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TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

OCTOBER 2000

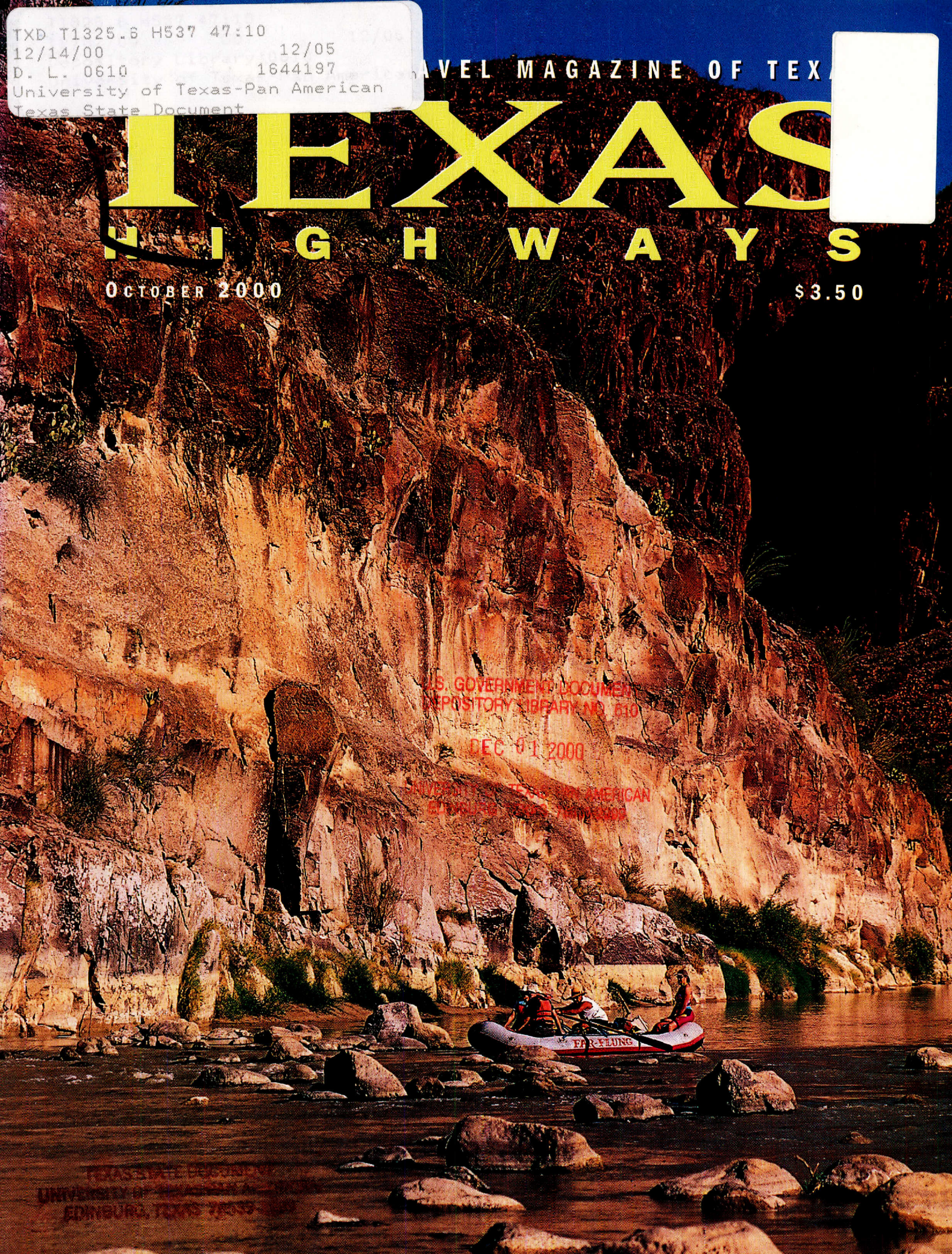
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In the June 2000 issue we published a troubling letter from Mr. Zac Puente of Wichita Falls. In it, Mr. Puente recounted an unfortunate experience he had had at a business in Hamilton. Since we published that letter, we have received several letters from people in Hamilton who feel that they and their fair city have been sullied by implication, which I regret sincerely. Our intention in publishing Mr. Puente's letter was honorable, although the fallout from it has caused undue anguish.

