For a full schedule and ticket information, call 361/570-5788 or go online at www.victoriabachfestival.org.

GALVESTON: Jubilee Banjo Band June 13-15. The Grand 1894 Opera House. www.thegrand.com 800/821-1894

HOUSTON: Accordion Kings & Queens June 7. 19th annual edition of "some mighty pleasin' squeezin'" features Step Rideau & the Zydeco Outlaws, La Troupe F, the Knights of Dixie Orchestra, and finalists from the 2008 Big Squeeze competition. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr. in Hermann Park. www.texasfolklife.org 512/441-9255 or 281/373-3386

HOUSTON: Summer Concert Series June 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29. Includes honky tonk, Tejano, funk, Cajun, and bluegrass. Concerts begin at noon. Traders Village. www.tradersvillage.com 281/890-5500

HOUSTON: Gulf Coast Juneteenth June 19. Celebrates freedom and the abolition of slavery. Artists include ReBirth Brass Band, Geno Delafosse and French Rockin' Boogie, Sherman Robertson, Trudy Lynn, and more. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr. in Hermann Park. www.houstonculture.org 713/521-3686 or 281/373-3386

HOUSTON: Houston Symphony/Target Summer Symphony Nights June 20-21, 27-28. Enjoy musical

masterpieces for all ages. Miller Outdoor Theatre, 100 Concert Dr. in Hermann Park. www.milleroutdoortheatre.com 281/373-3386

PORT ARTHUR: Juneteenth Celebration June 19. Downtown. 409/982-8040 or 409/985-7768

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND: International Surfing Day June 21. Isla Blanca Park. 956/433-1472

WHARTON: Wharton County Freedom Fest June 27-28. Includes a barbecue cookoff at Riverfront Park, car and motorcycle show, Commemorative Air Force Fly Over during Veterans Salute, street dance, food and craft vendors, and a fabulous fireworks display. Wharton County Courthouse Square in Historic Downtown Wharton. 979/532-1862

HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Bill Cosby June 6. Comedian, actor, television producer, storyteller, and activist performs 2 shows at Austin Music Hall. <http://gettix.net> 866/443-8849

AUSTIN: Loretta Lynn June 13. The coal miner's daughter plays Stubb's Waller Creek Amphitheater. <http://stubbss.frontgatetickets.com> 888/512-7469

AUSTIN: Merle Haggard June 18. The venerable country music legend comes to the Paramount Theatre. <http://gettix.net> 866/443-8849

AUSTIN: AMF All-Mozart Concert June 19-20. Rollins Studio Theatre, The Long Center, 701 W. Riverside Dr. www.amozartfest.org 512/371-7217

AUSTIN: Robert Earl Keen June 20. Welcome the summer solstice with one of the Lone Star State's favorite singer/songwriters at Stubb's Waller Creek Amphitheater. <http://stubbss.frontgatetickets.com> 888/512-7469

BANDERA: RiverFest June 21. Barbecue cookoff, car show, arts & crafts, and children's activities. Bandera City Park. www.banderariverfest.com 830/796-4447

BLANCO: Lavender Festival June 14-15. Includes classes and demonstrations, vendors on Old Blanco County Courthouse square, maps to/free tours of lavender farms, local artists, live music, and more. www.blancolavenderfest.com 830/833-5101

BRADY: Brady Lake Music Festival June 6-8. Includes Tejano, classic Texas country, and gospel. Enjoy a songwriter showcase, bass fishing tournament, washer and horseshoe tournaments, and gospel brunch. Brady Lake. www.bradytx.com 325/597-3491

BURNET: Burnet Old-Time Fiddlers Contest & Festival June 27-28. Fiddle music, free street dance with Kyle Parks, plus arts & crafts and food vendors. Downtown Square. www.bumetchamber.org 512/756-4297

BURNET: Texas Hill Country Railfair & Festival June 28-29. Ride historic rail cars; see historic railroad equipment and visit the railroad museum; vendors offer railroad memorabilia and model railroad supplies. Train departs Burnet at 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Burnet Train Depot, Old Town on Jackson Street. www.austinsteamtrain.org 512/477-8468 or 512/756-4297

CHERRY SPRING: Cherry Spring Festival June 12-15. Enjoy art, food, wine, and music. Thursday art show benefit. Canto Chamber Choir concerts. Mansfeldt Sheep Barn, Cherry Spring Road. www.cantochoir.org 830/990-2299

