

COAST AWAY! THE BEACH LIFE

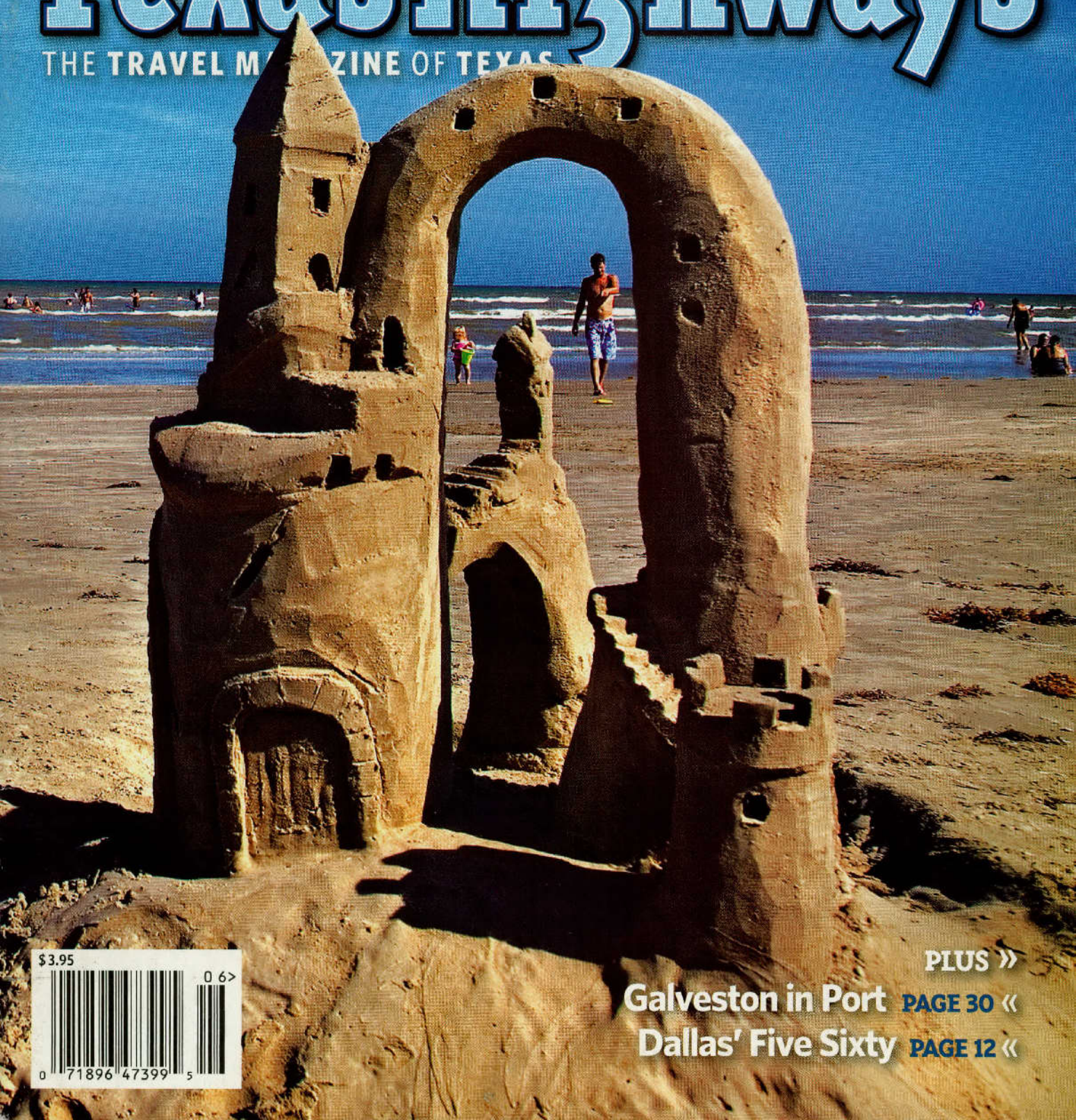
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Galveston in Port PAGE 30 <<

Dallas' Five Sixty PAGE 12 <<



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TH

VOL. 57, NO. 6

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There's no better setting than the Texas Coast for the idyllic performance of the classic beach bum: sand, surf, and the clear blue sky.

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by E. DAN KLEPPER



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Check out www.texashighways.com for more travel information

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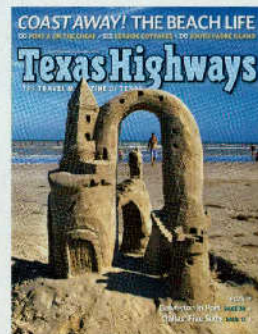
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FRONT: A sandcastle represents not only an idealized playhouse, but also a free-associative experiment in sculpture. **Photo © E. Dan Klepper**

BACK: The lighted pier near Little Bethel invites a stroll out over the quiet water of Baffin Bay. **Photo © Al Argueta**

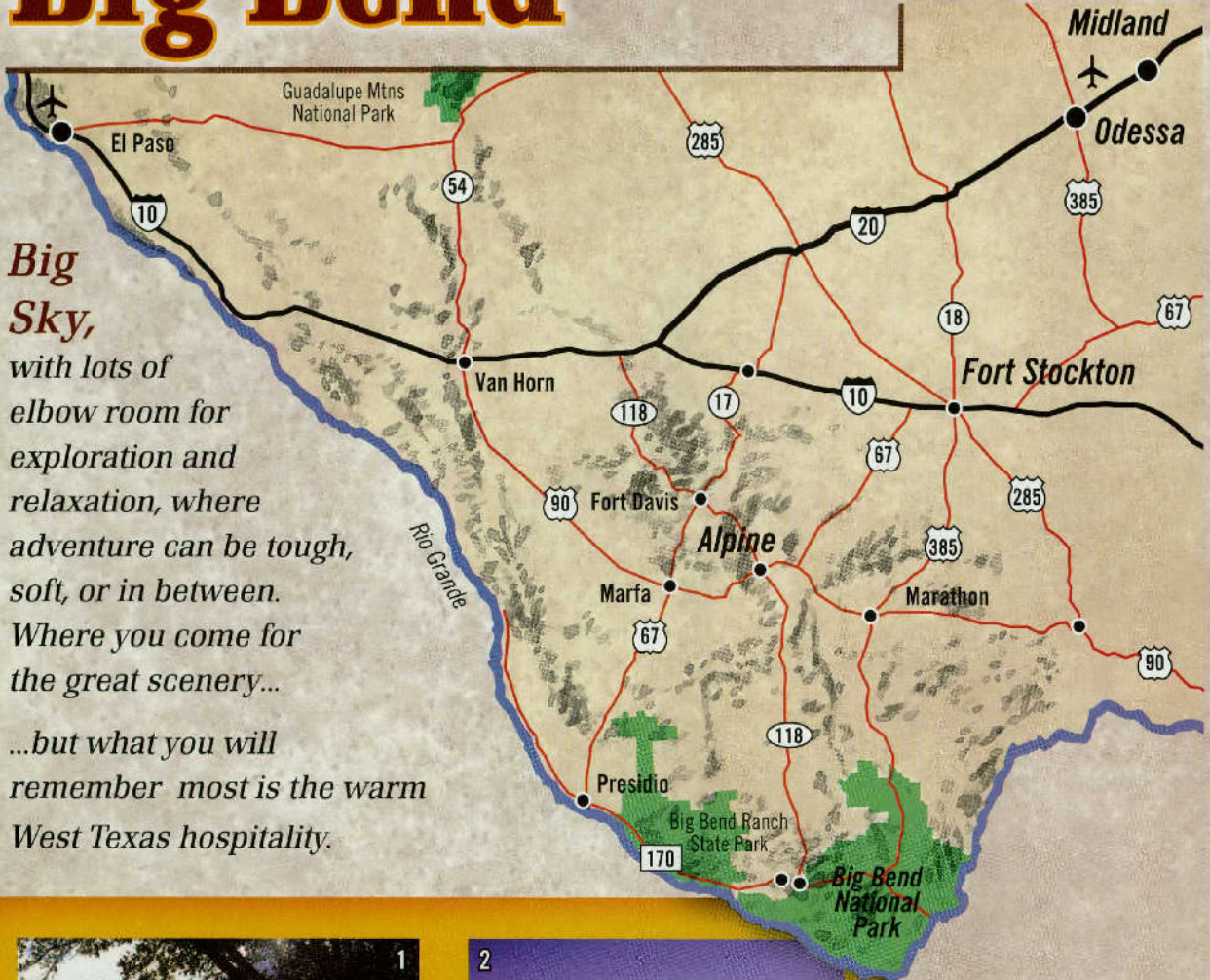
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The immediacy of the “relationship” message scrawled on the wall contrasts with the nearby action of the waves crashing against the shore. Metaphorically challenging? Don’t worry. Build a sandcastle instead.

The Lure of the Coast

“**T**HE CURE FOR ANYTHING IS SALT WATER—sweat, tears, or the sea.” I’ll settle on the third of writer Isak Dinesen’s salty cures: the sea, with a nod to the coast in general. And the beach in particular.

A few days at the beach, whether touring as a beachcomber (see “Beaching on the Cheap,” page 20) or seeking escape in a picturesque cottage (“Cottages by the Sea,” page 40) will prove restorative, if not completely curative. The beach evokes wide-ranging reactions: one extreme demands immediate gratification by splashing in the waves and enjoying the thrill of the moment, while the other calls the philosopher to ponder the infinite. Dan Klepper’s photo (above) brings to mind another quote, this one anonymous, “I dropped a tear in the ocean, and whenever they find it I’ll stop loving you, only then.”

This sentiment suggests a vast body of water. But even though the Gulf of Mexico—one small patch in a corner of the Atlantic Ocean—could be imagined as a body of endless capacity, in some ways it’s a closed system. When snorkeling off South Padre Island, Senior Editor Lori Moffatt learned that flooding in the Mississippi River deposits such a large sediment load in the Gulf that water visibility suffers all the way across to Padre Island. Such events remind us that, far from being limitless, the Gulf of Mexico—and, indeed the oceans—are delicate systems that depend on a fragile balance. (See her feature, “Happiness Comes in Waves,” on page 50.)

And, of course, the coast is not just about the beach—Texas bays continue to gain more popularity as a destination, with kayaking, fishing, birding, and stand-up surfing now virtually omnipresent activities. With new paddling trails opening all the time, paddling the bays draws adventurers of every stripe.

And we love the more urbane, if not urban, coastal settings. Galveston (“Easy Embarcadero” on page 30) is always a favorite, with the historic Strand and the grand Galvez.

One last quote, this time, by Thoreau, “My life is like a stroll on the beach ... as near to the edge as I can go.”

It’s time!

Charles J. Lohrmann, Editor

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Gone, But Not Forgotten

The wildflowers between Natalia and the Divot exit were breathtaking this year! Heading toward the Leona River Slough on FM 1581, I saw the most beautiful patches of pink thistle poppy! They hadn't bloomed like that in years.

MARIANNE HUTTO
TH Facebook Fan

Drive Time

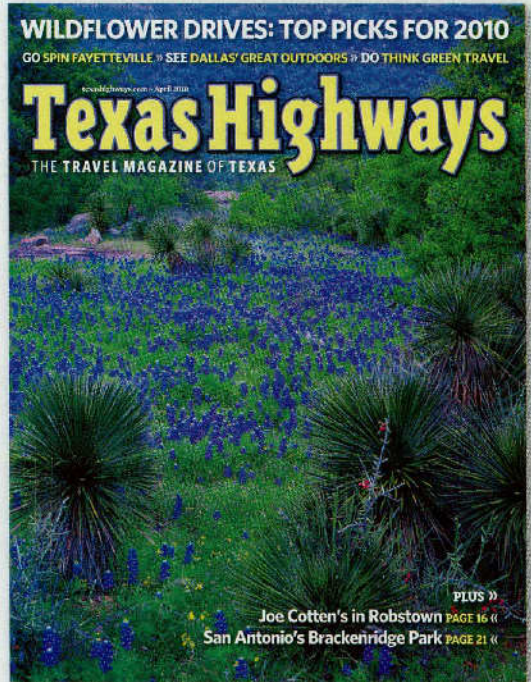
Regarding TH wildflower drives [April]: Why didn't you put the time of the year to make the drives in the article?

GERRY NASH
Amarillo

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks for writing. Typically, April TH covers the peak season for wildflower blooms. However, each year is so different that we can't suggest

"April TH—
always a
beautiful
issue!"

—CHARLOTTE CLARK,
TH Facebook Fan



KERRVILLE

SMALL TOWN BIG EVENTS!

<p>The Museum of Western Art</p> <p>"Texas' Big Bend: From the Pecos to the Rio Grande" Photographs by Michael Marvins May 15 - September 4, 2010</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tues-Sat 9 am-5 pm</p> <p>1550 Bandera Highway, Kerrville, TX 78028 830/896-2553 www.museumofwesternart.org</p>	<p>Southwest Gourd Fine Art Show</p> <p>May 27 - July 11, 2010 Kerr Arts and Cultural Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;">228 Earl Garrett, Kerrville, Texas www.kacc Kerrville.com 830.895.2911 Gallery Hours: Tues.-Sat. 10-4, Sun. 1-4 Free Admission</p>	<p>POINT THEATRE</p> <p>OUTDOOR SUMMER SEASON</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Neverending Story</i> June 11-26</p> <p>CATS A Tuna Christmas July 9-24 August 6-21</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Visit the Point Gallery one hour before show time.</i> For reservations, call 830-367-5121 Ingram, TX www.hcaf.com</p>
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Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau
800.221.7958, kerrcvb@kvc.com, KerrvilleTexasCVB.com

a specific weekend as the absolute best because of all the weather variables that affect the final bloom. As you know, this year the winter was colder than usual, so that delayed most blooms by a couple of weeks, at least. Next year, remember to check the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Web site; www.wildflower.org. On the home page, you'll find a link to specific wildflower sightings. Happy hunting!

Hey, Fayetteville!

Regarding Ian Dille's story on Fayetteville [April]: My parents retired there three years ago and it's a beautiful town! At first I thought they were crazy for moving to such a small town, but now I understand why. There's always something going on and the people are so friendly!

JOSIE STEIN DRENNER
TH Facebook Fan

While I enjoyed the article on my hometown of Fayetteville, you didn't mention Keilers Restaurant & Lodge [979/378-2578], which has been on the town square for over 30 years now. Not only is it well known for its catfish, it also has 15 rooms that accommodate the fishermen and bicyclists mentioned in the article.

AIMEE KORENEK
Fayetteville

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TH READER RECOMMENDATION

Super Tuesdays

WE RECOMMEND the **café** in the **Atascosa Livestock Exchange** near **Pleasanton**, operated by Elaine Rutherford. Elaine serves breakfast and lunch on Tuesday only (auction day)—good down-home cooking. Breakfast consists of sausage, ham, biscuits, eggs, tacos, etc. Lunch features beef stew with cornbread, burgers, and such specials as chicken-fried steak, meatloaf, chicken and dumplings, liver and onions, or roast beef. Her lunch desserts (pies of all kinds) are lip-licking good. We never know what the menu will be, but we are never disappointed.

WALTER AND EDITH CHESSHIR,
Jourdanton

The Atascosa Livestock Exchange/
café is on Texas 97 West; 830/281-2516. Café open only on Tue.

CONTACT TH

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PLEASE PASS THIS MAGAZINE ALONG



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06
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Postcards

INSIDE: DINING IN THE CLOUDS, IN DALLAS...12 HUMMINGBIRD RETREAT NEAR SAN ANGELO...16



Do!

Ask Tom Kreason about his collectible music posters for sale

All the Right Notes

The Texas Musician's Museum rewards a *Hillsboro* visit Text by **TIM SCHULLER**

SIGHTING THE TEXAS MUSICIAN'S Museum, two blocks north of Hillsboro's restored courthouse, gave me the metabolic mellow-down that comes when you disembark from the city into the country. The museum occupies a two-story frame house that looks like an apple pie should be cooling on a sill. But I knew to expect a good music exhibit because Director Tom "T.K." Kreason is a seasoned gleaner of music memorabilia, addicted to collecting since he was

exhibits curator for Dallas' Hard Rock Cafe in the 1980s. He opened the museum in June 2007 to educate the public about Texas music history and showcase his archives—currently tens of thousands of items. He changes exhibits every few months, usually highlighting 100 musicians or groups at a time.

The inside's not brightly lit. I like that. In contrast, Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum is lit up like an airport concourse, with chrome and

glass everywhere. Here, my boots make a satisfying clunk on the hardwood floors. And in Cleveland, I doubt a docent would whip out a record and yell, "Listen! Listen!" while playing it, as Kreason did, on a turntable battened among exhibits. Kreason smiled as if he were swigging fine bourbon while he spun "Blues In A Bottle" by Prince Albert Hunt's Texas Ramblers

A sign on the front porch of the Texas Musician's Museum welcomes visitors from across the globe.

The Caverns of Sonora

Texas' spectacular show cave celebrates 50 years of tours

EVEN THOUGH THE FANTASTIC GEOLOGICAL FORMATIONS

inside the Caverns of Sonora are the primary attraction, consider also that the cave is cool in the summer: a steady 71 degrees. And this year, the Caverns celebrate 50 years of public tours. As one expert, George Veni, Executive Director of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute in Carlsbad, New Mexico, explains, these caverns, located in the southwest quadrant of the state, "are internationally recognized as the most beautiful show cave on the planet."

You'll find the Caverns of Sonora 15 miles southwest of Sonora, off Interstate 10. The best driving route is to take Exit 392 south onto RR 1989 (Caverns of Sonora Rd.), and follow the road signs. The Caverns open daily, year-round, except Christmas Day; guided tours are offered throughout the day. Special "adventure tours," photography tours, and large-group tours must be arranged in advance. The visitor center offers fossils, rocks, books, and jewelry, as well as snacks (including homemade fudge). RV and tent camping are available, along with potable water, electricity, and restrooms with showers.



Caverns of Sonora staff will host a public celebration in July to mark the 50th anniversary of the first public cave tours. For updates on the event or details about the Caverns, including admission fees, call 325/387-3105 or 325/387-6507; www.cavernsofsonora.com. —Charles Lohrmann

Spectacular cave formations reward visitors on a two-mile, guided tour.

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(Okeh, 1928). It's one of those genre jumbles characteristic of Texas music, melding blues, jazz, and old-time fiddle. And I was hearing it on honest-to-gosh vinyl with requisite scratches and pops, an aural condiment to the place's rootsy feel.

I gawked at framed blues 78s of nape-tingling rarity.