Texas Highways never intended to impugn an entire community for the actions of a few. Furthermore, our policy is to give entities and communities that are reproached for poor service or otherwise blamed for any situation involving the traveling public an opportunity to respond before the magazine prints information concerning the complaint. In this instance, we did not follow our own policy. However good our intentions were, that does not excuse our failure to do the right thing for the people of Hamilton.

More heartening, however, is the outpouring of letters of support for Mr. Puente and for the town of Hamilton, letters of apology from citizens in Hamilton, and letters that have offered to make things right with Mr. Puente. Perhaps the best way to sum up this column is with a letter from a resident of Hamilton itself, who encapsulates his views of his community quite directly:

I am writing this in response to the letter written by Zac Puente in your June issue. I am very con-

cerned about this allegation of racism in Hamilton. I, too, am a very proud Mexican American who has lived in Hamilton for 32 years, and I have yet to be refused service in any of the eating establishments. And I just cannot see something like he described happening in Hamilton. It pains me greatly to hear allegations like this of my hometown. There have been some instances (i.e., a sick child and a death in the family) where my family has needed help from the community and not once did they hesitate to offer help. So, I hope that people will believe me when I say that Hamilton is a great town and please don't hesitate to visit. I'm proud to be a Hamiltonian.

RAMON LOPEZ

Hamilton, via email

By the way, when you visit Hamilton, drop by the 1887 limestone courthouse. A historical marker on the courthouse grounds honors Elsie Warenskjold, a pioneer whose writings lured settlers to Texas from her native Norway. Elsie, sometimes called the "Lady with the Pen," spoke out against slavery and called for temperance. We could use a dose of her moderation in these times of bombast and excess.

Enjoy your travels. Enjoy this issue.



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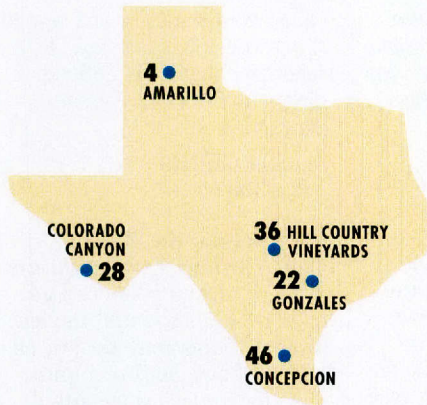
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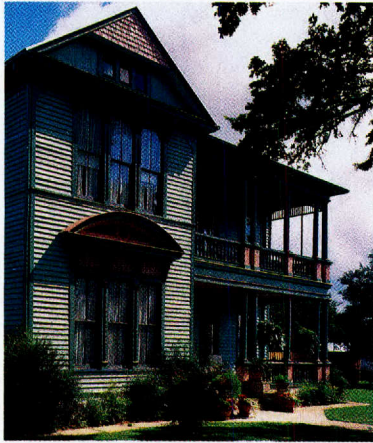


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Sites in This Issue



page 22



page 12



ABOUT OUR COVERS

FRONT—Ranked by many as one of the best places to raft the Rio Grande, Colorado Canyon lives up to its name with walls swathed in shades of reddish-brown. Our story on this Big Bend gem begins on page 28. *Photo © Stephan Myers*

BACK—Lisa Jackson and her Quarter Horse, Graystar, perform with Waco's Sweethearts of Texas riding group at the annual Hub of Texas Championship Rodeo, held each June in Hubbard. To see more Quarter Horses in the limelight, turn to page 4. *Photo © Jim Crow*

FEATURES

4

THE AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE, OF COURSE! *by Candace Leslie*

When it comes to Quarter Horses, you'll find few neigh-sayers in Texas. This remarkable animal shines statewide whether ridden for work or pleasure. An Amarillo museum recounts the breed's history

