

TEXAS TRAVEL

It's almost that time again. Applications for **free exhibit space** in eight **Texas Travel Information Centers** will be in the mail in early November. Regional tourism organizations and greater metropolitan areas interested in an opportunity to promote their attractions are invited to apply. For the next display period—March through August 2002—TxDOT will accept applications December 1–20. Participants will be selected from qualifying applicants based on the date and time the application is received. For details, call the Travel Services office at (512) 486-5800.

Now there's an easier way to send your event submissions for publication in our **Texas Events Calendar**. The calendar now has its own e-mail address: trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us. We'll be checking our e-mail in-box regularly for your event submissions to the *TEC*, which is published and distributed quarterly by TxDOT's Travel Division. You can still mail your entries to P.O. Box 141009, Austin, TX 78714-1009 or fax them to (512) 486-5879. But if you have Internet access, you can send us your events, or share your questions or comments about the *TEC*, with just a click of a mouse. It's fast. It's easy. It's trv-tec@dot.state.tx.us!

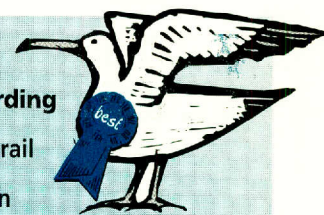
FACES

The **Austin CVB** welcomes **new President and CEO Bob Lander**. Lander, a Texas native, comes to Austin after serving as vice president of marketing for the Greater Phoenix CVB. Lander replaces **Ric Luber**, who **retired in August**. In addition to five years working with the Phoenix CVB, Lander's background includes 20 years of experience in the hotel industry.

PLACES

The **Rogers Hotel** in **Waxahachie** has seen its share of reincarnations. It began as a two-story hotel built by Waxahachie founder Emory W. Rogers in 1856. After that building was destroyed by a fire, a second hotel was built on the site—but it

FOR THE BIRDS Why are travelers flocking to the **Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail**? British Airways just honored the trail as the best sustainable-tourism project in the Americas—including North and South America and the Caribbean. "The British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards are a showcase for sustainable tourism across the world," says British Airways Chairman Lord Marshall.



The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail is expected to attract 400,000 visitors in 2001. The trail, which includes 308 birding sites along the entire length of the Texas coast, was developed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department with funding from TxDOT. Another partner in Texas tourism, the Texas Department of Economic Development, coordinated the application for the award. More information about the trail can be found at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails

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also burned to the ground. Finally, in 1913, the Rogers Hotel edifice that graces Waxahachie's square to this day opened its doors to the public.

Local legend has it that the grand hotel—which featured a roof-garden restaurant with a panoramic view of the city—hosted Bonnie and Clyde, Ty Cobb, Frank Sinatra, and other famous guests. But by the 1950s, the Rogers Hotel was down on its luck. The historic structure stood vacant for decades until a preservation-minded developer recently brought it back to life.

After two years, workers completed what the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* calls a "stunning restoration." The lobby features the original tile floor, marble stairs, and wrought-iron railing. But the work also included some major renovations, like new plumbing and larger rooms. The Rogers, which once had about 60 rooms, reopened in April with just 18 spacious suites and nine rooms.

The hotel is at 100 N. College; 1-800-556-4192; www.rogershotel.com.

More than **1,000 German families** visit **El Paso** each year, according to officials at Fort Bliss. European travelers are fascinated by Texas' Wild West roots

and that interest is reflected in a recent article that appeared in one of Germany's largest national daily papers. **Sueddeutsche Zeitung** featured El Paso in a story about I-10's trail across the southern United States. (Also mentioned in the article are **Houston, San Antonio**, and a side trip to **New Braunfels**.) The piece touches on El Paso's landscape, boot industry, multicultural flair, and relationship with its Mexican neighbor, Ciudad Juárez. In fact, German travelers' interest in El Paso is so strong that the **El Paso CVB's** Web site includes a link to a German-language guide to El Paso information and attractions. See www.clpasoevb.com.

How many office parks offer attractions for travelers? We know of one: Hall Office Park in **Frisco**, which hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony in September for its **Texas Sculpture Garden**. The collection, scattered along ponds on four acres of landscaped grounds, includes work by more than 30 of **Texas' leading artists**. The sculpture garden features contemporary works in steel, glass, bronze, granite, limestone, and other media. Visitors are

**TRAVEL TALES
OVERHEARD**

from TxDOT's Travel Information Centers

ANTHONY T.I.C.