I gawked at framed blues 78s of nape-tingling rarity—Zuzu Bollin's "Why Don't You Eat Where You Slept Last Night?" and Freddie King's "Country Boy"; both so rare that learning their value is difficult. I admired other 78s, too, by artists Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lightnin' Hopkins, Texas Alexander, and proto-rocker Big Mama Thornton. On the walls hang numerous posters, including one from Dallas' RL Blues Palace (one of earth's last great blues clubs) touting Texas' own Bobby Patterson, who donated an out-

Get ready to paint the town at:
www.rockport-fulton.org Charm of the Texas Coast

Photography by Diane Loyd

**Rockport
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geous faux-leopard pantsuit for the exhibit.

Kreason showed me a Tanya Tucker pantsuit red as a fire truck, a Jim Reeves tux that manages a soft élan like its wearer's music, and the embroidered jeans worn by Dixie Chick Emily Robison on the group's "Fly" tour in 2000. Buddy Holly grins

photos, and lobby cards from his movies (such as *Guns And Guitars*, 1936). I gaped at garish get-ups for Hank Thompson and Ernest Tubb, the former florid with flame-shapes, the latter a dull gray, like a leisure suit worn by a sad clown.

The place is rife with surprises. I didn't know Dale Evans, a native of Uvalde, was a seasoned pop and jazz singer before becoming Queen of the Cowgirls on *The*

Roy Rogers Show on TV in '51. But on view are records she made pre-Roy and a perkily risqué PR photograph of her in showgirl-style tap pants. I lingered over a couple of 1950s Dell comic books ("Still Only A Dime!") with Dale on the cover; they brought back memories.

Kreason says he enjoys hearing how folks relate to the exhibits. He mentioned last year's celebrations [continued on page 11]



with heart-mashing boyishness in photos flanked by 45s, contracts, and suit receipts. And Janis Joplin's comically frumpy black dress hangs beside a 1960 Port Arthur high school yearbook affirming that she was a member of the Slide Rule Club. (Not the only time someone geeky morphed into a star.)

Tom Kreason adjusts a 1950s television in the museum's display on the Big Bopper.

Kreason told me he has entertained visitors from Germany, Bali, the U.K., Japan, and France. Only a couple of days before, he said, "A gentleman from St. Petersburg, Russia, spent three hours here. He'd come to Dallas for a concert but said this was the high point of his trip."

The personable Kreason (who somewhat resembles actor Jeff Bridges) will conduct a tour if you wish, his narratives both informed and informal. Most guests take the tour and linger afterwards, to peruse and reflect at will.

There are Gene Autry records and



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Major support for the exhibition at The Blanton is provided through a generous challenge grant from Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long and by RBC Wealth Management.



Support also is provided by Mr. and Mrs. Jack S. Blanton, Sr., the Booth Heritage Foundation, the Elva J. Johnston Foundation, Erize and Stuart Stadman, Carolyn and John H. Young, and the many other donors who contributed to meet the Long Challenge.

New Works for the Collection is organized by the Blanton Museum of Art.

Henri Matisse, Seated Nude, Viewed from Behind, 1913, Crayon transfer lithograph, Image: 16 1/2 x 9 1/2 in., Sheet: 19 1/2 x 13 in., Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation (14-01-302-01.1), © 2009 Succession H. Matisse/Artists, Rights Society (ARS), New York, Courtesy American Federation of Arts

Postcards

See!

Galveston Historical Foundation's Underground Railroad program

Honoring Juneteenth

Galveston celebrates an historic day

A NATIONAL HOLIDAY HONORING

African American heritage claims origins in Texas. Though President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862, with an effective date of January 1, 1863, enforcement of the executive order didn't materialize in the Lone Star State until Union General Gordon Granger and 2,000 federal troops arrived in Galveston on June 18, 1865. The next day, June 19, Granger publicly read the contents of "General Order No. 3," mandating the abolition of slavery in Texas. Shortly thereafter, that calendar date became known as Juneteenth.

Celebrations of Juneteenth now take place in Texas and many other states. Galveston's event offers a wealth of activities June 12-19, including a family day at Stringfellow Orchards in nearby Hitchcock; an Underground Railroad reenactment at Garten Verein Pavilion and Kempner Park; several gospel concerts; a jubilee picnic and parade; an Emancipation Proclamation reading and prayer breakfast; a banquet at Old Central Cultural Center; and a march from Old Galveston Courthouse to Reedy Chapel for music and a reception. Visit www.juneteenthgalveston.com or www.galveston.com; 888/425-4753.

Youngsters learn how the Underground Railroad helped slaves escape to freedom.
—Marty Lange



PHOTO: COURTESY GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

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continued from page 91 Temple-born musician Steven Fromholz' guitar and hat enjoy a prominent spot. surrounding the 40th anniversary of Woodstock, and then reminded me of the Texas International Pop Festival in Lewisville, which happened over Labor Day weekend in 1969 with an equally stellar lineup. It wasn't filmed or recorded, so the event is a relative footnote in rock lore. He pointed to a classically dizzy Sixties-style poster, signed by artist Lance Bragg, from the fest (featured: Janis, Sam & Dave, Johnny Winter, Santana, Spirit, Sly & The Family Stone, Ten Years After, and—in one of their few festival appearances—Led Zeppelin).

Kreaseon fell silent a moment, and we gazed. How ephemeral the past can seem without objects to evoke it. And how often such objects vanish in time's stride!

As I drove back to Dallas, I pondered the museum experience. Music is often rife with turbulence, as are musicians' lives, and for that matter, our lives, as well. But Kreaseon's little museum is calming as it opens the conduits of memory and exhibits fascinating memorabilia from the soundtrack of human experience. **TH**

PHOTO: RANDALL MAXWELL

Texas Musician's Museum

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Text by **STEVEN LINDSEY**

THE MAGNIFICENT FIVE SIXTY BY WOLFGANG PUCK, AT THE TOP of Reunion Tower in downtown Dallas, has been my go-to choice for fine dining and entertaining guests since it opened in February 2009—not just for the spectacular food, but also for the drama of dining 560 feet above the city.

Reunion Tower itself has been a Dallas icon since it opened in 1978, its geodesic sphere illuminated with 260 lights that shine in unison or dance in playful patterns. For nearly three decades, visitors could take an elevator to three levels within the dome, where an observation deck offered birds-eye views of the city, a revolving restaurant called Antares wowed diners, and a cocktail lounge offered spirits with an unparalleled sky-high ambiance.

In 2007, though, the Tower and adjacent Union Station—the latter built in 1916, and which once handled as many as 80 trains daily—closed for a grand, \$46 million renovation. And as a highlight of the transformation, city planners announced that chef Wolfgang Puck, the “fusion chef” famous for such trendsetting restaurants as Spago and Chinois, would open a new restaurant inside the tower. Five Sixty is Puck’s first fine-dining restaurant in Texas.

After a barely 60-second elevator ride to the top of the

Slowly revolving atop Dallas’ iconic Reunion Tower, Wolfgang Puck’s Asian-influenced Five Sixty restaurant offers diners a panoramic view of the city.

tower, the doors open to the comforting hum of clinking glasses and lighthearted conversations. Steely gray booths intermingle with cream-colored leather chairs, mesquite flooring gleams underfoot, and pearly white river rocks in a chain-link cage separate the host area from the bar and dining spaces.

“Given Five Sixty’s Asian-focused menu, we were inspired by a Zen sense of balance

Wolfgang Puck’s life
revolves around food.
Now, the food
does the revolving.

and stillness,” says Jennifer Johanson, who designed the restaurant with her team at EDG Interior Architecture + Design. “We tried to balance the motion and incredible views from this high outlook with a sense of intimacy and stillness in the social spaces. We wanted to create a great restaurant experience, where guests can enjoy the stunning views but still maintain a focus on food and friends.”

The dining room takes about an hour to revolve a full circle. Familiar landmarks such as Dealey Plaza, the Old Red Courthouse, and Dallas’ futuristic I.M. Pei-designed City Hall take on new drama seen from above. The frenetic lights from the jumbo screens outside Victory Park’s American Airlines Center glow behind a cluster of Dallas’ new high-rise condos. The recently imploded Texas Stadium is no longer on the horizon, but you can see its replacement, Cowboys Stadium, in the distance, with the Trinity River in the foreground. And in nearly every direction, traffic on Dallas’ web-like network of freeways and bridges provides a hypnotic stream of flickering movement.

“I love Dallas by night when all of downtown is lit up. When you look out



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What's Brewing in Houston?

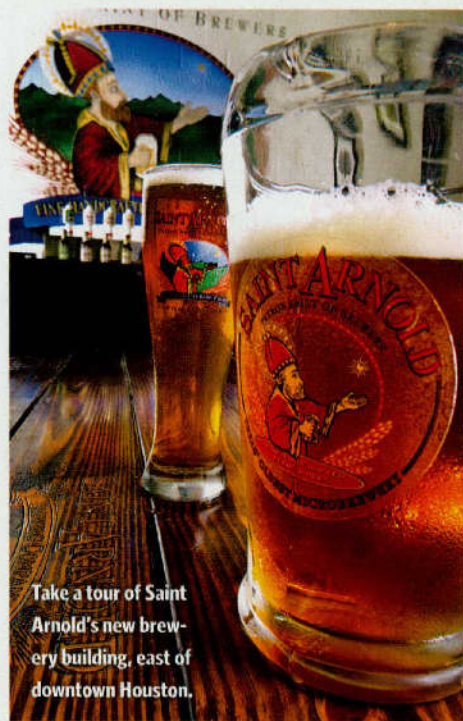
Texas' oldest craft brewery celebrates new digs

WHEN BEER-LOVER AND RICE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE BROCK WAGNER decided to leave his career in investment banking, he turned to his off-hours avocation: brewing and drinking beer. In 1994, Wagner co-founded Saint Arnold Brewing Company in Houston, a city with plenty of perfect beer-drinking weather, an adventuresome entrepreneurial culture, and a curious absence of microbreweries.


Sixteen years later, Saint Arnold—named for the patron saint of brewing—makes 10 types of beer (five year-round brews and five seasonal types, like Summer Pils), which are available in restaurants and stores in Houston, Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio.

But for a true taste of what makes Saint Arnold special, visit the brewery's new facility, in a former 1914 paper-bag factory just east of downtown, during regular open-house hours (weekdays from 3-4:15 and Saturdays from 11-2). Admission costs \$7, which buys you four tasting tokens, a tasting glass, and the opportunity to see the brewing kettles, fermenting tanks, and other equipment. The tasting room resembles a large German beer hall, complete with long, communal tables; some regular Saturday visitors bring picnics to enjoy while they explore Saint Arnold's beer menu. Saturday's party averages around 1,000 people, while weekdays bring in smaller crowds. Pick your pleasure, and *Prost!* Call 800/801-6402; www.saintarnold.com.

—Lori Moffatt




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the window, it feels like you're in Manhattan," Puck says.

Until renovations are complete on the observation deck below the restaurant, Five Sixty offers the only opportunity to take in the panoramic views. But that's not the only reason people flock to Five Sixty. The Wolfgang Puck brand entices diners because it's synonymous with quality and innovation. In Executive Chef Sara C. Johannes, Puck has found someone who understands his vision yet incorporates her own style, flavors, and techniques. "Sara is a brilliant young chef," says Dallas chef Stephan Pyles. "To have creative, perfectly executed food in a revolving restaurant far above the ground is a real rarity. I know Wolf is proud of her."

For a first course, pork-belly dumplings drizzled with black vinegar and chili oil fuse Asian favorites with Texas ingredients, as does the "General Tso" style crispy quail on the entrée menu. And Puck's most famous appetizer, a spicy tuna tartare served in a sesame-miso cone, is as popular at Five Sixty as it is at Spago, where it originated.

Many guests come for the sushi alone, thanks to the freshness of the seafood flown in daily from Maine, Alaska, Japan, and Hawaii. The creative interpretation of Sushi Chef Hiroyuki "Fuji" Fujino makes every dish a work of culinary art. Such subtle touches as fresh herbs transform a sushi roll visually and on the palate. Highlights of the sushi menu include

"I love Dallas by night. When you look out the window, it feels like you're in Manhattan."

the Surf and Turf Roll, which features poached lobster, garlic, chili aioli, and seared Kobe beef; and the Crispy Tempura Dynamite Roll, which combines sea scallops, cucumber, chili, and sweet soy.

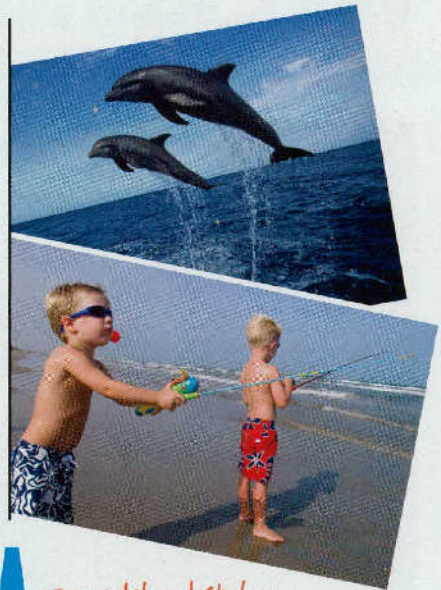
Cocktails at Five Sixty feature exotic ingredients like Thai spice-infused vodka, fresh blood orange purée, and house-made tonic water. More than 400 wine options and a dozen or so varieties of sake and beer selections round out the libation menu. And Happy Hour here—Monday through Friday from 5-7, when a sampling of appetizers and cocktails costs \$5.60 each—offers a chance to enjoy the view and ambiance without the expense of a full dinner.

Five Sixty, the revolving restaurant high above bustling downtown Dallas, takes fusion cuisine to new heights. **TH**

Five Sixty

is at 300 Reunion Blvd. in Reunion Tower in Dallas. The restaurant opens Mon-Sat for dinner and drinks; the kitchen closes at 10 Mon-Thu, at 11 Fri-Sat. (The bar closes at 11 and midnight, respectively.) Valet parking costs \$5. Call 214/741-5560; www.wolfgangpuck.com.

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Licensed bird bander Debra Dawkins of San Angelo documents a summer tanager at the Brown Ranch.

Where the Birds Are

Black-chins, ruby-throats, painted buntings, and other wildlife delight guests at a B&B south of San Angelo

Text by **NOLA McKEY**

AT THE HUMMER HOUSE B&B ON THE BROWN RANCH, NEAR Christoval, if you snooze, you lose. The main event at this secluded inn with a trio of cozy cottages takes place just after dawn, when scores of hummingbirds begin arriving at seven large feeders hung outside the observation room, just a few feet away from a 30-foot-long wall of windows. So even after a late night talking to owners Dan and Cathy Brown about their 1,200-acre wooded retreat, I wander into the viewing area around 6:45, ready to see the show.

And what a show it is! You don't have to be a birder to appreciate the antics of these tiny creatures as they maneuver their way around other hummers to a feeder, where they hover in midair and lap sugar-water for a few seconds before flitting away and crowding into a cluster of birds at another station. These rowdy visitors seem to think the "breakfast" in B&B refers to *their* breakfast, and they're determined to get their share.

"Try these," says Dan, handing me a pair of binoculars. The room begins to fill with about a dozen people, all eager to watch the morning spectacle and hear Dan present a lecture on the fascinating behavior of hummingbirds. As I focus on the tiny features of an individual hummer—its bright, dark eyes, long bill, and exquisite, curved toes—I'm entranced. I glimpse one of the birds dart its long, forked tongue in and out of the feeder. "That tongue allows them to scoop up insects, pollen, and nectar from flowers," explains Dan.

He points out a male ruby-throated hummingbird, easily identified by its iridescent,

See!

More on the Brown Ranch at texashighways.com/weekender

red gorget (throat). He then shows me another ruby-throat with a somewhat streaked gorget that he says could be a juvenile male; like the males in most bird species, the juveniles gradually display more color as they mature. Ruby-throats aren't the only hummers feasting here, though. Dan points out a male rufous hummingbird, with feathers that look like burnished copper, and several black-chinned hummingbirds, the species for which the ranch is most famous.

You don't have to be a birder to appreciate the antics of these tiny creatures.

"See that one over there?" asks Dan, motioning to a hummer with a purple throat and a black chin at one of the feeders. "That's a male. We have about 3,000 black-chinned hummingbirds on the ranch every summer during the breeding season—April to August—the largest concentration in the state."

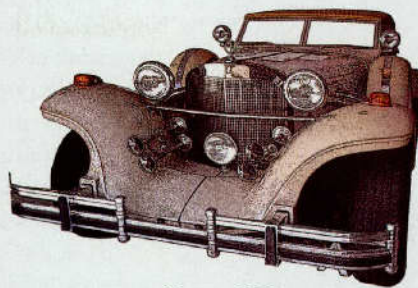
Cathy reminds me that the Hummer House isn't just about hummingbirds. "We have a lot of birds here—about 135 species. My favorite is the painted bunting," she says, referring to the particularly colorful songbird. Although it's native to Texas, it looks like it belongs in the tropics, especially the male, with its blue head and red, green, and yellow body.

"We've banded large numbers of both black-chinned hummingbirds and painted buntings at the ranch, most of them netted right around the B&B," says Angelo State University chemistry professor and licensed bird-bander Ross Dawkins, who leads frequent banding efforts here. The process involves attaching a metal band to a wild bird's leg, which allows scientists to track the population of a species in a given area.

"Of course, you can spot a variety of

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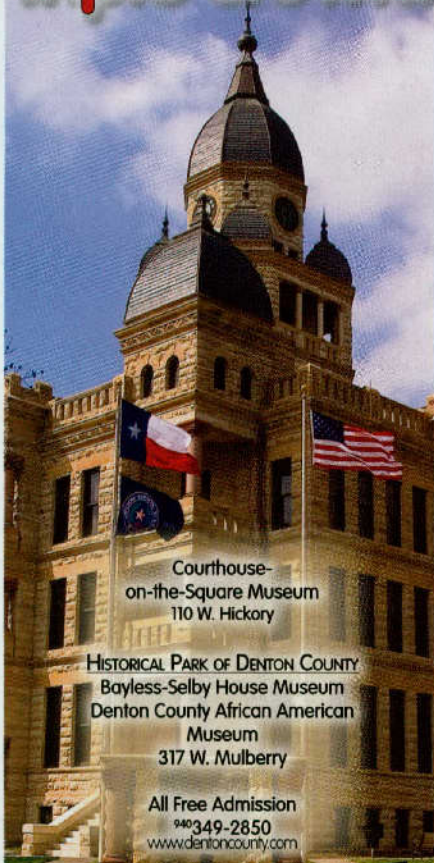
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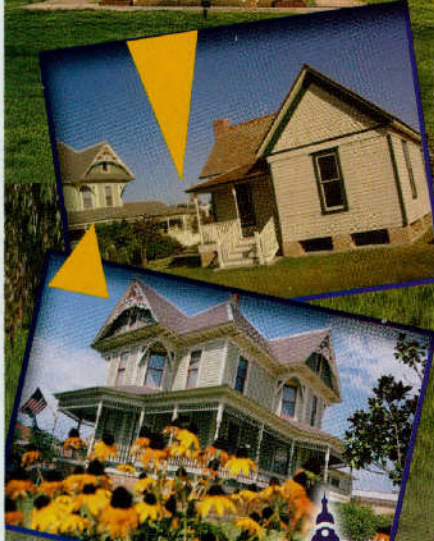
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Weekender

birds here, from red-shouldered hawks to mountain bluebirds," adds Dawkins. "And it's not unusual to see 40 white-tailed deer or more than 100 wild turkeys gathered in the backyard."