12

POWWOW: DANCE OF LIFE *by Randy Mallory*

Native Americans celebrate their heritage with numerous powwows around the state. The traditional drumming, singing, and dancing at these public gatherings provide powerful medicine for members of many cultures

22

COME AND TAKE IT IN—GONZALES *by Joe Crisp*

An October festival spotlights the history and hospitality found year round in this south-central Texas town. Gonzales offers old homes, museums, antiques, and—best of all—a relaxed pace

28

RAFTING THE RED CANYON *by Janet R. Edwards*

If a vacation from civilization appeals to you, head to Colorado Canyon for a ride down the Rio Grande. Moved by a meandering waterway through beautiful Big Bend landscapes, you'll understand why this trip is a favorite of river rats

36

THREE DAYS IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY AND SPIRITS *by Randy Mallory*

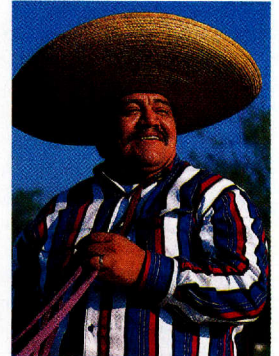
Got a weekend to wander in the Hill Country? If so, you can retrace the author's steps as he tours a half-dozen wineries and happens upon friendly folks, delectable meals, monarch butterflies, and other sweet surprises

46

FIESTA DEL RANCHO *by Arturo Longoria*

An annual celebration with unmistakable Tejano flavor, Fiesta del Rancho in Concepcion boasts spirited music and savory food, as well as a trail ride, parade, and cabrito cookoff. The colorful October event dates to the late 1800s

page 46



DEPARTMENTS

2 LETTERS

3 SPEAKING OF TEXAS

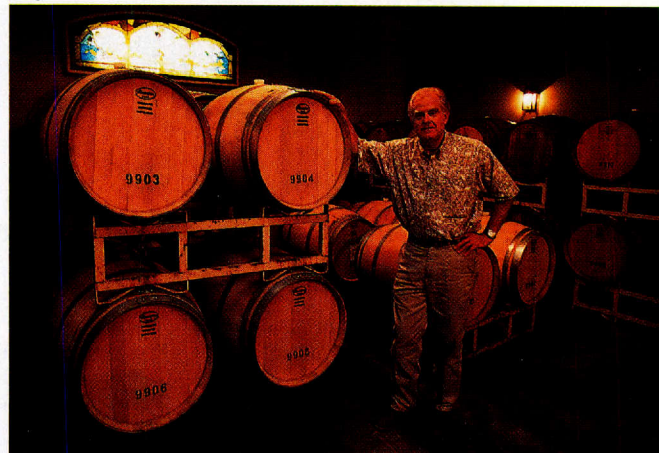
50 FUN FORECAST

54 FOR THE ROAD

56 TEXCETERA

57 WINDOW ON TEXAS

page 36



Long, Tall Texans

I enjoyed July's Speaking of Texas. Did you know that Texas has another claim to fame regarding tall Texans? At 7 feet, 7½ inches, Henry Clay Thruston of Mount Vernon was the tallest soldier in the Confederate Army. He even survived the Civil War, being wounded only twice!

RICHARD L. FLOURNOY
Mount Pleasant

Unforgettable Storm

Of special interest in the August issue was the article on the 1900 Galveston hurricane, which brought back memories of my late grandfather, Augustus (Gus or Hackberry) Westerman. His family immigrated from Germany and landed in Galveston on Christmas Day around 1880, and he was born on New Year's Day (he always said he was still seasick from the trip). His family ended up in Bell County, but he was an apprentice harness-maker in Galveston during the hurricane. He was listed in all of the newspapers as one of the casualties. Imagine his family's surprise when he opened their door, weeks later, after walking and catching wagon rides to get home. He later moved to Brownwood and carried on his harness-making and leather-craft business. During World War II, he served as an interpreter for the German prisoners of war at Camp Bowie.

