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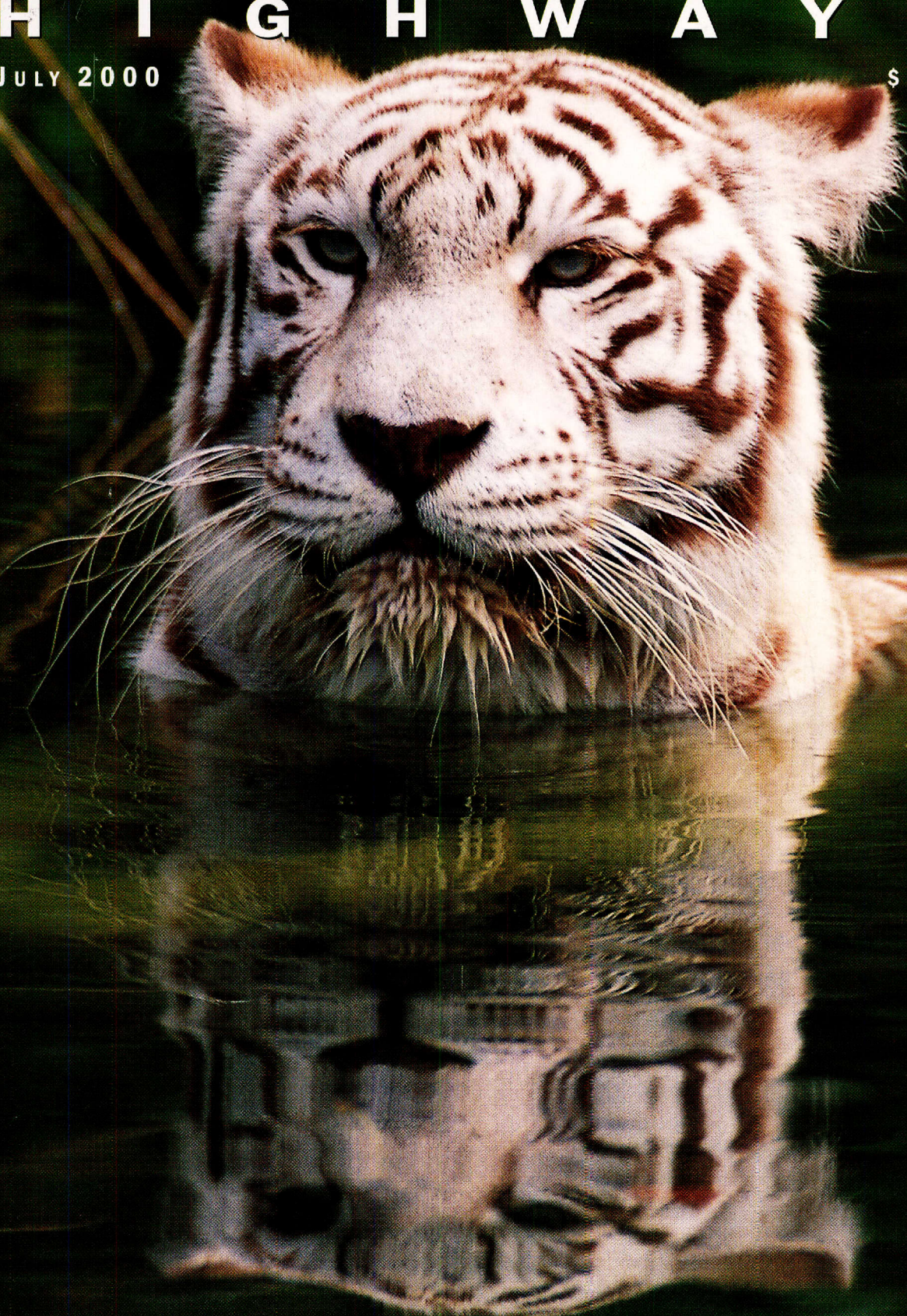
TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

TEXAS

HIGHWAYS

JULY 2000

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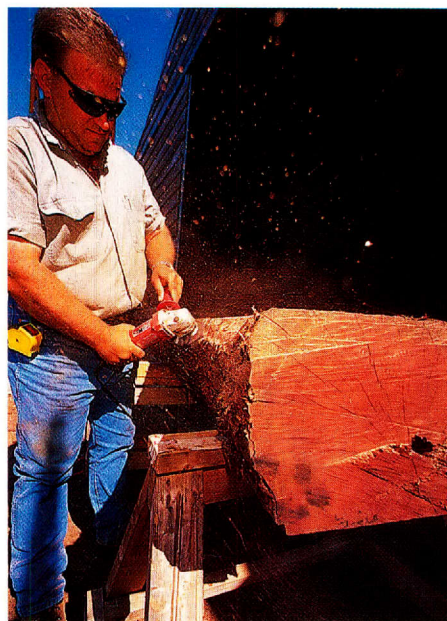
Our cover story this month focuses on the **Houston Zoo**. As writer **Jan Edwards** makes clear, the artfully landscaped grounds and low admission prices help make this one of the most popular zoos in North America. The naturalistic exhibits open 365 days a year, offering Houstonians and travelers a window into the diversity of life on the planet.

The zoo's collection of beautiful, bizarre, endangered, and always-fascinating creatures provides rare opportunities to observe everything from sea stars and lionfish to poison dart frogs and the red junglefowl. And you can always enjoy glimpses of monkeys, tigers, giraffes, and wolves.

When Jan's husband, **Stephan Myers**, shoots a story like this, he prefers to get as close to the animals as he can. Before he entered the enclosure with the white rhinoceroses, Stephan was admittedly apprehensive. After all, white rhino males—at upwards of 4,400 pounds—are almost double the weight of black rhinos. And like the rest of us, Stephan had been brought up on images of rhinos ferociously defending their territory.

"I expected these huge animals to be aggressive," says Stephan, who was concerned for his skin as well as his camera equipment. "But the rhinos turned out to be quite docile. **Phil Coleman**, their keeper, regularly gives the eager animals a rub. The rhinos' eyes are half shut, and they remind me of puppies.

"I wasn't prepared for the aggressiveness of the Attwater's prairie chickens, though," Stephan adds. "The males kept charging me, well, like wild rhinos." He was apparently intruding on their "booming grounds," where the male birds perform their elaborate and noisy courting rituals. During the spring mating season, the males puff out their orange neck pouches and stomp the ground so rapidly that they



STAN WILLIAMS

Scott Stewart of Texas Kiln Products in Smithville removes the outer layers of a mesquite log destined to become a fireplace mantel. The sawmill is the oldest and largest producer of mesquite lumber for furniture, flooring, and doors.

become a blur. The booming from their air sacs is so loud that it can carry for half a mile.

Thanks to Jan's words, Stephan's photographs, and additional images (including the front cover and story lead of magnificent tigers) by Houston photographer **Ron Zaguli**, all of us can visit the Houston Zoo through this issue of *Texas Highways*. . . .

Also in this issue, **Marsha Harlow** of San Antonio and staff photographer **Stan Williams** team up for a story on glamorous **mesquite**. *Glamorous*, you say? That's right—it's not just for bulldozing and burning any more. As our story shows, artisans around Texas are transforming distressed and gnarled mesquite wood into beautiful bookcases, boxes, chairs, chests, desks, doors, flooring, molding, and tables. For a list of artisans and resources, turn to page 39. . . .

Jack Lowry

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JULY 2000

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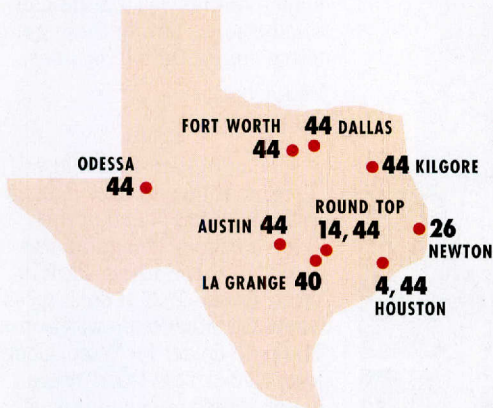
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ABOUT OUR COVERS

FRONT—Nice kitty, er, make that Koti. A longtime resident of the Houston Zoo, the rare white Bengal tiger keeps her cool in the summer. For more coverage of this urban animal kingdom, turn to page 4. *Photo © Ron Zaguli*

BACK—Young thespians Jeremy Brown and Dacia Balch rehearse a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Winedale Historical Center, near Round Top. One of many Shakespeare companies in Texas (see story, page 44), Shakespeare at Winedale presents performances each July and August. *Photo © Earl Nottingham*

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Though often reviled by ranchers, mesquite has new status that goes beyond its barbecue fame. The little wood that could is showing up in handcrafted furniture and in custom home decor from doors to floors

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Whether your aim is to stir memories or to create new ones, the friendly folks at The Jersey Barnyard, near La Grange, offer a farm setting "barn" none. Where else can youngsters pose with Belle the Blue Bell cow?

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Each summer, the words of the world's greatest English playwright resound on stages across the state. To see or not to see? No question. Get thee to a Shakespeare fest

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Readers: Keep an eye out for our *Where in Texas Are You?* contest page in this September's special travel extravaganza.

In addition to the Fredericksburg prize package lined out in last month's *Up Front* (two nights' accommodations provided by First Class Bed & Breakfast Reservation Service; tickets to the National Museum of the Pacific War and the Pioneer Museum Complex; and \$25 gift certificates to Fredericksburg Winery, The Plateau Café, and Wildseed Farms), the fine folks at Fredericksburg Herb Farm have thrown in two complimentary massages and dinner for two at their restaurant. A big thank you to our friends in Fredericksburg!

Great-Uncle Buck

I enjoyed Gene Fowler's article on Kilgore in your April issue. We have a particular interest in the town, as it was named for my great-uncle C.B. "Buck" Kilgore. He bought 840 acres in the area at a U.S. Marshal's sale in 1869. A few years later, he gave the I&GR Railway 15 acres right through what is now Kilgore and sold them another 174 acres, which the railroad sold again as town lots. I believe it was on some of these lots in the 1930s where wells were drilled and folks got rich.

Buck Kilgore had an interesting life and quite a few minor claims to fame, but the most memorable tale comes from when he was a Congressman in Washington, between 1887 and 1895. Kilgore (described as one of the "most colorful and fire-eating Congressmen ever to walk the Capitol halls") kicked open the door of the House of Representatives to break a quorum and thus defy the efforts of Republican Speaker Thomas Reed to pass an elections bill that was most obnoxious to the Democrats.

The story makes us proud to be Buck Kilgore's descendants (even if he probably did cost us an oil fortune).

LOU BIRDWELL PARRIS
Houston

Thrilling Drilling

My father was a salesman for American Snuff Co., and the town of Kilgore was in his territory. In summer, he would sometimes take me with him on business. We went to Kilgore right in the middle of the oil boom. I was eight or nine at the time. Dad would buy me a stalk of sugarcane and turn me loose while he called on his customers. I would wander around town and listen to all the grownups "talk oil." I have never seen so many cars in one place or mud so deep. Dad would pick me up before it got dark, and we would go out to an oil well that was drilling and stand up real close—one of the most thrilling sights of my youth.

PAUL COCHRAN
Martinsburg, West Virginia

Now That's History

Thanks for January's articles on Judge Roy Bean and Charles Goodnight. I don't suppose the judge ever knew that the love of his life was the mistress of the future King Edward VII of England! Probably just as well—otherwise, the old boy might have been tempted to dispense some of his own brand of justice on the future king, and who knows what that might have done to Anglo-American relations!

IAN WARD-BROWN
London, England

When my wife and I met through the pen pals section of a newsletter, *Texas Highways* was already a favorite magazine of mine. So, when I tried to figure how to get this young lady in England up to speed on what Texas was all about, I thought a subscription was in order. More than five years have passed since I first

COURTESY MARILYN DYAL KING



Shown here sometime in the late 1940s, Texas Leaguer Monty Stratton takes a break from the ballgame to greet Marilyn Dyal.

wrote her, and we are now married and living in Ludlow, England. When *TH* arrives, we virtually stop everything and read it cover to cover! On one of our first visits together to Texas, when we were in Palo Duro Canyon, I said, "Texas is a great state, but it doesn't have all of the years of history of England." She smiled, pointed to a mural in the visitor's center of the [geologic] formations, and said, "I don't know. A million years is a lot of history!"

BILL MOORE, via email

A League of Their Own

May's article on the Texas League reminded me of the stories my father, Archie, used to tell when he was a pitcher in the minor leagues. He played for Paris, Longview, Tyler, Texarkana, and the Macon (Georgia) Peaches. My mother was glad when he injured his pitching arm in the 1940s and had to stop playing and settle down. He may not have been a great baseball

player, but he was a great dad to nine sons. Two of them got to try out for the big leagues.

RICK COOK
Dallas

One of the most unbelievable things to ever happen in baseball happened in the Texas League. The game was played at the old Katy Park in Waco around 1927 (I don't recall where the other team was from). The right fielder for Waco, Gene Rye, came to bat three times in one inning, a very unusual situation. He hit a home run each time—and all three went over the right-field fence.

EARL L. CREASEY
Salado

Your Texas League article reminded me of the late 1940s when I was about 11 or 12. My father, Herman Dyal, kept score for the San Antonio Missions, and he would take me to some of the games. I have a picture of me taken with the late Monty Stratton [above]. He had an artificial leg. Thanks for the memories.

MARILYN DYAL KING
Houston

Ed. Note: *Thank YOU for the memories. And thanks to John Hyde of Georgetown, who wrote in regard to our May Speaking of Texas item on baseball great Paul Richards. Mr. Hyde told us that in 1945, Richards became the first-string catcher for the Detroit Tigers, who won the World Series (against the Chicago Cubs) that year, with help from Richards' "bases-clearing, two-out double, which scored three runs and clinched the deciding game for the Tigers."*

Ralph Hackemack of La Grange also wrote to tell us that Richards "was the General Manager of the Houston Colt .45s from 1962 to 1964. In 1965, the Colt .45s changed their name to the Houston Astros, and Richards served as the GM through that season. He is probably most noted for having signed Rusty Staub while with the Houston organization."

If you would like to write to *Texas Highways*, the editors would enjoy hearing from you. Though we are unable to print every letter, we just might select yours to appear in the magazine—whether you send us kudos or criticism. We reserve the right to edit letters. Write to Letters Editor, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009, or fax 512/486-5879. Email: editors@texashighways.com.

Standing Tall

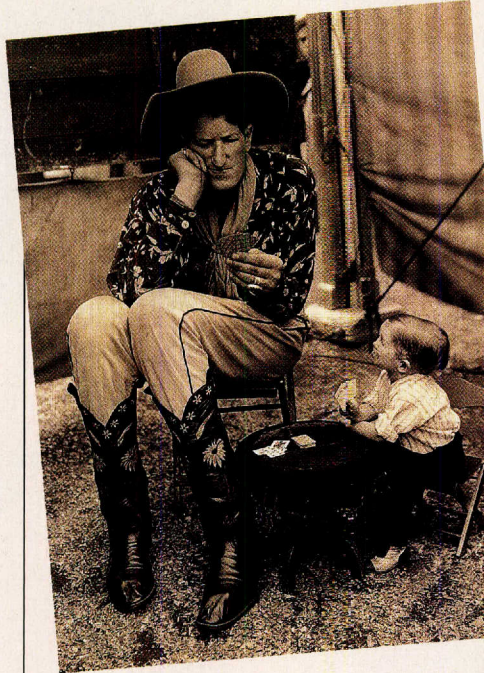
Tall tales tell that crops and critters grow giant-size in the Lone Star State. Sometimes the folklore proves true. In fact, a long line of long, tall Texans have trekked from Hobokenville (NY) to East Saginaw (MI) and beyond, where folks paid money to gawk at the legendary limbs.

The four Shields brothers of White Rock, Texas, had already soared to heights of seven feet eight inches to just shy of eight feet when they joined a Barnum & Bailey sideshow around 1880. Shade, Guss, Frank, and Jack Shields each made about six dollars a day as “The Texas Giants.” The brothers sold souvenir photos of their skyscraper frames, and Guss (later a schoolteacher around Celeste and Kingston) wrote a little book about attaining such high altitude.

Three of the brothers returned to Texas after 10 years, but Shade trouped on into the 1890s. At one point, he and his tall, Irish wife, Annie, were billed as “The Texas Giant and Giantess.” After Shade retired, he and Guss ran a saloon in Greenville. But in his last years, recalling the magic of the big top, Shade spent most of his time on Missouri riverboats with his good friend and fellow circus veteran, 36-inch-tall Major Ray, who had formed one half of “the smallest married couple in the world.”

Terrell native Tex Baker amazed circus-goers around 1910 with stories of 11 inches of growth in seven months; Tex wound up about eight feet two inches tall. J.G. Tarver of Dallas, variously reported at 8’6” and 8’2”, appeared with Ringling Bros. and other circuses as “Big Jim Tarver, the Texas Giant” from 1907 to 1933.

At 8’6”, Jacob Erlich, better known as Jack Earle, appeared in 48 movies before he took to the circus trail. Ironically, Jacob had been so small at birth that doctors feared he wouldn’t survive. In 1926, while at home in El Paso attending college, friends took him to the circus to see Big Jim Tarver.



A sideshow recruiter followed Jack home, and that fall, he debuted in Madison Square Garden. The tall drink of water toured with various incarnations of “The Greatest Show on Earth” for 14 years. In his post-circus life, the melancholy giant became a traveling wine salesman and dabbled in photography, poetry-writing, and oil painting.

Like his fellow circus performers of uncommon size, Jack Earle faced a challenge in finding the right “fit” in life—whether it was clothing or his coffin. Though he adopted a philosophical view of his station in life, the thoughtless behavior of some “normal” folks still wounded his sensitive nature. He probably found solace in the wisdom of his friend Harry Doll, a circus performer known for his diminutiveness. “Don’t worry, Jack,” counseled Harry, “there are more freaks out in the crowd than there are up here.”

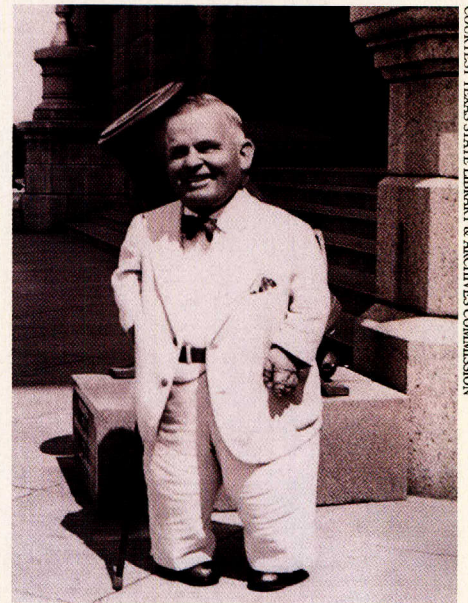
—Gene Fowler, *Austin*

But Not Short on Funds

While the Texas Giants amazed folks with their soaring heights, another Texan proved that a person needn’t be altitudinous to succeed in life. During the 1930s, Charley Lockhart—

The long and the short of it. From the left: El Pasoan Jack Earle and Major Mite; “Big Jim” Tarver of Dallas and Major Mite; Texas State Treasurer Charley Lockhart in front of the State Capitol.

TOP PHOTOS COURTESY HERTZBERG CIRCUS MUSEUM, SAN ANTONIO



COURTESY TEXAS STATE LIBRARY & ARCHIVES COMMISSION

who measured 45 inches from head to toe—took pride in serving Texas as “the shortest state treasurer in the nation.” When he retired in 1941, Charley was succeeded at the post by a man named Jesse James.

—Gene Fowler, *Austin*

wild and woolly at the HOUS



BY JANET R. EDWARDS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
STEPHAN MYERS

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright/In the forests of the night./What immortal hand or eye/Could frame thy fearful symmetry? William Blake's immortal verse evokes the power and grace of the Siberian tiger, one of the Houston Zoo's feline denizens. At a weight of some 600 pounds, and a length of 12 feet, including its tail, this rare and endangered tiger is the largest member of the cat family.

animal

TON ZOO

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THE HOUSTON ZOO PROVIDES A FAUNAL AND FLORAL RETREAT THAT VISITORS MAY FEEL AS IF THEY'VE DISCOVERED AN OFF GARDEN OF EDEN.





SO APPEALING
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the pale green eyes of a Siberian tiger glisten from a hiding place deep in the shadows of a man-made forest. A few hundred yards away, enigmatic orbs the size of walnuts, wreathed in the folds of an elephant's dusty flesh, seem to ponder secrets of the animal's soul. Elsewhere, a pygmy hippo's beady-black peepers, glistening with mischief, pop above the surface of a pond and follow your every move. As you encounter these and other rare, feral creatures at the Houston Zoo, you may begin to wonder, who's really watching whom?

Sitting smack in the middle of a super-size city like Houston, the zoo is tailor-made for the wide-eyed kind of fun that can fuel the mind and captivate the spirit. Landscaped with colorful flowers and luxuriant tropical and native plants, it flourishes on 55 prime, forested acres of Hermann Park.