INGRAM: Robin Hood June 20-Jul 5. The Point Outdoor Theatre, Hill Country Arts Foundation, TX 39. www.hcaf.com 830/367-5120 or 800/459-HCAF

KERRVILLE: Singin' in the Rain June 5-21. Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. www.caillouxtheater.com 830/896-9393

LAMPASAS: Riata Roundup Rodeo June 20-21. Little Bear Arena. 512/556-5172

LOMETA: Antique Tractor Pull June 14. Lometa Regional Park. 866/556-5172

MASON: Sesquicentennial Tour of Old Mason County Schools June 14. www.masontxoc.com 325/347-5758

NEW BRAUNFELS: Hello, Dolly! June 5-29. Produced by the New Braunfels Theatre Company, Brauntex Theatre, 290 W. San Antonio. 830/620-9655

SABINAL: 42nd Annual Cypress Celebration Day June 21. Live Oak Park. 830/988-3001 or 830/261-0638

SAN MARCOS: Texas Water Safari June 14. This 260-mile canoe race begins at Aquarena Center and continues to the Gulf Coast. www.toursanmarcos.com 888/200-5620

SAN MARCOS: Juneteenth Celebrations June 19-21. www.toursanmarcos.com 888/200-5620

SAN SABA: San Saba Rodeo June 19-21. County team roping on Thursday and two rodeo performances per day on Friday and Saturday. 325/372-5141

STONEWALL: Stonewall Peach Jamboree & Rodeo June 20-21. Celebrates the annual peach crop including peach judging, crowning of the Peach Queen, parade, food, live music, and rodeo. www.stonewalltexas.com 830/644-2735

UVALDE: Sacred Heart Festival June 7-8. Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 408 Fort Clark Rd. 830/278-3448

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: As You Like It June 26-28. Shakespeare Festival stage production at Williams Performing Arts Center, Fulks Theatre. 325/674-2787

ALBANY: 70th Annual Fort Griffin Fandangle June 19-21, 26-28. With singing, dancing, pantomiming, and pageantry, this outdoor musical re-creates the look and feel of the Old West. Cowboys, Indians, Longhorns, a stagecoach, a railroad train, a covered wagon, and a gushing oil well are all historic elements of the Fandangle's ongoing appeal. Outdoor Prairie Theater. www.fortgriffinfandangle.org 325/762-3838

AMARILLO: Jeff Dunham's Spark of Insanity Tour June 1. Along with his suitcase posse of Walter, Peanut, Melvin, Achmed, and Jose, native Texan and Baylor graduate Jeff Dunham, this generation's most popular comic ventriloquist, brings the laughs to the Civic Center Coliseum. www.panhandletickets.com 806/378-3096

AMARILLO: Will Rogers Range Riders Rodeo June 28-30. One of the top rodeos in the Texas Panhandle, this event features area cowboys right off the ranch. 806/622-2102

BIG SPRING: 75th Big Spring Cowboy Reunion & Rodeo June 19-21. Howard County Rodeo Arena. 432/263-8485

BROWNWOOD: Texas Bluegrass Celebration June 5-7. Brownwood Coliseum. www.texasbluegrasscelebration.com 325/646-8531

CANYON: Texas June 2-Aug 17. This outdoor musical drama by Paul Green is in its 43rd year of production.

The evening's entertainment is preceded with a catered steak dinner by the world famous Big Texan Steak Ranch. Pioneer Amphitheatre at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. www.texas-show.com 806/655-2181

COLEMAN: 71st Annual Coleman PRCA Rodeo June 19-21. Coleman Rodeo Grounds. www.colemantexas.org 325/625-2163 or 325/625-4111

CROSS PLAINS: Robert E. Howard Days June 13-14. 254/725-4993

DUMAS: Dogie Days Celebration June 11-14. www.dumaschamber.com 806/935-2123

JACKSBORO: Pioneer Day June 7. Jack County Museum. www.jacksborochamber.com 940/567-5410

LUBBOCK: Joe Ely with Joel Guzman June 7. Touring in support of his latest recording, *Live Cactus!*, the famous Texas singer/songwriter Ely—along with accordionist compadre Guzman—returns to the town that helped launch his musical career. Cactus Theater. www.cactusliver.com 806/762-3233