FRED WESTERMAN
Marble Falls, via email

My grandmother, who was 18 at the time, survived the 1900 storm. [The family] had 50-plus people crowded into the upstairs portion of their home. My great-grandfather, who was then in his 80s, roped himself off an area upstairs, gathered his jug of whiskey, his volumes of Shakespeare, and his rocking chair, and rocked, drank, and read throughout the storm. Water covered the bottom floor of the house, but my great-grandfather and his sons were builders, and they had drilled holes

in the wood floors to allow water to rise and, they hoped, keep the home from breaking up. It worked! They all survived.

The family had an angel picture hanging in the stairwell of the home. My grandmother truly believed that was the guardian angel who protected them during the storm. Today, that angel picture hangs in my guest bedroom.

KATHY McDONALD, via email

A.Y. OWEN/LIFE MAGAZINE © TIME INC.



By publishing this photo, LIFE magazine blew the cover of young Peggy Vinson (far left), who wasn't supposed to be at this Elvis concert.

Ahhh-gust

Your swimming-hole story in August made me wonder what ever became of the popular swimming hole near Boerne known as Edge Falls. When I was a teenager in the '70s, I swam there on several occasions. It was privately owned then. It had a beautiful waterfall with metal stairs leading down to a fern-covered paradise. The water was a beautiful emerald green.

JANICE MACROSSIN
Helotes, via email

Ed. Note: According to The New Handbook of Texas, Edge Falls,

on Curry Creek near Kandalia in Kendall County, closed to the public in the 1970s. The site was named for settler George Edge.

Elvis Sightings

August's article on Elvis was even more interesting to all of us in TxDOT's Amarillo District. One of the riled-and-wild Amarillo teenagers in the picture on page 14 is our own chief accountant, Peggy Vinson. Peggy is the girl on the far

front left (see photo). The plot thickened when we learned that she was not supposed to be at the concert. It appears that she was found out because this photo also appeared in LIFE magazine. The greatest part

of this story is that Peggy has not changed a bit!

ANNE JONES
Amarillo District Office

I saw Elvis in 1955 or '56 in Odessa at the high school auditorium. He appeared with Johnny Cash and Floyd Cramer. When they finished playing, I had the nerve to ask Floyd Cramer if I could play a duet with him, and he was nice enough to say yes. He had yellow cowboy boots on.

I walked out behind the building where Elvis had parked his pink Caddy. Girls had followed him out and were screaming and holding on to him, but I stood at the edge of the crowd. Elvis pointed at me and asked, "Did you want my autograph?" I said I did, but I didn't have a pen or paper. So, he got some

paper from someone and signed "Love you, Elvis Presley." I read later that Elvis noticed girls who didn't scream and claw at him.

MARIDELL HENRY
Kingsland

Pals Across the Pacific

I read joyfully Texas Highways every morning before I go to work. I had thought the features of Texas were desert, oil, and cowboys, but I recognize now that Texas is a beautiful country with bluebonnets and big rivers. I admire that various races are living with pride under the flag of the Lone Star.

My wife and I like to visit Texas very much, and we like to eat the famous tomato dish.

HIROSHI FUJII
Nishinomiya, Japan

The Iceman Cometh

Your article on icehouses in August brought back memories. My parents installed a drain pipe from their icebox so that the water dripped outside their house in Austin. We grew cannas where the ground was always kept wet by the drip.

My grandparents in Fort Worth had an arrangement so that the iceman need not come into the house. The icebox was by an outside wall. There was a passageway through the wall with a door on the outside and another inside the icebox. My grandmother opened the inside door, and the iceman opened the outside door and slid the ice into the icebox.

DALE U. VON ROSENBERG
Georgetown

Corrections

Do-bie or not Do-bie? That was the question in August's "Swimming-Hole Sampler." Reader Clariace Baldwin let us know that historian J. Frank Dobie was not related to the Dobies who once owned Blue Hole in Wimberley.