Why such an abundance of wildlife? It's partly because the Hummer House is what Dawkins calls a "mega feeding station." Last year, the Browns put out 40 tons of corn and three tons of birdseed, and used 1,580 pounds of sugar—more than three-quarters of a ton—to mix up sugar-water for the hummers. "They also provide plenty of nesting material for the female hummers," says Dawkins.



Common on the Brown Ranch, the black-chinned hummingbird makes its nest with spider webs, which stretch to accommodate growing chicks.

Cathy reminds me that the Hummer House isn't just about hummingbirds. "We have a lot of birds here—about 135 species," she says.

Indeed, as the light comes up, I can see other types of feeders and structures designed to attract resident birds, plus migrating birds, such as western warblers and cedar waxwings, as the seasons change. An attractive water feature takes center stage—a shallow, 20-by-four-foot, flagstone-lined pool, with an arched metal "bridge" that functions as a perch for avian bathers. Using the binoculars again, I spy 30 to 40 hummingbirds, several painted buntings, and a few lesser goldfinches dipping in the water or luxuriating in gentle sprays from nearby misters. Carolina jasmine, coral honeysuckle, and salvia planted around the pool add further enticement.

Dan tells his audience that even without the feeders and water features, hummers would still frequent the area. "The main reason we have so many hummers is because the ranch borders the spring-fed South Concho River," says Dan. "Thousands of pecan and oak trees grow in the river valley. The trees attract aphids and other small insects, which in turn attract hummingbirds, so they flock to the valley.

"We're also on the eastern end of the black-chinned hummingbird's range, and on the far-western edge of the rubythroat's, so the birds overlap," he says. "And hummingbirds have phenomenal recall memory, so they come back year after year."

Picking up a portion of a tree limb with what looks like a knot in the middle, Dan tells the group, "This is a black-chinned hummingbird's nest." The tiny nest—about half the size of a walnut shell—looks impossibly small even for a miniscule mother-to-be. "It takes about a week for the mother to build the nest," adds Dan. "Then she lays two eggs, each one about the size of a Tic Tac. After 14 days, if everything goes OK, the baby birds emerge. The hatchlings grow fast because the mother feeds them a high-protein diet of insects."

While Dan doesn't have any formal training in ornithology—he's actually a geologist and a practicing lapidary—his

knowledge of hummers is encyclopedic, gleaned from decades of studying the tiny birds that frequent the ranch. His lecture spans topics from the weight of a black-chinned hummingbird (it takes eight of them to equal an ounce) to the mechanics of a hummingbird nest (the mother uses spider webs—which stretch—to build the nest so it can expand as the chicks grow).

After the lecture, I talk with retired teacher Edna Earle Benton of Mason. She enjoys bringing her daughter Myrtle Bob Keefe and Keefe's family here when they visit from California. "It's such a thrill for the kids to see all the hummers up close and to see so many at one time," she says. "My favorites are the rubythroats. My 13-year-old granddaughter Mason, who loves nature, enjoys seeing all the wild turkeys and deer. The ranch is a serene, beautiful place."

I take this as my cue to head back to my comfortable, native rock-faced cottage, with a swing on the porch and a hummingbird feeder hanging nearby. I remember that my breakfast also awaits in the fridge—cinnamon rolls and fruit, as well as a slice of Cathy's homemade coconut cream pie with sky-high meringue to snack on later. (The recipe appears in Cathy's latest Hummer House cookbook, which she sells in the gift store.) After breakfast, I'll walk down to the river on one of the hiking trails. But I'm making plans to come back to the observation room later—Dan tells me that the hummers like to tank up on sugar-water again just before dark, and I don't want to miss the twilight performance. **TH**

Hummer House

is on the Brown Ranch, 18 miles south of San Angelo, near Christoval. The observation room opens for non-B&B guests by appt. only (\$5, children age 18 and younger free; includes lecture on hummers by Dan or Cathy Brown). Call 325/255-2254; www.hummerhouse.com.

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Beaching on the Cheap

Summertime on Mustang Island can be the perfect chance to relax and enjoy the easy life—and keep your budget intact.

Text and Photographs by **E. DAN KLEPPER**





Signs of life on the beach. The sandcastle offers an opportunity to design, sculpt, and free-associate simultaneously and in three dimensions. But never leave your sandcastle unattended; its life expectancy will be short.

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



I confess. I am a dreamer. A grasshopper in an ant-hill world. Each month, as soon as I pay the bills, I take the money left over and go hiking or mountain biking. Maybe go fishing. Or pitch a tent, build a campfire, and cook out. Some folks who know me substitute my sobriquet “grasshopper” with the more definitive “bum.” They can say what they will, but I prefer to live outside.

Bold? Daring? Adventurous? Hardly. It's cheaper.

And once a year, I spend an idyllic stretch as a very specific kind of bohemian: the Texas Beach Bum.

The Texas Gulf Coast has a lot to offer—more than 360 miles of coastline, seven barrier islands, and more than 3,000 miles of bay-estuary-lagoon shores. All these provide hundreds of satisfying places to anchor your toes in the sand. And Mustang Island, particularly, lures me back year after year. The island and its only town, laid-back Port Aransas, features funky and affordable eateries, reasonably priced campgrounds and rental cottages, and abundant fishing, paddling, biking, and birding opportunities.

Sound intriguing? Then come along, fellow grasshoppers.

Start with the main draw: the beach. Mustang Island, a sandy barrier of dunes and lagoons, is only 18 miles long and no more than two miles wide. Most roads lead to the water's edge, either along the estuaries of Corpus Christi Bay or shin-deep in the Gulf of Mexico. The nearest beach access

along the northern end of the island is at I. B. Magee Beach Park. This county park offers RV hookups, a bathhouse, and beach camping. Rates start at \$12 a night for tent camping.

Mustang Island State Park occupies the island's southern end and provides both beach and bay access. On the Gulf side, you'll find five miles of sand and surf while on the bay side, you'll encounter a short channel, called Fish Pass, which makes an easy entry into the kayak-friendly lagoons. Primitive-camping permit fees start at \$8 per night.

Elsewhere on the island, RV parks pitch slightly more expensive ways to crash but only a few offer direct access to the beach. The cheapest island overnight is a \$12 beach-parking permit (purchase at island retailers) for three days of camping on the beach. Public restrooms and cold-water showers are available. Most of the beach

ABOVE: The colorful umbrella immeasurably enhances quality of life on the beach, where shade is a precious commodity. **RIGHT:** The bay side of Mustang Island offers access to popular, and scenic, paddling trails.

*The Lighthouse Lakes Paddling Trail
features a close-up view of the historic 1857
Lydia Ann Lighthouse on North Harbor Island.*



Beaching on the Cheap

along Mustang Island is open to vehicular use, meaning you can drive all of your stuff to a nice spot, park, and enjoy. Just negotiate loose sand carefully, avoid parking in the tide zone, and obey all traffic rules.

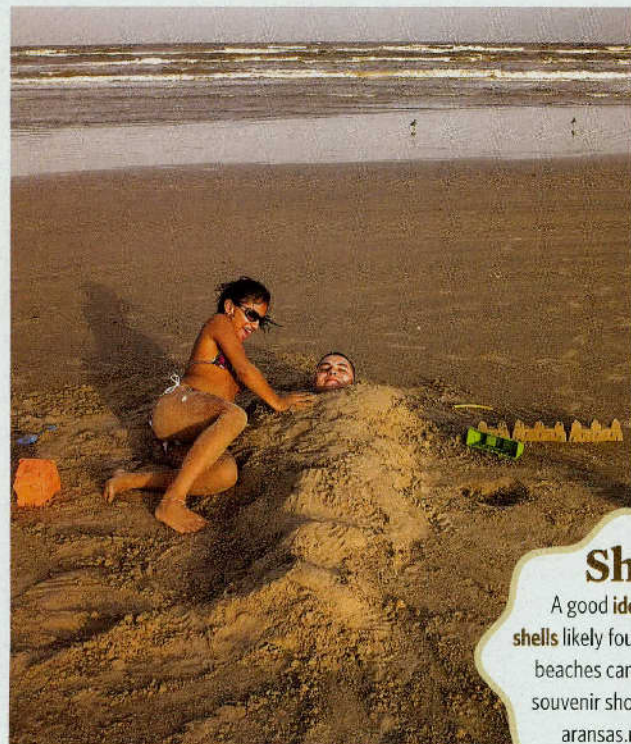
Once you lay claim to your own sandy Xanadu, get comfortable. My personal beachwear includes a pair of orange boardshorts, shades with a screaming green neoprene tether, a straw cowboy hat with elastic band to keep it anchored, blue flip-flops, and a thick layer of water-resistant sun block. I wouldn't walk around my home wearing this getup but, hey, it's the beach.

Either pack your favorite beach gear or outfit yourself on arrival. I keep my list short: big umbrella, fat-tire bicycle, barbecue grill or Coleman cookstove, and an ice chest. I also include a lawn chair (which I'll anchor in about a foot of surf), a surf rod, and plenty of cut bait. If you enjoy the relaxation of fishing but not the constant reeling and casting, then surf fishing is for you. The slow pace (cast once then sit and wait) makes surf fishing feel like you're actually doing something while doing almost nothing.

Zen, isn't it grasshoppers? Calm surf, no incoming seaweed drifts, and a heavyweight but floppy bait might increase your chances of catching red drum, speckled trout, croaker, and gaff-top catfish. Keep your fishing license handy and pay attention to size and catch limits.

The lure of covering a partner or friend with cool sand is tough to resist. Just be careful to make sure everyone is enjoying the prank—and can breathe easily.

Ready to beachcomb? Some of the best shelling on the island occurs



Shelling

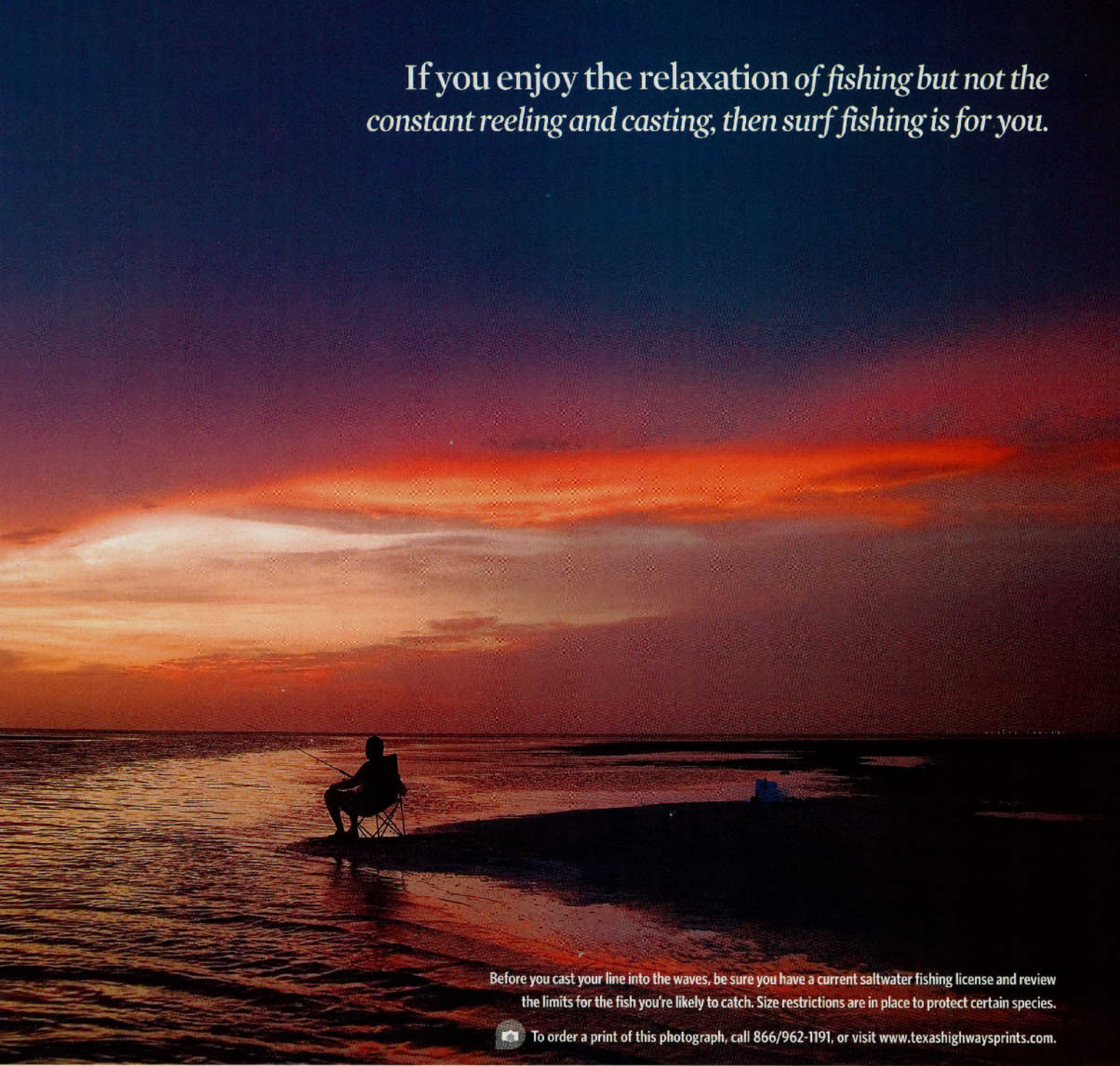
A good **identification chart for shells** likely found along Mustang Island beaches can be purchased at local souvenir shops. Or visit www.port-aransas.net/port_aransas_seashells.aspx.



just after storms, but the island's daily tide always delivers treasures, too. Check tide schedules online or in the local paper (*Port Aransas South Jetty*) and plan your beach walks accordingly. Beachcombers who peruse the stretch of sand between the water and the latest tide line can find sand dollars, sundials, cockles, moon snails, whelks, Campeche angel wings, and the beautiful disk dosinia.

But always avoid the purple, bubble-like critter that washes up daily on Mustang Island beaches. The Portuguese Man-o-War floats like a butterfly, but stings like a giant, angry lavender bee with stringy, venomous tentacles. Steer clear! And while I'm handing out beach-

If you enjoy the relaxation of fishing but not the constant reeling and casting, then surf fishing is for you.



Before you cast your line into the waves, be sure you have a current saltwater fishing license and review the limits for the fish you're likely to catch. Size restrictions are in place to protect certain species.



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

comber advice, make sure any whelks you collect are free of critters before you leave them in your pockets.

Between beachcombing expeditions, and after you've finished sculpting that sandcastle, it's time to get your paddle on! Mustang Island's bay side is included in the Texas Paddling Trails program, which provides maps and signage to create a rewarding paddling adventure. Paddlers can access Mustang Island water trails at three locations off Texas 361: Fish Pass, the Island Moorings Marina, or Wilson's Cut. Once on the water, you'll enjoy gliding around small islands and along the shoreline following more than 20 miles of marked trails.

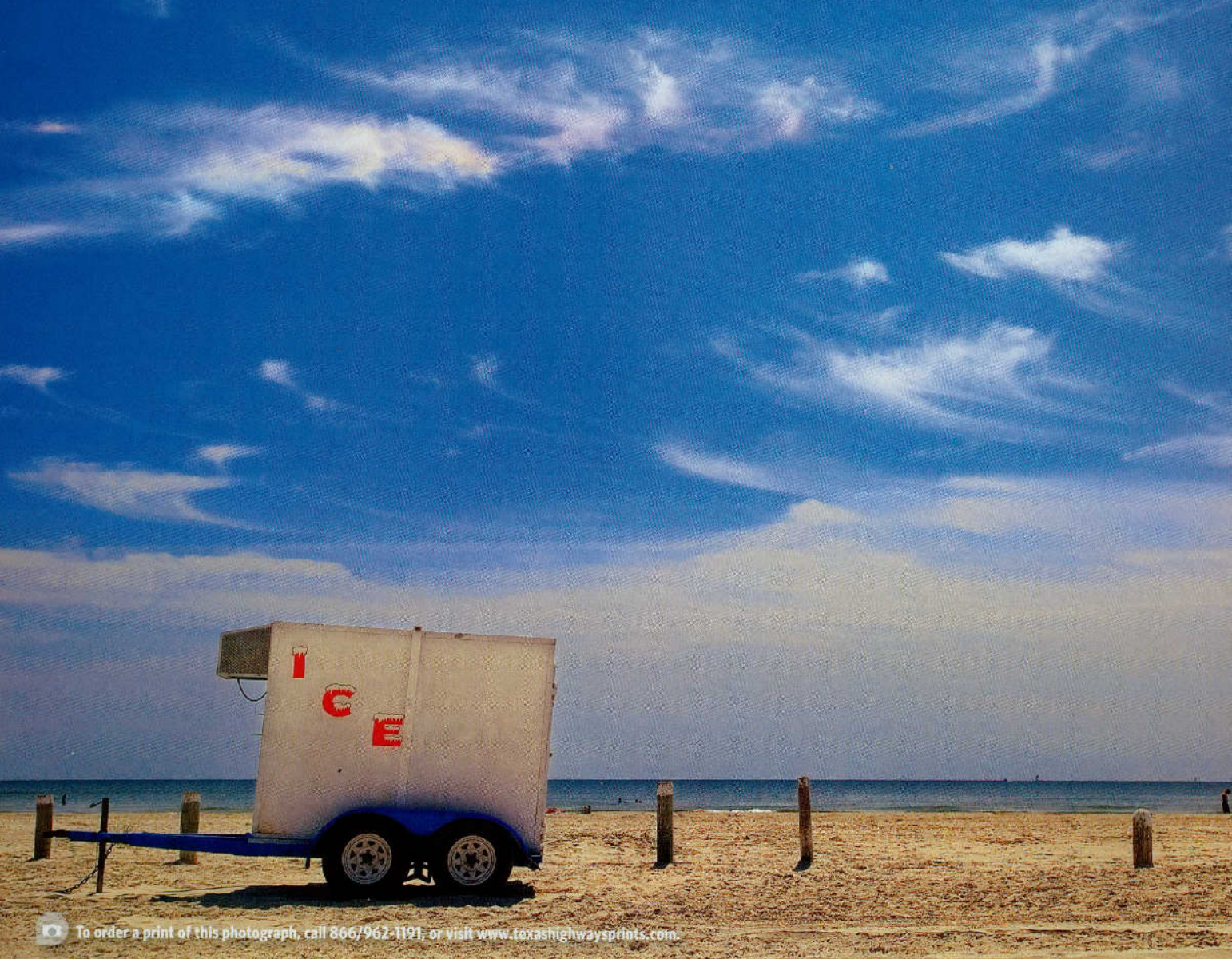
Another excellent paddling option, the Lighthouse Lakes Paddling Trail, lies just north of Mustang Island along the Port

Aransas Causeway. The trail, comprised of four loops, guides paddlers through mangroves and seagrass flats, extensive oyster beds and excellent shorebird habitat, and over tidal hideouts for flounder, red drum, and spotted seatrout. It also features a close-up view of the historic 1857 Lydia Ann Lighthouse on North Harbor Island.