"Everything always happens to Gabe," says counselor Lori Hernández, of fellow Anthony TIC counselor Gabriel Bautista. One day, Lori tells us, the phones were ringing off the hook, and Gabe was answering one call after the other. "Then, a man came into the center," says Lori, "and Gabe turned to him and said, in his perfect phone voice, 'Texas Travel Information Center, this is Gabe, how can I help you?' Gabe tells us he sounded like a robot. The guy looked at him like he was crazy."

GAINESVILLE T.I.C.

Old-timer Tom Denson—who worked at the Glenrio Information Bureau in 1946—stopped in and visited with supervisor Cheryl Cash. Denson, who now lives in Oklahoma, reminisced about working with Tom Taylor in Glenrio before that location closed in 1950. "Dr. Denson was very complimentary of our facilities and the work we do," Cheryl says.

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Contributing Editors: *Texas Highways* editorial staff

Design/Layout: Kirsti Harms

welcome to visit the Texas Sculpture Garden any time during business hours. In addition to the 17 works displayed outdoors, the collection includes 20 colorful indoor works, which can be viewed in the lobby of 6801 Gaylord Pkwy. To learn more or to schedule a group tour, call (972) 377-1100; www.hallofficepark.com/sculpture.html.

MUSEUM NEWS

Denton's newest museum—which celebrated its grand opening in late September—has, in fact, been around for over a century. The **Bayless-Selby House Museum** is a two-story, Queen Anne-style home that dates from 1898. The old house, which faced demolition in the mid-1990s, was purchased by Denton resident Mildred Hawk, who then donated it to the **Denton County Historical Commission**. After a fundraising campaign, the structure was moved intact about a mile to a new site one block off the square.

The Bayless-Selby House has undergone a **\$400,000 renovation** designed to restore it—including its interior and furnishings—to an appearance typical of the period from 1898 to 1908. A horticulturist also worked on the project to ensure that the landscaping is historically

accurate as well. The house, originally owned by one of Denton's oldest and most prominent families, now serves as a study of turn-of-the-century lifestyles and architecture. The museum is at 317 W. Mulberry; (940) 349-2865.

While our boys were fighting in World War II, they helped shape a folk-art tradition that celebrated the girls back home. "**Nose art**"—the paintings of lovely women that adorned military aircraft—represents a bygone era and a cultural expression of young men at war. In fact, the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** has designated a collection of these panels at **Midland's American Airpower Heritage Museum** as an official project of **Save America's Treasures**.

On October 5, the museum opened the new 6,000-square-foot **Aviation Nose Art Gallery**, which houses its collection of 33 original World War II-era nose-art panels. These rare panels are displayed alongside other memorabilia from the museum's collection, including flight jackets and armament. The American Airpower Heritage Museum—which is located at the Confederate Air Force Headquarters—is at 9600 Wright Dr.; (915) 563-1000; www.airpowermuseum.org.

After a **\$7.2-million, 14-month restoration** and renovation, the mansion that forms the heart of **San Antonio's McNay Art Museum** will reopen on November 4. Many original architectural features of the Spanish Colonial Revival-style mansion have been restored, according to museum director William J. Chiego.

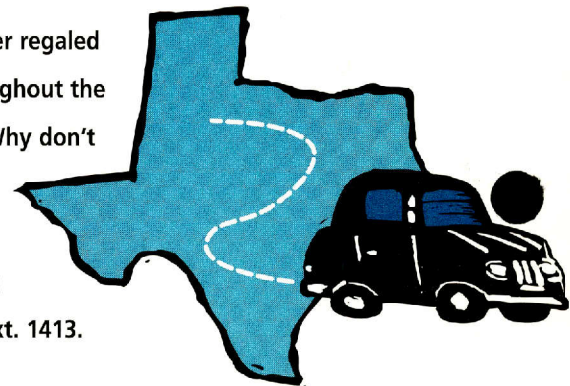
"The colorful, hand-stenciled coffers and beams of the original ceilings of the mansion have been cleaned and restored," Chiego says. "Outside, the museum's beautiful wrought-iron gates, lanterns, and window grills have been refurbished, and the museum's great central fountain...has been completely rebuilt and restored."