And in September's "Lone Star Resources" (page 62), we misprinted the number to call for a free copy of the Texas State Travel Guide. The correct number is 800/8888-TEX.

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.

Veni, Vidi, Vici Vini

It was the impassioned act of a desperate nation. In 1887, French winemakers sent their premier wine researcher, Professor Pierre Viala, to Denison to consult with America's foremost grape expert, Thomas Volney Munson.

For several decades, vineyards in France (and other European countries) had been ravaged by disastrous diseases—first, a fungus, then a plant louse (*phylloxera*)—that had almost wiped out the country's wine industry. Viala's hopes rested with the man responsible for groundbreaking research in grape hybridization, a man who called the grape “the most beautiful, most wholesome and nutritious, most certain and profitable fruit.”

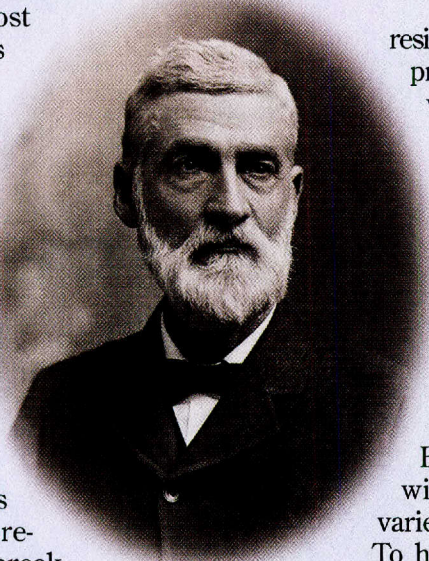
Munson had made that declaration in 1870, soon after graduating from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of the University of Kentucky. Enthralled by his chemistry professor's elaborate vineyard, Munson vowed to identify all American grape species. (The quest, which would last most of his life, took him by horseback, rail, and on foot more than 50,000 miles through 41 states and Mexico. His 1909 book, *Foundations of American Grape Culture*, remains the standard reference on native grapes.)

But Munson also wanted to develop superior varieties of grapes from native species. To that end, he moved to Denison in 1876 and began gathering wild grapevines from the bluffs of the Red River and its tributaries—an area he called “my grape paradise.” Over time, he hybridized more than 300 varieties of improved grapes at his Denison vineyard.

The hybridized varieties—some

The studies—and grapevines—of viticulturist Thomas Volney Munson (1843-1913) proved instrumental in saving the wine industry of France and other European nations in the late 19th Century.

COURTESY T.V. MUNSON VITICULTURE AND ENOLOGY CENTER, GRAYSON COUNTY COLLEGE



resistant to phylloxera—proved to be exactly what Professor Viala and French winemakers were looking for. Millions of cuttings from Munson's disease-resistant rootstocks were distributed to vineyards across France and other parts of Europe for grafting with local *vinifera* varieties.

To honor Munson's contributions, the French government sent a delegation to Denison in 1888 that presented him with the French Legion of Honor, *Chevalier du Mérite Agricole*. Several French regions erected monuments to him.

Today in Denison, Grayson County College carries on his legacy with research and educational programs at the T.V. Munson Viticulture and Enology Center (903/463-8717). The adjacent vineyard bearing Munson's name contains 65 varieties developed by the grape man of Texas, whose passion helped save the French wine industry.

—Randy Mallory, Tyler

Comanche at Heart

Among the many 19th-Century confrontations between Anglo-Texans and Native Americans, perhaps the most compelling story remains that of Cynthia Ann Parker. In 1836, Comanches captured young Cynthia Ann and four other settlers in a raid on the Parker family's fortified home in what is now Navasota County. (Various sources give her age at the time of the raid as nine, 10, or 11.) In time, she embraced Indian life, mar-

ried Chief Peta Nocona, and bore him two sons, Quanah and Pecos, and a daughter, Topsannah.

In 1860, Texas Rangers recaptured Cynthia Ann, along with Topsannah, in West Texas (near present-day Crowell) and forcefully returned mother and daughter to Parker family members in East Texas. Unhappy in now-unfamiliar surroundings, Cynthia Ann tried repeatedly to return to her tribe (her family apparently prevented her escape).