MORTON: Texas' Last Frontier Heritage Celebration June 28-29. Displays and exhibits demonstrate the early frontier heritage days of Texas. Buffalo Soldiers will host presentations on the life of the Ninth Cavalry on campaign. Cochran County Park. 806/266-5484

RANGER: Old-Time Country Festival June 7. 1505 Loop 254 W. 254/647-3340

SAN ANGELO: USTRC Team Roping June 5-8. 1st Community Credit Union Spur Arena. 325/653-7785

SAN ANGELO: Festival on the Concho June 13-15. Includes hot air balloon glows, concerts, water events, 5-K/10-K runs, talent shows, children's area, merchant booths, food booths, and more. www.sajuniorleague.com 325/655-9866

SNYDER: West Texas Western Swing Festival June 10-14. Musical celebration featuring several of the best Western Swing bands in Texas. Scurry County Coliseum. www.snyderchamber.org 325/573-3558

PINEY WOODS

CENTER: Shelby County Sheriff's Posse PRCA Rodeo June 20-21. Shelby County Expo Center. www.shelbycountyshelbycounty.com 936/598-8453

CROCKETT: 72nd Annual World Champion Fiddlers Festival June 13-14. Includes the fiddlers festival, regional steak cookoff, antique tractor show, flea market, and craft show. Crockett Civic Center. www.crockettarea.com 936/544-2359

GLADEWATER: Round Up Rodeo June 4-7. Nationally sanctioned PRCA rodeo. Rodeo Grounds. www.gladewaterrodeo.com 903/845-5126 or 903/845-5441

HUNTSVILLE: Juneteenth Celebration June 14. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Neighborhood Center. 936/291-1626

LINDEN: T-Bone Walker Blues Festival June 20-21. Music City Texas Theater. www.tbonewalkerbluesfest.com 903/756-7774

LIVINGSTON: 40th Annual Alabama Coushatta Powwow June 6-7. www.alabama-coushatta.com 936/563-1120

LONGVIEW: AlleyFest June 6-8. Downtown Longview. www.alleyfest.org 903/753-3281

LUFKIN: Neches River Rendezvous June 7. Ten-mile canoe trip is a popular East Texas outdoors tradition. Experience the beauty, challenge, and pleasure of the Neches River. www.visitlufkin.com 936/634-6305



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Tomatotown

C'MON. YOU'RE RIPE FOR SOME FUN. WELL THEN, it's time to head for **Jacksonville's Tomato Fest**, Saturday **June 14**, and their special day that celebrates this wondrous vine-ripened farm and garden beauty. There's a Couch Tomato Olympics, Tomato Shoot, arts and crafts, a fishing tournament, live entertainment, and contests like Best Home Grown Tomato. If all that doesn't make you wish you had a V8, ketchup on your burger, a BLT, or some soup (tomato, of course), then check out some of this East Texas community's other attractions like Love's Lookout Park, Lake Jacksonville, and the venerable Tomato Bowl stadium. For more information, go online at www.jacksonvilletexas.com; or call 903/586-2217 or 800/376-2217.



COURTESY JACKSONVILLE CHAMBER

MARSHALL: Main Street Second Saturday Festival June 14. Downtown Marshall, North Washington Avenue. www.marshalltxchamber.com 903/935-4417

NACOGDOCHES: PRCA Rodeo June 7. Nacogdoches Expo Center. www.nacexpo.net 936/564-0849

NACOGDOCHES: 19th Annual Texas Blueberry Festival June 14. Enjoy this berry fine day of live music, farm tours, arts and crafts, children's activities, and delicious blueberry fare. Downtown Nacogdoches. www.texasblueberryfestival.com 888/653-3788

OVERTON: 20th Annual Overton Bluegrass Music Festival June 13-14. City Park. www.overtonbluegrass.com 903/834-3171

THE WOODLANDS: Chicago & The Doobie Brothers June 14. Double your pleasure with an evening of music from 2 classic rock bands at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. <http://pavilion.woodlandscenter.org> 713/629-3700

THE WOODLANDS: Texas Music Festival Orchestra June 20. An evening of classical music. Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. <http://pavilion.woodlandscenter.org> 281/363-3300

WINNSBORO: Northeast Texas Music Festival June 7. Winnsboro Park Pavilion. www.netmusicfestival.org 903/342-0263