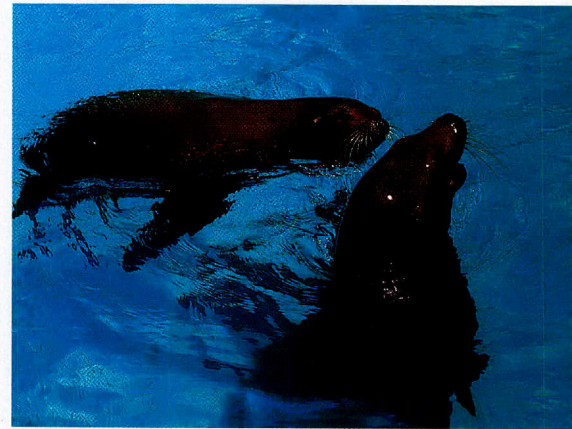
The zoo serves as permanent or temporary home to some 5,800 animals of more than 700 species, including 65 species that are endangered or threatened. One and a half million people visit every year, making the preserve one of the most popular attractions in Texas and among the most-visited zoos in the country. Its well-maintained animal exhibits include the rare southern white rhinoceros, snow leopard, Eastern Lowland gorilla, Mexican wolf, koala, Galapagos tortoise, and scarlet macaw.

It all began with a bison named Earl. Donated to the City of Houston in 1920 by the U.S. government as part of a program to reduce bison herds in national parks, Earl was given a home in the city's Sam Houston Park. The bison's fenced area, which became known as "the zoo," soon acquired a deer, ostensibly to keep Earl company. Two years later, the zoo moved

to Hermann Park, a heavily wooded area donated to the city in 1914 by businessman, philanthropist, and Civil War veteran George H. Hermann. Within a short time, birds, monkeys, and other small animals joined the collection, as did a few former circus animals and several exotic pets donated by local citizens.

Hans Nagle became the Houston Zoo's first keeper in 1923, and by 1924, local citizens and institutions had become involved in helping the city acquire more animals. With Nagle's help, an elephant named Nellie collected \$2,700 for a mate by touring downtown Houston with giant donation cans strapped to her sides. By 1925, an additional \$10,000 investment by the city for new exhibits made it possible to enlarge the zoo to 30 acres, and an aviary and a primate facility opened the following year. Today, the Houston Zoo provides a faunal and floral retreat so appealing that visitors may feel as if they've discovered an offshoot of the Garden of Eden.

Animals of nearly every description await you: invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals. Interpretive signs offer information on the creatures' common and scientific names, natural habitat, range and migratory patterns, diet, and feed-



California sea lions frolic in a cool pool. Twice daily, crowds gather to watch the animals being fed their staple of herring, smelt, and squid.

[FACING PAGE, TOP LEFT TO RIGHT] Giraffes are generally gentle, but when an enemy such as a lion approaches, they can deliver powerful kicks with their long legs or swing their necks to strike. A Pacific yellow tang glides effortlessly over living corals. The small white area near its tail is made up of bones that hinge outward as a defense mechanism.

[FACING PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT TO LEFT] The beautifully landscaped Houston Zoo provides a haven for thousands of visitors and more than 700 species of animals. The golden-headed quetzal from South America joins curassows, mynahs, macaws, and other colorful birds in the zoo's raucous tropical aviary.



THE EXPERIENCE OF SEEING, HEARING, AND FEELING THE LIFE FORCE OF THESE WILD, WONDERFUL, AND SOMETIMES WEIRD ANIMALS IN A BEAUTIFUL OUTDOOR SETTING MAKES THE HOUSTON ZOO SUCH A POPULAR PLACE.



BOTTOM PHOTOS © RON ZAGULI

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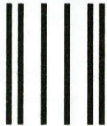
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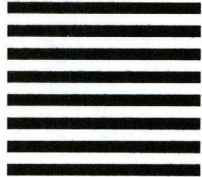


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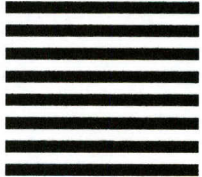
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ing habits. Special “Vanishing Animal” symbols, appearing at dozens of displays, identify species as endangered or threatened with extinction. These symbols remind visitors that the Houston Zoo’s goal is not only to preserve the health and longevity of the animals in its care, but also to maintain each species’ genetic diversity through globally coordinated and monitored captive-breeding programs.

Though the zoo’s educational kiosks and signs are compelling, the experience of seeing, hearing, and feeling the life force of these wild, wonderful, and sometimes weird animals in a beautiful outdoor setting makes the Houston Zoo such a popular place. Sea lions glide through cool, blue waters. Spotted giraffes nibble the leaves of tall trees. Exotic birds sing melodiously, their tunes blending with the calls of siamang gibbons that swing from branch to branch. Bengal tigers swim near cascading waterfalls, while a powerful, 17-foot python slumbers on a simulated rock.

So diverse and captivating are these animals that many people arrive early and stay all day. Just north of the main entrance, plunge right into your own zoological adventure at the Kipp Aquarium, where 960 species of freshwater and saltwater creatures thrive in 24,000 gallons of water in various tanks. Fish both fragile and ferocious from the rivers of South America swim here: cardinal tetras, angelfish, the four-foot-long arapaima fish, stingrays, and red-bellied piranhas.

At the *Life on the Reef Lagoon* exhibit, cuttlefish communicate by means of kaleidoscopic patterns created by pigments that pulse across their skin, and translucent moon jellyfish undulate as if dancing to the beat of a ghostly drummer. Gardens of iridescent sea anemones, clustered like sumptuous bouquets of alien flowers, capture tiny bits of floating food with delicate rosettes of stinging tentacles. Nearby, a seahorse the color of a sun-ripened apricot gently sways in the current, its long, lovely tail curled round a bit of seagrass.

A couple of hours can quickly evaporate in this aquatic environment, but keep in mind that a world of other exhibits awaits, including the zoo’s amazingly varied and colorful collection of birds. Take your time as you tour the Fisher Bird Garden, an outdoor aviary filled with trees, flowers, and shrubbery native to the foreign lands from which the birds come. Shaded benches afford excellent close encounters with, for example, the great blue touraco, a shy creature sporting an enormous, banana-shaped bill and a black, helmet-shaped crest. At a nearby pond, watch for the Chilean flamingo, an elegant tangerine-hued bird that will amuse and amaze you most when it pauses for a nap, as it rests its head across its shoulders and back while balanced on a single leg.

But that’s not all. The recently renovated, climate-



[RIGHT] Students from Walnut Bend and S.C. Red elementary schools participate in the Houston Independent School District’s Wildlife Discovery program. Here, third graders record their observations on the lions’ naturalistic habitat.

[FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT] An American alligator stretches his eight-foot frame as he absorbs the sun’s rays at the American Swamp display. The Houston Zoo is the first facility to successfully breed and raise the Andean cock-of-the-rock in captivity. An African lioness eyes photographer Ron Zaguli before taking a drink. Interested in elephant art? The Houston Zoo sells the work of their pachydermous Picassos at the Natural Selections gift shop. Senior keeper Karen Gibson holds the artist’s pad while five-year-old Singgah provides practiced brush strokes.



**THE ZOO SERVES AS
OR TEMPORARY HOME
ANIMALS OF MORE TH
INCLUDING 65 SPECIE
ENDANGERED OR THR**





PERMANENT
TO SOME 5,800
AN 700 SPECIES,
S THAT ARE
EATENED.



controlled Tropical Bird House boasts its own multitude of exotic species, including the golden-headed quetzal, the national bird of Guatemala, whose cherry-red belly stands out against its iridescent blue-and-green plumage. Also watch for the keel-billed toucan, which displays a protuberant green-and-orange bill set off by a large, lemon-yellow bib.

Returning to the outdoors, you'll soon hear

the refreshing sound of water splashing into a quiet pond. Here, at Duck Lake, the water fills a lagoon that curves around the zoo's rear food court. With gift and food vendors close at hand, visitors can shop for souvenirs, or feast on pizza, burgers, hot dogs, and ice cream. Many folks find this serene setting, in the company of free-swimming ducks and multicolored koi gliding in the waters nearby, a perfect place to cool their heels.

Once you feel rested, hoof it on over to the zoo's spacious exhibits of camels, anteaters, zebras, exotic antelope, and powerful, predatory mammals, including lions, tigers, leopards, jaguars, and margays. Surprisingly, some big felines, like the Siberian tiger, fancy the water, a pleasure the Houston Zoo accommodates by providing them easy access to tree-shaded pools. On the other hand, the black jaguar, which spends a lot of its time climbing, can cavort on the rugged slopes of simulated mountain terraces. When they want solitude, the cats find it in caves and crevices sheltered by dense vegetation. Recent renovations of these exhibits have added a tiger-viewing pavilion, which consists of a sturdy, elevated walkway with a large deck and screened-in porch that afford a panoramic, bird's-eye view.

Nearby lies an indoor sanctuary set aside solely for M'Kubwa, the zoo's Eastern Lowland gorilla. The only one in North America (and one of only five in captivity in the world), this critically endangered, silver-backed creature enjoys a jungle-like, climate-controlled habitat furnished with multilevel playground equipment and a freshwater stream.

A few yards farther on, you'll find the Children's Zoo. In this peaceful, shady setting, visitors can pet Nigerian dwarf goats, Toulouse geese, small Dexter cattle, Australian emus, St. Croix sheep, and miniature Mediterranean donkeys (28 to 36 inches at the shoulder). A new exhibit (scheduled to open this fall), the *John P. McGovern Children's Zoo*, takes its name from a retired physician and philanthropist who has been a generous supporter of the zoo and area museums. The facility will include multisensory experiences organized around six thematic areas representing the state's major habitats: forest, wetlands and Gulf Coast, prairie, desert, farm, and inner city. Youngsters of all ages will be able to stroke the skin of a live shark, sniff fragrant herbs, milk a cow, peer into an underwater wetland through a periscope, and "spelunk" in a simulated bat cave.



The food court borders a cypress bog that adds a wetland look and feel to the eating area.

[FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT] Lion and lioness bask in the sunshine. The skin secretions of the blue poison dart frog make it deadly to most predators. An emerald tree boa displays its camouflage, which suits it well for the rainforests of South America. Although koalas look like teddy bears, they are actually marsupials, carrying their undeveloped young in a pouch. California sea lions seem garrulous as they entertain visitors to the zoo. Sea lions are sociable animals whose colonies in the wild may number in the thousands.



[TOP] Zoo guests get an up-close view of the water-loving Siberian tiger from a deck of the viewing pavilion.

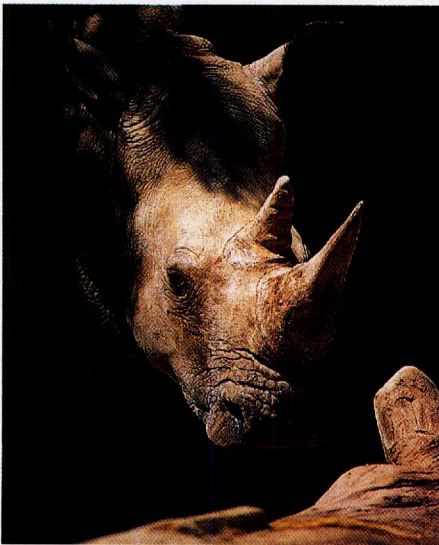
[RIGHT AND ABOVE] The Eastern Lowland gorilla—this one is one of five in captivity in the world—faces an uncertain future in its native Zaire. Poachers steal infants, often killing the mother and other gorillas in the process. Some poachers keep the hands, feet, and head as trophies. The zoo raises endangered Attwater's prairie chickens in an area not on view to the general public. During the prairie chicken's springtime courtship display, the males puff out their orange neck pouches and dance in competition for the females.

A *Kidscape* exhibit (part of the inner-city habitat), developed and maintained in part by Houston I.S.D. third graders, will feature small ponds, a garden designed to lure butterflies and hummingbirds, and an area for outdoor projects, such as growing and identifying plants.

The Texas Bayou building sits next door. This tunnel aquarium features natural lighting and a chance to see native Texas species like leopard gars and several kinds of catfish. Don't miss the adjacent *Texas Wildlife* exhibit, an indoor habitat where time of day has been "altered" by carefully controlled lighting so that animals normally active only at night—the porcupine, common barn owl, and adorable Eastern flying squirrel, among others—will be awake and active when visitors are around.

The zoo's numerous primates can keep you spellbound for hours. A ring-tailed lemur dances by her tail among the trees, while a Patas monkey, adorned with a lovely fringe of long white hair across her ebony-colored back, nibbles a tasty nut. A baboon proudly struts his stuff beneath a shady oak, as a foot-tall golden lion tamarin carries his baby on his back. Nearby, a shaggy, rust-colored Bornean orangutan, an endangered creature whose dark, dreamy eyes peer from between pendulous cheek pouches, steals the show with a sudden, impish grin.

Be sure to go inside the nearby Reptile and Amphibian House. Keep a watchful eye for a Boelen's python, a beautiful snake with iridescent hues of blue-on-black along its dorsal side and corn-kernel yellow on its belly. Equally mesmerizing are the Gila monster, white alligator, and banded sea snake. But few visitors can stifle a giggle of delight upon



Although the huge white rhinoceros may look fearsome (males typically weigh more than two tons), it is truly a gentle giant. The Houston Zoo's white rhinos enjoy receiving regular rubs from their keeper, Phil Coleman.

first seeing the green chameleon, whose lime-green, dinosaurian silhouette and independently rotatable eyes surely rank it among the world's most exquisite natural wonders.

Outside once again, refresh your spirits by resting beside the Reflection Pond, where you can watch sunbeams shimmer in a sparkling fountain's mist. Then head for Small Mammal World, which features bold depictions of biodiversity, adaptation, biological niches, and changing ecosystems, set off by heart-fluttering exhibits of fruit bats and vampire bats. The interactive fun continues at the nearby Brown Education Center, where little ones and even folks in wheelchairs can safely handle sea urchins, star fish, sea anemones, and sea cucumbers.

And don't miss the new koala display near the front entrance, where three of these curious and cuddly-looking outback creatures munch their way through bundles of eucalyptus leaves, then take a snooze so peaceful and cozy you may briefly consider climbing out on one of their simulated tree limbs to do likewise.

As you leave behind the marvelous sensations of the Houston Zoo, you may be reminded of its admirable efforts to preserve rare and exotic creatures worldwide. The zoo reinforces our appreciation of the beauty and interdependence of all living things, and it offers refuge for man and beast alike in the urban jungle. As you step outside the wrought-iron gates and head home, remember the eyes of those myriad creatures upon you, watching with the expectation that you'll return. ★

Husband-and-wife team JAN EDWARDS and STEPHAN MYERS live in the Big Thicket country of East Texas and make frequent journeys into the wilds on *Texas Highways* assignments.

Houston Zoo



© KELLEYGRAPHICS

If going wildlife-watching in the city sounds appealing, visit the Houston Zoo, at 1513 N. MacGregor, in Hermann Park (next to the Texas Medical Center and Rice University, and within the city's Museum District). You'll find ample parking for a full-fledged caravan nearby, as well as easy access to a glorious cluster of additional attractions in Hermann Park.

To get to the zoo from the Eastex or Southwest freeways (both US 59), take Texas 288 south to the N. MacGregor exit, and turn right onto N. MacGregor. Turn right on Golf Course Dr. The zoo will be on the left.

Hours: Daily 10-6. Admission: \$2.50, \$2 age 65 and older, 50¢ ages 3-12, free age 2 and younger. Free on city holidays.

Strollers are available for older children, but bring along everything you might need for a baby. Most pathways are wheelchair friendly, and all restrooms, restaurants, and snack areas are fully accessible.

The zoo also offers an array of educational experiences: day and evening seminars, guest lectures, classes, demonstrations, puppet shows, touch tanks, and tours, many of which are free to the public or cost very little. A paws-down favorite for young ones is the zoo's "Night Prowl," an opportunity to explore the exhibits after visiting hours, when the animals make the transition from day to evening behaviors. Other must-do's include opportunities to meet the zoo's baby animals, study bugs, touch barnyard buddies, and take a behind-the-scenes tour to see how zookeepers take care of so many different kinds of animals.

For more information about the Houston Zoo, contact Visitor Services any time at 713/523-5888 (recorded information) or 713/284-8300 (for specific information during visitor hours), or write to 1513 N. MacGregor, Houston 77030. Web site: www.houstonzoo.org.



★ HAPPY BIRTHDAY, USA ★





Round Top, Texas, Shows the Way

There's no better time to get a feel for life in a tiny Texas town than on the Fourth of July in Round Top, population 81. That's when the townsfolk come out to do what they have done as long as anyone can remember: hear speeches, watch a parade, and gather at Rifle Hall to eat barbecue and while the afternoon away with polkas and waltzes. **BY MADELINE IRVINE**

The daylong celebration is living history; genuine, hard-to-find Americana. Local lore says this year marks the historic town's 150th continuous Independence Day celebration, and that the event is the longest continuous observance of the Fourth of July west of the Mississippi. In the 19th Century, floats were carried on wagons drawn by mules or horses, and the parade might have been a few wagons long. Now, gasoline powers the parade, and to celebrate Round Top's Sesquicentennial, in 1998, the procession stretched some two miles. La Grange, Fayette County's seat, no longer holds a Fourth of July parade because so many of its residents are in Round Top that day.

Anticipation may get some folks to Round Top as early as 8:30 a.m., though events don't kick off until 10. But then again, they might be looking to find a spot in the shade. As Ronny Sacks, a proud descendant of the original German settlers of the 1840s, explains, "There's not enough trees to go around." By 10 a.m., when the speechifying begins from the gazebo in the town square, the parade route is lined three or four people deep.

Mayor Dave Nagel, another descendant of German settlers, kicks off the speeches and introduces the keynote speaker. Prominent politicians have long made a point of coming to talk in Round Top on the Fourth, a tradition that dates to 1851, when the town celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.



The Round Top Brass Band formed in the Seventies to assure continuation of the oompah music tradition during the community's Fourth festivities.

COURTESY ROUND TOP MERCANTILE COMPANY

To reach voters in those days, some politicians used multilingual skills: State Representative Robert Zapp, for example, delivered his speech three times, in German, English, and French.

Today, thankfully, the speeches are delivered but once. When the talk winds down, a cannon shot booms out, signaling the beginning of the parade. The American Legion leads the way, with World War II veterans carrying the colors. Behind them comes the Round Top Brass Band playing lively

marches, followed by a host of waving elected officials.

Then the heart of the parade passes: antique tractors and cars, and homemade floats sponsored by families and businesses, carrying celebrants who toss candy into the crowd. The tractors harken back to the town's beginnings as a row-crop farming community, and a hotly contested competition for best float ensures a creative turnout. Finally, trail riders bring up the rear, and it's over. Now it's time for barbecue at Rifle Hall.

Legend has it that Round Top's first settlers celebrated Independence Day soon after they arrived. The community also celebrated the Fourth during the Civil War.

"When a town in the South held a Fourth of July parade during the War between the States," says Shearer Davis Bowman, a historian at the University of Texas at Austin, "it did not necessarily signify allegiance to the Union." Instead, the parade could represent the Confederacy's belief that the South, rather than the

[FACING PAGE] Sometimes you need a fire truck to put out a fire, and sometimes it comes in handy as a parade vehicle. The covered wagon and trail riders signal the parade's end during Round Top's Fourth of July celebration. This year's fete marks the 150th year of patriotic participation.

BOTH PHOTOS COURTESY ROUND TOP REGISTER



COURTESY ROUND TOP REGISTER

A classic Allis-Chalmers tractor reflects Round Top's agricultural heritage.

Little Town, Big Fun

For a town measuring just one square mile, Round Top packs a wallop. Many have come to know the town as a cultural mecca in the midst of rolling fields. Thousands come for the large antique shows, held each spring and fall. Others come to hear concerts at Festival Hill, an international music institute, to attend Shakespeare at Winedale, or to visit Henkel Square, a museum village that re-creates the life of Anglo and German settlers of the 19th Century.

But these cultural attractions have entered Round Top's orbit in the last 30 years, since its rural beauty and tranquility—and its cultural heritage—began to lure influential Houstonians, including Miss Ima Hogg, here to live. Within a few years, citizens founded one organization after another, and they quickly became premier attractions.

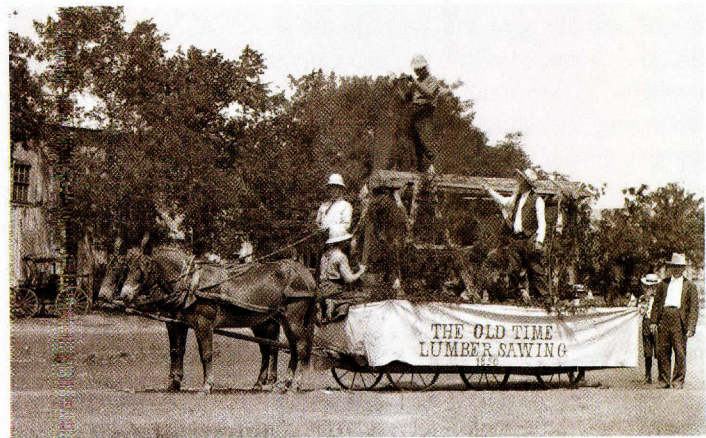
Round Top's new settlers altered the course of the town. Until that time, most of the residents were descendants of the area's original German settlers, and Round Top had managed to preserve its German heritage for generations. German was spoken in the schools until World War II, and even today, it is not unusual to hear people speaking German in the Round Top Mercantile Company, a venerable store that carries groceries, gifts, hardware, and feed. Now, many of the residents are people who have moved here for the special charms, which locals refer to as "Round Top magic."