Though Cynthia Ann never adjusted to Anglo ways, the feat, ironically, was accomplished by her son Quanah. After years of resisting soldiers and buffalo hunters, Quanah in 1875 surrendered and led his Quahadi Comanches from their home in the Texas Panhandle to a reservation in Oklahoma. He adapted well there, and federal agents, desiring to unite the disparate Comanche bands, named him a chief. He was a man of two worlds, maintaining many Indian traditions—he refused to cut his braids, and he had seven wives, who, with their many children, lived in his 22-room house—while becoming a successful rancher and businessman. He was one of the era's best-known, and richest, Native Americans.

Today, sites and events across Texas recall this famous family saga. A reconstruction at Old Fort Parker State Historical Park, between Groesbeck and Mexia, marks the site of Cynthia Ann's capture. The town of Crowell remembers her each May with its Cynthia Ann Parker Days festival. The town of Quanah takes its name from the last Comanche chief. And Parker family descendants cohost annual powwows at Fort Worth (honoring Quanah) and Childress (honoring Cynthia Ann).

Some accounts say Cynthia Ann died in 1864 following Topsannah's death from influenza, though her tombstone gives the year 1870. Quanah Parker died in 1911. He, Cynthia Ann, and Topsannah are buried at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

—Randy Mallory, Tyler





What has four strong legs, grace, agility, a good nature, and all-around cow sense?

The American Quarter Horse, Of Course!

By Candace Leslie • Photographs by Jim Crow

As they cross the pasture in the golden glow of late afternoon, small girl and muscular horse seem as one. Blonde tresses and flowing mane dance together in time to the rhythmic movement of the graceful animal. Joy radiates from the child's face. Even an observer who has never sat in a saddle would surely marvel at the perfect synchronization and well-placed trust. Powerful as well as gentle, intelligent as well as surefooted, the mount belongs to a breed beloved by rodeo roper and ranch hand, by barrel racer and youthful tenderfoot. Like thousands of recreational riders across the country and around the world, this youngster rides Texas' favorite, the American Quarter Horse.

"Everyone's life has been affected by the horse," says James May, director of Amarillo's American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum (see sidebar, page 8). "Whether pioneer or farmer, consumer or traveler, someone, somewhere in your past, depended on this animal."

The story of the horse as presented in the museum confirms May's claim. Quarter Horse history begins with early Spanish explorers, who brought horses of Barb, Arabic, and Turkish descent on their sailing ships to the shores of Florida.

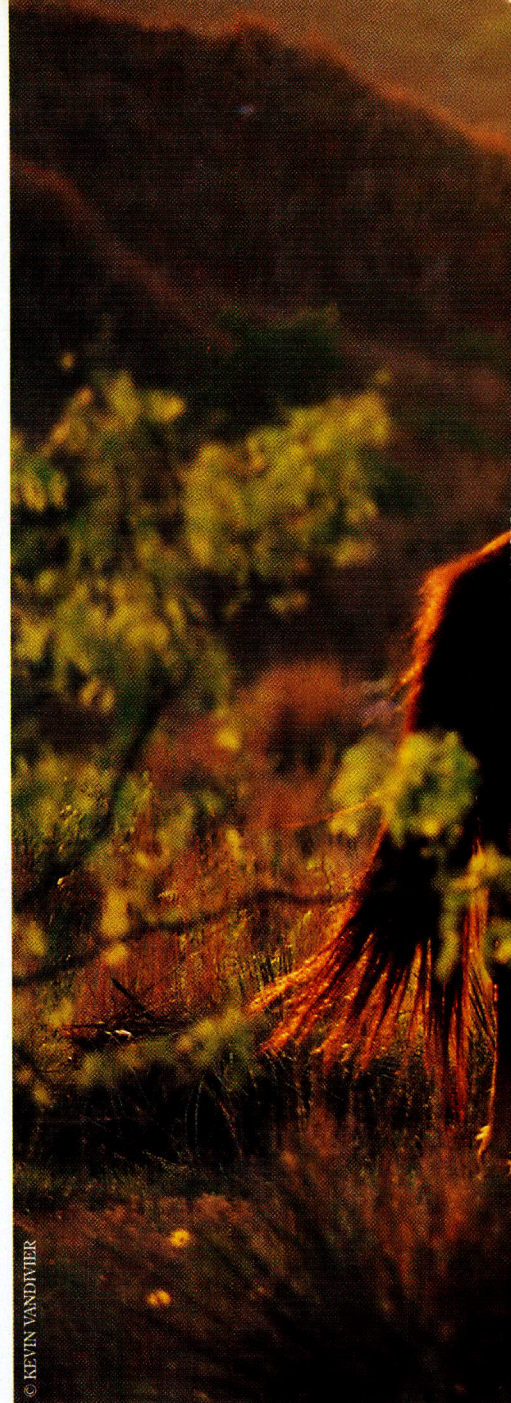
Virginia and Carolina colonists of the early 1600s crossed some of their own imported English stock with Spanish offspring, developing a breed that could run with amazing speed for short distances. They called the newcomer the "Celebrated American Quarter Running Horse"—named for the quarter-mile races that were a popular colonial pastime, with fortunes gained and lost.