Kayak and fishing guide Hector Rios, owner of Coastal Bend Kayak in Aransas Pass, makes the Lighthouse Lakes a special destination, providing paddling instruction for beginners and plenty of paddle time for kayak veterans. Rios offers an extensive list of nature tour packages, kayak rentals, and lodging. Other outfitters in the area also offer tours, fishing guides, and kayak rentals.

Now that you've experienced floating on water, why not get airborne? The father-and-son team at Brazos Helicopters

Mustang Island is open to vehicular use, meaning you can drive all of your stuff to a nice spot, park, and enjoy.



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

Surf and Sun Safety

● Sunburn, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke can overtake you quickly, so **wear a hat, sunshades, and plenty of sun block**. ● Always **stay hydrated** by drinking lots of water. ● **Bring a shelter or large umbrella** and be prepared to anchor it in the sand. ● Lifeguards are stationed at only a few of the beach locations, so **practice water safety** and **keep an eye on youngsters** at all times. ● **Rip currents and undertows** are not uncommon. ● Know how to **recognize dangerous water conditions** and teach kids what to do in case they find themselves caught in a rip current. ● Find an overview of rip currents at the National Weather Service's Web site: www.ripcurrents.noaa.gov.

conducts aerial island tours that depart from the Mustang Beach Airport. The Birdsell boys can elevate you for a simple beach fly-over or a search for sharks along the shores of nearby St. Joseph Island. Or try Bryan Evans of Port A Parasail, behind Woody's Sport Center on the island. Evans will launch you off his boat deck like a human kite.

Speaking of flying, take time to catch the evening antics of your favorite feathered friends at the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, on the island's bay side. With its triple-decker observation tower, the Center is an ideal spot for birding enthusiasts. Any migratory waterfowl passing over the island will usually make a pit stop at the Birding Center's lagoon, so serious birders often get a chance to extend their life lists. The center's tower also ranks among the best spots on the island to watch the sun set over the bay.



LEFT: Sand, surf, and sky: As it reflects the clear blue above, the peaceful Gulf massages the beach with its seemingly endless waves. ABOVE: Parasailing is just one way to take to the air when you're enjoying life on the beach.

100 bottled microbrews, imports, premiums, and elite beers. Order one of the stellar pizzas while you make up your mind.

Looking for nightlife? A dozen or so clubs feature music and entertainment. The Gaff is a rambling, rowdy, pirate-themed bar with an outdoor stage, and hosts one of the quirkier activities you're likely to encounter: belt sander

races (don't try to figure this one out, just show up and watch). Need a cappuccino and a cinnamon bun the morning after? Bundy's opens at seven a.m., and Tammy Bundy is on hand to serve fresh-baked goods along with breakfast. Or, just ask for a fruit smoothie with an espresso chaser.

When you're ready to learn more about the coastal environment, enjoy a morning or afternoon touring the University of Texas Marine Science Institute and its Wetlands Education Center, a 3.5-acre living laboratory just east of town. Stroll along the boardwalks and explore the surrounding salt marsh or pause in the shade of the observatory platforms to survey the landscape. Check out the adjacent Visitor Center and its seven aquaria featuring Texas coastal habitat. Or catch a public

Ready for dinner? Pick up a pound or three of fresh Gulf shrimp from Port A Seafood Company or, if you want a break from camp cooking, hit the island eateries. Start with a satisfying meal at Seafood and Spaghetti Works. Jay Kenigsburg's family-owned Works, an island landmark, offers delicious, reasonably-priced cuisine featuring fresh seafood. Or go for the tuna tacos and a deep-fried avocado at Kody's, another popular hangout.

Feeling like beef instead? Surf over to the Wild Horse Saloon and Grill and order the Stampede, a hand-pressed burger topped with Jack Daniels sauce, bacon, peppers, sautéed onions, onion chips, and chili. Continue your evening with a brew from the Port Aransas Brewing Company, a microbrewery that serves some outstanding pilsners, stouts, bocks, and ales from eight brewing tanks. You also can select from about

Stroll along the boardwalks or pause at one of the observatory platforms at UTMSI's Wetlands Education Center.



The Wetlands Education Center is a 3.5-acre living laboratory project of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute, where tours and presentations are usually free of charge.

lecture in the Center's auditorium. There's no charge!

Maybe culture and history are more to your liking. Visit the Port Aransas Museum, located in a beautifully restored island "kit house," built in the 1900s, that served as home to several Port Aransas families as well as the island's U.S. Coast Guard Station. The Museum, part of the Community Center complex, exhibits photographs, artifacts, and documents chronicling Port Aransas' past.

The lore of Mustang Island will entertain as it informs. Since its founding in the first half of the 19th Century, residents have called the village Sand Point, Star, The Pass, Ropesville, and Tarpon. The island community sheltered about 300 residents by 1870. Port Aransas became the community's name about 1910. These days, Port Aransas maintains its relaxed, 19th-Century ambiance by preserving historic architecture, protecting and promoting natural resources, and managing development.

Bohemians are known for their love of leisure. And beach

bums, in particular, are not immune to the allure of hot showers and clean linens. So if you begin to feel salted and overly sanded while camping, check in to some proper digs. The Balinese Flats, a cool, calm retreat for the meditatively inclined, is a converted 1950's motel reimagined as a private, harmonious blend of bayside simplicity and Mexican colonial décor.

If you're traveling with pets, try A Laughing Horse Lodge, a collection of cowboy-kitsch cottages two blocks from the beach. Want to go old-school? Check into one of the recently renovated rooms at the Tarpon Inn, the island's oldest standing structure. Built more than a century ago, the Tarpon Inn dispenses with telephones and TVs in exchange for rocking chairs and porch fans. Need a little high-tech while aligning your chakras? The Tarpon has wi-fi. And a new pool.

If you're still not quite convinced to chuck your shoes (along with that weekend to-do list) and head to the beach, you might



Seafood Recipes

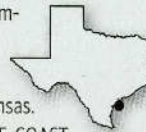
Try any of the totally delicious seafood recipes from Rockport's Beverly "BJ" Newton. Her style of **Texas Gulf Coast "old school" cuisine** lends itself to **simple, outdoor cooking** with a BBQ grill or a camp stove and frying pan.
www.redfishcharters.com/rockport_seafood_recipes.htm.

Whether you suit up in special gear or just coast along on big tires, Mustang Island will love you—and you'll love the near-level rides.

➤ TH ESSENTIALS

Port Aransas/Mustang Island

THE PORT ARANSAS Chamber of Commerce hosts a terrific Web site with lots of information: www.portaransas.org. Or call them at 800/45-COAST.



Getting There

Access the island from the north via the Port Aransas ferry. The ferry leaves the shore at Aransas Pass, south of Rockport, every 15 minutes or so and deposits you into Port Aransas. Access the island from the south via the JFK Causeway from Corpus Christi.

Restaurants and Clubs

Port A Seafood Company, 361/749-6456, www.portaseafood.com

Seafood and Spaghetti Works, 361/749-5666.

Kody's, 361/749-8226, www.kodysportaransas.com.

Wild Horse Saloon and Grill, 361/749-0105, www.wildhorsesaloonandgrill.com.

Port Aransas Brewing Company, 361/749-BREW, www.portabrewing.com.

The Gaff, 361/749-5970, www.gotothegaff.com.

Bundy's, 361/749-4BUN, www.bundysporta.com.

Accommodations

I. B. Magee Beach Park, 361/749-6117,

www.nuecesbeachparks.com.

Mustang Island State Park, 361/749-5246, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/mustangisland.

The Balinese Flats, 361/749-1880 or 888/951-6381, www.balineseflats.com.

A Laughing Horse Lodge, 361/749-5513, www.alaughinghorseelodge.com.

The Tarpon Inn, 361/749-5555, www.thetarponinn.com.

Stuff to Do

Texas Paddling Trails, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/paddlingtrails.

Coastal Bend Kayak, 361/537-8668, www.coastalbendkayaking.com.

Brazos Helicopters, 361/ 443-2827, www.hothelicopters.com/beach_tours.

Port A Parasail, 361/ 749-4600, www.southtexasparasail.com.

Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center, www.cityofportaransas.org/leonabelle_turnbull_birding_center.cfm.

University of Texas Marine Science Institute and the Wetlands Education Center, 361/ 749-6729, www.utmsi.utexas.edu.

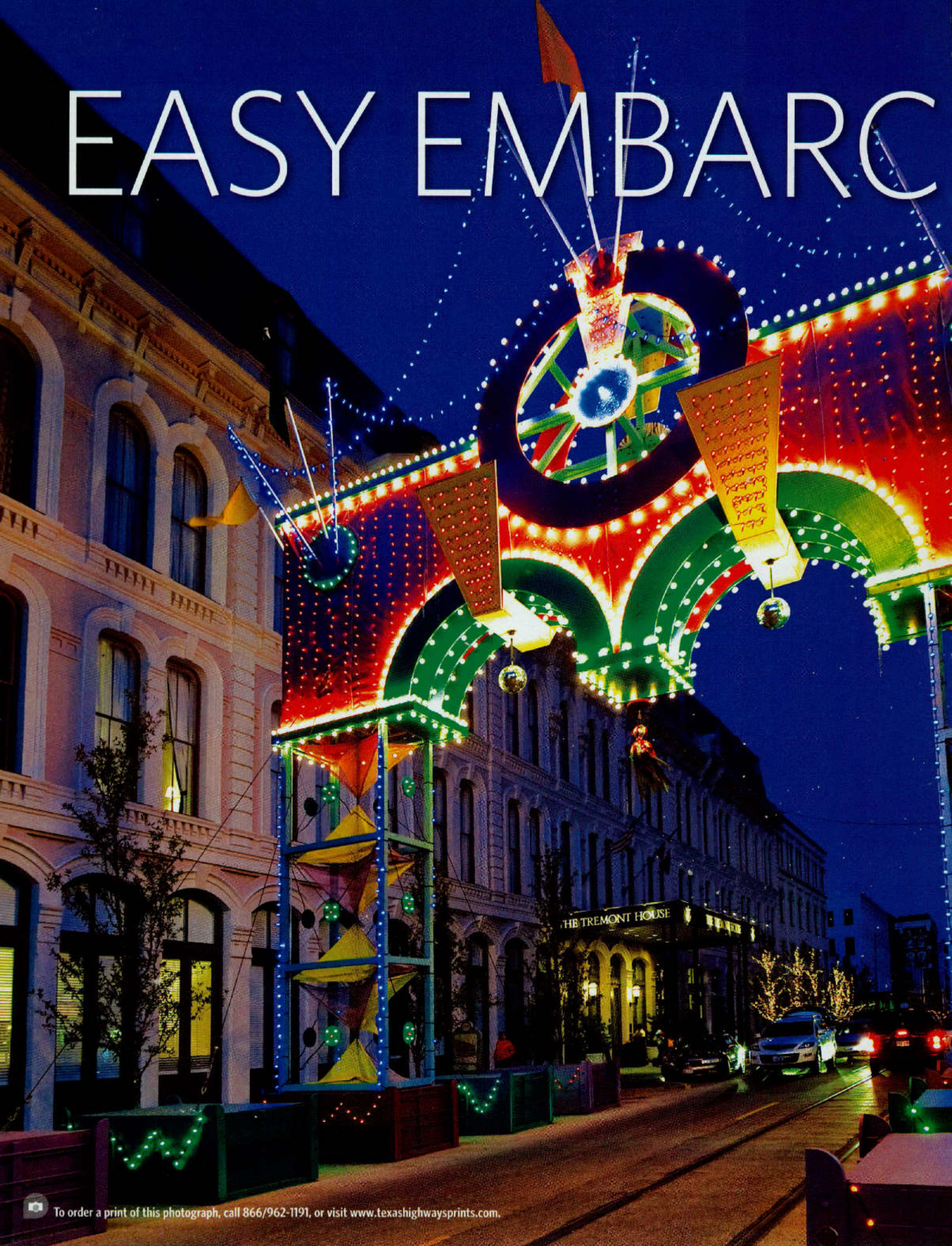
Port Aransas Museum, 361/ 749-3800, www.portaransasmuseum.org.

need more visualization. Try this: Close your eyes and take a big, deep breath as if you were diving underwater. Let the breath out slowly. Feel your body rising gently, floating, breaking the surface of warm, salty foam as the noise and clutter around you recedes. Now, you're gliding across the waves in your own special craft, its pleasant rocking sensation a lulling duet with the splendid sunrise and the call of gulls.

Are you ready for the Island? **TH**

Writer and photographer **E. DAN KLEPPER** rambles around Texas virtually all the time. Check out his work—including the book *100 Classic Hikes in Texas*—at www.edanklepper.com.

EASY EMBARC

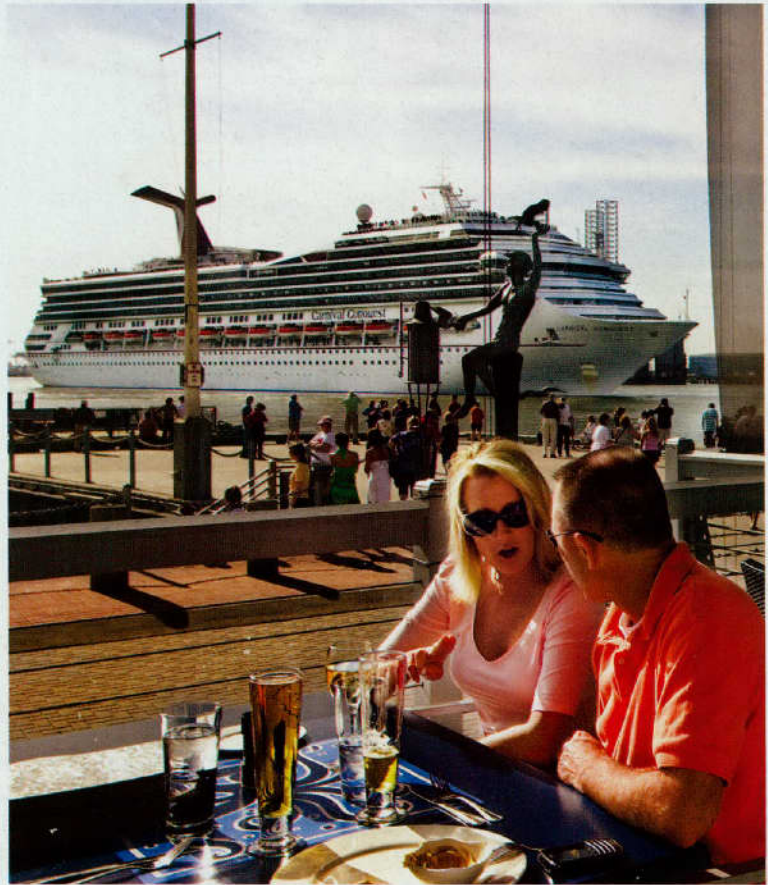


ADERO

Whether you're coming or going, **Galveston** is a shipshape port for extending your cruise.

Text by **HEATHER BRAND SCHATZ**
Photographs by **SARAH KERVER**

Strolling along The Strand, the main thoroughfare of Galveston's historic downtown, I get the overwhelming impression that I've somehow traveled back to the 1800s. For five blocks, extending from 20th Street to 25th Street, Victorian-era storefronts with decorative brickwork and high balconies line the street, and horse-drawn carriages convey passengers to shops, museums, and restaurants. At night, gas street lamps illuminate the sidewalks, and the illusion is complete, save for one thing: An immense (nearly 1,000-foot-long) cruise ship docked at the adjacent harbor brings the scene undeniably into the present.



ABOVE: Diners enjoy the view overlooking Galveston Harbor from the patio of the Olympia Grill. LEFT: A brightly lit arch in Galveston's historic downtown/Strand District frames the entrance to The Tremont House.



GIFT SHOP & TICKETS

NO SWIMMING
NO FISHING

Ever since the Galveston Cruise Ship Terminal was dedicated in 1990, millions of cruise-goers have flocked to the island as a jumping-off point for high-seas adventures and exotic ports of call. The harbor has expanded and improved over the last 20 years, and currently ranks fifth in the nation for number of embarkations, averaging about 600,000 a year.

Today, two major cruise lines call the harbor home base. Royal Caribbean's *Voyager of the Seas* departs weekly from late November through mid-April, and Carnival Cruise Lines' *Ecstasy* and *Conquest* embark year round for such tropical hotspots as Cozumel, Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands.

Yet as enticing as these far-flung ports of call may be, many cruise passengers find that Galveston is a worthy destination in its own right. Located on the bay side of the island, the cruise terminal abuts downtown Galveston, known as The Strand National Historic Landmark District, which includes The Strand and the adjoining 36 square blocks. Here, more than a century ago, cotton brokers weighed and traded bales of cotton prior to export, shipping magnates haggled with their bankers, and vacationers promenaded The Strand while taking in the bracing sea air. Even today, remnants of the past remain, and many of the downtown structures speak to a time when Galveston, not Houston, served as Texas' most significant port—at least until the hurricane of 1900 took its toll.