Another change saw the surrounding farms shift from row-crop agriculture to cattle farming. When you see the antique tractors paraded proudly on the Fourth, it's a reminder of a bygone era.

North, upheld the legacy of the American Revolution and thus had the right to celebrate Independence Day.

Like many German settlements in Texas, Round Top did not favor secession, even though plantations existed in Fayette County, and some Germans owned slaves. Texas joined the Confederacy, but Round Top, like Fayette County, voted against leaving the Union. Still, the town was a recruiting center for the Confederacy, and two units from Round Top served in the war.

After the war ended, marauders called "The Rowdies" would besiege the town and live up to their name. As defensive measures, the community incorporated in 1870 with the help of Representative Zapp, built a jail, and appointed a marshal.



COURTESY ED W. AHRICH, FRIEDERIKE RECKNAGEL COLLECTION

The banner on this float reads 1850, but Round Top folks place this Fourth of July parade photo closer to the turn of the 20th Century.

Round Top's Fourth of July

Sometime during the war, or soon after, the cannon that signals the start of the parade took up residence in the town square.

The cannon has its share of stories to tell. In 1889, citizens loaded it with so much gunpowder—reputedly to make the shot heard clear over to neighboring Warrenton—that it exploded, killing John George Kaiser, president of the local Rifle Association. The cannon remained silent until 1975, when Mayor Don Nagel, father of the present mayor,



COURTESY ROUND TOP REGISTER

Butter churn? No, it's the historic little cannon that could. Out of commission after too much gunpowder was used in 1889, the pint-size piece of artillery made a comeback in 1975 and remains a part of Round Top's Fourth.

had it restored. The diminutive noise-maker soon resumed its place of honor in Round Top's Fourth of July history.

Not long after the town incorporated, local marksmen formed the Round Top Rifle Association as a social club modeled on German shooting clubs. Today, the Rifle Association and the town of Round Top sponsor the parade. Association members cook the barbecue for the Fourth as did their forefathers, seasoning the meat a day ahead, cooking it over hot coals in a pit, and serving it "mopped with barbecue sop," a delicious blend of vinegar, oil, and seasonings.

Everyone in Round Top wears many hats to make the day a success. For example, Ronny Sacks, a member of the Rifle Association, is also a founding member of the town's Brass Band. In 1971, the popularity of brass bands had diminished, and they were difficult to find for the parade. A group of locals decided to form their own band, and to this day, they continue to bring vintage sound to the parade. By tradition, the band reappears later at Rifle Hall to play oompah music for the barbecue.

Round Top lies midway between Houston and Austin, a few miles south of US 290 on Texas 237, and a few miles north of Texas 71. Call the Round Top Chamber of Commerce for more details at 979/249-4042. Web site: www.roundtop.org.

Fourth festivities begin around 10 a.m. Visitors can park along the roadside in town, at the Round Top State Bank parking lot, or at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

While people stand several feet deep along the circuitous parade route through town, the Fourth of July Parade officially begins and ends at Rifle Hall. Barbecue is served afterwards, with antique tractors and cars from the parade on display, and oompah music by the Round Top Brass Band. Later, at the dance, Donnie Wavra and the Hi-Liters will perform. To reach Rifle Hall, follow FM 1457 from the town square.

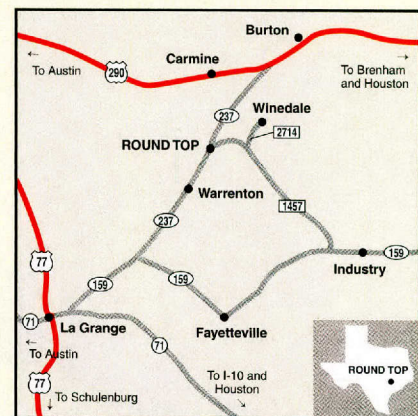
The Fourth at Festival Hill

On Sun., July 2, at 3 p.m., the Texas Festival Orchestra presents a rousing Fourth of July concert featuring American composers at **Festival Hill**, a year-round international music institute. Admission: \$15. This performance and the festival-institute's many other classical programs take place in an ornate, 1,200-seat concert hall. Wheelchair accessible. For details on the complete summer season, write to the International Festival-Institute at Round Top, Box 89, Round Top 78954; 979/249-3129. Web site: www.festivalhill.org.

Other Attractions

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, a block west of Texas 237 on White St., is said to be the oldest active Lutheran church in the state (built in 1866). Of note: a native cedar pipe organ. The church is open during July 4th festivities. Wheelchair accessible. Call 979/249-3686.

Founded in 1993, the **Round Top Historical Society**, 304 N. Washington,



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is the repository for the community's rich history. Hours: Sat-Sun noon-3 and by appt. Wheelchair accessible.

Explore historic **Henkel Square Museum Village**. The log cabins, schoolhouse, and church were built by German immigrants in the 19th Century. Hours: Thu-Sun noon-5. Not wheelchair accessible. Call 979/249-3308.

Winedale Historical Center, 4 miles from Round Top on FM 2714, and operated by the University of Texas, offers Shakespeare performances in Apr. and Aug., among other events (see story, page 44). Write to Box 11, Round Top 78954; 979/278-3530.

Royers Round Top Cafe, the town's epicenter, just off Texas 237, serves "sophisticated comfort food, from pasta to pie." Hours: Thu 11-9, Fri-Sat 11-9:30, Sun noon-7. Call for reservations; open on July 4. Limited wheelchair access. Write to Box 207, Round Top 78954; 979/249-3611 or 877/866-PIES. Web site: www.royersroundtopcafe.com.

Round Top Mercantile Company is 4 blocks north of the square on Texas 237. Hours: Mon-Sat 7:30-6, Sun 9-3. Call 979/249-3117.

Progress may have changed Round Top—newcomers may soon boost the population to 91—but at this small-town Fourth of July celebration, not much has changed. Stake out your shade tree by 8:30 a.m., listen for the cannon boom and the Sousa-inspired sounds of the Round Top Brass Band, and settle back to enjoy a really old-fashioned Fourth. ★

Austin's MADELINE IRVINE has lit a firecracker or two, and enjoys celebrating America's birthday.



CAN YOU *Believe* THAT?!

WHEN Travis Robison found a turtle in 1933 that appeared to have the face of a Chinese man painted on its shell, his northeast Texas neighbors said, “There’s one for Rip.”

Ditto for William H. Rainey of Fort Worth, who grew a four-foot, 11-inch cucumber in 1930. And for Cowntown’s Miller Daniel and his gourd shaped like a baseball bat. “There’s one for Rip,” folks agreed after seeing Dallasite Robert Fern balance the edge of a quarter on his nose...and after watching Tyler waitress Blanche Lowe carry 23 coffee cups with one hand.

Since 1918, when adventurer Robert Ripley invented his *Believe It or Not!* cartoon feature to highlight the world’s eccentricities, Texans like Fort Worth’s William Rainey have reveled in their moments of fame. Like most *Believe It or Not!* celebrities, Mr. Rainey submitted a photo to prove his prowess, in this case, with cultivating cucumbers.

Ripley's

I N

T E X A S

By Gene Fowler



One wonders how Dallasite Robert Fern developed this skill. In 1933, he wowed the crowds by balancing a quarter on his nose.

BOTH PHOTOS © 2000 RIPLEY ENTERTAINMENT INC.



In the pre-World War II days at Tyler's popular Clayton's Café, waitress Blanche Lowe could carry 23 coffee cups in one hand. Would you like pie with that?

names of his seven ex-wives tattooed on his arm, or a gal grew the longest fingernails in the world, Ripley could make him or her a temporary star.

Irma Farek of Hockley (near Houston) wrote to Ripley in 1932 about her bulldog named Tex. Part bird dog, Tex weighed in at 120 pounds. "Everyone that sees Tex considers him the fattest dog they have ever seen," Irma confided. "Tex will not go to his bed at night without a bag of cookies." She enclosed a snapshot "as proof," showing the dog "holding a box of lemon snaps, his favorite food." A few months later, a drawing of Tex, along with his story, appeared

"R I P" was Robert Ripley, the globe-trotting cartoonist and curator of the unusual, the remarkable, and the downright strange. In the 1930s and '40s, the "Golden Age of Ripley," his *Believe It or Not!* cartoon feature was syndicated to 300 newspapers in 17 languages. A million folks a year wrote to Ripley, each with a weird and wonderful tale to tell.

If a person could lift a 155-pound anvil with his teeth, drive a nail into his head, hold a blowtorch to his tongue without pain, or play the harmonica with his nose while whistling, he knew Ripley fame awaited. Dogs that could roller skate, smoke a pipe, or play the piano found renown in *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* Likewise a feller who could smoke 600 cigars in 48 hours. If a guy had the first



Tex, the 120-pound pooch owned by Irma Farek of Hockley, posed in 1932 with his favorite food, lemon snaps.



In 1935, Port Arthur's poultry population was no match for Buck Fulford, who, among his many other talents, could kill, pluck, cut up, cook, and eat a chicken in less than two minutes.

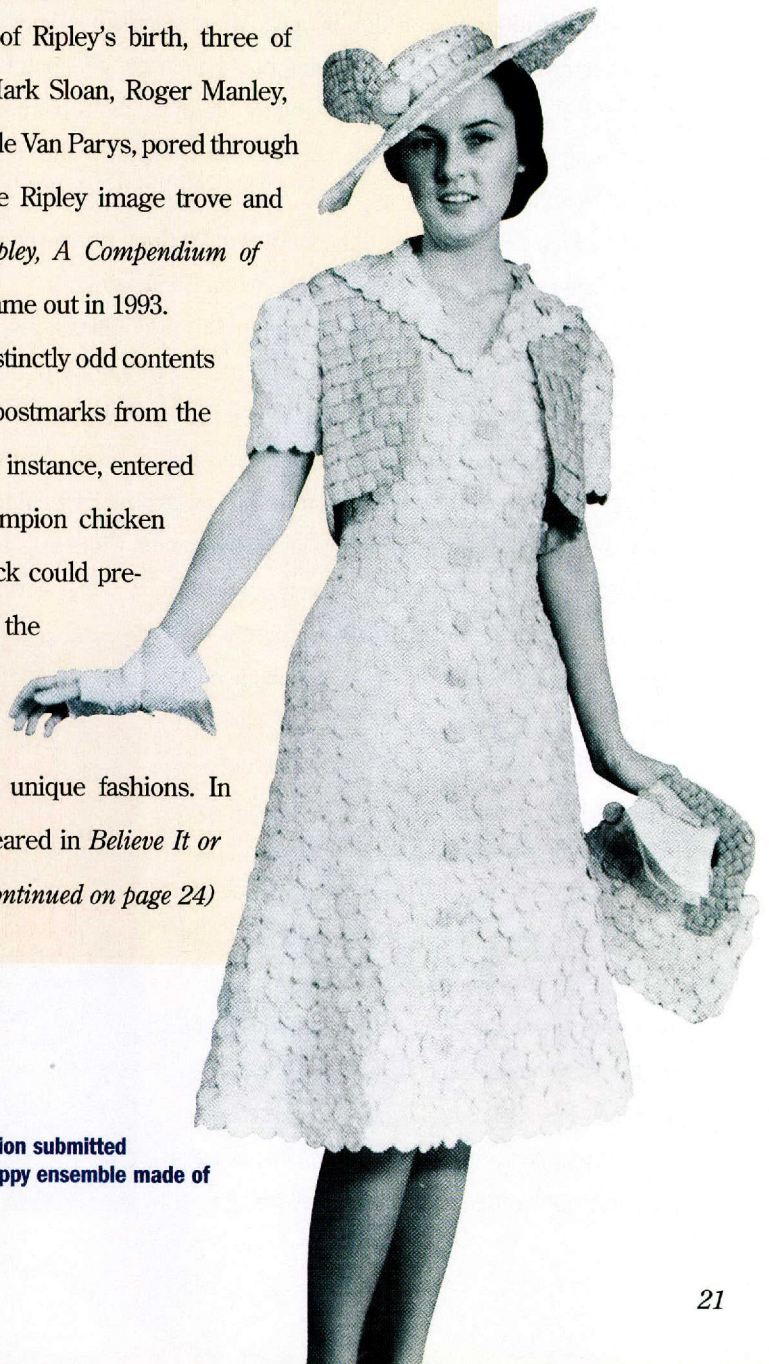
selected photographs for a book. *Dear Mr. Ripley, A Compendium of Curioddities from the Believe It or Not! Archives* came out in 1993.

A glance at the book's decidedly curious and distinctly odd contents reveals that a fair sample of Ripley's mail bore postmarks from the Lone Star State. Buck Fulford of Port Arthur, for instance, entered the Ripley limelight in 1935 as the "world champion chicken plucker." In a mere minute and 50 seconds, Buck could prepare, cook, and eat the bird. An outside wall of the champ's Port Arthur chicken shack sported a rendition of his Ripley cartoon.

Several Texans impressed Ripley with their unique fashions. In February 1940, Virginia Winn of Mercedes appeared in *Believe It or Not!* gussied up in a hand-stitched, 40-pound *(continued on page 24)*

in the *Ripley's Believe It or Not!* feature, seen by as many as 80 million readers.

Like Irma, most folks sent photographic documentation of their *Believe It or Not!* phenomena. After confirmation by Ripley's research department, the selected items were then artistically rendered by Ripley and the photos stored away. To celebrate the centennial of Ripley's birth, three of his fans, Mark Sloan, Roger Manley, and Michelle Van Parys, pored through the massive Ripley image trove and



In 1940, Wilma Beth Shulke of Mission submitted this photo of herself modeling a snappy ensemble made of corncobs and orange peels.

Behold the **ODDITORIUM!**

BY GENE FOWLER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN STILLMAN

THE DUKE OF WINDSOR, it is said, dubbed Ripley “the modern Marco Polo” for his tireless treks around the world. Wherever he went, Ripley hauled back exotic souvenirs and cultural artifacts, everything from Amazonian shrunken heads to the massive trumpets of Tibetan lamas. In the 1930s, Americans viewed many of these treasures, along with offbeat performances and posters of *Believe It or Not!* cartoons, at museums across the nation called “odditoriums.”

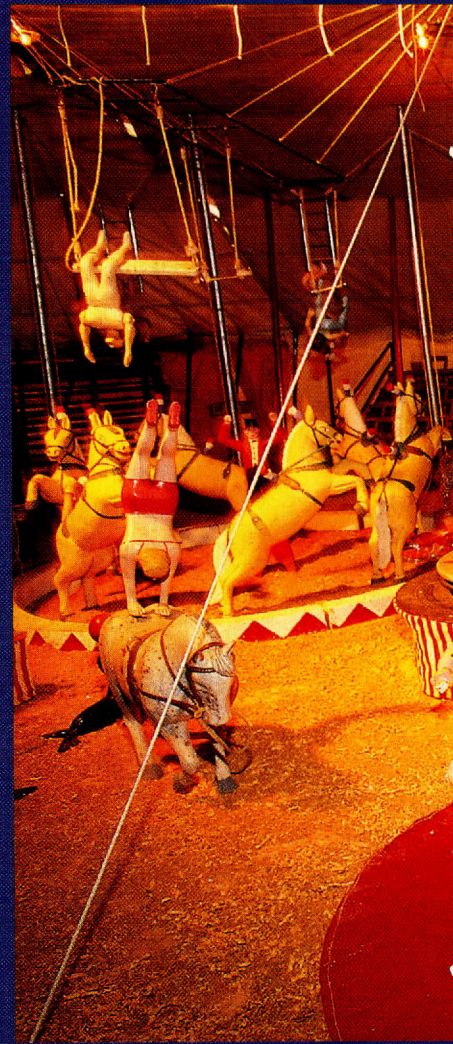
The Dallas Odditorium opened in 1936 on the grounds of the Texas Centennial Exposition. Curioddities on view included a beret-and-smock-clad artist who painted three portraits at the same time, using both hands and one foot. Performances in 1937 by B.A. Bryant of Waco presaged a current fad, body-piercing. “I have had as many as 50 different pins and needles stuck in my body at the same time,” wrote Bryant to Ripley, “without causing any pain. *And it is no trick.*”

When Ripley himself visited the Dallas Odditorium, he was declared an honorary Texas Ranger and presented with a ten-gallon Centennial hat.

Today, Ripley’s grab-bag collection of 20,000 curioddities is dispersed among 26 museums, from Thailand to Wyoming. (There is also a *Believe It or Not!* TV show, and the newspaper cartoon feature is carried on by Ripley devotees.) The Texas museums—in Grand Prairie and San Antonio—are housed alongside wax museums that bring to life celebrated figures from history and popular culture. The 500 curioddities in the Alamo City odditorium include a one-ton Chinese jade “good-luck coin,” a 17th-Century suit of armor for a samurai warrior, and “the world’s smallest painting”—a ship painted on the head of a pin by

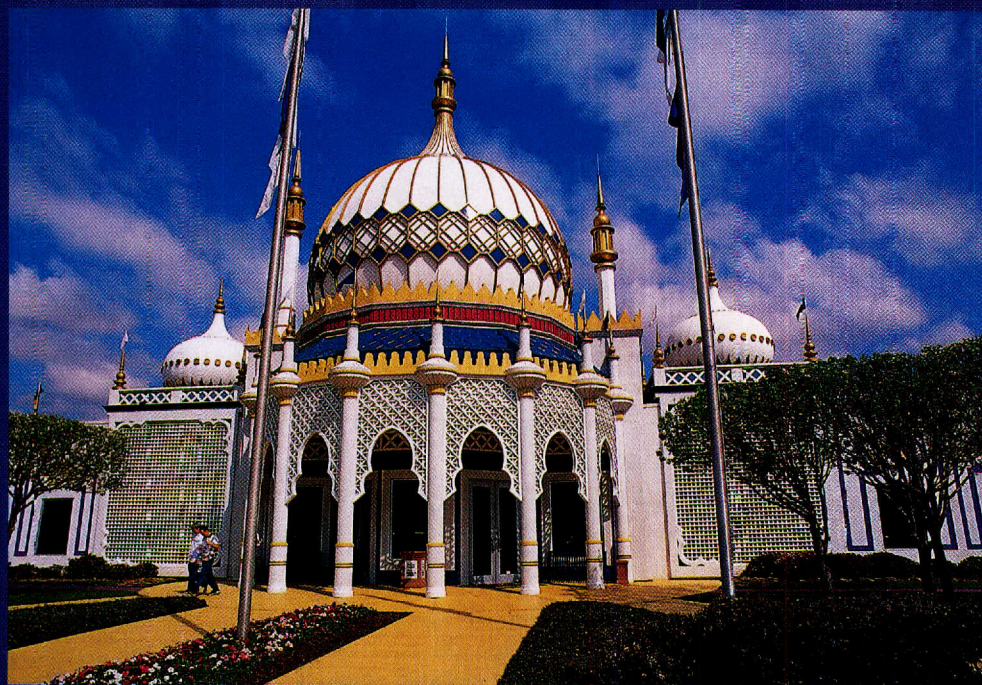
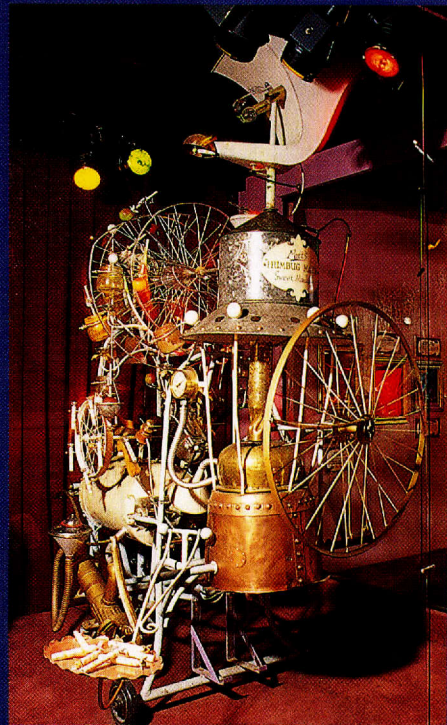
Argentinean artist Manuel Andrade, who used a human hair for a brush. Another Ripley artist used laundry lint to create a portrait of Queen Elizabeth I. A Guatemalan shaman’s costume on display was made from pounded tree bark and the feathers, beak, and other parts of a toucan.

Visitors to the Grand Prairie odditorium enter through a “nautical gallery” that features a recreation of “the Lost Ship of the Skeletons.” The vessel *Marlborough* sailed from New Zealand in 1890 and vanished...until some 23 years later, when it reappeared near Cape Horn, its passengers and crew reduced to bones. Believe it?





[LEFT AND BELOW] The curiosities on view at the Ripley's museum in San Antonio include a scale model of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus built in the 1930s and 1940s; and a working Humbug Major Sweet Machine, designed for the 1968 film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.



[FAR LEFT AND LEFT] Visitors flock to the Ripley's Believe It or Not! museum in Grand Prairie for a glimpse of the world's oddities. One of 26 Believe It or Not! museums across the globe, the Grand Prairie site boasts a Middle East-inspired exterior, a landmark on Interstate 30 between Dallas and Fort Worth.



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Thrifty Mrs. E.E. Smith of 1930s Dallas crocheted her Easter bonnet with her own hair, and rather than using cosmetics, she trusted her handsome visage to a regimen of facial calisthenics.

faces a photo of herself in her 1938 Easter bonnet, which she had crocheted from her own hair.