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ARLINGTON: Texas Scottish Festival & Highland Games June 6-8. Maverick Stadium, The University of Texas at Arlington. www.texasscottishfestival.com 800/363-7268

ATHENS: Power Maiden Sprint Triathlon June 21. This USA Triathlon-sanctioned event includes a 300-meter swim, 13.2-mile bike, and 5-K run. Cain Center, 915 S. Palestine. 903/677-2001

BOWIE: Jim Bowie Days June 27-28. Includes a traditional rodeo, parade and festival, chuck wagon cookoff expo, quilt show, frog jumping contest, skateboard exhibition, live music, and more. Downtown Bowie and Rodeo Grounds. www.jimbowedays.org 940/872-1173

BRYAN: Texas Reds—Steak & Grape Festival June 20-21. Celebrates the beef and wine industries' history in the Brazos Valley. Includes 25 wineries from across Texas, 35 steak-cooking teams, live entertain-

ment, children's activities, and quality food and craft vendors. Historic Downtown Bryan, 105 Main St. www.texasredsfestival.com 979/209-5518

COLUMBUS: Best in Texas Festival June 13-14. Two days of live music featuring Roger Creager, Cory Morrow, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Radney Foster, Randy Rogers, Robert Earl Keen, and more at the Colorado County Fairgrounds. www.bestintexasfest.com 972/690-6099 or 866/255-2223

DALLAS: Cool Thursdays Concerts June 5, 12, 19, 26. Begins at 7:30 p.m. Dallas Arboretum. www.dallasarboretum.org 214/515-6521

DALLAS: Stomp! June 17-22. Music Hall at Fair Park. www.dallassummermusicals.org 214/217-1536

DALLAS: Hairspray June 24-29. Music Hall at Fair Park. www.dallassummermusicals.org 214/217-1536

DECATUR: Chisholm Trail Days Western Heritage Festival June 21. Historic Downtown Decatur. www.decaturnainstreet.com 940/627-2741

DENTON: Twilight Tunes Concert Series June 5, 12, 19, 26. Live music on the lawn of the historic Denton County Courthouse. Downtown Square. www.dentonmainstreet.org 940/349-8529

DENTON: Juneteenth Celebration June 21. Fred Moore Park. www.dentonparks.com 940/349-8576

ELGIN: Juneteenth Festival June 14. Downtown and Veterans Memorial Park. www.elgintx.com 512/281-9582

ELGIN: Western Days Festival June 24-28. Includes a rodeo, live music, softball and horseshoe tournaments, country fair, tennis-court dance, Main Street parade, food booths, arts and crafts, photography contest, children's activities, and Miss Western Days pageant. Rodeo Arena and Elgin Memorial Park. www.elgintx.com 512/285-4515

FARMERSVILLE: Audie Murphy Day Celebration June 21. Downtown parade, military flyover, and ceremony. Downtown and Historic Onion Shed. www.farmersvillex.com 972/784-6846

FLATONIA: Sacred Heart Spring Picnic June 1. Sacred Heart Church, 516 S. Faries. www.flatoniachamber.com 361/865-3568 or 361/865-3920

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FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Opera Festival presents *Angels in America* June 4. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwopera.org 817/731-0726

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Opera Festival presents *Turandot* June 5. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwopera.org 817/731-0726

FORT WORTH: George Jones June 12. Country music great plays Bass Performance Hall. www.basshall.com 817/212-4280 or 877/212-4280

FORT WORTH: Loretta Lynn June 14. The blue Kentucky girl, coal miner's daughter, and country music legend comes to Bass Performance Hall. www.basshall.com 817/212-4280 or 877/212-4280

FORT WORTH: American Paint Horse Association World Championship Show June 22-Jul 5. Will Rogers Memorial Center. www.willrogersmemorialcenter.com 817/392-7469

FORT WORTH: Monty Python's Spamalot June 24-29. Bass Performance Hall. www.casamanana.org 817/332-2272

GATESVILLE: 35th Annual Gatesville Shivarree June 6-7. Enjoy arts and crafts, food, wiener dog races, old-time fiddlers, petting zoo, pony rides, horseshoe tournament, and more. Raby Park & Faunt Le Roy Park. www.gatesvillelx.info 254/865-2617