As the West expanded, Quarter Horses came into Texas with the pioneer settlers and farmers. Besides being strong and good-natured, the agile animals possessed an innate "cow sense," which would prove essential in the great cattle drives that headed northward from Texas following the Civil War. The Quarter Horse served as an indispensable partner on the grueling trails. Unless cowboys had dependable, hardworking, surefooted horses, they could not control the cattle if the animals became crazed by thirst or spooked by wild animals at night. Watch just about any old cowboy movie, and you will see Quarter Horses at work.

Knowing the value of good horses, famous breeders such as William Anson, Coke Blake, George Clegg, and Bob Kleberg



Man's best friends. Orin Barnes, with equine companion Sir Thomas Jay and pooch Juel, shows riders the ropes at his Training Center in Canyon. Orin calls Quarter Horses "beautiful pieces of art"



© KEVIN VANDIVER

Time and technology have not weakened the bond between horse and cowboy. Above, Stran Smith and his hardworking partner take a break after a long day on the range near Amarillo.

helped refine the breed. Many of the bloodlines could be traced back to the "Celebrated American Quarter Running Horse." During the 1940 Southwestern Exposition and Fat Stock Show in Fort Worth, a group of ranchers and horsemen concerned about preserving pedigrees met and founded the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), reserving the Number One place in the new registry for the Grand Champion



"Everyone's life has been affected by the horse. Whether pioneer or farmer, consumer or traveler, someone, somewhere in your past, depended on this animal."

Stallion of the following year's show. As 1941 winner, Kleberg's "Wimpy" of the King Ranch earned the coveted first place in the prestigious stud book.

Today, the registry numbers nearly 4 million American Quarter Horses throughout the world. Not surprisingly, Texas claims the highest number of reg-

istered horses by far, more than 450,000.

A modern complex of buildings in Amarillo houses both the AQHA headquarters and the museum, where more than 300 employees keep the registry up to date, administer programs, prepare publications, and answer the thousands of questions that AQHA mem-

bers and other folks routinely ask.

Like so many early Texas heroes, some of the first famous Quarter Horses became the stuff of legend and song. The stallion Copper Bottom was almost as famous among horsemen as his owner, Sam Houston, who had the horse sent from *(continued on page 10)*

Amarillo's American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum

Across the facade of the American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum in Amarillo, graceful sculptures of horses and riders serve as an invitation to this entertaining and informative place of discovery. The sculptures depict skills for which America's horse is best known—roping, jumping, racing, maneuvering around barrels, and, above all, traveling the trail.

The Heritage Center offers something for every visitor, from retired cattlemen to city children who can only dream of owning a horse. A beautiful introductory film sets the mood for celebrating and learning about the animal “that made America.”