Other Texans demonstrated physical feats. Alice Humbarger, a 6'4" Houston gal, ascended to the Ripley pantheon in 1931 for palming a basketball in each hand. In 1934, 64-year-old contortionist Ed Thardo, a popular performer for many years with the Texas-based Harley Sadler

Traveling Show, made the Ripley cut by doing the splits while standing up, in

[LEFT] At the Dallas Odditorium in 1937, Waco's B.A. Bryant, known as "the human pincushion," said he felt no pain as he stuck as many as 100 pins and needles into his body.

evening dress adorned with 60,000 grains of corn. A few months later, Wilma Beth Shulke of Mission modeled a sleek little number covered with sliced corncobs and trimmed with orange peels. In 1947, Beverly Bell of Cuero (home these days to the annual Turkeyfest) dazzled the Ripley galaxy by appearing in a local fashion show decked out in a turkey-feather dress and shoes made from the quills.

Mrs. E.E. Smith of Dallas may have been the most resourceful Lone Star "designer" in the Ripley parade. A spiritualist who shunned scissors, Mrs. Smith sent *Believe It or Not!* of-

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In 1931, six-foot-four-inch city champ Alice Humbarger of Houston could palm two basketballs. She could also play two octaves on a piano with one hand, but alas, she couldn't sing.

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Handley (a community that is now a part of Fort Worth). A year later, O.H.C. Bell of Chillicothe gained *Believe It or Not!* immortality for a more cerebral sports accomplishment: O.H.C.

reported to Ripley that he had fished for six years, using both live and artificial bait, without so much as a nibble.

Honors for the most dramatic Lone Star curioddity would probably have to go to U.S. Navy wrestling champ Joe Reno and mystic hypnotist Rajah Yogi. In 1930, Rajah Yogi journeyed from his Oklahoma headquarters to Dallas, where he placed wrestler Reno in a deep, deep sleep. For 17 days, Reno slumbered, setting a "new world's record" for hypnosis. After Rajah Yogi awakened him, Reno promptly wrestled middleweight champion Red Lindsay to a draw. Believe it or not! ★

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Joe Reno - Walter weight wrestler
after breaking World's Record
artificial sleep of 390 hours.
Has slept 406 hours
under spell of Rajah Yogi.
Dallas, Texas. June 16-1930.

After a hypnotic sleep in a coffin for nearly 17 days in June 1930, U.S. Navy wrestling champ Joe Reno awoke in Dallas and wrestled middleweight champ Red Lindsay to a draw.

Under certain alignments of the stars, Austin writer GENE FOWLER will believe anything.

WHEN...WHERE...HOW

Ripley's in Texas

In San Antonio, the Plaza Wax Museum and Ripley's *Believe It or Not!* museum are on Alamo Plaza, across the street from the Alamo. Hours: Memorial Day-Labor Day, 9 a.m.-10 p.m. daily; remainder of year, Sun-Thu 9-7, Fri-Sat, 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Admission to one museum: \$10.95, \$4.95 ages 4-12. Admission to both museums: \$14.95, \$7.95 ages 4-12. Both museums are wheelchair accessible. Write to the Plaza Wax Museum/Ripley's *Believe It or Not!*, 301 Alamo Plaza, San Antonio 78205; 210/224-9299.

In Grand Prairie, the Palace of Wax and Ripley's *Believe It or Not!* museums are on Interstate 30, "seven minutes east of Six Flags Over Texas." Hours: Memorial Day-Labor Day, 10-9 daily; remainder of year, Mon-Fri 10-5, Sat-Sun 10-6. Admission to one museum: \$10.95, \$6.95 ages 4-12. Admission to both museums: \$14.95, \$9.95 ages 4-12. Both museums are wheelchair accessible. Write to the Palace of Wax/

Ripley's *Believe It or Not!*, 601 E. Safari Pkwy., Grand Prairie 75050; 972/263-2391.

Look in your bookstore or library for *Dear Mr. Ripley - A Compendium of Curioddities from the Believe It or Not! Archives* by Mark Sloan, Roger Manley, and Michelle Van Parys (Little Brown & Co., 1993) and *The World of Ripley's Believe It or Not!* by Julie Mooney (Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1999). The latter, described as "a global retrospective of extraordinary achievements, curious behavior and bizarre events," includes such Texas items as Orange banker E.W. Brown Jr. and his bow ties made of \$20 bills; Grimes County lawyer Carl Harper, who spiked his handkerchiefs with onion slices to produce jury-swaying tears; and the Longhorn V12, "the world's snazziest sport roadster," built by Oliver Albert of Gonzales using parts from Cadillacs, Chevrolets, Fords, and 11 other brands of cars.

S U M M E R ' S
T H E S E A S O N
F O R

Artesian Springs

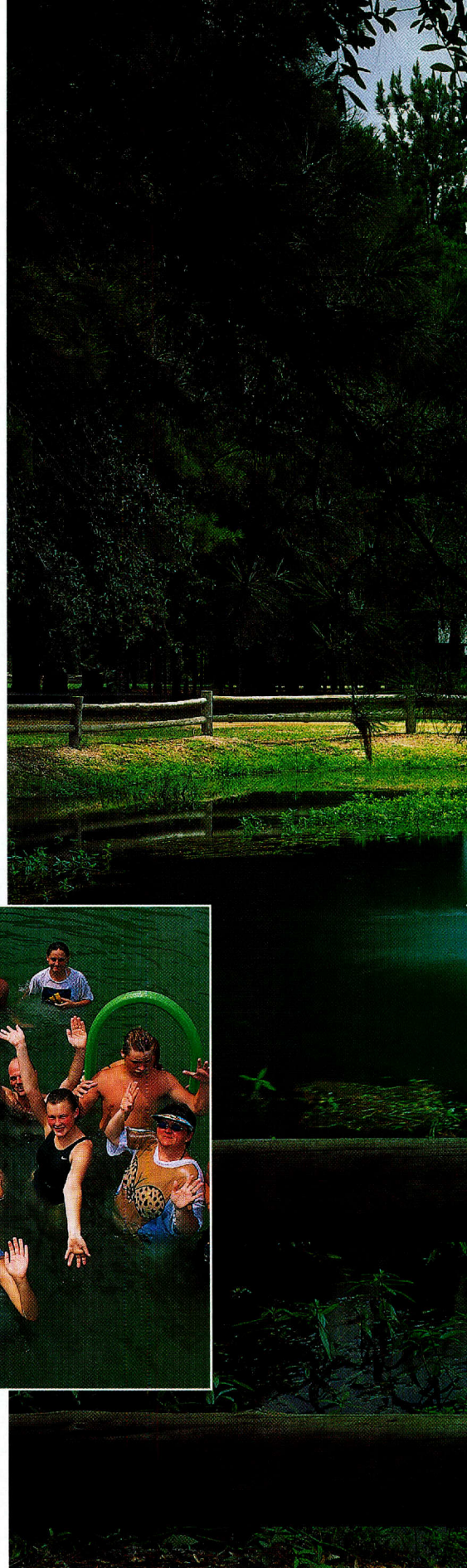
BY JANET R. EDWARDS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHAN MYERS

Texans sure know how to beat the summer heat! Clad in cool cotton shorts and tank tops, they flock to refreshing blue water, white sugar-sand beaches, and towering pine trees. Towering pine trees? You betcha. Surprising as it may seem, a park called Artesian Springs, nestled deep in the Piney Woods, a stone's throw from the Sabine River and the Louisiana border, offers a bodacious swimming hole and 10 tree-rimmed fishing lakes fed each day by thousands of gallons of clear, cold, artesian spring water. The spot has proved popular for almost two decades, often attracting hundreds of folks each weekend from Houston, Beaumont, and many other towns and byways of East Texas, especially during the frizzle-fried days of summer.

Kids especially love Artesian Springs. Equipped with water toys, goggles, snorkels, and foot fins, youngsters can splash and squeal to their hearts' delight along the gently sloping shores of the campground's ample swimming lake. With a roped-off area (for the little ones), a water-volleyball court set up in the shallow end, and a double-decker diving board for the more daring on the deeper end (25 feet in some places), the lake is truly a summertime haven. Along this reservoir's sandy beaches, visitors plop down in their low-slung beach chairs, immerse themselves in the dog-eared pages of paperback novels, and sip cold drinks retrieved from nearby ice chests. Others spread colorful beach towels for a slumber in the sun, occasionally slathering bare arms and legs with gobs of fragrant lotion. *(continued on page 30)*



Members of the Shiloh Baptist Church in De Ridder, Louisiana, frequently cross the state line for retreats at East Texas' Artesian Springs.





Koi, perch, and bass swim in the crystal-clear waters of Artesian Springs' 200,000-gallon pond, site of the original springs, discovered by Bill Blanchard in 1976.



Nature trails wind through cypress swamps and acres of interconnected lakes.



Still more folks cozy up to cool shadows cast by the campground's thatched beach umbrellas. Sitting in the sand a spell, they watch happy youngsters dig for treasure or ride the gentle waves near shore on floats and inner tubes. Soon enough, the sun and the sight of so many people having fun will lure these sand potatoes in for a delicious dip in the chilly-crisp waters. Near lunch and dinnertime, lively music may waft over the water from the nearby RV campground, while a wandering wind tempts appetites with mouth-watering aromas of hot dogs, burgers, steaks, and sausage sizzling on grills.

Just behind the campground headquarters awaits a pleasing duo of dry-land amusements—18-hole mini golf and a video game center. You can also test your reflexes on the pinball machine or try your luck with a game of horseshoes. If you have a yen to prove your sports prowess, lighten your feet for a game of basketball, Frisbee, or volleyball. Music from an old-fashioned jukebox may inspire you to grab a partner and dance beneath the pine trees.

Those who prefer more-pedestrian pursuits will enjoy Artesian Springs' many nature trails. Dotted with tranquil lakes and old-fashioned wooden bridges, the forest here holds abundant wildlife, including deer, rabbits, raccoons, beavers, and armadillos, most often seen early mornings and late evenings.



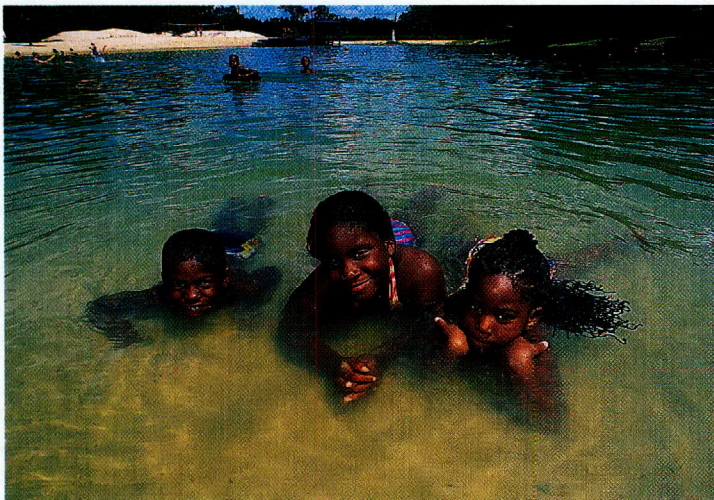
Anglers like Corey Babineaux and J.J. Sluss, both of Vidor, can take their pick of 10 spring-fed lakes teeming with crappie, catfish, and bass.

If you feel most at home with a fishing pole in your hand, catches of bass, crappie, and catfish await your bait in several of the spring-fed reservoirs. All 10 of the fishing lakes are interconnected and accessible by foot and by boat.

Several covered pavilions (some with utilities) on the grounds provide excellent places for reunions, parties, and picnics. A 200,000-gallon pond—accented by a nostalgic waterwheel, a wooden

gazebo, clusters of lily pads, and colorful schools of Japanese koi, goldfish, and native fish—attracts young and old, especially at feeding time. This is the site of the original springs, discovered by Bill Blanchard in 1976 when he and his wife, Priscilla, decided to develop 200 acres of East Texas forest land they had owned since 1971.

“The land was solid forest when we first bought it, except for a few old aban-



In the swimming lake (from left to right), Elliot Brown and Kaylynn Gregory, both of Beaumont, and Keyina Barnett of Buna bask in the shallows. At right, Shiloh Baptist Church members delight in aquatic antics toward the deep end.

Pleasin' Artesian Springs

doned gravel pits," says Bill. "But we'd heard there were artesian springs in the area, and I'd been thinking about turning the property into a recreational park, so our well-digger gave it a try. On the first go-round, we struck a little-bitty squirt. But the next day, after additional cleaning and blowing, we got a gallon-a-second gusher. Later, we discovered two more artesian springs that now flow into the swimming lake."

Not one to sit around, even after early retirement in 1980 from a mobile home dealership and park in Vidor, Bill and his son, Billy, soon set to work digging out a small lake around the new water source. Cabins, decks, nature trails, fishing ponds, the recreation arcade, and a larger swimming hole gradually followed over the next 16 years. Priscilla Blanchard and Billy's wife, Karen, have added the finishing touches to many park buildings by handpainting whimsical designs on walls, doors, and window facings, details that help give Artesian Springs a feeling of "home away from home."

After buying tickets at the front gate, you can park right next to the swimming lake. Then visit the headquarters building (near the lake), where an indoor concession area lets you feast on Frito pie or chill your chops with a delicious ice cream cone. In the registration center, you can also visit with the Blanchards or browse among the gift shop's tools, knickknacks, toys, and picnic supplies.

"We want people to have a real good time in the great outdoors," says Bill. "But security and safety are also a priority, so we take a lot of pride in making sure this is an ideal place to bring the whole family."

When daylight wanes, visitors who have made reservations head toward one of Artesian Springs' 10 cozy cabins, most of which have a private bath, air conditioning, microwave, refrigerator, covered deck, and grill. Other guests opt to spend the evening in their RV's or tents. The park's tree-shaded campgrounds provide partial and full hookups, tables, barbecue pits, and a bathhouse with hot showers.

Artesian Springs is 12 miles east of Newton (which is about an hour's drive north of Beaumont). From Newton, take Texas 190 east, then turn left on FM 2626. Look for the Artesian Springs sign at a dirt-and-gravel road, and take a right. Drive 3 miles to the front entrance (watch for the sign).

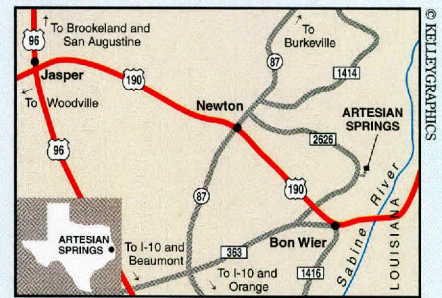
This year, Artesian Springs will be open daily through mid-Sep. (call the number listed below for exact date), then closed until Mar. 1, 2001. The swimming lake opens daily through mid-Aug., then on weekends only through Labor Day; again, call for exact dates. Day-use hours: 10-7. Not wheelchair accessible.

The park offers several acres of campgrounds, with partial and complete RV hookups, 10 cabins, and space for tent camping. All campsites and cabins are equipped with tables and barbecue pits. The bathhouse has hot showers. RV storage is available.

At the swimming lake, certified lifeguards keep watch on summer days. Picnic tables and grills are available near this lake. Inner tubes, golf clubs, golf balls, volleyballs, and basketballs are available for rent at park headquarters. At the 200,000-gallon pond, visitors can feed the fish (food packets available at park headquarters). A recreation arcade (partially covered) offers an 18-hole mini-golf course, pinball machine, video games, and a jukebox.

Nature-lovers will enjoy the park's nature trails, which traverse acres of lakes surrounded by bald cypress trees. Fishing in the 10 lakes is catch-and-release, or check park rules for prices. Fishing license not required.

Admission: \$4 for a day pass, free younger than age 2. The pass includes



access to the swimming lake, volleyball, basketball (half-court concrete slab), fishing, nature walks, pond, concession area, gift shop, and picnic tables/grills. Miniature golf costs \$1 per person per game. Boat rentals: \$10 per day (includes paddles and lifejackets). Paddleboats are also available (\$10 per hour). Launching your own boat costs \$1 a day (paddles or trolling motor only). The 10 fishing lakes are connected for boating convenience. Inner tubes start at \$1 per tube per day (price varies according to size).

Tent camping, \$12 a night; RV camping, \$15 a night (\$90 per week, \$300 per month). Camping rates include access to all activities. Rates are based on 2-person occupancy. Children camping with parent, additional \$2 each per night. *Cabins must be reserved in advance*; most provide private bath, microwave, air conditioning, refrigerator, outdoor deck, and grill. Check rates at park headquarters. Pavilion rental: \$10-\$25 per day. Meeting room available.

Quiet hours in the park are 10 p.m.-8 a.m.

Write to Bill and Priscilla Blanchard, Artesian Springs, Rt. 1, Box 670-12, Newton 75966; 409/379-8826.

After dinner, campers often stroll back to the swimming lake to watch the sunset reflected in the water's calm surface. Then, as twilight falls, some gather round a fire for toasted marshmallows. With the stars shining overhead, frogs croaking, and crickets calling from the woods nearby, folks with firelight in their eyes tell tall tales and sing along to favorite tunes strummed on a six-string guitar. Before long, the

campers will retire, falling blissfully asleep in the heart of an East Texas forest. At sunrise, they'll awaken, ready to savor yet another festive summer day in the fresh and frosty waters of Artesian Springs. ★

Longtime contributors JAN EDWARDS and STEPHAN MYERS are writing and photographing a story on traveling in East Texas for our upcoming September special issue.



Mesquite

BY MARSHA MURRAY HARLOW
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STAN WILLIAMS



Known especially for his rocking chairs, Uvalde artisan Robert Hensarling creates mesquite furniture in which the beauty of the wood enhances the design.

H

Head west on US 90 from San Antonio on a blazing summer day, and you'll begin to understand the mesquite tree's reputation for tenacity. Just outside of San Antonio, scrubby, bush-like mesquites crowd each other on parched, undeveloped land, surviving where little else can. In quietly prosperous Castroville, large and gnarly mesquites sway gracefully over manicured lawns of homes and businesses. Farther west, through Hondo and Sabin, mid-size mesquites that have escaped ranchers' root-plows and bulldozers hug the fence line, offering precious shade to creatures large and small.

Drive all the way to Uvalde, and you'll glimpse the tree's promise for the future. A simple sign says it all: "Mesquite Furniture." This sign belongs to Robert Hensarling, one of many artisans and entrepreneurs in Texas who create a livelihood from this distinctive wood.

Except in the Piney Woods of deep East Texas, it's hard to drive far in Texas without spotting a mesquite. The tree's range comprises about 60 million of the state's approximately 168 million acres, with the honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa* Torr.) being the most common.

Experts say there's no typical form of mesquite—it ranges from a low-lying, vine-like, woody plant to a tall tree—an average of 40 feet high—with a broad, open canopy. The trunk rarely grows straight, twisting and arching into unusual, convoluted forms. When its lacy, delicate leaves emerge in the spring, old-timers herald it as a sign that all danger of frost is past. Clusters of yellow flowers are followed by bean-like pods up to 10 inches long.

In ranching country, the mesquite is often reviled as a noxious weed that invades pastures, but in many areas it offers livestock the only shade around, and, during times of drought, the sugary bean pods provide handy fodder when mature.

Unlike the tree's revilers, mesquite artisans hold a deep respect for the living tree. Talking about it, they'll mention the wood's rich, reddish-brown color, swirling grain, strength, and distinctive flaws—which artisans see as desirable characteristics—such as bark pockets, burls, borer burrows,

[FACING PAGE] As trees go, the mesquite might never qualify as a beauty contestant. But its twisted form finds favor with artisans and entrepreneurs, and even gardeners appreciate the tree's drought-tolerance.

A R T F U L S U R V I V O R

and mineral streaks. And many proudly point out that they use only wood from trees that have died or that grow on land about to be cleared.

“Nothing is more beautiful than a big mesquite tree,” says Robert Hensarling. “But if the land is going to be destroyed anyway, I like to salvage trees that will be destroyed. I get a lot of satisfaction in taking a beautiful, gnarly old tree—resin pockets and all—and transforming it into a functional piece of furniture.”

Robert specializes in rocking chairs (priced from \$5,500 to \$12,500), but he also makes tables, dining chairs, and desks, many of which find homes in executive offices and boardrooms of major corporations. In all his designs, the beauty of the wood dominates.

[RIGHT] From tree to lumber to functional item. Robert Hensarling found the mesquite wagon wheel—more than 150 years old—on a trip to Laredo. [BELOW] At the Southwest Trading Post near Bee Cave, partners David Oliver and Mike Schalesky mill their own mesquite for their handcrafted, custom-made furniture.



© MICHAEL A. MURPHY



MESQUITE'S HARDNESS AND RESISTANCE TO DECAY MADE IT THE NATURAL



Craig Lagerstrom of Texas Mesquite Company in Bertram builds a Lone Star motif into his distinctive furniture. His wife, Janet, assists him in the finishing process. The Lagerstroms produce hand-rubbed home and office furniture, most of it made from mesquite.

“Mesquite is a hard, dense wood that cuts well and polishes up really nice,” he explains. “No two pieces are alike. Even within the same board, the grain changes.” One rocker takes 200 hours to build, and Robert knows it likely will become a family heirloom. He nods toward a rocker in the finishing stages at his workshop and says, “There’s a good feeling in knowing that rocker will be around 200 to 300 years from now.” And he jokes that his rockers have a lifetime guarantee. “That’s *my* lifetime, of course,” he says with a grin.