Even before the Texas Revolution (1835-36), Stephen F. Austin, who brought the first colonists to settle in the territory, praised Galveston as “the best natural harbor the colony of Texas has to offer.” According to Steve Cernak, director of the port, “Galveston’s roots are maritime. It was founded as a port in 1825, and the city grew up around it. Galveston played a pivotal role in the growing economy and population of Texas. It was the gateway through which many immigrants arrived and goods left for market.” The city was incorporated in 1839, and by 1840 it was the largest in Texas. Though Galveston no longer boasts the state’s largest population, it continues to draw vacationers in droves, and The Strand and its surrounding streets still bustle. The historic buildings that once served as mercantile warehouses and banks now house wine bars, bistros, curio shops, and clothing stores.

To learn more about the port’s history, I venture two blocks north on 22nd Street to the Texas Seaport

Museum, which occupies a two-story contemporary brick building alongside the wharf at Pier 22. The museum pays tribute to Galveston’s identity as a major hub for shipping and immigration with two floors of displays, where visitors can weigh hay bales, examine historic photographs, and search a computer database for immigration records.

The museum’s main gallery houses a functioning sail loft and sail-making exhibit, which is strewn with canvas and equipped with sewing machines for the production and repair of sails for the 1877 tall ship *Elissa*. Docked oppo- [continued on page 36] ©

LEFT: Set sail! The historic *Elissa* attracts a crowd at the Texas Seaport Museum. BELOW: Pencil this in! A youngster enjoys getting to the point at Hendley Market, full of fun stuff for all ages.



GALVESTON'S ROOTS ARE MARITIME. *It was founded as a port in 1825, and the city grew up around it. Galveston played a pivotal role in the growing economy and population of Texas.*



The Carnival Conquest docks in Galveston as the sun rises over the island.

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

EASY EMBARCADERO
GALVESTON





◉ continued from page 331 site the museum's entrance, this three-masted iron barque visited Galveston twice in the 1880s to be loaded with cotton bound for its home port of Liverpool, England. The *Elissa* continues to sail Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico today. I take a self-guided tour of the stately ship, across decks crisscrossed with rigging, through the engine room's warren of machinery, and past the elegant officers' quarters. Glancing into the narrow berths of the fo'c'sle at the bow, I gain a new appreciation for the relative luxury of a modern-day cruise-ship cabin.

Another vessel operated by the Seaport Museum, the double-decker *Seagull II* offers hour-long tours of the harbor four times a day. I take a seat at the prow, a prime spot for viewing the harbor's natural and industrial wonders. As we motor along the ship channel, the *Seagull II* bounces gently in the wake of passing barges and cargo ships. Gulls circle overhead, and low-flying pelicans skim the water with the tips of their broad wings. My fellow passengers and I gasp in delight when a pod of dolphins surfaces behind a nearby shrimp trawler. Meanwhile, our captain explains the harbor's various industrial features, pointing out the dockside cranes and grain elevators, as well as the floating dry docks and decommissioned offshore oil-drilling platforms.

One of these rigs, connected to a pier off 20th Street, now serves as the Ocean Star Offshore Drilling Rig and Museum, with exhibits devoted to the engineering and ingenuity required to pump crude from deep beneath the Gulf of Mexico.

Witnessing the thriving port, I find it difficult to imagine the destruction wrought by the 1900 hurricane, which had submerged the island, destroyed most of its structures, and killed an estimated 6,000 people. After the harbor tour, I stop in next door at the Pier 21 Theater to see *The Great Storm*, a 20-minute film that relays the tragic events through photographs of the wreckage and heart-wrenching, first-person accounts of the disaster.

Several hurricanes have tested Galveston's mettle over the last century, and the most recent, Ike, flooded the downtown district in 2008. However, Galveston has once again rebounded, and the restaurants along the wharf have reopened. I make a beeline for the family-run Olympia Grill, attracted by its upscale nautical décor, wide wooden deck overlooking the harbor, and authentic Greek

Andrew, Laura, Katie, and Mike Taylor enjoy a quick lunch at Star Drug Store before their cruise departs from Galveston.

AS ENTICING AS FAR-FLUNG
*ports of call may be, many cruise
passengers find that Galveston is a
worthy destination in its own right.*

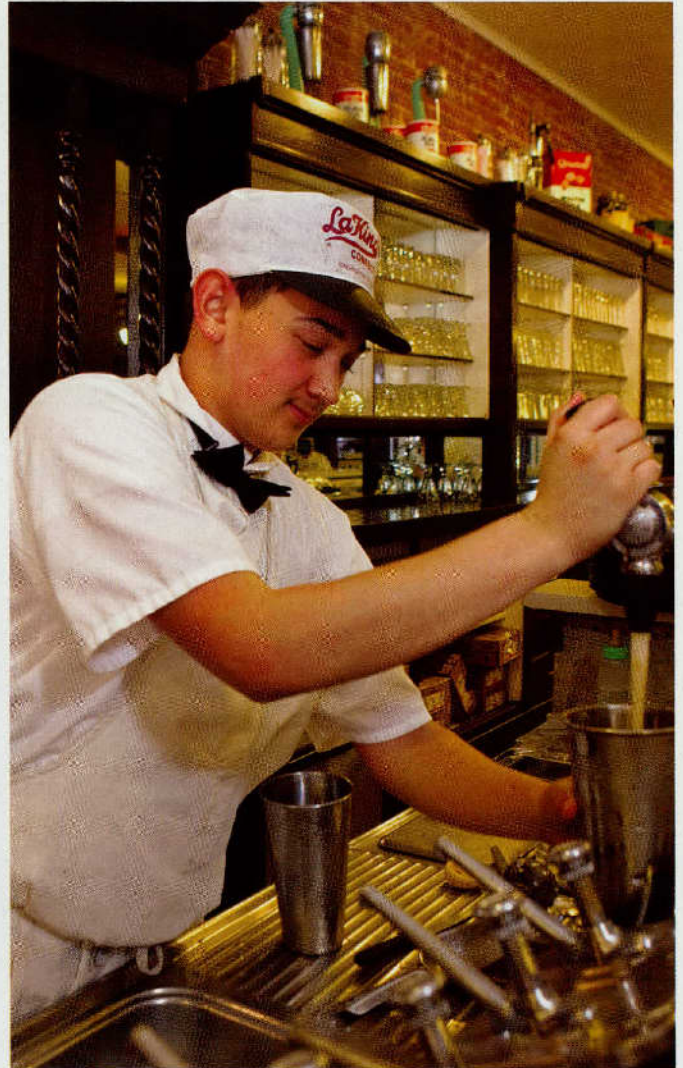
fare—and I'm not the only one. Families and couples fill the tables of the open-air dining deck, gazing out over the busy waterway and occasionally fending off brazen seagulls that eye plates piled high with crab cakes, gyros, and dolmas.

Though I stuff myself on chicken pita served with tzatziki, onion, and tomatoes, and the Olympia's classic spanakopita, I can't resist heading over to The Strand for my all-time favorite dessert destination: La King's Confectionery, an island staple for decades. There, I join the throng of tourists lined up at the 40-foot-long marble counter to order authentic, old-fashioned sundaes, malts, and other ice-cream treats. Jostling my way through the crowd, I peruse display cases loaded with chocolate truffles, pralines, and saltwater taffy, a specialty of the house. Meanwhile, at the back of the store, master candy-makers pull the sticky confection on vintage equipment and lob samples into the eager crowd of onlookers. I purchase a paper sack full of my favorites (lemon, root beer, and sour cherry) to take home.

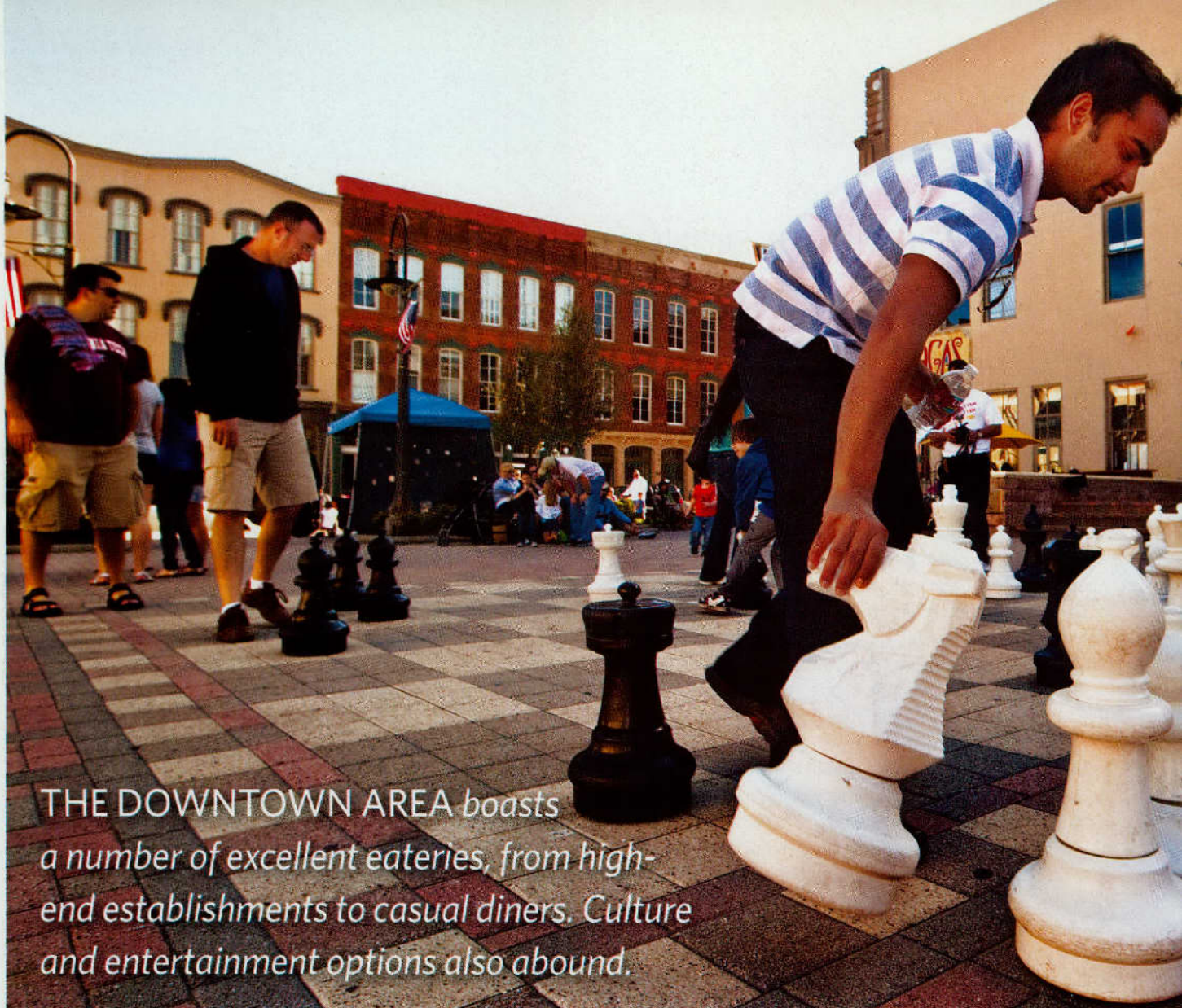
The downtown area boasts a number of excellent eateries, from high-end establishments like Luigi's Ristorante Italiano, famous for its handmade ravioli, and Rudy & Paco Restaurant & Bar, featuring exceptional grilled seafood, to casual diners like the Star Drug Store, first opened in 1917, where patrons still belly up to the horseshoe-shaped counter to order egg creams and pimento-cheese sandwiches. Tourists and locals alike swear by the turbo-charged espresso at MOD Coffeehouse, and the Oasis Juice Bar blends smoothies as exotic as the birds for which they are named. Though the Oasis tempts me with the Roseate Spoonbill, a mixture of watermelon juice and raspberries, I ultimately order a Brown Pelican, a delicious blend of banana, raw cacao, and rice milk.

Culture and entertainment options also abound. The Galveston Arts Center (currently on Market, while The Strand location is renovated) presents exhibitions by established and up-and-coming visual artists, and The Grand 1894 Opera House hosts a diverse schedule of dance, theater, and music in a distinguished, historic setting. However, for many cruise-goers, shopping is the main attraction. Many of the stores along The Strand cater to vacationers with racks of brightly hued T-shirts, bikinis, sun hats, and flip-flops as far as the eye can see.

In search of souvenirs, I duck into Hendley Market, with its



Classic soda fountain lovers receive royal treatment at La King's Confectionery, which offers terrific ice cream treats, homemade candy, pralines, saltwater taffy, fudge, and chocolates.



THE DOWNTOWN AREA boasts a number of excellent eateries, from high-end establishments to casual diners. Culture and entertainment options also abound.

assortment of novelty items, antiques, and tchotchkes from around the globe. Here, finger puppets and self-adhesive mustaches share display cases with Victorian jewelry, glass eyeballs, and nativity figurines from as far away as Kenya and Vietnam. Afterward, I browse the cluttered aisles of Colonel Bubbie's, a surplus shop stocked floor-to-ceiling with outmoded uniforms, excess canteens, and other military paraphernalia. Those searching for something to read poolside on the lido deck need look no further than the Galveston Bookshop, an historic brick storefront just a few blocks off The Strand, where customers scan shelves stacked high with everything from paperback thrillers to vintage hardback editions of the classics. A resident orange tabby cat named Gus usually dozes next to the register, occasionally soliciting chin scratches.

Cruise passengers find many reasons to extend their trips to spend time in the port city, and several of the nearby hotels encourage this practice by providing free cruise parking when you stay the night prior to your departure. One of those hotels, the posh Tremont House, located a couple blocks south of The Strand in an elegant, four-story Italianate building, offers not only free cruise parking but also bird's-eye views of the historic district

from its rooftop terrace, where guests can watch the sun setting over the bay and ships maneuvering in the harbor.

Houston resident Susan Latimer, who has embarked four times from the island's port, says that "boarding a cruise from Galveston is like having your vacation start early. You can show up ahead of time and make a day of it—or even a night." With all that the island has to offer, some might even find it hard to cross the gangway and leave the lively city behind. Yet seafarers can rest easy knowing that downtown Galveston, with all its Victorian charm, awaits them on their return. Latimer affirms, "Coming back to Galveston makes the reentry easier to bear. Your vacation doesn't have to end the second you step on dry land." **TH**

Houston native **HEATHER BRAND SCHATZ** grew up sailing on Galveston Bay but has yet to embark on a cruise, though she'll find any excuse to visit The Strand (and eat taffy). Whether going to visit family on the island, or taking the occasional cruise, photographer **SARAH KERVER** finds Galveston to be better than ever. She says, "There's always something fun to do and never a dull moment."

ABOVE: An oversized chessboard attracts players at Saengerfest Park on The Strand.

TH ESSENTIALS



Galveston Cruising

FOR DETAILS about cruises departing from Galveston, visit www.portofgalveston.com/cruiseinformation. For information on Galveston events, attractions, restaurants, and lodging, contact the Galveston Island CVB, 2328 Broadway, 888/GAL-ISLE; www.galveston.com/cvb.

Attractions

Colonel Bubbie's, 2202 Strand St., 409/762-7397 or 800/231-6005; www.colbubbie.com.

Galveston Arts Center, 2501 Market St., 409/763-2403; www.galveston.com/galvestonartscenter.

Galveston Bookshop, 317 23rd St., 409/750-8200 or 877/750-8200; <http://galvestonbookshop.com>.

The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St., 409/763-1894 or 800/821-1894; www.thegrand.com.

Hendley Market, 2010 Strand St., 409/762-2610; www.hendleymarket.com.

Ocean Star Museum, Pier 20 at Harborside Dr., 409/766-STAR; www.oceanstaroec.com.

Texas Seaport Museum, Pier 21 at Harborside Dr., 409/763-1877; www.galvestonhistory.org/Texas_Seaport_Museum.asp.

Restaurants

La King's Confectionery, 2323 Strand St., 409/762-6100; www.lakingsconfectionery.com.

Luigi's Ristorante Italiano, 2328 Strand St., 409/763-6500; www.luigisrestaurantgalveston.com.

MOD Coffeehouse, 2126 Postoffice St., 409/765-5659; www.modcoffeehouse.com.

Oasis Juice Bar, 409 25th St., 409/762-8399; www.theoasisjuicebar.com.

Olympia Grill, Pier 21 at Harborside Dr., 409/765-0021; 4908 Seawall Blvd., 409/766-1222; www.olympiagrill.net.

Rudy & Paco Restaurant & Bar, 2028 Postoffice St., 409/762-3696; www.galveston.com/rudypaco.

Star Drug Store, 510 23rd St., 409/766-7719; www.galvestonstardrug.com.

Accommodations

The Tremont House, 2300 Ships Mechanic Row, 409/763-0300; www.wyndhamtremonthouse.com.



BELOW: The Grand 1894 Opera House provides Galveston with an elegant home for the performing arts.



Cottages by the Sea

Text by **HELEN BRYANT**
Photographs by **AL ARGUETA**

OUR MENTAL IMAGES of “a cottage by the sea” may vary, but the idea of a bungalow with gumbo simmering in the kitchen and a little sand on the floor, tracked in after a day at the beach, appeals to many of us. Sometimes, instead of a hotel room, we have in mind something homier, with more space for flinging off our flip-flops, stashing sand pails and surfboards, and lounging on a spacious porch to enjoy the coastal breeze.

Home, sea home. Once a church and school in Falfurrias, Little Bethel now welcomes overnighters at Loyola Beach. The lighted fishing pier juts some 300 feet into Baffin Bay.







Somewhere on the Gulf of Mexico or one of its bays sits the perfect cottage for you. We've combed the coast some 420 highway miles and zeroed in on a few special places to lure you seaward. All capture the spirit of seaside living, each with a personality all its own.

SURFSIDE BEACH

Blue Mermaid

You can't get much closer to the Gulf of Mexico than this cheery, yellow A-frame with turquoise trim, perched on stilts at the water's edge in Surfside Beach, about 40 minutes southwest of Galveston.

Inside Blue Mermaid, a living-dining room feels warm and welcoming, its sloping walls enclosing an overstuffed couch and love seat, a round rattan table with four chairs, and a fully equipped little corner kitchen.

A short hall leads to a tidy bathroom with a shower and a bedroom with a comfortable queen bed and a shelf filled with paperbacks. A narrow staircase climbs to a loft with two twin beds, another double, and a balcony. Internet access? No, but you can watch satellite TV or, better, sit on the deck and keep an eye on the surfers (hence the name Surfside).