GRAND PRAIRIE: Return to Forever June 1. Acclaimed jazz quartet of Chick Corea, Lenny White, Stanley Clarke, and Al Di Meola plays Nokia Theatre. www.nokia.livedfw.com 214/373-8000 or 972/647-5700

GREENVILLE: Audie Murphy Days Celebration June 27-28. www.cottonmuseum.com or www.audiemurphy.com/celebrate.htm 903/450-4502

LOCKHART: 36th Annual Chisholm Trail Roundup June 12-15. Enjoy the Barbecue Capital of Texas Cookoff, a music festival, cowboy breakfast, and more. City Park. www.lockhartchamber.com 512/398-2818

LULING: Watermelon Thump June 26-29. This annual Texas tradition includes a parade, continuous live entertainment, street dances, a beer garden, magicians, melon judging, World Champion Seed Spit, carnival, arts and crafts, rodeo, and more. Downtown Luling. www.watermelonthump.com 830/875-3214

McKINNEY: McKinney Home & Garden Tour June 7. www.mckinneygardenclub.org 972/547-4839 or 972/529-1470

McKINNEY: Art & Jazz Festival June 7-8. Historic Downtown McKinney. www.downtownmckinney.com 972/547-2660

MOUNT VERNON: Scroggins Catalpa Worm Festival June 20-21. Includes live music, trail ride, and arts and crafts. Lake Cypress Springs. www.mtvernon-tx.com 903/537-4365

PALESTINE: Dogwood Jamboree June 21. Palestine Civic Center. www.visitpalestine.com 903/723-3014

ROUND TOP: 38th Annual International Festival-Institute at Round Top June 1-Jul. 13. The Texas Festival Orchestra will perform eight different programs and the Texas Festival Chamber Orchestra will perform three different programs with world-renowned conductors and soloists. The International Festival-Institute at Round Top. www.festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

ROWLETT: Festival of Freedom June 28-29. Pecan Grove Park, 5300 Main St. www.rowlett.com 972/412-1904

SEGUIN: Fiestas Juan Seguin June 6-7. Street dance, food booths, carnival, and games. Downtown Seguin. 830/401-5000 or 800/580-7322

SHERMAN: Hot Summer Nights June 5, 12, 19, 26. Enjoy live entertainment at 7:30 p.m. on the Oliver Dewey Mayor Stage. Sherman Municipal Lawn, 401 Elm. www.shermantx.org 903/957-0310

SHERMAN: The Music Man June 6-8, 12-15, 19-22, 26-29. 903/892-8818

STEPHENVILLE: DairyFest June 21. Stephenville City Park. www.tricountyag.com 254/965-2406

SULPHUR SPRINGS: Hopkins County Dairy Festival June 13-21. Begins with a hot air balloon festival and a parade through the heart of town. Includes a carnival, street dance, and a variety of dairy-related events. Visit the Southwest Dairy Museum and Learning Center. Hopkins County Regional Civic Center. www.civic-centeronline.com 903/885-8071

WAXAHACHIE: Hot Air Balloon Classic June 20-22. Mid-Way Regional Airport, US 287. 469/644-4576

WEATHERFORD: Parker County Sheriff's Posse Frontier Days Rodeo & Parade June 18-21. Parker County Sheriff's Posse Arena. www.parkercountysheriffsposse.com 817/599-9076

YOAKUM: Tom Tom Festival June 6-7. Includes arts & crafts, children's entertainment, barbecue cookoff, live music, and a rodeo. www.yoakumareachamber.com 361/293-2309

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

SAN ANTONIO: Texas Folklife Festival June 13-15. Brings together more than 40 ethnic communities from across Texas to celebrate in a cultural extravaganza of food, music, dance, crafts, and interactive demonstrations. UTSA's Institute of Texan Cultures. www.texasfolklifestival.org 210/458-2224

SAN ANTONIO: Monty Python's Spamalot June 17-22. Majestic Theatre. www.majesticempire.com 210/226-3333 or 210/224-9600

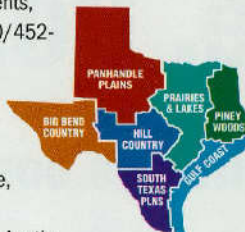
LAREDO: Miss Texas USA Pageant June 29. Laredo Entertainment Center. www.visitlaredo.com 956/791-9192 or 800/361-3360

Want more? Go to the Events Calendar at www.texashighways.com.