Another artisan, Michael Moore of Bastrop, crafts one-of-a-

kind mesquite boxes—mainly jewelry boxes and humidors—accented by turquoise, which he uses to fill the wood’s cracks and crevices. “Mesquite is the most remarkable wood in the United States,” he says, “because it has so much character. It grows in twists and turns, even on the inside. When you cut into a piece of mesquite, you never know what you’re going to find.”

Michael seeks out wood whose color variations, splits, and burls might make some people consider it defective. He designs his boxes with dove-tail corners and handmade wooden hinges.

CHOICE OF EARLY TEXAS SETTLERS FOR FENCE POSTS AND WAGON WHEELS.

He fills the natural cracks with a mixture of crushed turquoise and glue, then assembles the pieces and sands the surfaces smooth. The boxes usually cost between \$250 and \$650.

While mesquite can look smartly sophisticated with a fine finish, it can also take on a rustic, early-Texas appearance in the hands of Rob Eberle of Dripping Springs. Rob's Wild Woods of Texas sawmill/showroom buzzes with the production of mesquite mantels, tables, beds, and lamps.

Rob, too, enjoys working with the bends and turns of the wood. "The art is in matching the curves, the grain, and shades of the wood," he says. Consequently, you'll find few square edges

Native Americans used mature mesquite beans (green stage shown at right) to make a meal called *pinole*. Today, Texas companies sell jelly, syrup, and fruit butter made from the beans. Rob Eberle's mesquite furniture (below) retains natural characteristics of the dense hardwood.



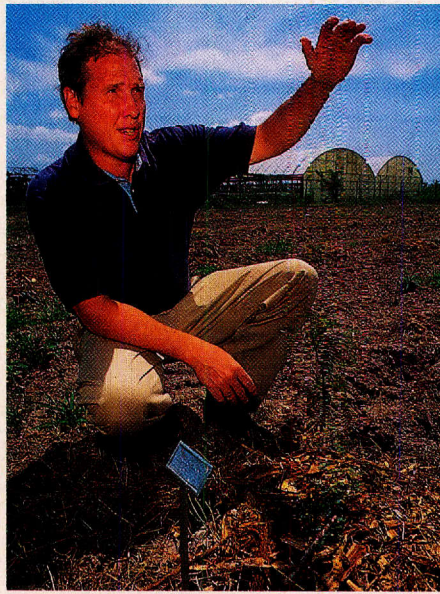
MESQUITE TIMBERS WERE USED TO BUILD THE ALAMO, AND MESQUITE BLOCKS

BUSINESS IS SMOKIN'!

When mesquite-smoked foods became trendy in the 1980s, Dr. Calvin Finch, then a Texas agricultural extension agent, received a call from a California horticulturist seeking tips on growing mesquite. "I had to tell him that most of our information involved how to kill the stuff," Calvin recalls. "He was horrified."

Times have changed. About 250 people now work in cooking-wood companies, sawmills, and woodworking shops across the state, and entrepreneurs believe mesquite has the potential to become even greater than the \$20 million industry it is today. Along the way, however, successes have mingled with thorns.

Jerry Lawson, owner of WW Wood, Inc., one of the largest producers of cooking wood in the nation, says that when he started his company in Pleasanton in 1986, "many people didn't know what to do with cooking wood. We had to teach them to use mesquite as a primary fuel instead of charcoal briquettes." Once people discover how much better food tastes when cooked



Kingsville researcher Robert Ohm oversees mesquite seedlings being grown to produce long, straight lumber.

with mesquite, Jerry says, they seldom go back to charcoal.

David Miller of Texas Woods, Inc., near Bastrop, says mesquite makes excellent flooring, mantels, and furniture. "The wood doesn't come in very

long lengths, but these products don't need long boards," says David. "Mesquite is probably the most sustainable native tree in the United States. I'd like to see mesquite wood products take some of the pressure off traditional woods like oak, cherry, maple, and walnut, and at the same time, we'd be utilizing this treasure we have in our state."

As it turns out, the ongoing "Texas Tall and Straight Mesquite" project at Texas A&M University-Kingsville may be just what David hopes for. Its aim: to locate the tallest and straightest mesquites in the state, gather their seeds, and develop trees that would thereby yield more usable lumber. Research associate Robert Ohm oversees about 800 seedlings growing in a two-acre plot near the campus.

The ideal mesquite for manufacturing purposes, Robert says, would mature in 30 years, have a straight trunk 12 to 16 inches in diameter, and have its first branches eight feet from the ground. The results of the Kingsville project won't be known for a few years, but development of such a tree could be a boon to the mesquite industry.

—Marsha Murray Harlow

David Miller of Texas Woods, Inc. in Bastrop sells mesquite flooring, as well as doors, mantels, beams, molding, and custom lumber. David himself is sold on mesquite's sustainability and calls the tree a Texas treasure.

in Rob's designs. For example, he'll allow a slice of irregularly shaped wood to define a table's edge. Or he may use matched, mid-size tree trunks to anchor a naturally curving headboard.

Rob prefers to go into pastures himself to cut mesquites that are dead or marked for removal. "I enjoy finding the right trees with the right curves and cutting them where they should be cut," he says. He then stacks the wood in his workshop and "lets the worms go after it" to create the "distressed" look he likes. Rob explains that borer larvae first attack the sapwood, the light-colored wood just inside the bark, then the heartwood. "I like to use it," he adds, "before they get very far into the heartwood."



ONCE PAVED SAN ANTONIO STREETS.



No matter what treasures you store in them—jewels, hand-rolled cigars, old love letters—Michael Moore’s turquoise-accented mesquite boxes are works of art. Michael lives and works in Bastrop.

Robert Hensarling, Michael Moore, and Rob Eberle are just a few of the artisans who create beautiful objects from mesquite. At the Heart of Texas Mesquite Art Festival, held each October in Fredericksburg, more than 50 professional woodworkers display their wares—jewelry boxes, bowls, sculptures, kitchen utensils, gunstocks, furniture, entry doors, mantels, cabinets, and flooring. The festival is billed as “the largest collection of fine mesquite gifts and furniture in the world.”

Aside from its beauty, the mesquite has deep roots in the history of Texas and the Southwest. Legend says that mesquite seeds came to Texas in the bowels of cattle wandering north from Mexico. However, Ken Rogers, a wood technologist formerly with the Texas Forest Service and author of an upcoming book, *The Magnificent Mesquite* (University of Texas Press), says the plant’s arrival in the state was a bit more complicated. He says that while mesquite did indeed spread into Oklahoma and Kansas, thanks to cattle on the cattle trails, researchers think the

tree has been in Texas for several thousand years. Within recorded history, he cites documents that trace the plant’s presence in Texas at least to the 1400s. “Since then, mesquite hasn’t expanded its range in Texas as much as it has become more dense within that range,” says Ken. Overgrazing, fencing of the land, and significant reduction of wildfires and the prairie dog’s range, along with major droughts that killed off other trees, contributed to the mesquite’s proliferation.

In times gone by, the ever-present mesquite provided a seemingly limitless source of food (the beans), medicine, and building materials. Mesquite beans (about 30 percent sugar when mature), in fact, were an important part of the Southwest Indians’ diet, says Janis Merritt, native plant curator for the San Antonio Botanical Gardens.

“The Indians ground the pods into a meal called *pinole* that was used to make bread, and they made candy from the gum found on the trunk and branches,” says Janis. They boiled the pods to make a honey-tasting jelly, hence the name “honey mesquite,” she explains. The sap was also used to produce a black dye and a cement for mending pottery. Apaches and Comanches used the mesquite’s plentiful thorns to pierce their ears.

Both Indians and pioneers used other parts of the tree, including leaves, roots, and bark, to make teas, lotions, and salves to treat ailments such as sore throat, diarrhea, ulcers, colitis, stomach inflammation, hemorrhoids, wounds, and eye infections.

Mesquite’s hardness and resistance to decay made it the natural choice of early Texas settlers for fence posts, wagon wheels, and paving blocks. Mesquite pavers topped streets in Brownsville, San Antonio (where mesquite timbers had also been used to help build the Alamo), and other Texas towns.

Through the years, mesquite has both sustained and enhanced life, and it continues to do so. It would be hard to say which has proved more persistent: mesquite in its survival or humans in their determination to make the most of this remarkable tree that shares our land. ★

San Antonio freelance MARSHA HARLOW, who specializes in gardening articles, often writes for *Neil Sperry’s Gardens Magazine* and *The Dallas Morning News*. This is her first story for *Texas Highways*.

Staff photographer and longtime woodworker STAN WILLIAMS recently bought a massive mesquite timber to create a mantel for the home he and his wife, Bettie, are building near Smithville.

Texas Mesquite

Most Texans don't have to drive far to enjoy the beauty of mature mesquite trees. Texas 39 and Ranch Road 337 in Kerr and Real counties feature an abundance, including the National Champion Honey Mesquite in Real County, 4.5 miles east of Leakey on Ranch Road 337 (see *Texas Highways*, January 1999). It measures 57 feet tall, has an 87-foot crown, and a trunk circumference of more than 14 feet. In San Antonio, look for nice specimens on the Trinity University campus and along the River Walk.

Sample the richness of mesquite flooring in the lobby of San Antonio's Hilton Palacio del Rio or Neiman Marcus' North Park store in Dallas. Or visit the Cowboy Artists of America Museum in Kerrville (1550 Bandera Hwy; 830/896-2553), where all the galleries have mesquite floors.

Mesquite Art Festival

The 8th annual **Heart of Texas Mesquite Art Festival** takes place Oct. 13-15, 2000, in a covered pavilion (Adelsverein Hall) on Market Square in downtown Fredericksburg. More than 50 professional woodworkers display wares, from jewelry boxes to flooring. Sponsored by the Texas Mesquite Assn., the festival includes demonstrations. Hours: Fri noon-5:30, Sat 10-5, Sun noon-4. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. For details, write to 703 N. Llano, Fredericksburg 78624; 830/997-8515, or call the Fredericksburg Convention & Visitors Bureau at 830/997-6523.

Artisans

Robert Hensarling's workshop, **South Texas Fine Woods, Inc.**, is at 4326 US 90 East, Uvalde 78801; 800/528-6196. Web site: www.mesquite-furniture.com. Robert offers tours of his one-person operation Mon-Sat 9-5; call ahead to be sure he's there.

To reach **Michael A. Moore Woodworks** in Bastrop, call 512/321-3603. Email: michael@totalaccess.net.

Rob Eberle's workshop/showroom, **Wild Woods of Texas**, is 11 miles west of Dripping Springs on US 290. Write to Box 1195, Dripping Springs 78620; 830/868-

2081. Rob welcomes visitors Mon-Sat 9-5; call ahead.

David Oliver and Mike Schalesky mill their own wood and produce handcrafted furniture of Texas mesquite (as well as some long-leaf pine furniture) at their workshop, **Southwest Trading Post**, on Hamilton Pool Rd., near Bee Cave. They welcome visitors Mon-Fri 8-5:30, Sat 8-1. Write to 16016 Hamilton Pool Rd., Austin 78738; 512/263-2836.

Craig and Janet Lagerstrom produce handcrafted home and office furniture of Texas mesquite (as well as some built of antique yellow pine) at **Texas Mesquite Co.** in Bertram. Their showroom, at 165 Gabriel St., opens Mon-Fri 8-5, Sat 8-4. Write to Box 555, Bertram 78065; 512/355-3710. Email: jlager@flash.net.

Other Mesquite Businesses

Numerous Texas supermarkets sell mesquite cooking wood in both chips and chunks. To contact **WW Wood, Inc.**, write to Box 398, Pleasanton 78064; 830/569-2501. Web site: www.woodinc.com.

Ken Rogers' business, **Brazos Mesquite Co.**, sells cooking wood, flooring, burl wood, and lumber. Write to Box 9009, College Station 77842. Email: krogers@tca.net. Web site: www.brazosmesquite.com.

David Miller's company, **Texas Woods, Inc.**, has a showroom at 1192 Texas 304 in Bastrop (78602). Hours: Mon-Fri 8-5, Sat 9-noon, or by appt. Call 800/687-1779. Web site: www.texaswoods.com.

Texas Kiln Products produces kiln-dried lumber from mesquite and other native Texas woods, as well as flooring, mantels, and doors. Write to 170 Texas Kiln Place, Smithville 78957; 512/360-4385 or 800/825-9158. Web site: texaskilnproducts.com.

You can find **mesquite-bean jelly** at gift and specialty shops throughout Texas, but it's also available direct from the following companies (some offer other mesquite food items, too):

Texas Traditions, Box 18029, Austin 78760; 800/547-7062. Web site: www.texas traditions.com.

Early Texas Tastes, Box 130, Roby 79543; 915/776-2408.

Grandmother's House, Box 151, Dryden 78851; 915/753-2343.

Lowake Ranch Jelly, Box 18, Lowake 76855; 915/442-3271 or 442-3173.

Meier Ranch Foods/Texas Wild, 2209 Morris Ranch Rd., Fredericksburg 78624; 800/687-4427. Email: wayne@fbg.net.

Truly Texas, Box 139, Georgetown 78627; 512/869-1977. Email: trulytexasfoods@aol.com.

to Robert Ohm, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, MSC 218, Kingsville 78363; 361/593-3957.

The **Texas Forest Service** offers technical information on mesquite and other woods. Write to the Texas Forest Service, Products Laboratory, Box 310, Lufkin 75902-0310; 936/639-8180. Web site: txforestservicetamu.edu.

Ken E. Rogers, a consulting wood technologist and owner of



A majestic mesquite at Fort Duncan, established in Eagle Pass in 1849, offers ample shade to visitors. The fort grounds now serve as a city park.

Truly West Texas, 7500 E. CR 110, Midland 79706; 915/687-3345. Email: trulywesttexas@aol.com.

Resources

Comprised of scientists, foresters, business owners, artisans, ranchers, and others, **Los Amigos del Mesquite** produces a quarterly newsletter and meets annually in Oct. Write to Jesse Rosales, Secy. of LADM, Box 310, Kingsville 78364, or call 512/303-0985. Email: redrockwoods@aol.com. The **Texas Mesquite Assn.** includes woodworkers, hobbyists, and small-business owners. Write to Bill George, 7354 Reindeer Trail, Leon Valley 78238-1277; 210/348-9733.

To learn more about the **Texas Tall and Straight Project**, write

Brazos Mesquite Co., offers information on any aspect of mesquite and a free Q/A forum on his Web site (address given previously).

The following **books** offer additional information on mesquite:

Where There's Smoke by Jean McLeod-Craig (Hummer Press, 1989). This 84-page cookbook includes mesquite folklore. Available from the author for \$9.95 (includes tax and postage). Write to #1 Mesquite Tree Lane, Marlin 76661; 254/883-5056.

Look for Ken E. Rogers' book *The Magnificent Mesquite* (Univ. of Texas Press) in bookstores and libraries this fall, or order it through Ken's Web site (address given previously).

THE JERSEY BARNYARD

Land of Moos and Ahs



BY LANA ROBINSON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JIM CROW

The grass is always greener at The Jersey Barnyard, a year-round petting farm and working dairy in Fayette County that offers friendly critters and oodles of opportunities for families to experience life in the country. Visitors here talk with the animals and walk with the animals—you can ham it up with Daisy the Pig and butter up to Belle the Blue Bell cow. It's easy to be "herd" in this delightful land of moos and ahs.

equipment in the dairy barn convinces folks that work here really goes beyond the "pail." You can take the short course on dairy farming, including the opportunity to hand milk a cow, if you're inclined.

Gretchen and David Willard of Bas-

Perched atop a hill on a rolling stretch of land between La Grange and Round Top, The Jersey Barnyard is a welcome sight to curious city slickers wanting a taste of country life, and to homesick transplants whose memories of the old family farmstead have grown dim.

"The whole idea is to give our urban neighbors a chance to see firsthand how we live and the work that we do," says Ralph Frerichs, a second-generation dairyman and expert cheesemaker. "Because most people today are several generations away from the farm, few of them have an agricultural connection. We want to be that connection."

Ralph's wife, Faith, the Barnyard's marketing director, says, "Most of all, we want our guests to enjoy themselves. We like to say, 'Come to The Jersey Barnyard, where folks have fun 'til the cows come home!'"

First-time visitors milk the Barnyard's wholesome atmosphere for all it's worth. First stop is typically the petting pens, where kids and adults observe the antics of donkeys and cows vying for their attention. Naturally, the goats try to horn in on the act. Feeding machines provide treats for those who wish to

reward the resident entertainers. The brown-eyed beauty, Belle, star of the Blue Bell ice cream commercials, often gives a "moo-ving" performance, while her pudgy pal, Daisy, wallows in the limelight. Both celebrities are capable of striking irresistible poses for the benefit of photo enthusiasts.

Afterwards, visitors can browse in The Jersey Barnyard gift shop, an old-fashioned store boasting barnyard memorabilia; a bountiful selection of gourmet foods, jellies, and honey; and nifty, farm-related gifts, books, toys, and games. Texas Jersey Cheeses, made from milk produced by the Frerichs' congenial cows, receive top billing in the store's dairy case. Assorted snacks and sweets, including ice cream, are also sold here.

"There is a small fee for a guided hayride tour of the farm, but it's optional," notes Faith, who hastens to add that there is no charge for enjoying the fresh country air and petting the Barnyard animals.

Students and others opting for the dairy tour get to see crops growing in the fields, what and how the cows are fed, and how they are milked. The automated

trop and their daughters, three-and-a-half-year-old Georgia and Savannah, who is almost two, enjoyed a tractor-pulled hayride around the farm last April, when the wildflowers were in full strut.

"We stopped in a gorgeous field of bluebonnets, with the dairy in the background, and had our picture taken," says Gretchen. "We've been back a number of times since, to let our daughters milk a cow and feed the animals. The Barnyard's staff are all so friendly and good with the kids. And you can see that they take real good care of the animals. On a couple of occasions, we took our camcorder. The girls love watching the videos."

Special activities throughout the year provide opportunities galore for memory-making. Each second Saturday in October (October 14, 2000) marks the Barnyard's Anniversary Celebration, a lively day filled with music, food, and fanfare. Later that month, near Halloween, spooks and goblins descend on the Barnyard to participate in a "Haunted Hayride." An inspiring "Live Nativity" is usually presented on the Sunday evening before Christmas (this year it's been moved to December 17). After the performance, guests enjoy a tractor-pulled

Belle, star of the Blue Bell ice cream commercials, strikes the pose with Allison Frerichs at The Jersey Barnyard, which offers a year-round family-farm experience near La Grange, in Fayette County.

hayride, then gather round a campfire to roast marshmallows and sip hot chocolate. In spring, a free Easter Egg Hunt, with live music and other entertainment, is held on the Saturday before Easter.

As tour guides and coordinators of the Barnyard's special activities, managers Sarah Busch and Doris Matula look for clever ways to connect with the kids, like the recent "Name Belle's Baby" contest. The search for a name for the heifer calf born in December 1998 drew many creative entries. Judges agreed that Silver Belle, submitted by 10-year-old Aaron Prause of La Grange, had a nice ring to it and harmonized with the names given to Belle's other calves—Jingle Belle, Tinker Belle, and Sleigh Belle.

"To give kids something to do when the weather was cool last fall and winter,



It's The Jersey Barnyard team photo. Three generations of the Frerichs family invite you to come on down.

we stacked hay bales in our barn to make a hay maze," Doris explains, adding that 44 schools came here for field trips last spring.

Ronda Whiteside of La Grange, her husband, John, and daughters, Emma,

10, and Hannah, 6, make frequent trips to The Jersey Barnyard. Says Ronda, "My girls know Sarah by name and just cling to her. She's so patient with them. Once, she let them hold a newborn pig. They really got a kick out of that." The girls also love the hayride and find the cows "udderly" irresistible.

A facility adjacent to the gift shop is a popular place for children's birthday parties, and family reunions (call for rental fees).

"I can't count the number of times we've been out to the Barnyard for birthday parties," adds Ronda. "Hannah has already said that's where she wants to hold her next one."

"Got milk?" takes on a new connotation at this 51-year-old spread, which covers some 850 acres and serves as home to 275 Jersey cows. Three generations of Frerichses live and work on the dairy, and everyone pitches in to keep things running smoothly.

Since opening The Jersey Barnyard in October 1997, the Frerichs family has made a lot of new city friends, who go away with a much better understanding of agriculture.



Talk to the animals. Dr. Doolittle would love the touchy, feely times at The Jersey Barnyard.

The Jersey Barnyard

Says Faith, "It's amazing how many people come out here, and, after seeing all the work that goes into the production of milk, say 'We can't believe a gallon of milk is only \$2.50!'"

To whet the consumer's appetite for higher quality dairy products, the Frerichses launched the Texas Jersey Cheese Company in 1996. The company is the only one of its kind in Texas that processes pure, Jersey milk into cheese.

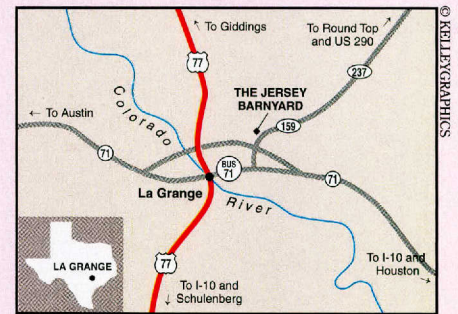
The cheeses originating here are "all natural." "We start with our rich, Jersey milk, which is free of hormones, and we use absolutely no preservatives to extend the shelf life of the cheeses," says Ralph, who mastered his cheese-making techniques at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Even our coloring is an all-natural, vegetable base."