Scamper down to the beach for a walk, or try to catch a trout. You can cook your catch at the cottage or go out for seafood about half a mile away at Red Snapper Inn. (Try the buttery, sautéed soft-shell crabs meunière.)

ABOVE: The grounds of sand sculptor Lucinda Wierenga's cottage on South Padre Island include a practice sandbox where she hones her craft. (This castle, co-sculpted by Wierenga and Walter McDonald, is on display through November at the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.)

RIGHT: The Blue Mermaid's cozy loft opens to a balcony with gulf's-eye views of the Gulf.

SOMEWHERE on the Gulf of Mexico or one of its bays sits the perfect cottage for you.





Nearby tide pools offer good crabbing, or you might rent a surfboard at Bingo's and try your luck on the waves. Whatever you do, take it easy: You're on island time.

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

The SandBox

Make yourself at home in a sand sculptor's cottage, one of the most unusual places to stay on South Padre Island.

Professional sand sculptor Lucinda Wierenga—better known as Sandy Feet—lives on the ground floor of this gray, two-story beach house and rents out the top floor and loft apartment. You'll know you're there when you see the sandcastle sculpture out front and the peace-sign weather vane on the roof.

Decorated in what Wierenga calls "beach-shack chic," the pine-floored upstairs, which has its own entrance, features a gourmet kitchen with a curved, poured-concrete countertop housing two copper sinks—a big one for most tasks and a smaller, round one perfect for icing down boiled shrimp—along

with a bar fashioned from an eight-foot slab of mesquite.

Pop a top on the pool table, and—voilà!—you can dine on it. Tickle the ivories on the upright grand piano, watch cable TV, or use free WiFi to connect to the Internet.

In the main-floor bathroom, you'll find a bidet, along with a Mexican painted ceramic sink.

Surprisingly roomy, the house sleeps 10, with a queen bed in one bedroom, a double and two singles in the loft (which also has its own large bathroom), and two pull-out couches. A futon on the back porch adds fair-weather sleeping al fresco.

A chandelier dangles over a picnic table in the backyard near an ever-changing sandcastle under the second-floor deck. Occasionally, Wierenga hosts live music events out here.

The cottage sits a half block from the beach, and a short walk from the island's most popular seafood restaurant, Blackbeard's. Try the Deep sandwich, piled high with fried flounder fillets.

ABOVE: The spacious Robin's Nest features covered and uncovered decks, and plentiful beachy scenery. BELOW RIGHT: Catch it, and then cook it in The SandBox's gourmet kitchen.



A bonus: Anyone who stays in The SandBox for a full week earns a sand-sculpting lesson.

Pelican Bay Resort's colorful cottages lie near a lighted fishing pier on Aransas Bay. Ask about golf and fishing packages.

ROCKPORT/FULTON

Pelican Bay Resort

North of Rockport, near the Fulton Beach area on Aransas Bay, pastel Cape Cod-style cottages with shutters line a winding road through a grove of live oaks.

Pelican Bay takes the fishing-village definition of resort: no golf course or spa; rather, a lodge, a cluster of cottages, mini-suites (alongside a pool with hot tub), a clubhouse, and a fishing pier. If you prefer your own cottage but appreciate amenities such as daily maid service along with coffee and breakfast bars, this place is for you.

Even though the interiors, with tile flooring except in the carpeted bedrooms, might seem familiar to those who frequent beach condos, each distinguishes itself with cottagey touches such as knotty-pine ceilings, wainscoting, and furnishings; window boxes of red silk poppies; and two rocking chairs on the porch near a barbecue grill.

Each lodging sleeps four—in the bedroom's new queen-sized bed and the queen sofa sleeper in the living-dining area; both rooms have TVs. The kitchen's full-sized appliances include a dishwasher and a microwave.





Wander down to the clubhouse to use the free wireless Internet connection, play cards or billiards, or take advantage of the coin-operated washer and dryer.

If you're not up for cooking dinner, drive about a mile to Fulton Beach Road, where you'll find several good restaurants, including Moondog, overlooking Fulton Harbor, where the cooks know how to fry shrimp and snapper without losing the delicate textures and flavors.

The water awaits nearby, and just a short walk leads you to the resort's lighted fishing pier. The resort can arrange tee times at Rockport Country Club, and Pelican Bay makes a good base for visiting Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, which hosts the world's largest wild flock of endangered whooping cranes from around mid-October to March.

CRYSTAL BEACH

Robin's Nest

Stretch your definition of "cottage" when you drive through the gates of Crystal Beach's "The Biscayne" neighborhood and see Robin's Nest. This grand haven can house a big family. Maybe two.

With four bedrooms and four full bathrooms, Robin's Nest—on the Bolivar Peninsula a block from the Gulf of Mexico, but within view of it—sits on stilts

ABOVE: Pelican Bay's poolside mini-suites include microwaves and mini-refrigerators.

RIGHT: Vintage radios, 45-RPM records, and other period memorabilia contribute to Little Bethel's 1950s vibe.



WITH four bedrooms and four full bathrooms, Robin's Nest on Crystal Beach stretches the definition of "cottage."



so sturdy they held up even when Hurricane Ike pushed 15 feet of water at them in 2008.

Enter the blue-gray house and find a large living-dining room with cushy sofas and chairs, a flat-screen satellite TV, and a white wooden dining table that seats eight. Robin's-egg-blue walls and plentiful sea-view windows keep it beachy-feeling albeit upscale, with stainless-steel kitchen appliances, granite countertops, and huge bedroom closets. Eleven people can sleep here comfortably.

No Internet connection, but why turn on a computer when you can watch blue herons wading in a pond just outside the master suite's window?

If you're in the mood to stalk trout, redfish, and flounder, hire a guide at the marina near Stingaree restaurant, a local favorite because of dishes like red snapper almondine.

People often choose Crystal Beach for its bucolic setting, but if you get antsy, take the free, 20-minute ferry from Port Bolivar (15 minutes away) to entertainment-packed Galveston.

When you return to your cottage, take a walk on broad Crystal Beach, then enjoy a meal on your porch and watch ships, silhouetted against the pink early-evening sky, glide into Galveston Bay.

LOYOLA BEACH

Little Bethel

The white steeple tells you you've found Little Bethel, a 1950s African American Methodist church and school that Keith and Bobette Naylor moved from Falfurrias to the edge of Baffin Bay at Loyola Beach, about an hour south of Corpus Christi, and turned into a rental cottage.

Clues to its past—a church pew, a pulpit, and a chalkboard—remain amid this hardwood-floored cottage's '50s decor: a turquoise arm chair, a yellow Formica kitchen table, a cotton skirt covering the area under the sink. You won't find a microwave or Internet; either would ruin the mood, anyway.

The cottage sleeps six—on a queen bed in the bedroom, a couch, and another double and a single behind a screen decorated with '50s 45-RPM records (Johnny Mathis' "Chances Are," for one). Play darts, watch TV, or choose one of dozens of furnished videos.

The kitchen redefines stocked, offering coffee, condiments, milk, juice, crackers, and, best of all,

Photos of Keith and Bobette Naylor's family and friends with their prize catches decorate Little Bethel's entrance hall.



fresh-baked goods from Bobette Naylor's oven. My favorite: her spongy poppyseed cake, baked in a Bundt form and presented on a sturdy paper tray, so you can take it home with you if you'd like.

A 300-foot lighted fishing pier pokes out into the bay, and a butane fish-cooker near the driveway can fry your catch. Not up for cooking? The King's Inn restaurant, half a mile up the road, serves some of the best fried shrimp on the coast.

At the end of the day, sit out back on Little Bethel's porch, savor Bobette's cake, and watch the stars shine over the water. If you get chilly, relax inside and read a mid-century cookbook for farmers' wives. Note the sign over the back door: "Thou shalt not whine." I should think not. **TH**

HELEN BRYANT likes nothing better than sitting on a cottage porch, watching the surf roll. **AL ARGUETA**, who added a painterly effect to the images, especially enjoyed photographing Little Bethel. "The setting is spectacular—it's right on the water and there's that wonderful pier that lights up at night."

TH ESSENTIALS

Coastal Cottages

FOLLOWING is contact information for cottages in the story. Rates vary by season. For information on other rental cottages along the Texas coast, contact area convention and visitors bureaus or chambers of commerce.

Surfside Beach: Blue Mermaid, 109 Beach Dr., 713/530-1152; www.turkoiseproperties.com. Summer rates: \$980 week, \$650 weekend. **Red Snapper Inn**, 402 Blue Water Hwy., 979/239-3226; www.redsnapperinn.com. **Bingo Surfboards** (surfboard retail/rental, factory, restaurant, museum), 18 Fort Velasco, 979/230-9000; www.bingossurfboards.com.

South Padre Island: The SandBox, 117 E. Saturn St., 956/459-2928; www.sandboxinn.com. Rates: \$130 to \$300 per night, depending on season and demand. **Blackbeard's Restaurant**, 103 East Saturn Ln., 956/761-2962; www.blackbeardsspi.com.

Rockport/Fulton: Pelican Bay Resort, 4206 N. Texas 35, 361/729-7177 or 866/729-7177; www.pelicanbayresort.com. Summer rates: \$169 a night, \$900 a week. **Moondog**, 100 Casterline Dr. (Fulton), 361/729-6200.



Aransas National Wildlife Refuge is at 1 Wildlife Circle in Austwell. Call 361/286-3559; www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/aransas/.

Crystal Beach: Robin's Nest, 705 Sara Way, 800/880-2622; www.cobbrealestate.com. (At press time, Robin's Nest was on the market.) Summer rates: \$2,441.25 week, \$1,593.25 weekend. **Stingaree**, 1295 N. Stingaree Dr., 409/684-2731; www.stingaree.com.

Loyola Beach: Little Bethel, 1008-A East FM 628, 361/296-4056. Rate: \$150 a night for two guests; \$50 each for each additional person. An extra building out back sleeps up to five more. **King's Inn**, 1116 E. County Rd. 2270, 361/297-5265. (Call for directions.)

happiness COMES IN *waves*



South Padre Island can coax you out of your shell



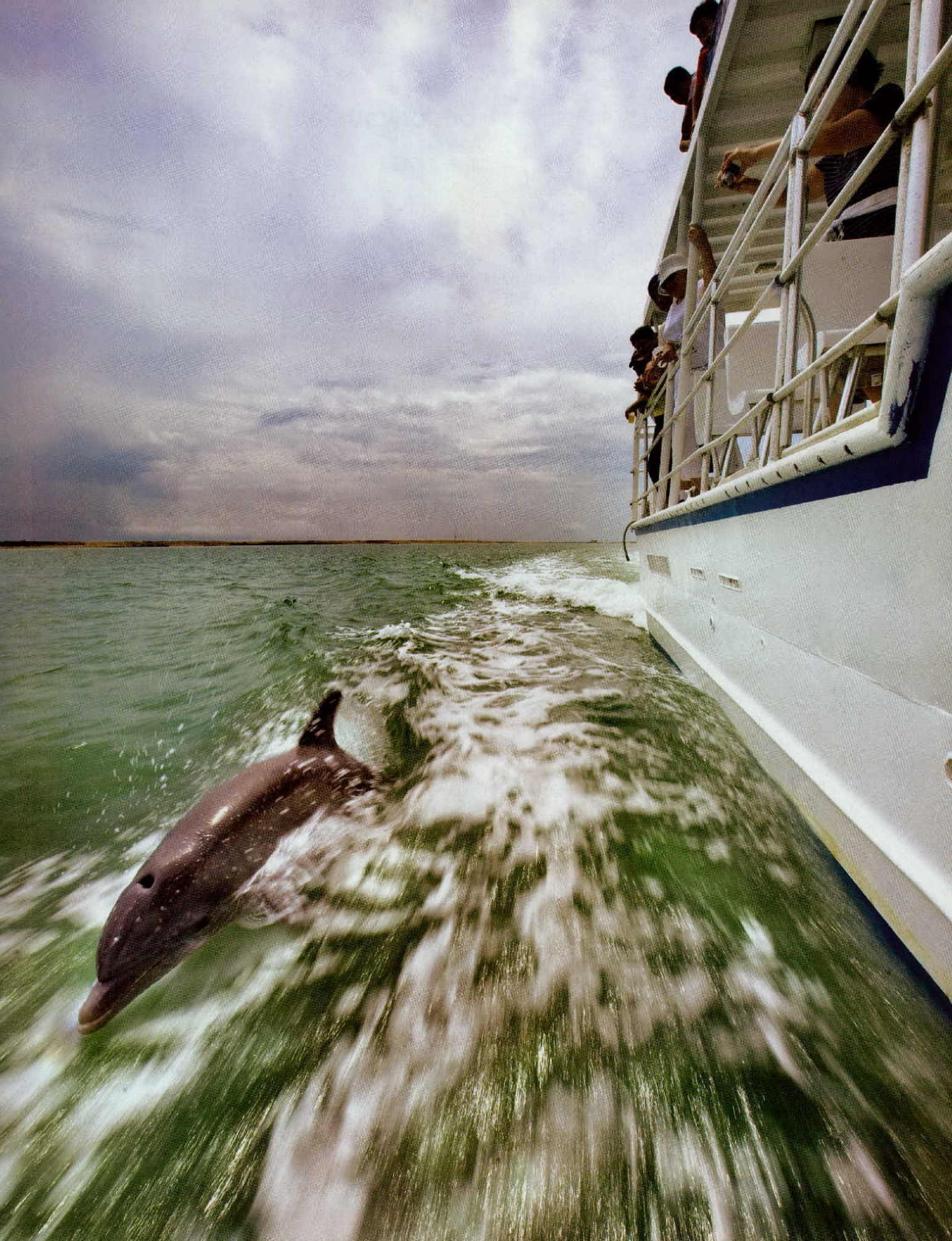
Text by **LORI MOFFATT**

Photographs by **ERICH SCHLEGEL**



Every time I walk on the beach—listening to the roar of the ocean, watching quarter-size ghost crabs skitter into the surf, admiring the agile antics of dive-bombing pelicans—I can't help but ponder the planet's complexity and magnitude. These grains of sand I'm walking on? Before hundreds of years of tides tumbled them into fine grains, perhaps they were the pearlescent shells of marine mollusks, or garden stones in the Yucatan Peninsula, across the Gulf of Mexico. How mind-bogglingly connected everything is! And where is *my* place in the dynamic mosaic of experience?

Few moments on the beach can compare to the joy of witnessing a rosy sunrise, when the sea and the sky seem to meld in a milky, shimmering wash of violet.



I'm meditating on these philosophical topics as I stroll the beach at South Padre Island. If you're like a lot of people, when you hear "South Padre" you think of the raucous bacchanalia that overtakes the island during spring break, when the beaches become hormone-charged playgrounds for college students gone wild. Maybe you've gone wild here yourself; if so, join the club. More than 45,000 students from across the U.S. descend on South Padre each March, after all, so the island comes by its "Padre Hearty" reputation honestly. (There's a reason why the Travel Channel recently declared the scene on the beach behind the Isla Grand Resort the "largest beach party on the planet.") But, as I discovered on a recent fall visit, this subtropical getaway—a 34-mile-long barrier island first charted in 1519 by Spanish explorer Alonso Álvarez de Pineda—offers more nuanced fun for visitors of all ages.

I'm meeting sand sculptor Lucinda Wierenga—aka "Sandy Feet"—for a sandcastle lesson on the beach outside the Palms Resort, an unassuming two-story hotel with one of the island's surprisingly few beachfront restaurants. When Wierenga's not traveling on the international sandcastle competition circuit, she gives lessons here on SPI. She's slender and tanned, with well-muscled arms, and I understand how she earned the physique when she shows me some tricks of the trade.

We select a spot barely on the dry side of the tide line, plop down on the sand, and dig to the water table a couple of feet below. The physics of sandcastle-building, Wierenga tells me, has everything to do with compaction. With both arms deep in the hole, she scoops up a pile of wet sand and, in one fluid maneuver, begins building the castle's foundation with a practiced move I'll call the "Drop-and-Jiggle." Many Drop-and-Jiggles later, we begin to carve turrets, bridges, windows, and balconies in our mound of compacted sand, using tools Wierenga has adapted from plastic tableware and a variety of household implements. Passersby soon stop to admire our work.

"Working with sand is so immediately

gratifying," she says. "If your first attempt doesn't work out, you just smash it down and start all over again. It's very freeing. People think of building sandcastles as a kids' activity. But I've learned that adults are the ones you can't drag away."



On the ride back to the island, we trade salty fish stories and watch bottlenose dolphins surf in our bow waves.

Wierenga grew up in Michigan, and played with sand on the beaches around the Great Lakes. "But Lake Michigan sand won't do what South Padre sand will do," she says. "Here, it's fine-grained, and sticky from the natural clay and silt carried to the Gulf from the Mississippi River."

The Mississippi, the world's third largest drainage system, releases more than 200

FACING PAGE: Dolphin-watching tours on South Padre Island range from excursions on the 60-foot *Double Sunshine* (shown here) to intimate encounters aboard Scarlet Colley's *Laguna Skimmer*. ABOVE: Paddleboarding, also called stand-up surfing, depends on muscle and balance rather than wind. Instructor Karen Pfeiffer demonstrates.



metric tons of sediments each year into the Gulf of Mexico and Mississippi delta. This means that when the river floods, visibility in the Gulf suffers. The next morning, I'm on deck of the *MV Diver I*, suiting up to go snorkeling around a manned natural gas rig known as Little Sara, nine miles offshore, and this is disappointing news. It has been an exceptionally rainy year.

Dive Captain Tim O'Leary assures the scuba divers aboard that water clarity improves in deep water, but advises us snorkelers to keep our eyes open despite the murky surface conditions. The rig supports huge schools of snapper, ling, blennies, sergeant majors, and wrasse, and while we may not spy the whale sharks spotted here only the week prior, we'll still have an adventure—and a close-up look at the Gulf's diverse ecosystem.

From the boat, the rig resembles a giant yellow jungle gym, and the sea appears relatively calm. In the water, though, I have a different perspective. The rig's steel pylons extend 100 feet to the ocean floor, and they're covered with dark green barnacles. "Look, don't touch," says O'Leary. "The barnacles will slice you up." The waves toss us back and forth, and we work hard to control our position. I feel a faint prickly sensation on areas of exposed skin—tiny stinging cells broken during rough weather from jellyfish, coral, and stingrays, I learn later. I watch snub-nosed blennies and silvery lookdowns dart among the pylons, and then squint through my mask at a lone barracuda—angular and gray and somehow menacing despite its comical underbite. It seems to coolly size me up, then sea-swagger away.