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

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

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



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TIPS FROM OUR READERS

I WOULD like to recommend **Main Street Courtyard Café** in **Vernon**. It is only open for lunch, but what a treat! During a recent week-long visit to this North Texas town, I ate here four times—every time was great. The quiches, soups, and desserts were excellent.

FLO MACKLIN, *Austin*

Main Street Courtyard Café is at 1726 Main St.; 940/552-9200. Once a month, the café hosts Dinner and a Movie Night in conjunction with the nearby Vernon Plaza Theater. For details, visit www.vernonplaza.com.

MY DAUGHTER and I happened upon **Al T's Cajun Kitchen** in **Winnie** while traveling from San Antonio to New Orleans. It is locally owned and serves large portions of excellent food at good prices. The atmosphere is warm and comfortable, and the service is very friendly. I recommend trying the boudin, po'boys, and onion rings, as well as the delicious shrimp platter and the pralines. We liked it so much that we stopped there on our return drive.

GREG NYE, *Cape Cod, Massachusetts*

Al T's Cajun Kitchen is on Texas 124; 409/296-2981.

THE BEST food in **La Grange** can be found at **La Marina Restaurant**. The menu selection is broad and they serve absolutely the best chicken-fried steak in the South. The wait staff will welcome you with open arms upon arrival and truly make you feel like an old friend. I attribute my wide waistline to the



COURTESY TIGER CORNER EXXON

Sweet defeat: You won't be able to stop at just one. Shown here, a selection of **Barnard Street Bakery's** sugary goodies sure to make your sweet tooth happy.

ONE OF the best bakeries around is in **Glen Rose**: **Barnard Street Bakery**. The moment you step inside this wonderful place, you'll realize you're not prepared for what you see. The delicious pies, cakes, cookies, and kolaches on display will tempt your taste buds. The bakery also sells the best sandwiches, made fresh while you wait.

CHERYL NABORS, *Glen Rose*

Barnard Street Bakery is at 1110 NE Big Bend Trail; 254/897-3324; www.tigercorner.biz/barnardstreetbakery.html.

culinary skills of owner Adolfo Hernandez—he cooks the best ribeye steak.

SHERRI LEWALLEN, *Giddings*

La Marina Restaurant is at 1502 W. Texas 71; 979/968-2065.

AFTER eating at a wonderful Italian place in **Winnboro** called **Cibovino Restaurant**, I must recommend it to my fellow *Texas Highways*

readers. The food is fresh and expertly prepared, and the atmosphere is great. The experience is above reproach. I'm sure I'll probably see some of you there soon, because I'm going back!

LILLIAN GEE,
Sulphur Springs

Cibovino Restaurant is at 218 N. Main St.; 903/342-0028; www.cibovinorestaurant.com. Noteworthy menu items here include the Deconstructed Meatball Sandwich (meatballs covered in marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese served with a ciabatta loaf) and Penne Pasta Art (pasta with artichoke hearts, capers, and marinara sauce).

FOR A delicious dining experience, head to **Castroville Café** in **Castroville**.

The soups and sandwiches are delectable—try the Cabaret (roast beef, mushrooms, swiss cheese, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, and mayo on toasted sour-

dough bread). And no meal would be complete without a glass of peach iced tea and a Strawberry Delight (strawberry gelatin mixed with fresh strawberries, pineapples, and pecans, and topped with a sour cream glaze). Everything is utterly delightful!

VIVIENNE McDOUGAL, *Grapevine*

Castroville Café is at 309 Lafayette St.; 830/538-3400; www.castrovillecafe.com.

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

Go. See. Do.
THERE'S MORE AHEAD AT
www.texashighways.com.

Next month... We head back in time to the **Rio Grande's steamboat era**, crack open a cold one at Texas' coolest **microbreweries**, high-tail it to **Bryan/College Station**, and pay a visit to **Big Spring**, the crossroads of **West Texas**.



© ROBB KENDRICK

COWBOY CULTURE Texas photojournalist Robb Kendrick's latest book, *Still: Cowboys at the Start of the Twenty-First Century* (University of Texas Press), features tintype photographs that depict cowboy subcultures from British Columbia, Canada, to Coahuila, Mexico (including 14 U.S. states). According to Kendrick, this cowboy rides the range in the "Buckaroo Region, in Southern British Columbia."

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