Right now, the Frerichses' cheese plant is in Schulenberg, but they hope to move it to the farm in the near future. Texas Jersey cheeses include Cheddar, Pepper Cheddar, Colby, Pepper Jack, and Monterey Jack. Their specialty cheese-

The Jersey Barnyard, a dairy and petting farm at 3117 Hwy. 159 near La Grange, is 1.4 miles east on Texas 159 from its intersection with Texas 71.

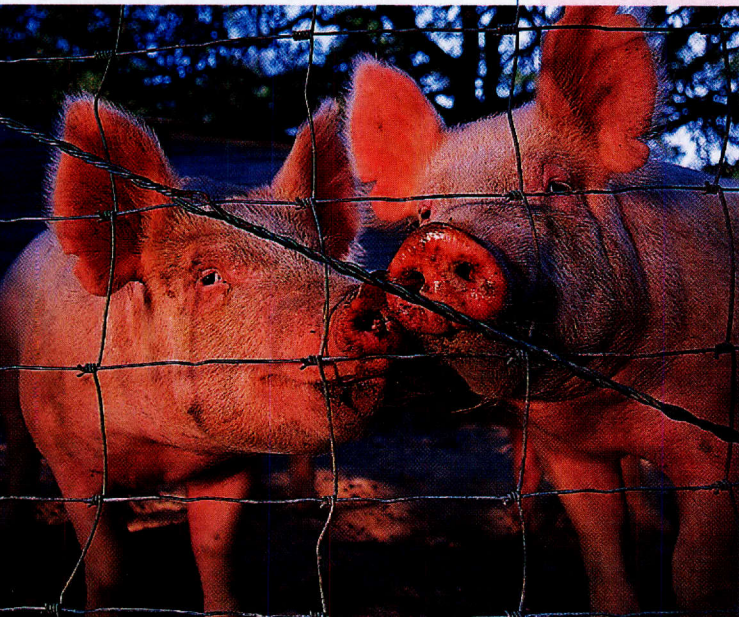
The Jersey Barnyard and gift shop, offering packaged snacks and sweets, hand-dipped ice cream, soft drinks, Texas Jersey Cheeses, honey, and assorted farm-related gifts, toys, and books, open daily for business (except Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day). Hours: Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 9-6, Sun 1-6. Farm tours are conducted for a small fee (\$5.50, \$4.50 ages 3-12). Discounts available for groups of 15 or more, and senior citizen discounts are honored. Reservations recommended. Not wheelchair accessible.

During the Barnyard's Anniversary Celebration, held each second Sat. in Oct., visitors enjoy demonstrations of milking, beekeeping, and farm implements, as well as horse-drawn hayrides, a Pumpkin Patch, live music, and moderately priced hamburgers and drinks. The annual "Haunted Hayride" occurs near Halloween (Oct 29, 2000). Two performances of an



inspiring "Live Nativity" are presented annually on the Sun. evening before Christmas, followed by a tractor-pulled hayride and marshmallow roast. The Barnyard hosts a free Easter Egg Hunt, with live music and special entertainment, each year on the Sat. before Easter.

For more information, or to book a farm tour, call The Jersey Barnyard at 979/249-3406; fax 979/249-3110, or write to 3117 Hwy. 159, La Grange 78945. To inquire about cheeses, or to order gourmet gift boxes and baskets, call the Texas Jersey Cheese Company toll-free at 800/382-2880. Web site: www.texasjersey.com. Email: barnyard@fais.net.



"Babe, Gordy, Miss Piggy, Wilbur, Porky, Snowball...yeah, we've played 'em all, but our favorite parts are our starring roles at The Jersey Barnyard."

balls, handmade with all-natural ingredients, come in three zesty flavors—Pepper Jack, Cheddar, and Herb-and-Garlic.

"Our cheeseballs are a huge hit during the holiday season, and our Texas-shaped and star-shaped cheeses are really popular for gift baskets," says Faith. "We also sell bulk cheese for weddings and other festivities."

In addition to the farm's store, Texas

Jersey Cheese Company products are available by mail order and in many local supermarkets, including some H-E-B's and H-E-B Pantries.

"Shoppers at the H-E-B Central Markets in Austin and San Antonio really love our cheese. We also deliver fresh cheese curds when available," says

Ralph. Whole Foods stores in Austin and San Antonio also sell Texas Jersey Cheeses.

When it comes to churning fresh ideas into good, solid fun and spreading it around, the Frerichses and their amiable Barnyard staff are the cream of the crop. When you say "cheese" at this fun place, you always get smiles. Here, where tawny cows graze and gaze while their calves romp in knee-deep clover, Kodak moments abound, and life's simple pleasures are close at hand. You can get here in two shakes of a cow's tail, so pack a picnic and beat a trail to The Jersey Barnyard, where folks have fun 'til the cows come home!★

LANA ROBINSON wrote and JIM CROW photographed the "Hats Off to Hico" feature in the April issue.



Shakespeare
FESTS *in* TEXAS

No Holds Bard

NOBODY WOULD BLINK IF HE SAW A BUS ZOOMING across the West Texas plains, packed with noisy high school students, heading for a football game on a Friday night. The devotion of Texas pigskin fans and the distances spanning the western portion of the state are both legendary.

But what about students trekking hundreds of miles to Odessa, not to see a clash of gridiron opponents, but rather to witness the clash of warring factions in ancient Rome, as imagined by an Englishman 400 years ago?

Would anyone really travel that far just to see Shakespeare's tragedy *Julius Caesar* performed by local actors? They would, and they do. Every year, Odessa's Globe of the Great Southwest draws spectators from as far away as Muleshoe and Alpine for performances of the Bard's plays in a near-replica of his original theater.

To Odessa, to Kilgore, to Fort Worth, Dallas, Winedale, Austin, Houston, and elsewhere around the state, hundreds of thousands of folks come to see *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*. They sit under the stars—or inside cozy auditoriums—to be ravished by the words of the greatest writer the English language has ever produced.

"I wanted my students to experience Shakespeare the way people did back

in Elizabethan times," says Kimberly Beard, a teacher at Muleshoe High School, who took her class to the Odessa Globe last year. "They were entranced by the atmosphere there."

Carolyn Mangrem of Alpine also appreciates the Globe. "Shakespeare is such a basic, important part of our education and our lives—I'm glad there are places like this in Texas," she says. Carolyn accompanied her daughter Sarah's English class to the Globe last fall.

When the heat of the day has subsided a bit, crowds gather outdoors at Texas Shakespeare festivals in Fort Worth, Austin, Dallas, and Houston. In Kilgore, they relax indoors in modern comfort. At Winedale, they take in the Bard's poetry in the rustic comfort of a renovated barn. In Odessa, they try to recapture the experience of an Elizabethan audience by sitting in stalls. All hope to be transported for a

few hours to Arden Forest or Verona or Illyria. The staging may be simple or grandiose, the costumes contemporary or elaborately historical, but in each case the magic of Shakespeare draws audience members in and binds them together.

It is difficult to imagine another playwright having this breadth of appeal. Shakespeare suffuses Western culture like no other writer. He enriched English with

countless words (including "countless"; see *Titus Andronicus*, Act V, Scene 3). His best-known lines are quoted ("The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose"; *The Merchant of Venice*, Act I, Scene 3) and misquoted ("Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio," usually quoted as "I knew him well"; *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene 1) every day. Only the King James Bible rivals his works for influence on the English language.

Even in these days of pop-culture saturation, Shakespeare has the power to enthrall. Paul Norton, artistic director of the Austin Shakespeare Festival, recalls an outdoor rehearsal of *Much Ado About Nothing* that coincided with a birthday party being celebrated just up the hill from the stage. Slowly but steadily the children from the party drifted to the edge of the stage and raptly watched the rest of the rehearsal while their parents stayed behind and whacked the

[FACING PAGE] At the Texas Shakespeare Festival in Kilgore, the Bard's tragic love story of Antony and Cleopatra is played out once again. In 1999, Sarah Hartmann (center stage and inset) took the role of the Egyptian queen. Joseph Graves played the Roman soldier and political leader whose death (background and inset) leads Cleopatra to commit suicide. Michele Tauber and Mary Dolson played Charmian and Iras, attendants to the queen.

BOTH PHOTOS © O. RUFUS LOVETT

kids' piñata. Norton says the impromptu audience was one of the most attentive the show has ever had.

Who can argue with literary critic Harold Bloom's statement that "The answer to the question 'Why Shakespeare?' must be 'Who else is there?'"

The idea of creating Shakespeare festivals in Texas began in Austin at the University of Texas. In 1946, UT's Drama Department hired B. Iden Payne, a director and scholar who from 1935 to 1942 had led the renowned Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-on-Avon,

Shakespeare's birthplace. Although he never tried to duplicate the Stratford festival in Austin, Payne, who remained at UT for 30 years, trained many of the state's leading Shakespearean actors, directors, and designers.

Perhaps the state's most accomplished Shakespeare festival today is in Kilgore. Better known for its oil-boom history and its high-kicking Rangerettes, this East Texas town (see story, April 2000) has fostered a love for the Bard through the Texas Shakespeare Festival, on the campus of Kilgore College.

Shakespeare at Winedale, celebrating its 30th anniversary this summer, performs in the theater barn at Winedale Historical Center. Besides the barn, the center consists of several residences built by 19th-Century German settlers. Philanthropist Ima Hogg (1882-1975), who donated the property to the University of Texas in the 1960s, envisioned Winedale as an outdoor museum and educational site—and lived to see its realization.

© EARL NOTTINGHAM



Under the direction of Raymond Caldwell since its founding in 1986, the festival has presented an average of five different productions each summer—usually two by Shakespeare, another classic but non-Shakespearean play, a musical, and a children's show. TSF spends some three months each year holding auditions across the nation to bring in professional actors. Productions are performed in repertory (different shows alternate on successive nights) in the air-conditioned comfort of Van Cliburn Auditorium.

Another treasure, Shakespeare at Winedale, has flourished for 30 summers at the Winedale Historical Center, four miles east of Round Top in Fayette County. Founded in 1970 at the request of Houston arts patron Ima Hogg, the Winedale program was launched under the direction of Jim Ayres of UT's English Department. During a 17-week course, students (chosen without regard for age, knowledge of Shakespeare, or acting experience) carefully study and rehearse a group of Shakespeare's plays. Then, in April, July, and August, the class performs the plays in repertory in the company's renovated hay barn, cooled by fans, but still in conditions rough enough to feel familiar to the average Elizabethan. In 1998 and 1999, the Winedale group was invited to perform in the new Globe Theatre in London, and they will cross "the pond" again this summer.

As mentioned earlier, the oil city of Odessa houses the state's most startling Shakespeare outcropping. Seemingly out of place in the arid, low-lying landscape of the Permian Basin sits The Globe of the Great Southwest (along with a reproduction of the cottage of Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare's wife), a tribute to the community and the determination of one person, Marjorie Morris.

[FACING PAGE] Students of UT English professor Jim Ayres perform at Winedale following a 17-week course of study and rehearsals. For the third summer in a row, by special invitation, the Winedale troupe will also perform in London's recently reconstructed Globe Theatre.

TO ODESSA, TO KILGORE, TO FORT WORTH, DALLAS, WINE-DALE, AUSTIN, HOUSTON, and elsewhere around the state, hundreds of thousands of folks come to see *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Othello*. They sit under the stars—or inside cozy auditoriums—to be ravished by the words of the greatest writer the English language has ever produced.



A former English teacher at Odessa College, Morris studied at Yale University, at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., and with British scholar Allardyce Nicoll, who said of her plans to erect a replica of the Globe Theatre in West Texas, "You will have the most nearly authentic replica of Shakespeare's own Globe anywhere on earth." In 1951, the Regents of Odessa College donated the land, and for the next decade and a half Ms. Morris tirelessly sought funds from Texas foundations like the Houston Endowment, the Piper Foundation in San Antonio, and the Sid Richardson Foundation in Fort Worth. In 1968, Ms. Morris' vision was realized, and Odessa became the site of what is now Texas' oldest Shakespeare festival.

The Globe of the Great Southwest does not exactly replicate Shakespeare's theater: While Shakespeare's Globe sat open to the elements and its cheap seats were no seats at all (groundlings stood), Odessa's Globe is completely roofed and has seats near the stage. Like the original, the octagonal building features the half-timbered look of Tudor architecture. Patrons sit in padded seats resembling those in old movie theaters, and spectators in the upper levels must lean forward to catch the action. Actors perform on a mostly blank stage, not unlike the imagination-dependent stagecraft of Shakespeare's day. The company of The Globe of the Great Southwest performs Shakespeare's plays, along with other classical productions, each year. The theater also hosts professional traveling players.

Despite the challenges of heat, rain, mosquitoes, public drunkenness, and train whistles, Texas' larger cities have hosted well-attended outdoor Shakespeare fests for several decades. Houston—which first saw professional productions of Shakespeare's plays in the 1830s and witnessed the finest Shakespearean acting of its day when Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, and Helena Modjeska performed there in the 1870s and 1880s—now boasts the state's most polished big-city company, the Houston Shakespeare Festival (HSF).



Fort Worth's Trinity Park is the site of Shakespeare in the Park each summer. The park skirts the Clear Fork of the Trinity River just southeast of the city's museum district. Most of the state's Shakespeare festivals take place under the stars.

Begun in 1975 under the guidance of Sidney Berger, director of the School of Theatre at the University of Houston, HSF employs professional actors and presents two of Shakespeare's plays each summer. HSF performs in the expansive setting of Miller Outdoor Theatre, with audience members perched on one of Houston's few hills—and an artificial

one at that—and has entertained almost half a million playgoers at no charge during its 25-year history.

Billing itself as the second-oldest free Shakespeare festival in the country, the Shakespeare Festival of Dallas (SFD) performs in Samuell-Grand Park in its own parkside amphitheater, where patrons can sit on blankets or lawn

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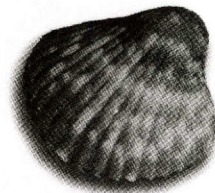
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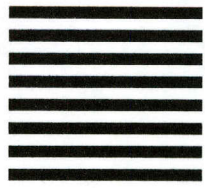
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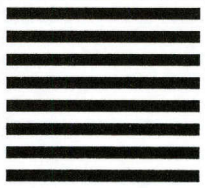
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Spiffed up with a banner of the Bard, the Van Cliburn Auditorium at Kilgore College prepared last summer for another round of performances by the Texas Shakespeare Festival. This summer marks the TSF's 15th year of ensuring that "the play's the thing" (*Hamlet*, Act II, Scene 2).



Shakespeare Festival of Dallas presented a Civil War version of *Romeo and Juliet* at Samuel-Grand Park last year. This summer, SFD—which will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2001—welcomes troupes from Montreal and Mexico City, as well as the Texas Shakespeare Festival from Kilgore.

chairs and enjoy picnics before the show. (Before 1989, the group performed at the Bandshell in Fair Park.) SFD was started in 1972 by producer Robert Glenn, who took his inspiration from the New York Shakespeare Festival. In preparation for its 30th-anniversary celebration next summer, SFD will present five of the Bard's plays this summer, two

of them performed by Repercussion Theatre of Montreal, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed in Spanish by Mexico City's Grupo Bocaniche. The Dallas festival has entertained more than a million viewers over the years.

A long tradition in Fort Worth recently took a new direction when Shakespeare in the Park (SITP), begun as a

project of Casa Mañana (Fort Worth's oldest mainstream theater), merged with the city's hippest contemporary company, Stage West. Now, you will still be able to see plays staged each summer in front of the Elizabethan-styled, WPA-built picnic shelter in Trinity Park (bring lawn chairs for sitting near the stage, or blankets for sitting on the levee), but you can also view performances in Stage West's renovated movie house, near the Texas Christian University campus. Since its first production, of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in 1978, SITP has performed two thirds of the Bard's plays for almost half a million spectators.

Given the artistic legacy of B. Iden Payne, Austin was surprisingly slow to develop and sustain a professional festival. Amateur performances of Shakespeare's works in Zilker Park occurred in the late 19th Century, but it was not until 1984, when Jeff Ellinger founded the Austin Shakespeare Festival (ASF), that Austin had an ongoing annual fest. ASF performs at Zilker Park's Sheffield Hillside Theatre, where audience members, like those in Houston and the Metroplex, tote picnic baskets and lounge on blankets and lawn chairs. The festival attracts 17,000 spectators each fall to performances of two of Shakespeare's plays, free of charge.

Shakespeare's plays, celebrated in festivals around Texas, will continue to enthrall us, because his "infinite variety" can never stale (as Shakespeare said of Cleopatra), and our desire—our need—to experience his works again and again will keep us coming back. On warm summer evenings, transported to Venice or to Prospero's magical isle, we will be reminded that his plays are "O wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful! And yet again wonderful, and after that, out of all whooping!" ★

MICHAEL BARNES is arts writer for the *Austin American-Statesman*. He wrote about opera in Texas for the November 1998 issue of *Texas Highways*.

KIP KELLER is a freelance writer living in Austin.

Texas Shakespeare Festivals

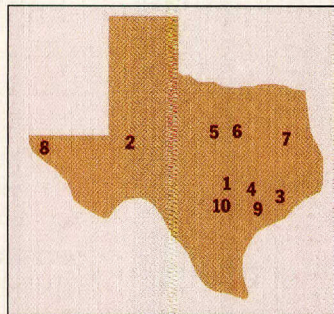
The imperishable words of the Bard resound all across the state. Most Texas Shakespeare festivals operate only during the summer. Some charge no admission, while others offer package deals on multiple shows.

Austin Shakespeare Festival performs at the Sheffield Hillside Theatre in Zilker Park, off Barton Springs Rd. (bring a blanket or chair). ASF will present *Julius Caesar* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Thu-Sun in Sep. and Oct. at 8 p.m. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 683, Austin 78767-0683; 512/454-BARD. Web site: www.austinishakespeare.org.

The Globe of the Great Southwest in Odessa presented its Shakespeare plays in the spring. This fall, it will present *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmund Rostand (Oct. 13-15 and 20-21) and *With an Everlasting Love*, a musical by Marty Nystrom based on the book by Kay Arthur (Nov. 3-5 and 10-11). Call for times, ticket prices, and information about tours. Wheelchair accessible; request wheelchair seating when ordering tickets. Write to The Globe of the Great Southwest, 2308 Shakespeare Rd., Odessa 79761. Box office: 915/332-1586 or 580-3177. Web site: www.globesw.org.

Houston Shakespeare Festival performs at the Miller Outdoor Theatre in Hermann Park. HSF presents *Othello* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* on alternate nights beginning Fri., Aug. 4, and continuing Wed-Sat through Aug. 19. Admission: Free, but tickets required for covered seating. Tickets (4 per person) available the day of performance from 11:30-1 and one hour before the show. Wheelchair accessible; request wheelchair seating when reserving tickets. Write to the Houston Shakespeare Festival, School of Theatre, University of Houston, Houston 77204-5071. Miller Theatre box office: 713/284-8352. Web site: www.hfac.uh.edu/theatre/hsf.htm.

Shakespeare at Winedale performs in the theater barn at the Winedale Historical Center, 4 miles east of Round Top (see map, page 15). Summer performances: *As You Like It* (July 20, 22, 29, 30, and



- 1 Austin, Austin Shakespeare Festival
- 2 Odessa, Globe of the Great Southwest
- 3 Houston, Houston Shakespeare Festival
- 4 Winedale, Shakespeare at Winedale
- 5 Fort Worth, Shakespeare in the Park
- 6 Dallas, Shakespeare Festival of Dallas
- 7 Kilgore, Texas Shakespeare Festival
- 8 El Paso, Shakespeare on-the-Rocks
- 9 Richmond, Shakespeare-by-the-Book
- 10 Wimberley, Shakespeare Under the Stars

Aug. 4, 6, 10, and 13), *Pericles* (July 21, 23, 27, 29, and Aug. 5, 6, and 13), and *Romeo and Juliet* (July 22, 23, 28, 30, and Aug. 3, 5, and 11). In honor of the group's 30th anniversary, there will be a special performance on Aug. 12 at 2 p.m. of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* featuring Winedale alumni. Thu-Fri performances at 7:30; Sat-Sun performances at 2 and 7:30. Tickets: \$5 for regular performances, \$10 for *Merry Wives*. Wheelchair accessible; request wheelchair seats when ordering tickets. *Note: Reserve well in advance.*

At 5 p.m. on July 22 and 29 and Aug. 5, the famous Winedale German stew and trimmings will be served (\$5; first-come-first-served) to benefit the Friends of Winedale. Tours of the building available on performance days; call for details.

Write to Shakespeare at Winedale, Box 11, Round Top 78954. Box office: 979/278-3530 (9-5 daily). Web site: www.shakespeare-winedale.org.

Shakespeare in the Park is presented by Allied Theatre Group at Fort Worth's Trinity Park, off Seventh St. This summer's productions are *King Lear* (June 2-18) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (June 23-July 9). *Note: No performances on Mondays.* Wheelchair accessible. Write to SITP, 3055 S. University Dr., Fort Worth 76109. Box office: 817/734-9378. Web site: www.shakespeare.vt1.com.