"The Little Sara dive is definitely for more experienced snorkelers," O'Leary tells me later. "But we have a wide array of snorkeling sites for novices—like the Turtle Grass Flats in the Laguna Madre, which is only about three feet deep. We can take divers and experienced snorkelers to the *Texas Clipper*, a sunken merchant marine training vessel that is by far our most popular dive spot."

On the 20-minute ride back to the island,



"Working with sand is so immediately gratifying. If your first attempt doesn't work out, you just smash it down and start all over again. It's very freeing."

we trade salty fish stories and watch bottle-nose dolphins surf in our bow waves.

To learn more about the area's dolphin population, I take a tour with Scarlet Colley, who has been documenting dolphins—primarily in the Laguna Madre, where they are smaller than offshore dolphins—for 15 years. Seven years ago, she and her husband, George, opened the South Padre Island Research Center and Sea Life Nature Center, across the Queen Isabella Memorial Bridge in Port Isabel, to educate the public about dolphins and the area's other wildlife. She takes a decidedly anthropomorphic view of how they relate to each other, and to us. Her dolphin-watch tour provides an intimate look at the 150-member Atlantic bottle-nose pod that makes the bay its home.

"I like to call them the Laguna Madre tribe," she tells us, guiding her *Laguna Skimmer* research boat out into the



To read an interview with coal miner-turned-windsurfer Glenn McKinlay, see texashighways.com/webextra.

FACING PAGE: The many oil and gas rigs in the Gulf of Mexico support abundant life forms, essentially becoming vertical, man-made reefs. A snorkeler studies the activity at Little Sara, a natural gas rig nine miles offshore. **ABOVE:** Sand sculptor Lucinda Wierenga makes sandcastles seem simple.

Dining and Drinking

YOU'LL FIND plenty of restaurants and bars on SPI. Here are some standouts.

Zeste Gourmet Market and Café. Part gourmet grocery, part deli, and part restaurant, Zeste offers more than 100 well-chosen wines (including many Texas varietals) and a large selection of craft beers (available for carryout), plus an eclectic menu that includes tapas on Friday and Saturday nights. Call 956/761-5555.

Naturally's Health Food Store & Café. Diners can thumb through the latest issue of *Yoga Journal* while they enjoy fruit smoothies, tempeh wraps, organic-vegetable salads, and sandwiches made with hormone-free meats. Call 956/761-5332; www.naturallys.net.

Padre Island Brewing Company. Burgers, po'boys, and beer-battered appetizers dominate the menu; you can taste each of the pub's five current brews by ordering a beer sampler tray. Call 956/761-9585.

Wahoo's Saloon. The motto at this open-air, bayside joint is "No shoes, no shirt, no problem." Snack on ceviche while you toast the sunset with a margarita or piña colada. Call 956/761-5344.

Sea Ranch. For 35 years, SPI visitors in search of prime beef, wild-caught seafood, and sunset views have made tracks to Sea Ranch. Call 956/761-1314; www.searanchrestaurant.com.

The Palms Café on the Beach. The Palms Café adjoins the popular (and affordable) Palms Resort. After a day at the beach, a cool Arnold Palmer (half tea, half lemonade) with a grilled red snapper sandwich hits the spot. Call 956/761-2703; www.palmsresortcafe.com.

bay. Only a few minutes pass before Colley's dog Rozzi begins to bark, alerting us to our first dolphin sighting, a mother-daughter duo that leap from the water and chatter at us. Colley recognizes the bay's dolphins by their dorsal fins, which often show scars from scuffles with other dolphins, or run-ins with boat propellers or fishing rigs.

She's full of stories. "Last summer," she tells us, "we had a young dolphin who



had become entangled in fishing line; her name is Mohawk. As she grew, the line was cutting into her flipper and across her eye; it would have eventually killed her. So we got a rescue team together. Mohawk was still with her mother, and I spent four weeks learning their habits."

Rozzi interrupts the story with more yapping, and Colley points out another dolphin group cavorting around a shrimp boat. And then she continues her tale. "We were able to get Mohawk up on a mat, and our team carefully cut all the fishing line away. The mother seemed anxious at first, but she seemed to know we were trying to help. Finally, we released the baby, and they both came to the boat—as if they were trying to thank us.

"I feel as though the dolphins have accepted me as one of their tribe," Colley

tells me. "We don't touch them. We don't feed them. But they definitely interact with us. Even when we do birding trips, I would never ignore the dolphins."

I see more dolphins later that afternoon as I kayak along the bayside with Glenn McKinlay and Karen Pfeiffer of On the Beach Surf Shop, the island's go-to spot for watersports. Surfers, bodyboarders, kiteboarders, and windsurfers have depended on this shop and its employees for equipment, expertise, and camaraderie since 1976. But paddleboarding—also called stand-up paddle surfing (or SUP), a sport that entered the U.S. about a decade ago—is the new hot sport in Texas,

The annual Ruff Rider Regatta, held at South Padre Island in the fall, welcomes nearly 50 sailboats from across the United States.



One of the most elegant restaurants on South Padre Island, Sea Ranch specializes in prime Angus beef and wild-caught Gulf seafood. Make reservations for a window seat at sunset.

➔ TH ESSENTIALS

On Island Time

FOR DETAILS about lodging, dining, and activities on South Padre Island, contact the SPI Convention and Visitors Bureau, 956/761-3000; www.sopadre.com. Information on sites/activities in the story follows.



Sandcastle lessons with Lucinda "Sandy Feet" Wierenga, call 956/459-2928; www.sandyfeet.com.

American Diving (snorkeling and scuba trips with Tim O'Leary), call 956/761-2030; www.divesouthpadre.com.

Dolphin and birding tours with Scarlet Colley, call 956/299-1957; www.spisealife.org.

On the Beach Surf Shop, call 956/761-1194; www.onthebeachspi.com.

she says. "Paddleboarding is all about balance and core stability," says Pfeiffer, who gives SUP lessons to beginners of all ages. Knees slightly bent, she stands on a narrow, nine-foot board and uses a long paddle to pull her through the water; the beginners in our group use wider boards. Together, we paddle toward the north side of the island, where the new South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center recently opened. "Stand-up surfing is soothing to my soul," she says, "plus, it's a great workout. We get a lot of windsurfers and kiteboarders at the shop, and if there's no wind, they go paddleboarding."

Later that evening, I'm walking again on the beach, and I think about Glenn McKinlay's unusual story. He grew up in Nottingham, England, and was destined to work in the coal mines, like his father. But he discovered windsurfing through a local youth club; in 1983 he broke a world

speed record and eventually wound up on South Padre Island. "Life has some strange twists," he told me. "I was working in the mines and came here on vacation, to go windsurfing. And I loved it—I didn't have to wear a wet suit, and there were dolphins swimming around me; it was pretty much like paradise."

I know what he means. It's that time of day when the grays of the sky and sea blur together, and I can't tell where one ends and the other begins. In the wet sand, my footprints disappear almost immediately, and it's pleasant to contemplate the unexpected interconnectivity of life. **TM**

Senior Editor LORI MOFFATT hopes to return to SPI this summer, when new dolphins will have joined the Laguna Madre tribe. Photographer ERICH SCHLEGEL enjoys shooting water activities, particularly surfing, fishing, sailing, and diving.

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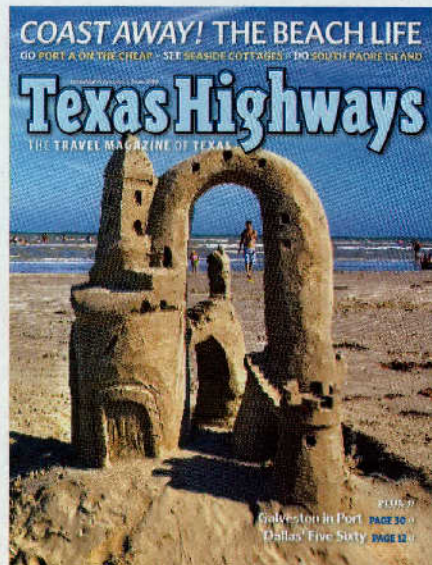
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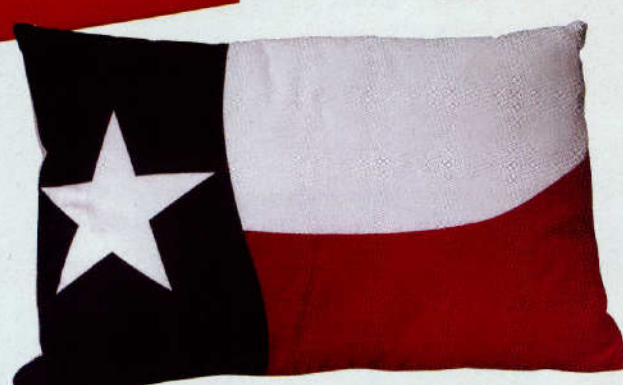
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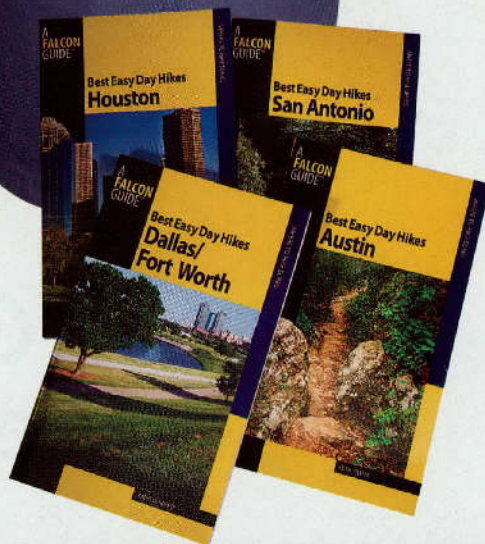
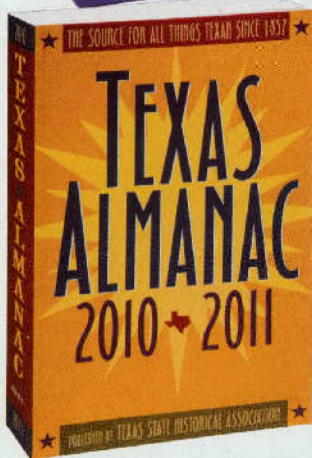
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Goodbye to a River turns 50

Revisit author John Graves' classic book

Text by **SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS**

WITH A DACHSHUND ON HIS lap, tarp-covered supplies at his feet, and a wooden paddle in hand, writer John Graves launched his canvas canoe from a muddy riverbank just below Possum Kingdom Lake one gray afternoon in November 1957. He wanted to connect with the primitive beauty and frontier history of the Brazos River before proposed dams downstream forever altered the river's natural flow and surroundings.

Graves, then 37 and not yet well known in literary circles, planned to produce a magazine article about his experience on the 170-mile trip. But by the time the voyage ended three weeks later near Glen Rose, Graves knew he had a book, as well. *Goodbye to*

Also seek out the splendid *Texas Rivers* (UT Press 2002), with text by John Graves and photography by Wyman Meinzer. Above, Graves and a friend traverse the Llano.

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Goodbye to a River—published in October 1960,
and in print ever since—endures today as a
Texas classic that appeals to readers worldwide.

a River—published in October 1960, and in print ever since—endures today as a Texas classic that appeals to readers worldwide. Wistful, humorous, keenly observant and philosophical, Graves ponders past and present as he and his pup, Passenger (his real name was Watty), float the river and live off the land.

John Alexander Graves III, born August 6, 1920, in Fort Worth, often hunted with friends as a boy in nearby river bottoms of the Trinity West Fork, which was pristine and lush with native wildlife. Regular visits to his father's family in Cuero, where he fished the Guadalupe and hunted quail with uncles, further strengthened Graves' bond with the outdoors.

In 1942, Graves earned an English degree from Rice Institute (now Rice University) in Houston, then entered the Marine Corps and served in the Pacific. On the island of Saipan, he nearly died when a Japanese soldier, playing dead on the ground, detonated a hidden grenade. Graves recovered from his wounds (and received a Purple Heart) but lost sight in one eye.

After earning his master's in English from Columbia University in 1948, Graves taught English for two years at the University of Texas at Austin. Restless, he freelanced in New York City, then lived abroad, mostly in Spain, where he continued to hone his writing. In 1957, he returned home to Fort Worth when his father became sick with cancer.

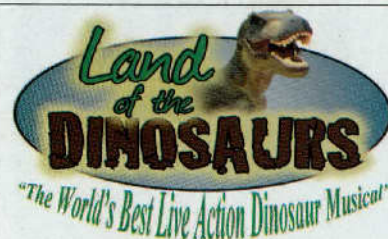
To justify his time on the river, Graves landed an assignment—and an advance



John Graves' signature Brazos River canoe journey included floating through scenic Dark Valley, near Grafard.

—from *Sports Illustrated*. As promised, he wrote the article, but editors turned it down, twice. Despite cuts and revisions, the article still wasn't sporty enough. "I did get to keep the \$500, which was a more significant sum back then than it is now," Graves wrote in *John Graves and the Making of Goodbye to a River, Selected Letters, 1957-1960*. An article about the trip appeared in *The West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* (October 1958). He later sold the piece to *Holiday* magazine, which published the story in November 1959.

During production of his narrative, Graves—always a stickler for precise wording—gently insisted that the word "good-by" in the title revert to his preferred spelling, "goodbye." "The reason I like 'Goodbye' is obscure," he wrote in a letter to typographer and book designer Carl Hertzog in April 1960. "I think it has to do with the ultimate derivation from 'God be with ye.'" [continued on page 68]



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June Events

BIG BEND COUNTRY

EL PASO: Junior Ranger Hike June 5. Kids learn about the Chihuahuan Desert. Franklin Mountains State Park. 915/566-6441

MIDLAND: Summer Sunday Lawn Concert June 20, 27. Museum of the Southwest. www.museumsw.org 432/683-2882

SAN ELIZARIO: First Billy the Kid Festival June 11-13. San Elizario Historic District. www.BillyTheKidFestival.com 915/594-8424

VAN HORN: Frontier Days & Jubilee June 18-19. City Park. www.vanhorn-texas.org 432/283-2682

GULF COAST

ALVIN: Tour de Braz Bicycle Ride June 13. 10- to 100-mile route through historic Brazoria County. www.tourdebraz.com 281/585-3359

ANGLETON: Sunflower Festival June 12-13. www.MannaFieldsFarm.com 979/849-2697

ARANSAS PASS: Shrimporee June 11-13. Community Park. www.aransaspas.org 361/758-2750

BEAUMONT: Spindletop Spin Bicycle Ride June 5. www.spindletopspin.com 409/839-2332

BROWNSVILLE: Animal Play Day June 13. Gladys Porter Zoo. www.gpz.org 956/546-7187

CORPUS CHRISTI: The Victoria Bach Festival Presents Requiem & Sacred Songs June 6. Corpus Christi Cathedral. 361/570-5788

CRYSTAL BEACH: Texas Crab Festival June 4-6. Gregory Park. www.bolivarchamber.org 409/684-5940

EAST BERNARD: Czech Kolache Klobase Festival June 12. Riverside Hall. www.kkfest.com 979/335-7907

FREEPORT: 63rd Fishing Fiesta June 30-July 4. Municipal Park. 979/233-5137

GALVESTON: AIA Sandcastle Competition June 5. East Beach. www.aiasandcastle.com 713/520-0155

HOUSTON: Accordion Kings & Queens Festival June 5. Miller Outdoor Theatre, Hermann Park. www.texasfolklife.org 512/441-9255

HOUSTON: Immanuel & Helen Olshan Texas Music Festival June 8-July 3. Nearly 50 public concerts and master classes at the University of Houston's Moores Opera House and throughout the metro area. www.tmf.uh.edu 713/743-3313

HOUSTON: La Fille Mal Gardée June 10, 12-13, 18-20. Houston Ballet. www.houstonballet.org 713/227-ARTS

KEMAH: Rock the Dock Concert Series June 3, 10, 17, 24. Kemah Boardwalk. www.kemahboardwalk.com 281/334-9880

PEARLAND: Summer Concert Series June 4, 11, 18, 25. Southdown Park. www.pearlandparks.com 281/652-1673

PORT ARTHUR: Zachary Breaux Jazz Fest June 11-12. Downtown. www.zacharybreauxjazzfestival.com 409/982-8394

SEADRIFT: 30th Annual Shrimpfest June 11-12. www.SeadriftChamber.com 361/785-3424

VICTORIA: Victoria Bach Festival June 7-12. Welder Center for Performing Arts and other venues. www.victoriabachfestival.org 361/570-5788

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HILL COUNTRY

AUSTIN: Austin Goes Classical: Guitar Foundation of America International Convention & Competition June 22-27. Long Center for the Performing Arts. www.austingoesclassical.org 512/300-ACGS

BANDERA: RiverFest June 26. City Park. www.bandera.riverfest.com 830/796-4447

BLANCO: Lavender Festival June 11-13. www.blanco.lavenderfestival.com 830/833-5101

BOERNE: Berges Fest Celebration & Parade June 18-20. www.bergesfest.com

CASTELL: Great Castell Kayak Race June 5. On the Llano River. www.castelltexas.com 512/217-4596

FREDERICKSBURG: Wine Road 290 June 19. Nine Hill Country wineries and the Texas Pork Producers offer *vino al pastor*. www.wineroad290.com 830/868-2321

GEORGETOWN: Festival of the Arts June 3-6. www.gtwnfestival.org 512/639-0433

KERRVILLE: The Sound of Music June 3-19. Cailloux Theater. www.caillouxtheater.com 830/896-9393

MARBLE FALLS: Chamber Music Festival June 21-26. Uptown Marble Theater. www.harmonyarts.org 830/693-1791

MASON: Country Opry June 22. Odeon Theater. www.heartoftexascountry.com 325/597-2119

NEW BRAUNFELS: Miranda Lambert June 5. Whitewater River Amphitheatre. 11860 FM 306. www.whitewaterrocks.com 830/964-3800

SAN MARCOS: Texas Water Safari June 12. A 260-mile canoe race. www.texaswatersafari.org 512/738-6607

SAN SABA: 72nd Pecan Capital of the World Rodeo & Parade June 11-12. Parade on Wallace Street. Rodeo at San Saba Rodeo Arena. www.sansabachamber.com 325/372-5141

STONEWALL: Peach Jamboree & Rodeo June 18-19. www.stonewalltexas.com 830/644-2735

PANHANDLE PLAINS

ABILENE: Texas High School Rodeo Association State Finals June 11-20. Taylor County Expo Center. 325/677-4376

ALBANY: Fort Griffin Fandangle June 17-19. 24-26. Prairie Theater. www.fortgriffinandangle.org 325/762-3838

AMARILLO: Coors Cowboy Club Ranch Rodeo June 4-5. Amarillo National Center, Tri-State Fairgrounds. www.coors.cowboyclub.com

AMARILLO: Music in the Gardens June 7, 14, 21, 28. www.amarillobotanicalgardens.org 806/352-6513

BIG SPRING: 77th Big Spring Cowboy Reunion & Rodeo June 17-19. Howard County Rodeo Arena. www.bigspringrodeo.com 432/263-8485

CANYON: TEXAS Outdoor Musical Drama June 4-August 14. Pioneer Amphitheatre at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. www.texas-show.com 806/655-2181

COLEMAN: 73rd Annual PRCA Coleman Rodeo June 17-19. Coleman Rodeo Grounds Complex. www.colemanrodeo.com 325/625-2163

CROSS PLAINS: Barbarian Festival June 12. Celebration of the life and work of Robert E. Howard, creator of *Conan the Barbarian*. www.BarbarianFestival.net 254/725-6498

DODSON: Centennial Celebration June 12.