The McNay—**Texas' first modern-art museum**—first opened to the public in 1954. The current renovations also include some **21st-century updates**: new lighting, heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems. These improvements are intended to enhance the protection and display of the museum's collections—and provide a more pleasant experience for visitors.

To mark the reopening of the mansion, the McNay will host a free, public celebration on November 4 from 1–4:30 p.m. The museum is at 6000 N. New Braunfels; (210) 824-5368; www.mcnayart.org.

ONE FOR THE ROAD **Texas History on Wheels** is one of the hottest new courses at **Central Texas College in Killeen**. The class—which can be taken for college credit or through the continuing education department—takes students on the road for a look at some of the state's historic sites. Among the stops on the two-week itinerary: **Goliad's Presidio La Bahía**, the **LBJ Ranch near Stonewall**, **Dallas' Sixth Floor Museum**, and the **Alamo and Mission San José**, both in San Antonio.

The course took shape after professor Stan Dyer regaled his students about the colorful historic places throughout the state. After one history lecture, a student asked, "Why don't you take us to see all those great sites?" Dyer replied, "Why not?" And **Texas History on Wheels** was born. The class will be offered again beginning **May 10, 2002**. To learn more, call 1-800-792-3348, ext. 1413.



The Pacific Combat Zone—a new outdoor exhibit at **National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg**—will open on December 7. The 3.5-acre exhibit, located two blocks northeast of the museum building, will feature rare **Pacific War-era artifacts in realistic settings**. These displays are designed to help visitors understand what American troops in the Pacific faced on a day-to-day basis during World War II. Major elements in the exhibit include the hangar deck of an American aircraft carrier, an American landing craft, and a Japanese tank.

The opening of the Pacific Combat Zone permanent exhibit is part of the museum's commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. **Former President George Bush**, a Pacific War veteran, will serve as keynote speaker at the December 7 ceremony. For more information, see www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/nimitz/nimitz.htm, or call 1-866-PEARL60. The museum is at 340 E. Main.

EVENTS

For 23 years now, the town of **Falfurrias** has played host in October to one of the most community-minded festivals in Texas. Known as **Fiesta del Campo**, the event attracts some 20,000 people over its three-day run. If you took an informal poll of the revelers and asked them what brought them here, you'd likely hear as many responses as there are lawn chairs and picnic baskets strewn about.

Some folks come to participate in (or judge) the tortilla-making contest or to enjoy the dozens of conjunto and mariachi bands that take the stage. Other people come to play horseshoes and softball, watch folklórico dancers (one troupe comes here from Veracruz), play games at the carnival, take a trail ride, check out the artwork and crafts, and visit with friends, family, and neighbors.

The 24th annual Fiesta del Campo takes place at Mary & Ed

WITHOUT RESERVATIONS *Bon Appétit* magazine sang the praises of six Texas eateries in its September issue. Several were featured in an article on "The New Ethnic Restaurant"—

Clay Pit in Austin, Lombardi Mare in Addison, and Rosario's in San Antonio. The magazine called the story "a private tour of the best of the new (and a few of the old) spots in America—places that serve Asian, Latin, Italian, Indian, Greek, French and Moroccan food with style." Other restaurants that merited a mention are **Ciudad and Cuba Libre Café in Dallas and Málaga Tapas & Bar in Austin.**



Lasater Park in Falfurrias, October 12–14, 5 p.m.–midnight. Call (361) 325-3333.

On October 20, the **Peckerwood Garden** Conservation Foundation and the Garden Conservancy present a one-day symposium focusing on the impact of Mexican art, architecture, cuisine, and indigenous plant life on the cultural landscape of the United States. *Vanishing Borders—Gardens: Common Ground for International Understanding* takes place at Prairie View A&M University of Texas (just 15 minutes from Hempstead). Afterwards, participants will venture to Peckerwood Garden, the masterwork of design professor John G. Fairey, for a tour.

The New York-based Garden Conservancy was founded in 1989 to preserve **America's finest gardens**. Peckerwood Garden is currently the Conservancy's sole Texas preservation project. The garden opens to visitors on select dates throughout the year. Its 2001 viewing schedule wraps up October 20–21, when it opens from 1–5 p.m. The garden is at 20571 FM 359; (979) 826-3232; www.peckerwoodgarden.com.