Shakespeare Festival of Dallas performs at Samuell-Grand Park, 3501 Samuell Blvd. This summer, Repercussion Theatre of Montreal performs *The Comedy of Errors* (June 20-25) and *Romeo and Juliet* (June 27-July 2); SFD presents *The Compleat Works of Wilm Shkspr (abridged)* (July 4-16); Grupo Bochi-che of Mexico City performs *Sueño de una Noche de Verano (A Midsummer Night's Dream)* in Spanish, July 18-23; and Texas Shakespeare Festival of Kilgore offers *The Winter's Tale* (July 25-30). Performances at 8; gates open at 6:45 for members, 7 for VIP's and groups, and 7:30 for general admission. Admission: Free, but donations requested. Wheelchair accessible. Write to SFD, 3630 Harry Hines Blvd., 4th Floor, Dallas 75219; 214/559-2778. Web site: www.shakespearedallas.org.

Texas Shakespeare Festival, at Kilgore College, presents *All's Well That Ends Well* (June 22, 27, and July 1*, 5, 8, 13, 16*, 21, and 23), *The Winter's Tale* (June 24, 29, and July 2*, 7, 9, 11, 15*, 19, and 22), *Revocco*, the world premiere of a musical drama about Martin Luther (June 23, 28, and July 1, 6, 9*, 14, 16, 18, and 22*), and *Fiddler on the Roof* (June 25, 30, and July 2, 4*, 8*, 12, 15, 20, and 23*). Performances with an asterisk (*) at 2 p.m.; all others at 7:30; two performances of *Fiddler* on July 4. (*Note: The Winter's Tale* July 25-30 takes place in Dallas' Samuell-Grand Park, in collaboration with SFD.)

Performances of *The Snow Queen* take place July 11 (2 p.m.), July 12-14 (10 a.m. and 2 p.m.), and July 15 (10 a.m.).

TSF offers a variety of ticket packages; call for prices. Wheelchair accessible; request wheelchair seating when ordering tickets. Write to the Texas Shakespeare Festival, Kilgore College, 1100 Broadway, Kilgore 75662-3299; 903/983-8117. Box office: 903/983-8601. Web site: www.texasshakespeare.com.

Other Texas Shakespeare Festivals

El Paso—The El Paso Assn. for the Performing Arts presents

its 8th season of **Shakespeare on-the-Rocks** in the McKelligon Canyon Amphitheater Sep. 7-Oct. 1. This year's plays are *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. A Renaissance marketplace and "entertainment and merriment" precede the shows. Pre-show backstage tours available (\$2; space limited). An Elizabethan-style Renaissance dinner takes place before Fri-Sat shows. Admission: \$8-\$11 for performance only (season tickets, group/student/military discounts, and dinner/show deals available). Wheelchair accessible; listening devices provided for the hearing-impaired; Sat. performances interpreted for the hearing-impaired. Write to EPAPA, Box 31340, El Paso 79931-0340; 915/565-6900 or 800/915-8482. Web site: www.viva-ep.org.

Richmond—The 13th Annual **Shakespeare-by-the-Book Festival**, produced by Fort Bend County Libraries and performed by students from Houston Community College-Southwest, presents *The Comedy of Errors* July 7-9 in the outdoor Stavinoha Amphitheater at George Memorial Library (concrete seating; bring cushions). Admission: Free. Request wheelchair access a week in advance by calling 281/341-2678. Write to 1001 Golfview Rd., Richmond 77469; 281/342-4455 or 341-2611.

Wimberley—The 11th season of **Shakespeare Under the Stars** takes place Aug. 7-19 in Wimberley. The state's only fully accredited high school summer Shakespeare program presents *The Two Noble Kinsmen* on Aug. 7, 9, 11, 15, 17, and 19, and *Richard III* on Aug. 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18. Chairs provided; bring a blanket if you prefer. Wheelchair accessible. Write to The EmilyAnn Theatre, Box 801, Wimberley 78676; 512/847-6969. Tickets (\$5) available at the gate, or call 888/597-7827. Web site: www.emilyann.org.

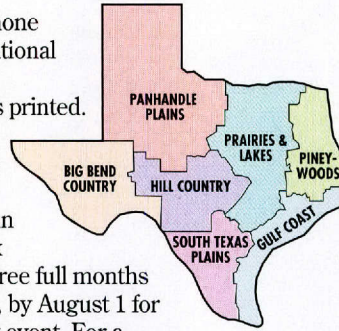
Shakespeare festivals around the nation are listed at www.unc.edu/depts/outdoor/dir/shakes.html.

August 2000						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

In Fun Forecast, we provide events and telephone numbers for next month, so that you'll have additional time to plan your outings.

Sometimes dates change after the magazine is printed.

Before you drive miles to an event, confirm the date by calling the number listed next to the festivity or by contacting the local chamber of commerce. If you wish to submit an event for Fun



Forecast, please send the information to Fun Forecast, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax 512/486-5879. Submit information at least three full months before the first of the month in which the event will take place (for example, by August 1 for November festivities). Space is limited, so we may not be able to print every event. For a quarterly, more detailed schedule of events, write for a free *Texas Events Calendar*, Box 149249, Austin 78714-9249.

Texas Highways' Web site (www.texashighways.com) includes an expanded Fun Forecast that gives descriptions of the events.

For free routing assistance or details on any destination in Texas, call 800/452-9292 toll-free from anywhere in the United States and Canada, any day between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Central Time. A travel counselor at one of the state's travel information centers will be on the line to provide travel information, send brochures, and advise you of any emergency road conditions.

6-20 GRANBURY Rio Brazos Art Festival 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212	12 BEDFORD <i>Cinderella</i> 817/952-2290
8 YOAKUM Country Music USA 361/293-2309	LANCASTER Second Saturday on the Square 972/227-2579
8-12 DE LEON Peach & Melon Festival 254/893-6600	LEWISVILLE Chili Cookoff 972/219-3550
8-13 FORT WORTH <i>Ragtime</i> 817/467-2787	NOCOMA Grasshopper Festival 940/825-3757
8-20 DALLAS <i>Copacabana</i> 972/298-1217	PALESTINE Wilderness Canoe Race 800/659-3484
9-13 FORT WORTH Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 817/884-2222 or 214/351-9806	SEGUIN Seguin Birthday Celebration 800/580-7322
9-13 SMITHVILLE Historic Main St Saturday Night 512/237-2504 or 237-2313	12-13 BRENNHAM Second Weekend on the Square 979/277-0913 or 888/273-6426
5-6 EULESS Summer Musical 817/685-1649	DALLAS Festival of Trains 214/428-0101
4, 11 TEMPLE Hot Summer Sounds 254/298-5415	FORT WORTH Classic Car Show 817/871-8150 or 595-6900
4-6, 11-13 SEGUIN <i>Brigadoon</i> 800/580-7322	12, 26 BOWIE Gospel Music 940/841-2041
4-Sep 30 GLEN ROSE (began Jun 1) <i>The Promise</i> 800/687-2661	13 PALESTINE Jason Andrews Piano Concert 800/659-3484
5 BRYAN Murder Mystery Dinner 979/778-9463	WEIMAR St Michael's Church Harvest Feast 979/725-6714
5, 12, 19, 26 STEPHENVILLE Cross Timbers Country Opry 254/965-4132	11-12 ATHENS Paint Horse Show 903/677-6354
6 GLEN ROSE Team Roping 254/897-4509	11-13 ARLINGTON Arts & Crafts Show 817/459-5000
6 GRAND PRAIRIE Traders Village Family Fun Day 972/647-2331	13-20 HEARNE Hang Gliding Championships 979/279-9382
6 SALADO Salado Legends Outdoor Musical Drama 254/947-9205 or 947-5269	14-19 ALVARADO Pioneers & Old Settlers Reunion 817/790-6667
1 LEWISVILLE Summer Concert 972/219-3550	15 PRAHA Prazka Pout 361/865-3560 or 865-3920
1-6 DALLAS (began Jul 26) Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 214/939-2770 or 939-2800	16-19 HAPPY Happy Days 806/558-2121 or 764-3434
25-28 BIG SPRING Howard Co Fair 915/264-0625	18-19 WICHITA FALLS Texas Ranch Roundup Festival 940/691-1723 or 800/799-MPEC
26 LEVELLAND Cowboy Ball 806/894-3157	19-20 SWEETWATER Cutting Horse Competition 915/235-3484
3-6 BASTROP Homecoming Rodeo, Parade, & Dance 512/321-2480	24-26 ROARING SPRINGS Old Settlers Reunion 806/348-7286
3-13 ROUND TOP (began Jul 20) Shakespeare at Winedale 979/278-3530	26-27 JACKSBORO Trade Days 940/567-2602
3-6, 31-Sep 4 CANTON Trade Days 903/567-6556 or 567-2991	27 ABILENE KTXS-TV Festival of Fun 915/677-2281
4-6 BRENNHAM Fireman's Fiesta 979/836-3695 or 888/273-6426	31-Nov 18 MINERAL WELLS Clark Gardens Fall Season 940/682-4856
4-6 CANTON The Mountain Wild West Adventure 903/567-STAY	1 LEWISVILLE Summer Concert 972/219-3550
1-6 DALLAS (began Jul 26) Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 214/939-2770 or 939-2800	4-6 QUANAH Rodeo 940/663-2222
1-19 CANYON (began Jun 7) <i>Texas</i> 806/655-2181	5 BIG SPRING Old Settlers Reunion 915/267-5551
2 QUANAH Stick Horse Rodeo/Clown Contest 940/663-2222	18-19 HAPPY Happy Days 806/558-2121 or 764-3434
3-5 DALHART XIT Rodeo & Reunion 806/244-5646	25-28 BIG SPRING Howard Co Fair 915/264-0625
4-5 BIG SPRING Sacred Heart Catholic Church Festival 915/263-7884	26 LEVELLAND Cowboy Ball 806/894-3157
4-6 POST Old Mill Trade Days 806/495-3529	27 ABILENE KTXS-TV Festival of Fun 915/677-2281

Panhandle Plains

1-5 OLTON Sandhills Celebration 806/285-2292
1-19 CANYON (began Jun 7) <i>Texas</i> 806/655-2181
2 QUANAH Stick Horse Rodeo/Clown Contest 940/663-2222
3-5 DALHART XIT Rodeo & Reunion 806/244-5646
4-5 BIG SPRING Sacred Heart Catholic Church Festival 915/263-7884
4-6 DALHART Arts & Crafts Show 806/244-4434
4-6 POST Old Mill Trade Days 806/495-3529

4-6 QUANAH Rodeo 940/663-2222
5 BIG SPRING Old Settlers Reunion 915/267-5551
5-6 CROSBYTON Prairie Days 806/675-2261
11-12 JACKSBORO Barbecue Cookoff 940/567-2674
11-13 VERNON Summer's Last Blast 800/687-3137
12 JACKSBORO Jack Co Jamboree 940/567-3506

12-13 AMARILLO August Lights Arts Festival 806/373-7800
18-19 HAPPY Happy Days 806/558-2121 or 764-3434
19 JACKSBORO Car Show 940/567-6530
19-20 SWEETWATER Cutting Horse Competition 915/235-3484
24-26 ROARING SPRINGS Old Settlers Reunion 806/348-7286

24-28 WICHITA FALLS Hotter 'n Hell Hundred Bicycle Race & Festival 940/322-3223
25-28 BIG SPRING Howard Co Fair 915/264-0625
26 LEVELLAND Cowboy Ball 806/894-3157
26-27 JACKSBORO Trade Days 940/567-2602
27 ABILENE KTXS-TV Festival of Fun 915/677-2281
31-Nov 18 MINERAL WELLS Clark Gardens Fall Season 940/682-4856
Prairies and Lakes
1 LEWISVILLE Summer Concert 972/219-3550

1-6 DALLAS (began Jul 26) Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 214/939-2770 or 939-2800
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4-6 BRENNHAM Fireman's Fiesta 979/836-3695 or 888/273-6426
4-6 CANTON The Mountain Wild West Adventure 903/567-STAY
1 LEWISVILLE Summer Concert 972/219-3550

4-6 SCHULENBURG Festival 979/743-4514
4, 11 TEMPLE Hot Summer Sounds 254/298-5415
4-6, 11-13 SEGUIN <i>Brigadoon</i> 800/580-7322
4-Sep 30 GLEN ROSE (began Jun 1) <i>The Promise</i> 800/687-2661
5 BRYAN Murder Mystery Dinner 979/778-9463
5, 12, 19, 26 STEPHENVILLE Cross Timbers Country Opry 254/965-4132
6 GLEN ROSE Team Roping 254/897-4509
6 GRAND PRAIRIE Traders Village Family Fun Day 972/647-2331
6 SALADO Salado Legends Outdoor Musical Drama 254/947-9205 or 947-5269

5 SMITHVILLE Historic Main St Saturday Night 512/237-2504 or 237-2313
5-6 EULESS Summer Musical 817/685-1649
5-12 FORT WORTH American Quarter Horse Youth World Championship 817/871-8150
5-6, 12-13 BRYAN Messina Hof Harvest Weekends 979/778-9463
5, 12, 19, 26 STEPHENVILLE Cross Timbers Country Opry 254/965-4132
6 GLEN ROSE Team Roping 254/897-4509
6 GRAND PRAIRIE Traders Village Family Fun Day 972/647-2331
6 SALADO Salado Legends Outdoor Musical Drama 254/947-9205 or 947-5269

6-20 GRANBURY Rio Brazos Art Festival 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212
8 YOAKUM Country Music USA 361/293-2309
8-12 DE LEON Peach & Melon Festival 254/893-6600
8-13 FORT WORTH <i>Ragtime</i> 817/467-2787
8-20 DALLAS <i>Copacabana</i> 972/298-1217
9-13 FORT WORTH Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus 817/884-2222 or 214/351-9806
10 BEDFORD Cindy Horstman, Jazz Harpist 817/952-2290
10-Sep 4 GRANBURY <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> 817/573-9191 or 572-0881
11 GLEN ROSE Bike the Rim Moonlight Tour 254/897-2960
11-12 ATHENS Paint Horse Show 903/677-6354
11-13 ARLINGTON Arts & Crafts Show 817/459-5000
12 BOWIE Trade Days 940/872-1680 or 872-1173
12 ARLINGTON Scale Model Show 817/777-5481
12 BASTROP Pine St Market Days 512/303-6233

12 BEDFORD <i>Cinderella</i> 817/952-2290
LANCASTER Second Saturday on the Square 972/227-2579
LEWISVILLE Chili Cookoff 972/219-3550
NOCOMA Grasshopper Festival 940/825-3757
PALESTINE Wilderness Canoe Race 800/659-3484
SEGUIN Seguin Birthday Celebration 800/580-7322
12-13 BRENNHAM Second Weekend on the Square 979/277-0913 or 888/273-6426
DALLAS Festival of Trains 214/428-0101
FORT WORTH Classic Car Show 817/871-8150 or 595-6900
12, 26 BOWIE Gospel Music 940/841-2041
13 PALESTINE Jason Andrews Piano Concert 800/659-3484
WEIMAR St Michael's Church Harvest Feast 979/725-6714
13-20 HEARNE Hang Gliding Championships 979/279-9382
14-19 ALVARADO Pioneers & Old Settlers Reunion 817/790-6667
15 PRAHA Prazka Pout 361/865-3560 or 865-3920
LOCKHART Country Music Jamboree 512/376-3430

16 RICHARDSON Community Band Concert 972/385-2999
17 GRANBURY Gospel Concert 817/572-0881 or 800/354-1670
17-19 WACO Texas Ranger Hall of Fame Symposium 254/750-8631
18-20 ATHENS Rodeo 903/677-6354
HICO Auto Swap Meet 800/361-HICO
LEWISVILLE Highland Village Balloon Festival 972/317-3295
McKINNEY Trade Days 972/562-5466 or 888/649-8499
18-26 DENTON North Texas Fair & Rodeo 940/387-2632
18-27 FORT WORTH <i>The King and I</i> 817/467-2787

18-Sep 4 FORT WORTH Omnifest 817/255-9300 or 888/255-9300
19 BRYAN Craft Show 979/779-7608
GAINESVILLE Gainesville Birthday Party 940/665-2831 or 888/585-4468
HALLETTSVILLE Carnival 361/798-3522
McKINNEY Ice Cream Crank-Off 972/562-6880 Summer Sounds Concert 888/649-8499
19-20 DALLAS Antique & Collectors Market 405/478-4050
RICHARDSON Lone Star Mint Coin Show 972/424-1405
20 BRENNHAM Ice Cream Smorgasbord 979/936-3695 or 888/273-6426
CISTERN Sts Cyril & Methodius Catholic Church Picnic 512/865-3920

20 GRAND PRAIRIE Low Rider Show 972/647-2331
22-27 DALLAS <i>Smoky Joe's Cafe</i> 972/298-1217
25 MESQUITE Light Crust Doughboys 972/289-8400
25-27 CANTON Auto Swap Meet 254/734-3194
MADISONVILLE Madison Co Trade Days 409/349-0163
26 ELKHART Golf Classic 800/659-3484
ROUND TOP Festival-Institute Concert 979/249-3086
26-27 DALLAS Bluesfest 214/823-3966
GAINESVILLE Antique Tractor & Farm Machinery Show 940/668-7861 or 800/689-7861
RICHARDSON Sports Collectors Show 972/255-9062

26-27 WACO Tennis Tournament 254/750-8662
WASHINGTON Cotton Harvest Days 936/878-2213
28 LOCKHART Opry 512/601-2154
29-Sep 2 PARIS Red River Valley Fair & Exposition 903/785-7971
31-Sep 3 DALLAS <i>The Dallas Morning News</i> Dance Festival 214/953-1977
LA GRANGE Fayette Co Country Fair 979/968-3781 or 409/968-3911
31-Sep 4 BELTON Central Texas State Fair 254/933-5353
31-Sep 30 RICHARDSON <i>Nunsense</i> 972/699-1130

17-19 NEW BOSTON Pioneer Days 903/628-2581
18-19 CARTHAGE Texas Country Music Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony 903/693-6634
18-20 LIVINGSTON Trade Days 409/327-3656
NACOGDOCHES Trade Days 936/564-2150
TYLER Trade Days 903/595-2223
19 TEXARKANA Dino Day 903/793-4831
25-27 MARSHALL Jaycees Rodeo 903/935-3121
28 NACOGDOCHES Golf Tournament 888/564-7351
31-Sep 3 TEXARKANA Strange Family Bluegrass Festival 903/792-2481 or 838-0361



Darthart hosts the XIT Rodeo and Reunion August 3-5.



Summer in Paris? You bet. Have fun at the Red River Valley Fair and Exposition, August 29-September 2.