EARLY: Brown County Rodeo & Parade June 10-12. www.earlychamber.com 325/649-9300

JACKSBORO: Mesquiteville June 11-12. Festival on the square. www.jacksboronewspapers.com 940/567-2616

LUBBOCK: Summer Showcase Concert Series June 3, 10, 17, 24. Meadows Courtyard, Buddy Holly Center. www.buddyhollycenter.org 806/775-3560

LUBBOCK: Llano Estacado Wine & Clay Festival June 12-13. Llano Estacado Winery. www.llanowine.com 800/692-4035

MIAMI: National Cow Calling Contest & Steak Cookoff June 4-5. At school auditorium, Community Center, and Roberts County Park. www.miamitexas.org 806/868-4791

MINERAL WELLS: Downtown Bicycle Criterium June 12. Professional cyclists on a course that circles the historic Baker Hotel. www.teambicyclesinc.org 817/282-7958

MORTON: Texas' Last Frontier Heritage Celebration & Texas Buffalo Soldier Living History Encampment June 26-27. Celebration of Cochran County's Western frontier heritage. 806/266-5484

OLTON: Sand Crawl Museum Cowboy Fest June 5. www.cowboy-fest.com 806/292-9591

PAMPA: Burnin' the Bricks Car Show/Cookin' on the Bricks Barbecue Cookoff June 12-13. www.pampachamber.com 806/669-3241

PERRYTON: Museum of the Plains 35th Birthday Party June 6. Museum of the Plains. www.museumoftheplains.com 806/435-6400

QUANAH: Ranch Rodeo June 18-19. 940/663-5916

RANGER: Old-Time Country Festival June 5. 254/647-3340

SAN ANGELO: Frontier Day June 12. Fort Concho. www.fortconcho.com 325/657-4441

SNYDER: West Texas Western Swing Festival June 8-12. The Coliseum. www.snyderchamber.org 325/573-3558

WICHITA FALLS: Legends of Western Swing Music Festival June 17-19. Multi Purpose Event Center. www.wfmpcc.com 972/612-9598

PINEY WOODS

CENTER: Shelby County Sheriff's Posse Rodeo June 11-12. Shelby County Expo Center. www.shelbycounty.chamber.com 936/598-8453

CROCKETT: World Championship Fiddlers Festival June 12. Crockett Civic Center. www.crockettarea.chamber.org 936/546-5636

GLADEWATER: 73rd Annual Gladewater Round-Up Rodeo June 9-12. www.gladewaterrodeo.com 903/845-5126

JACKSONVILLE: Tomato Festival June 12. Downtown. www.jacksonvilletexas.com 903/586-2217

LINDEN: T-Bone Walker Blues Fest June 18-19. Music City Texas Theater. www.tbonewalkerbluesfest.com 903/756-7774

LONGVIEW: Opera East Texas June 4, 12. www.operaet.com 903/234-1300

LONGVIEW: AlleyFest June 4-6. 903/237-4040

LUFKIN: Neches River Rendezvous June 5. Scenic canoe trip down the Neches River. 936/634-6644



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Fort Worth (3)
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Lockhart
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MOUNT PLEASANT: Mount Pleasant Rodeo June 3-5. Mount Pleasant Rodeo Arena. 903/572-1650

NACOGDOCHES: Texas Blueberry Festival June 12. Downtown Nacogdoches. www.texasblueberryfestival.com 936/560-5533

OVERTON: Overton Bluegrass Music Festival June 11-12. City Park. www.overtonbluegrass.com 903/895-4336

THE WOODLANDS: Wine & Food Week June 14-20. The Woodlands Waterway Marriott. www.wineandfoodweek.com 713/557-5732

THE WOODLANDS: Sting June 25. Performing with the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra. Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion. www.woodlandscenter.org 281/363-3300

PRAIRIES AND LAKES

ANDERSON: Juneteenth Celebration June 19. 936/873-2215

ARLINGTON: Texas Scottish Festival & Highland Games June 4-6. Maverick Stadium, UT Arlington. www.texasscottishfestival.com 800/363-7268

ATHENS: Blueberry Extravaganza June 12. Echo Springs Blueberry Farm. www.echospringsblueberryfarm.com 903/852-5277

BELTON: Fourth of July Celebration & PRCA Rodeo June 30-Jul. 3. Downtown and Bell County Expo. www.beltonchamber.com 254/939-3551

BOWIE: Jim Bowie Days Festival, Parade & Rodeo June 22-26. Pelham Park. www.jimbowedays.org 940/577-1184

BRYAN: Texas Reds Steak & Grape Festival June 18-19. Historic downtown Bryan. www.bryantx.gov/texasreds festival 979/823-0372

CAMERON: Milam County Nature Festival June 11-12. www.cameron-tx.com 254/697-4979

CANTON: Bluegrass Festival June 24-26. Canton Civic Center. 903/567-2991 or 877/462-7467

CELINA: Balloon Festival June 25-26. Old Celina Park. www.celinachamber.org 972/382-3600

CLARKSVILLE: Bicycle Tour June 9-13. www.red-river.net 903/427-2645

CLEBURNE: Johnson County Sheriff's Posse PRCA Rodeo June 16-19. www.sheriffsposse.com 817/556-9910

CLIFTON: Central Texas Youth Fair & Rodeo June 3-5. Clifton Fair & Rodeo Grounds. 254/675-3720

COLLEGE STATION: George & Barbara Bush's Birthday Celebration June 10. George Bush Presidential Library & Museum. <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu> 979/691-4000

COMANCHE: Comanche Cyclone Bicycle Tour June 5. www.comanchechamber.org 325/356-3233

DALLAS: Wicked June 1-27. Music Hall at Fair Park. www.liveatthemusicall.com 214/565-1116

DALLAS: Cool Thursdays Concerts June 3, 10, 17, 24. Dallas Arboretum. www.dallasarboretum.org 214/515-6518

DALLAS: Mark Morris Dance Group June 18-19. Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House. www.dallasperformingarts.org 214/880-0202

DECATUR: Chisholm Trail Day June 19. Downtown. www.decaturmainsstreet.com 940/627-6158

DENTON: Denton Air Fair June 19. Denton Municipal Airport. www.denton.schultzairshows.com 940/484-1603

DENTON: Juneteenth Celebration June 19. Fred Moore Park. www.dentonparks.com 940/349-8576

DUBLIN: Dublin Dr Pepper Birthday Bash June 12. www.dublindrpepper.com 888/398-1024

ELGIN: Western Days June 21-26. www.elgintxchamber.com 512/285-4515

FARMERSVILLE: Audie Murphy Day June 19. Historic Farmersville Onion Shed. www.farmersvilletx.com 972/784-6846

FORT WORTH: Fort Worth Opera Festival June 4-6. Bass Performance Hall. www.fwopera.org 877/396-7372

FORT WORTH: Firestone 550K Indy Car Series Race June 5. Texas Motor Speedway. www.texasmotorspeedway.com 817/215-8500

GATESVILLE: Shivaree Festival June 4-5. Faunt Le Roy Park. www.gatesvilletx.info 254/865-2617

GRANBURY: Granbury Wine Walk June 4-5. www.granburywinewalk.com 817/573-0046

GRAND PRAIRIE: Juneteenth Celebration June 19. 972/264-7670

HOLLAND: Holland Corn Festival June 18-19. Downtown. www.hollandcornfest.org 254/657-2568

LOCKHART: Chisholm Trail Roundup Barbecue & Music Festival June 9-12. City Park. www.lockhartchamber.com 512/398-2818

LULING: Watermelon Thump June 24-27. Downtown. www.watermelonthump.com 830/875-3214

MANSFIELD: Historic Mansfield Arts Festival June 4-5. www.historicmansfield.net 817/276-4228

MCKINNEY: Killis Melton Ice Cream Crank-Off June 12. Chestnut Square. www.chestnutsquare.org 972/562-8790

MIDLOTHIAN: Summer Balloon Classic & Air Fest June 11-13. Midway Regional Airport, between Midlothian and Waxahachie. www.summerballoonclassic.com 469/644-4576

MOUNT VERNON: Classic Car Show June 12. Downtown square. www.visitmvernontx.com 903/537-4495

PARIS: Northeast Texas Classic Car Show June 12. Love Civic Center. www.rvhonkers.com 903/783-6338

ROUND TOP: International Festival Institute at Round Top June 6-July 17. Live classical music at Festival Hill. www.festivalhill.org 979/249-3129

SEGUIN: Fiestas Juan Seguin June 11-12. Downtown Seguin. www.visitseguin.com 800/580-7322

SHERMAN: Melody Ranch Bluegrass Festival June 2-5. www.melodyranchbluegrassfestival.com

SNOOK: Snook Fest June 5. Snook Park. 979/272-3021

STEPHENVILLE: Cowboy Capital of the World PRCA Rodeo June 10-12. Lone Star Arena. www.stephenvilletexas.org 254/965-5313

WACO: Brazos Nights Concert June 4. Indian Spring Park. www.brazosnightswaco.com 254/750-5781

WAXAHACHIE: Cow Creek Country Classic Bike Ride June 26. www.cowcreekcountryclassic.org 972/937-2390

YOAKUM: Tom Tom Festival June 1-6. Community Center and City Park. www.yoakumareachamber.com 361/293-2309

SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

GOLIAD: Summer Flotilla June 5. A 6.6-mile float down the San Antonio River to Goliad State Park. 830/780-3249

SAN ANTONIO: Shakespeare in the Park June 2-5. San Antonio Botanical Garden. www.sabot.org 210/829-5100

SAN ANTONIO: Texas Folklife Festival June 11-13. UTSA's Institute of Texan Cultures. www.TexasFolklifeFestival.org 210/458-2224

STOCKDALE: 66th Annual Stockdale Watermelon Jubilee June 17-19. City Park. www.stockdaletx.org 210/771-1719

WESLACO: Full Moon Party June 26. Estero Llano Grande State Park, World Birding Center. www.worldbirdingcenter.org 956/565-3919

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

For a free printed copy of an even more detailed, quarterly schedule of events, write to Texas Events Calendar, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249. Or, call 800/452-9292 from anywhere in the U.S. or Canada, between 8-6 Central.

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

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



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Acclaimed Texas author John Graves.

Hello to John Graves

FOR HIS TRIP, JOHN GRAVES BORROWED A FRIEND'S Brownie camera to snap photos of Watty, their canoe, campsites, and river scenes. While on foot one afternoon, searching for a Native American rock shelter, Graves accidentally dropped the Brownie into a pool of water. "When I fished it out and tried it," Graves wrote in *Goodbye*, "its shutter went *clud*, foretelling the expenditure of money."



Later this year, vintage photos from Graves' trip (taken before the camera mishap) will be part of a small celebratory exhibit at the Wittliff Collections at Texas State University's Alkek Library in San Marcos. *Revisiting John Graves' Goodbye to a River: A 50-Year Anniversary*—which runs August 23-December 12—will showcase every edition of the book as well as Graves' canoe paddle. On permanent display is a full-figure bronze statue of Graves by political cartoonist and sculptor Patrick Oliphant, based on photos taken of the author by Bill Wittliff.

The Wittliff Collections, including the Southwestern Writers Collection and the Southwestern and Mexican Photography Collection, are on the library's seventh floor. Admission is free. Call 512/245-2313; www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu.

Drafts and correspondence related to *A Piece of River*, John Graves' article in *Holiday* magazine, are among the author's many papers preserved at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin. In June, the center will display a small collection of materials related to *Goodbye to a River* in the Director's Gallery. Admission is free. Call 512/471-8944; www.hrc.utexas.edu.

Even more relevant today, *Goodbye to a River* speaks to modern society's detachment from the natural world. As he floats "his piece" of the Brazos, Graves—who learns to let go of impatience and "get slowed down"—fly-fishes for bass, listens to a Carolina wren duet with a red-bird, and admires the "fine privacy" of a morning fog. "We will be nearly finished, I think," he muses in *Goodbye*, "when we stop understanding the old pull toward green things and living things, toward dirt and rain and heat and what they spawn."

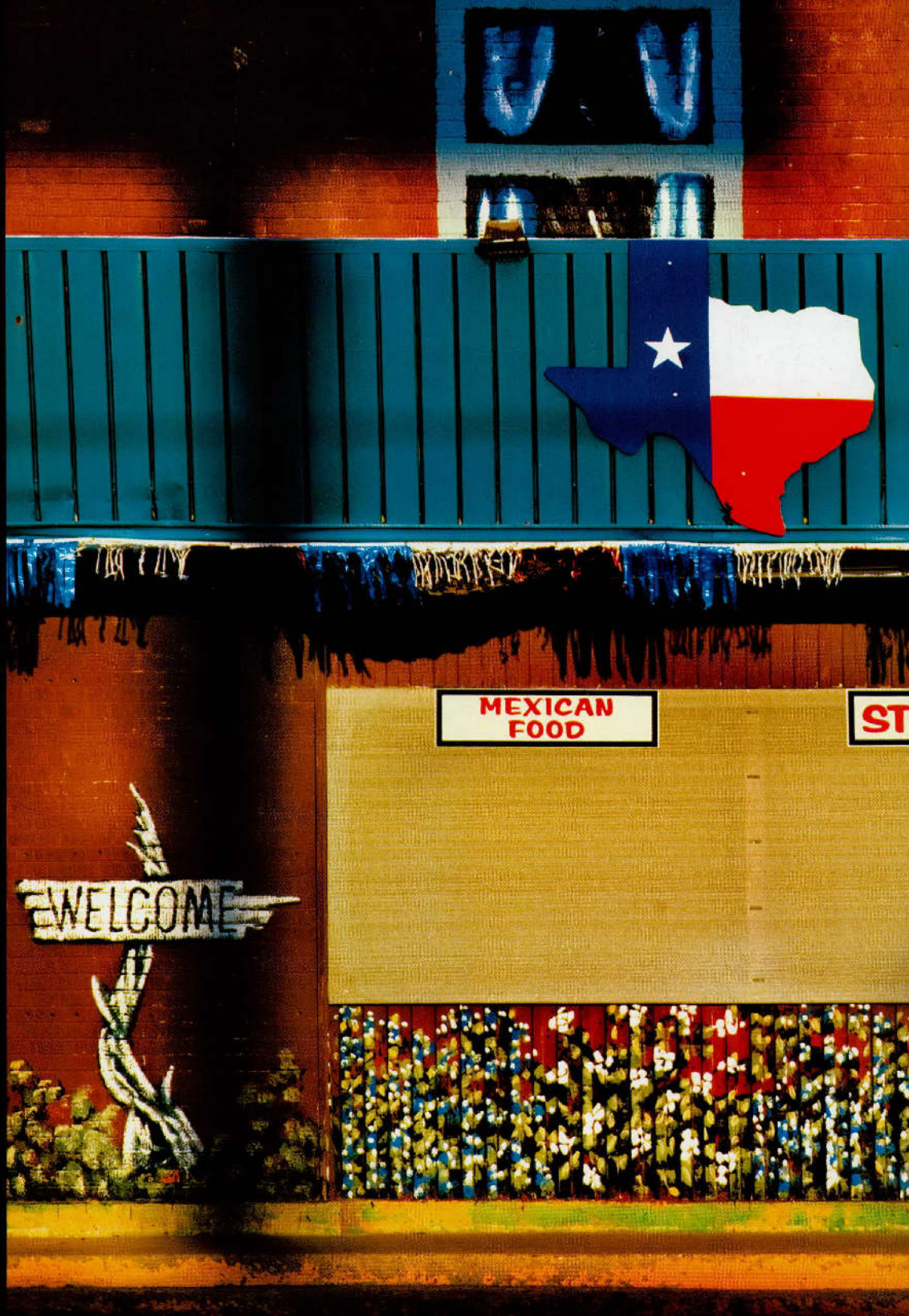
In 1961, *Goodbye* won the Carr P. Collins Award of the Texas Institute of Letters and was nominated for a National Book Award. Many have hailed Graves as the "Texas Thoreau," a title he respectfully declines. He doesn't consider himself a nature writer or an environmentalist but rather "a writer who tries to put words together as well as he can, regardless of the material involved," Graves said in an interview with Dave Hamrick

for *John Graves, Writer* (UT Press 2007).

In his writing, Graves recalls near-forgotten stories connected to the natural landmarks he passes and explores on the river: Keechi Creek and Dalton Bend near Palo Pinto, and many others.

Today, Graves—nearly 90 and still writing—and his wife, Jane, live at Hard Scrabble, their home near Glen Rose (and the subject of his second major book, *Hard Scrabble: Observations on a Patch of Land*, published in 1974). One frequent visitor is longtime friend Bill Wittliff, an Austin screenwriter and co-founder of the Southwestern Writers Collection at Texas State University in San Marcos.

"John's a treasure, our most civilized writer, our very own wise man," Wittliff says. "He's the one who understands how everything fits together to form the fabric of our lives and culture here in Texas. Nowhere is this more evident than in his journey that became *Goodbye to a River*." **TH**



Window on Texas

Photograph by **J. GRIFFIS SMITH**

PANHANDLE PORTRAIT A vibrant mural adorns the side of **J.D. Steakout restaurant** (806/874-7777) on 2nd Street/US 287 in Clarendon. Nearby, explore the restored 1890 Donley County Courthouse. The community's 130th annual Saints' Roost Celebration (parade, barbecue, and rodeo) takes place on July 4th. **Call the Clarendon/Donley County Chamber of Commerce at 806/874-2421; www.clarendonedc.org.**



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