Most of the year, **Austin's Wild Basin Wilderness** is anything but spooky, as visitors watch for wildlife amid the preserve's 227 acres. But for six nights in October, think again. On October 18–20 and 25–27, Wild Basin's 2.5 miles of hiking trails slither with monsters and ghosts,

demons and dark magic. Organizers stress that this isn't an event for kids—Wild Basin's Haunted Trails fundraiser has been touted by *The New York Times*, and the one-hour experience can be physically challenging. Call (512) 327-7622; www.wildbasin.org.

On November 2, many Latinos observe **el Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)**, during which the souls of deceased loved ones are said to rejoin the living to eat, drink, and rejoice. Throughout October and November, **San Antonio** hosts one of the most diverse Day of the Dead celebrations in the United States. Altars—dedicated to loved ones and decorated with their favorite foods, drinks, books, and photographs—are erected in public spaces throughout the city. Exhibits of art, photography, and literature at museums and libraries shed more light on the custom. Call (210) 207-6700 or 1-800-447-3372; www.sanantoniovisit.com.

Back in the 1930s, oceangoers flocked to **Corpus Christi's boardwalk**, which allowed easy access to the carnival, curio shops, and sandy fun along the stretch known then as North Beach. On October 19–21, a festival called **Bring Back the Boardwalk** will raise funds to replace the hallmark of the beach's heyday. Along with a carnival, parade, fishing tournament, antique car show, and fireworks display, the event features a petting zoo, arts and crafts booths, and a dance. Call (361) 776-7240 or 949-7703.

TEXAS TRIVIA

Which larger-than-life Texan made his debut in the role of Santa Claus?

Big Tex, the 52-foot cowboy who welcomes visitors to the State Fair of Texas, began his career as an oversized Santa Claus in the town of Krens, about 60 miles southeast of Dallas. In the late 1940s, folks with the Krens Chamber of Commerce came up with the idea of building the "world's largest Santa Claus" to attract shoppers. After presiding over Christmas in Krens for a couple of years, the super-sized Santa caught the eye of State Fair President R. L. Thornton (who would later become mayor of Dallas). For \$750, Thornton purchased the figure that would become the enduring symbol of the State Fair of Texas.

Of course, Santa needed quite a makeover before his 1952 Dallas debut as Big Tex. Fair officials hired Jack Bridges—who had designed and built stage sets in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Chicago—to handle the transformation. Bridges later told *The Dallas Morning News* that he had modeled Big Tex's facial features after three people: "Me, Will Rogers, and Doc Simmons, a rancher from Bell County. I took the worst features from all three of us."

Big Tex is outfitted by Fort Worth-based clothing manufacturer William-Dickie. His Dickie's jeans measure 28 1/2 inches at the waist and 185 inches in length. Big Tex also wears size-70 boots from Dan Post.

Next year will mark Big Tex's 50th annual appearance at the State Fair of Texas. As for this year, he'll continue to greet visitors through the run of the fair, which wraps up October 21.

TEXAS TRIVIA

NUMBERS as of August 31, 2001				
TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-Date	Percent Variation*
AMARILLO	11,451	-8.05	90,135	-12.60
ANTHONY	12,081	+36.88	113,169	+31.64
DENISON	24,507	+10.15	199,368	+2.16
GAINESVILLE	33,036	+28.54	228,648	+0.25
LANGTRY	3,696	+10.00	50,871	-9.84
LAREDO	7,440	-12.74	62,898	-15.43
ORANGE	36,813	+3.29	339,618	+6.38
TEXARKANA	43,092	+9.75	301,011	+6.77
VALLEY	13,272	-0.02	218,133	+24.65
WASKOM	31,809	-21.62	265,149	-17.71
WICHITA FALLS	19,368	+27.44	130,956	+1.71
CAPITOL	7,608	10.07	78,135	+21.83
CENTER TOTALS	244,173	+5.25	2,078,091	+2.15

	This Mo.	Y-T-D
Mail Services	33,840	682,947
Automated Attendant Road Condition Calls	20,089	241,791

Dial toll-free 1-800-452-9292 for travel assistance from TxDOT's Texas Travel Information Centers (8 a.m.-6 p.m. daily, Central Time)

www.traveltex.com
www.texashighways.com
www.dontmesswithtexas.org

Data as of August 31, 2001. Figures for September will appear in the November issue of *Texas Travel Log*.

**Compared to last year*

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