Pineywoods

3-5 CONROE PRCA Rodeo 409/760-1666
11-13 NACOGDOCHES Millard's Crossing Flea Market 409/564-4490
NOONDAY Trade Days 903/509-2886
12 KIRBYVILLE Country Music Show 409/423-5744
12-13 HENDERSON Sacred Harp Singing 903/657-0304 or 898-2510
15-19 ATLANTA Forest Festival 903/796-6615

Gulf Coast

1-5 VICTORIA (began Jul 31) Bach Festival 361/570-5788
1, 8, 15, 22, 29 GALVESTON Summer Band Concerts 409/744-2174
2 ALVIN Kidfest 409/864-1541 or 281/331-6101
2-6 SOUTH PADRE ISLAND Texas International Fishing Tournament 956/943-TIFT
3, 10 CORPUS CHRISTI Bay Jammin' Concert Series 361/880-3461

4-5 FREERPORT Fishing Tournament £79/239-2333
ORANGE Fishing Tournament 409/386-1363
PORT ARANSAS Hope Devlin Kids Fishing Tournament £61/749-4093
4-6 HOUSTON International Jazz Festival 713/839-7000 or £90/231-2299
5 GALVESTON Birding Tour £31/445-1187
HOUSTON Aztec Image Lowerder Show £21/390-5500
6 HOUSTON Celtic Harvest Festival & Highland Games 713/380-1065

6, 20 CORPUS CHRISTI Waterfront Art Market 361/880-3461
11-13 WINNIE Trade Days 409/892-4000 or 296-3300
11-12, 18-1£ HITCHCOCK Good Ole Days Festival 409/986-9224
12 BAYTOWN Golf Tournament 281/420-6593
BRAZORIA Fireman's Carriava 979/798-2277
LOS FRESNOS Elvis Presley Memorial Festival 956/233-5763
12-13 SEABROOK Back Bay Market 281/474-3869
13 PORT ARTHUR Second Sunday at Texas Artists Museum 409/983-4881

18-19 PORT ARANSAS Fishing Tournament 361/829-7267
19 BEAUMONT Charlie Pruitt's Country Music Show 409/727-2955
FREERPORT Shrimp Boil 979/233-4434
LEAGUE CITY Bluegrass Show 713/990-5171 or 281/993-1620
19-20 GALVESTON Aerobatic Flying Championship 409/762-3930
PORT ARTHUR Trade Days 409/982-4950
ROSENBERG Festival of Glass & Antique Show 281/342-4876 or 713/729-4267
21 BAY CITY Market Day 979/245-8333

25-27 CLEAR LAKE AREA Ballunar Liffoff Festival 281/488-7676
26 TEXAS CITY Shrimp Boil & Dance 409/935-1408 or 888/860-1408
26-27 HOUSTON Antique Market 405/478-4050
TEXAS CITY Trade Days 409/949-9273
VICTORIA Craft Fair 361/767-9333

South Texas Plains

1 THREE RIVERS Brush Country Music Jamboree 361/449-2636 or 786-3334
4 SAN ANTONIO Art Walk 210/222-1152

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4-6 LAREDO <i>Aladdin and His Magic Lamp</i> 956/723-1342	
5 BEEVILLE Market Day 361/358-3267	
SAN ANTONIO Youth Rodeo 210/698-3300	
5-6 SAN ANTONIO Accordion Bash 210/246-9622	
6 SAN ANTONIO Encanto en el Río 210/822-2453	
Youth Rodeo 210/698-3300	
12 GOLIAD Market Day 361/645-3563 or 800/848-8674	
18-19 PLEASANTON Cowboy Homecoming Celebration 830/569-2163	
19-20 SAN ANTONIO Team Roping 210/698-3300	
22 PLEASANTON Cowboy Jamboree 830/276-8757	
31-Sep 3 BEN BOLT Fiesta Amistad 361/668-1608	
Hill Country	
1 BOERNE Abendkonzerte 830/249-3543	
1, 8 BANDERA Cowboy Capital Rodeo 800/364-3833	
1-12 AUSTIN (began Jul 15) Zilker Summer Musical 512/479-9491	
1-Sep 1 INGRAM (began Jul 7) <i>Peter Pan</i> 830/367-5126 or 367-5122	

2, 16 AUSTIN <i>How to Murder a Millionaire</i> 512/263-4205
3-5 GEORGETOWN <i>The Sunshine Boys</i> 512/868-2966
4 NEW BRAUNFELS Starlight Gala 830/907-2443
4-5 CAMP WOOD Old Settlers Reunion 830/597-6241 or 597-4127
4, 18, 25 BANDERA Twin Elm Rodeo 830/796-3628
4-26 INGRAM <i>Into the Woods</i> 830/367-5126
5 GEORGETOWN Saddle Series Riding Competition 512/259-4161 or 254/547-2419
HONDO Hootenanny 830/426-3438
OZONA Davy Crockett Birthday Festival 915/392-3737
WIMBERLEY Market Day 512/847-8653 or 847-2201
5, 12, 19, 26 BANDERA Oxbow Rodeo 830/796-3045
SONORA (began Jun 3) Covered Wagon Dinner Theater 915/387-2880
6 D'HANIS Holy Cross Church Community Picnic 830/363-7268
6, 13, 20, 27 AUSTIN Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farm Family Sunday 512/837-1215
7-11 INGRAM Golf Tournament 830/257-4982

7-13 LAKEHILLS Country Swing Festival 830/535-4366
7-17 UVALDE Soaring Competition 830/278-4481
7-19 WIMBERLEY Shakespeare Under the Stars 512/847-6969 or 888/597-7827
12 CASTROVILLE Market Trail Day 830/741-3841
GEORGETOWN Market Day 512/868-8675
RIOMEDINA Market Trail Day 210/538-2441
SISTERDALE VFD Barbecue 830/324-6742
12-13 BOERNE Market Days 830/816-1796
FREDERICKSBURG Pari-Mutuel Horseracing 830/997-2359
14-20 BANDERA Old Time Pickers Reunion 830/796-8153
16-20 SONORA Sutton Co Days 915/387-2880
17-19 JOHNSON CITY Blanco Co Fair & Rodeo 830/868-7684
18-19 AUSTIN Ballet Austin 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW
19 AUSTIN Wild Basin Wilderness Family Trail Day 512/327-7622
BLANCO Market Day 830/833-5101
NEW BRAUNFELS Train Show 830/629-2943

19 TAYLOR International Barbecue Cookoff 512/352-5600
19-20 AUSTIN Wildflower Center Bee Blast 512/592-4200
FREDERICKSBURG Harvest Wine Trail 830/868-2321
GRUENE Market Days 830/629-6441
JOHNSON CITY Harvest Wine Trail 830/868-2321
20 CASTROVILLE St Louis Day 830/931-2826
25 JOHNSON CITY National Park Founders Day 830/868-7128
25-26 AUSTIN R. Carlos Nakai Concert 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW

25-27 AUSTIN Home & Garden Show 713/529-1616
FREDERICKSBURG Gillespie Co Fair 830/997-6523 or 997-2359
26 BIG LAKE Santa Rita Day Celebration 915/884-2980
BOERNE Agriculture Center Barbecue 830/537-4526
GRANITE SHOALS Last Saturday 'Pickin' 830/699-8408 or 693-5646
STONEWALL LBJ Birthday Celebration 830/868-7128
26-27 AUSTIN African American Culture Symposium 512/836-9544

26-27 BURNET Texas Hill Country Railfair & Festival 512/477-8468	
ROUND ROCK Accordion Kings Camp & Festival 512/441-9255	
STONEWALL Grape Stomp 830/644-2681	
27 STONEWALL LBJ Ranch Tour 830/868-7128	
31-Sep 3 BOERNE Kendall Co Fair & Rodeo 830/755-8788 or 249-2839	
KERRVILLE Wine & Music Festival 830/257-3600	
Big Bend Country	
1-26 EL PASO (began Jun 1) <i>Viva El Paso!</i> 915/565-6900	

1-30 EL PASO (began Jul 28) Ysleta Street Festival 915/859-7913
1-Sep 2 MIDLAND (began Jun 16) Summer Mummies 915/570-4011
3-5 MONAHANS Butterfield Overland Stagecoach & Wagon Festival 915/943-2187
3, 17, 31 FORT STOCKTON Live Music at Annie Riggs Museum 915/336-2167
4, 11, 18, 25 ODESSA Back Porch Swing Concert Series 915/332-7123
5 VAN HORN Old Car Festival 915/283-2682

6 EL PASO Noche Ranchera 915/541-4481
MIDLAND Museum of the Southwest Concert 915/683-2882
7-25 EL PASO Arts International Show 915/534-0696 or 800/351-6024
9-10 CLINT Fiesta de San Lorenzo 915/851-2255
12 EL PASO Fiesta de las Flores 915/542-3464 or 542-3491
13 EL PASO KLAQ Barbecue & Taste of El Paso 915/772-3953

13 EL PASO The Kingston Trio 915/541-4481
18-19 EL PASO Ballet Folklórico Tierra del Sol 915/778-7858
19 FORT STOCKTON Harvestfest 915/336-2541
20 EL PASO Symphony Orchestra 915/541-4481
21-27 MIDLAND Golf Tournament 915/580-4710
27 EL PASO Inti-Ilumani Concert 915/541-4481 or 532-7273
27-28 FORT STOCKTON Golf Tournament 915/335-4600



Chilean world-music supergroup Inti-Ilumani performs at El Paso's Chamizal National Memorial on August 27.

COURTESY CAMI SIMONDS/XENOPHILE

Southtown Surprises

Yes, it's hot in San Antonio in July. But there's no better time to visit the city's fascinating Southtown (as the pedestrian-friendly area south of downtown is known) than during July, dubbed Contemporary Art Month. On any given day, of course, the area buzzes with creative energy. The Blue Star Arts Complex, with its colorful conglomeration of galleries, shops, artists' studios, and even a brew pub, offers surprises at every turn. Just across the river, you'll find the city's historic King William District, where walking tours of the architecturally stunning homes and bungalows offer a glimpse into San Antonio's past. And shops along S. Alamo and S. Presa offer treasures ranging from Mexican ceramics to fine art.

In July in particular, Southtown rolls out the red carpet, especially during the First Friday Art Walk. On the evening of July 7, art-lovers can stroll a half-mile route lined with galleries, shops, restaurants, and bars, which host live music and month-long exhibits. Don't miss the 1100 block of S. Alamo, where from 7-10 p.m., the annual *Art in the Hood* show features the works of some 125 area artists—both novice and professional.

For more information about Southtown, Contemporary Art Month, the monthly First Friday Art Walk, or *Art in the Hood*, write to the Southtown Urban Main Street Program,

PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON



Rome, not Paris, was Europe's cultural capital in the 1700s. Agree? Disagree? See *The Splendor of Rome* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and decide. Left, a landscape by Andrea Locatelli.

show, and games such as apple bobbing and the "Try-Apple-On" obstacle course. Mist tents keep everybody cool, and six performance areas—ranging from a children's stage (jugglers, Hula-Hoop demonstrations, and clowns) to stages dedicated

716 S. Alamo, San Antonio 78205, or call 210/226-0888. Web site: www.southtown.net.

Sweet Tart

Most folks don't think of Texas when they think of apples, but some of the juiciest fruits you'll ever taste grow in Lone Star soil. Some 350,000 apple trees grow, in fact, in a 50-mile radius around the town of Medina, which holds its annual International Apple Fest on July 29 this year.

Some 15,000 folks convene annually along the banks of the Medina River to enjoy pony rides, apple treats galore, a quilt show, competitions for "Best Apple Pie" and "Best Apple Anything," a juried arts and crafts

Apple treats abound at Medina's International Apple Festival on July 29.

to Peruvian music and gospel tunes—keep things interesting.

And to prove that these apples don't fall too far from the tree, take a tour of nearby Love Creek Orchards, where you'll see trees laden with Texas Gala, Jonathan, and McIntosh apples. Tour vans take you there from the festival site.

The International Apple Festival takes place July 29 from 9-6 at the Apple Fest grounds in downtown Medina. Admission: \$5, \$4 age 65 and older, \$2 ages 4-12, free age 3 and younger. Write to Box 125, Medina 78055, or call 830/589-7224 or 800/596-9484.

Forget Paris

If you could turn back the clock to 1750 and ask people on the street, "What city is the cultural capital of Europe?" the resounding reply would be Rome, not Paris, as many might think. Or so says Philadelphia Museum of Art curator Joseph Rishel, who with curator Edgar Peters Bowron at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and scholars worldwide, organized the blockbuster exhibit

The Splendor of Rome: The 18th Century. The exhibit opens June 25 at the new Audrey Jones Beck Building of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and remains on view through September 17.

Featuring some 400 paintings, sculptures, prints, drawings, maps, furniture pieces, and examples of the decorative arts, plus architectural models of Rome's great churches, palaces, piazzas, and cathedrals, *The Splendor of Rome* aims to illustrate why Rome was a mecca for 18th-Century artists and travelers. It took nine years to compile the show, for which the curators borrowed works from almost 200 museums, churches, institutions, and private collections in 16 countries.

The Audrey Jones Beck Building of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is at 5601 Main Street. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-7 (Thu and Fri until 9) and Sun 12:15-7. Admission: \$5, \$2.50 ages 6-18, students with ID, and age 65 and older, free age 5 and younger. Write to Box 6826, Houston 77265, or call 713/639-7300. Web site: www.mfah.org.

By the Way...

In celebration of the mineral springs that brought health-seekers by the thousands to Lampasas in the 1880s, residents throw an annual fete they call **Spring Ho**, this year on July 3-9. A carnival, a pet show, an arts and crafts fair, street dances, and a Saturday morning parade draw crowds. A chuck-wagon breakfast before the parade (with Dutch-oven biscuits, sausage, eggs, gravy, and drinks; \$5) benefits restoration of the 1883-84 courthouse, and you'll claim a prime spot for float-viewing...call 512/556-5301 or 556-5172.

On July 15, Fredericksburg's annual **Night in Old Fredericksburg** welcomes revelers to whoop it up in honor of the town's German heritage. Polka bands play throughout the day,

KEVIN STILLMAN



providing a musical backdrop for games of horseshoes and washer pitching, demonstrations of period crafts and skills, and browsing the wares of some 50 arts and crafts vendors. Sample German-style brews at the new beer-tasting tent, and chow down on sausage and kraut, among other good eats....call 830/997-6523. Web site: www.fredericksburg-texas.com.

At the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth from July 2 through October 1, you can view artwork collected over five centuries by one of imperial Russia's wealthiest and most influential families. **Stroganoff: The Palace and Collections of a Russian Noble Family** highlights some 230 objects, including Greek and Roman antiquities, medieval art, Iranian silver from the 6th and 7th centuries, pre-Columbian objects, and decorative Chinese arts....call 817/332-8451. Web site: www.kimbellart.org.

Through August 13, The Menil Collection in Houston presents the exhibit **Spirits of the Water: Native Art Collected from Expeditions to Alaska and British Columbia, 1774-1910**.

Explorers and traders from Spain, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States made frequent journeys to the rich coastlands of these two territories, bringing back such items as masks, helmets, rattles, bowls, and blankets. Some 150 items, plus maps and engravings by illustrators who accompanied the expeditions, help paint a picture of the era's geographical and anthropological discoveries....call 713/525-9400.



THE SOUVENIR OF HISTORY AND ART MUSEUM

Through October 1, the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth presents some 230 works collected by the Stroganoff family.

COURTESY THE AUSTIN POND SOCIETY



On July 15-16, while away a steamy summer weekend as you take in the sights and sounds of Austin's water gardens during the **Austin Pond Society's 6th Annual Pond Tour**. It's fun to visit modest ponds built from galvanized tubs, then admire the more elaborate endeavors spilling with exotic plants and fish. As you'll see, both types have their charms. Talk with the owners, learn about plants and fish, and get to know a side of Austin that trickles along at a comfortably relaxed pace. Proceeds (\$5 per day) benefit the Austin Area Garden Center....call 512/896-6377. Web site: www.austinpondsociety.org.

With the state hopping with Fourth of July celebrations (check out the long list in last month's Fun Forecast), the folks in Belton thought they'd stand out from the crowd if they gave their July 4th fete another name. This year's **Festival on Nolan Creek**, held at two parks on the creek (travel between the two sites via free hayrides), features a two-hour parade, a fiddlers' contest, live polka music, a carnival, lots of food and crafts, a flea market, and...no fireworks.

Large or small, simple or elaborate, water gardens soothe the soul. See some 34 Austin gardens July 15-16 during the Austin Pond Society's Annual Pond Tour.

After all, when the festival wraps up at 8, you'll have plenty of time to dash over to Fort Hood for some of the prettiest pyrotechnics in the state....call 254/939-3612 or 939-3551. Web site: www.beltontxchamber.com.

The **Texas Cowboy Reunion** in Stamford, which combines rodeo, poetry, good grub, and old friends like no other event, celebrates its 70th year July 1-4. Hailed as the world's largest amateur rodeo, the reunion also includes cowboy poetry readings, chuckwagon and brisket cookoffs, a ranch horse show, dances, a spur and bit show, a parade, a fiddlers' contest, a cowboy church service, and plenty of guitar-pickin'....call 915/773-2411 or 773-3614. Web site: www.tcrrodeo.com.

Any kid who's seen Disney's summertime blockbuster **Dinosaur** knows that lemurs can save the day. If the kids would like to return the favor, take them to Waco's Cameron Park Zoo on July 15 for the annual **Kids' Zoobilee** fundraiser, which this year raises money for the new lemur habitat. If \$25 seems a little steep, remember that the price of admission includes all of the kid-approved comestibles, entertainment (clowns, puppeteers, jugglers, and other kid-pleasers), face painting, and games (how long can you stick to the Velcro wall?) you and your kiddos can stand. Even the animals get to stay out late....call 254/750-8400.

Visit our Web site at <http://www.texashighways.com>

Some 40,000 spectators head to Longview each summer to marvel at one of Texas' most spectacular airborne competitions—the **Great Texas Balloon Race**, held this year July 14-16. Some 80 balloonists ride the currents, vying for prizes in categories such as the “Hare and Hound Race,” a “Special Shapes” competition, and a “Key Grab” event. An airshow, aircraft displays, evening concerts, food booths, and arts and crafts vendors round out the attractions....call 903/237-4000. Web site: www.greattexasballoonrace.com.



RICHARD PERINOLDS/TXDOT

The 70th annual Texas Cowboy Reunion takes place in Stamford July 1-4.

It's harvesttime at Bryan's Messina Hof Wine Cellars, time to stomp grapes and cultivate culinary passions. The 18th annual **Harvest Festival** takes place Saturday and Sunday on four consecutive weekends (July 22-August 13), with activities that run the gamut from simple picking-and-stomping (\$10 per person) to cooking demonstrations and a sumptuous murder-mystery dinner. If you don't relish the idea of driving home, book a suite at Messina Hof's new bed and breakfast, The Villa at Messina Hof....call 979/778-WINE. Web site: www.messinahof.com.

TEXCETERA brings you readers' tips and timely travel tidbits. Because we're unable to check out every item in "Readers Recommend," and because details can change, we encourage you to call ahead for more information. When we mention new places, products, or publications, we try to include only those with promise; keep in mind, however, that problems can occur with start-up businesses.

If you run across a noteworthy Lone Star attraction, restaurant, event, or product, we'd love to hear about it. Write to Readers Recommend, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. Email: editors@texashighways.com. Remember that space constraints prevent us from running every suggestion we receive. We reserve the right to edit items.

READERS RECOMMEND...

People come from all over the world to see **Eggemeyer's General Store in San Angelo**. The store offers wonderful hams and specialty foods (including Eggemeyer's own "Sweet and Hot" sauce that can be used as a dip, spread, or marinade), as well as collectibles.

Kay Halfmann, Lowake

Eggemeyer's General Store is at 35 E. Concho Ave.; 915/655-1166.

There's a wonderful lodging place at **Grand Saline in East Texas**. Owner-operator Beth Fisher's **Lit'l Fannie's Country Retreat** offers several cottages, each decorated with a different theme, such as the "School House," the "Bunk House," and the "Hen House." Mrs. Fisher, a kindergarten teacher, is fun to talk to and has stories about her life in East Texas.

Nancy Scott, via email

Lit'l Fannie's Country Retreat is on Texas 110, 5 miles south of Grand Saline; call 903/962-3737 and leave a message. Web site: www.geocities.com/littlefannies/.

Love and War in Texas in Plano offers excellent food, service, and atmosphere, with live Texas music on the patio six nights a week. Owned by Texans who use mostly Texas-grown beef, produce, and seafood, the restaurant also has a wine list of exclusively Texas wines and a

beer list that includes all major brands—even Pearl. They serve the best chicken-fried steak in North Texas!

Ron Duckworth, Addison, via email

Love and War in Texas is at 601 E. Plano Pkwy.; 972/422-6201. Web site: www.loveandwarintexas.com.

THE BEST OF THE EAST

When traveling Texas, some folks just like to get in the car and go; others prefer to plan their journey carefully. Whatever your choice, the **Deep East Texas Development Association** has made it easy to visit the historical, cultural, and scenic highlights in its region. The organization recently published the **Deep East Texas Driving Tour Guide**, a 16-page brochure that maps out sites and attractions within the 12-county Deep East Texas area that includes towns such as **Crockett, Lufkin, Nacogdoches, and San Augustine**. Historic frontier jails, important Indian sites, museums, stately old courthouses, famous churches and homes, and scenic byways figure prominently in some 43 stops along the route.

For a free copy of the guide, write to the Deep East Texas Development Assn., Box 1647, Lufkin 75902; call 936/634-7444, or pick one up at any of the region's chambers of commerce.

GIDDY-UP

Seahorses, those strange, sturdy little steeds of the briny deep, take center stage at **Seahorse Seatopia**, a new exhibit at the **Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi**.

The display spotlights five species of seahorses, along with pipefishes and seadragons, in 10 habitats that replicate regions of the Gulf of Mexico, the Western Atlantic, and the waters off Australia and Indonesia. Humans have always been fascinated with these small fishes, which boast decidedly "unfishy" features, such as a head like a horse, eyes like a chameleon, a pouch like a kangaroo, and a tail like a monkey. Add to their exotic looks the fact that the *males*

© GREG DIMIJIAN



A lined seahorse rides the briny range in the Texas State Aquarium's new Seahorse Seatopia exhibit.

of the species give birth (up to 1,500 babies in two to six weeks), and the little creatures become even more intriguing.

The Texas State Aquarium is at 2710 N. Shoreline Blvd.; 361/881-1200 or 800/477-GULF. Web site: www.texasstateaquarium.org.

NEW CHOO-CHOO

Last December, the **Age of Steam Railroad Museum in Dallas' Fair Park** took delivery of a monumental gift from the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway—a rare, 33-year-old **diesel locomotive** that weighs some 380,000 pounds. One of nine locomotives built in the late Sixties for the Santa Fe Railway's first-class *Super Chief* service, the 72-foot-long diesel engine once whisked its passengers along the route between Chicago and Los Angeles at speeds up to 90 miles per hour. The historic locomotive joins other locomotives, as well as sleeping, dining, and lounge cars, on permanent display at the museum (1105 Washington St.). Call 214/428-0101. Web site: www.startext.net/homes/railroad.

UNDERGROUND OPERATION

Vanishing Texas Tours, Inc., which runs the popular Vanishing Texas River Cruises on Lake Buchanan, recently began operating the concession for **Lonehorn Cavern State Historical Park**, a 639-acre park in the Hill Country between **Burnet and Marble Falls**. VTT plans to introduce new programs for the park, including the possibility of a "haunted cave" tour in October. Call 830/598-CAVE or 877/441-CAVE.

Down the Road

Come August, Elvis is spotted in Texas, and then we'll cool you off with stories on swimming holes, vintage icehouses, and the underwater realms of the Dallas World Aquarium. We'll also commemorate the 100th anniversary of the hurricane that ravaged Galveston Island.

W I N D O W O N T E X A S

© LAURENCE PARENT



An approaching thunderstorm brings the promise of rain to the Oasis Filling Station, which appears to be a long-abandoned business, but is instead a prop built in 1997 for the movie *Dancer, Texas Pop. 81*. The Oasis adorns the roadside along Ranch Road 505 between Valentine and Fort Davis.