The Center's exhibits use art, artifacts, video clips, whimsical quotations, descriptive text, and interactive displays to trace the horse from its prehistoric origins to today's beloved registered Quarter Horse. Castings of fossils from 4 million years ago show the development of the hoof of “Equus.” Illustrations from Tutankhamun's tomb (1400 B.C.), the Bayeux Tapestry's depictions of the Norman Conquest, Chinese sculptures in jade and stone, and many other paintings, drawings, and sculptures tell the story of the horse through the centuries.

“It was a Barb blood spiced with a Celtic infusion and refined with a dash of Eastern blood that fashioned the present day Quarter Horse,” reads the quotation from Robert Denhardt that introduces the exhibits. You can follow the horse from its arrival on Spanish ships to the era of colonial short-racing, where the stakes could be the deed to a plantation. The timeline continues through the settling of the West and the crucial role the horse played for pioneers, and also for the great roundups and Texas cattle drives. Highlighting that era, a vintage chuck wagon seems ready to offer breakfast. You can follow a typical day in the life of a ranch horse and that of a cowboy, and find out what cattleman Lee Vernon meant when he said of a good horse, “He can do anything but count cattle.”

An extensive area devoted to today's Quarter Horse offers interactive exhibits. Folks can climb aboard life-size fiberglass



And they're off... almost. At the American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum in Amarillo, Josiah and Simeon Crow (left and right) of Mount Calm get a jockey's-eye view from behind starting gates once used at Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico.

replicas of racehorses and hunker down behind the actual starting gates used at the first All-American Futurity (the American Quarter Horse's richest event, held each Labor Day weekend at Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico). You can also compare your weight and size with those of the average jockey, or seat yourself on a genuine saddle in the Performance Theater to watch action-packed videos of ranch work, rodeos, and racing.

A specially designed Preschool Activity Center invites very young visitors and would-be cowboys and cowgirls to try on ranchwear and play equine games. A program called “A Lifetime of Fun” tells youngsters about the American Quarter Horse Youth Association (AQHYA) and its equestrian activities. Stop by a cut-away horse trailer to learn about the demands of life on the road with horses. Anyone, young or old, who has never owned a horse but feels a yearning can watch more videos and learn about the hard work involved in selecting, feeding, and grooming.

For the serious horse-enthusiast, a library holds archives for in-depth research. Elsewhere in the Center, The American Quarter Horse Hall of Fame pays tribute to more than 110 people and horses that have been instrumental in the development of the breed. Vintage photographs and video footage, as well as interactive computer exhibits, offer information on the life of each inductee.

Outside the Center, at a fenced demonstration area sponsored by Justin Boots, you can watch seasonal and specially scheduled live demonstrations and performances, such as cutting and reining (call ahead to find out what will be going on during your visit).

And no visit to the Center would be complete without a stop at Quarter Horse Outfitters. The large store and gift shop offers a wide range of souvenirs: AQHA merchandise, Western jewelry, art reproductions, foods, toys, handmade items, and other special reminders of your American Quarter Horse encounter.

—Candace Leslie

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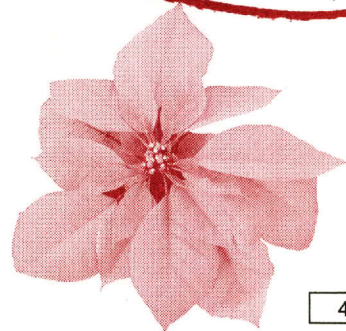
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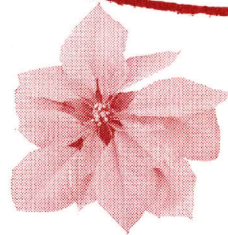
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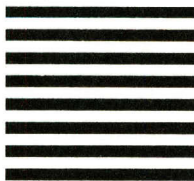
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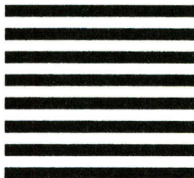
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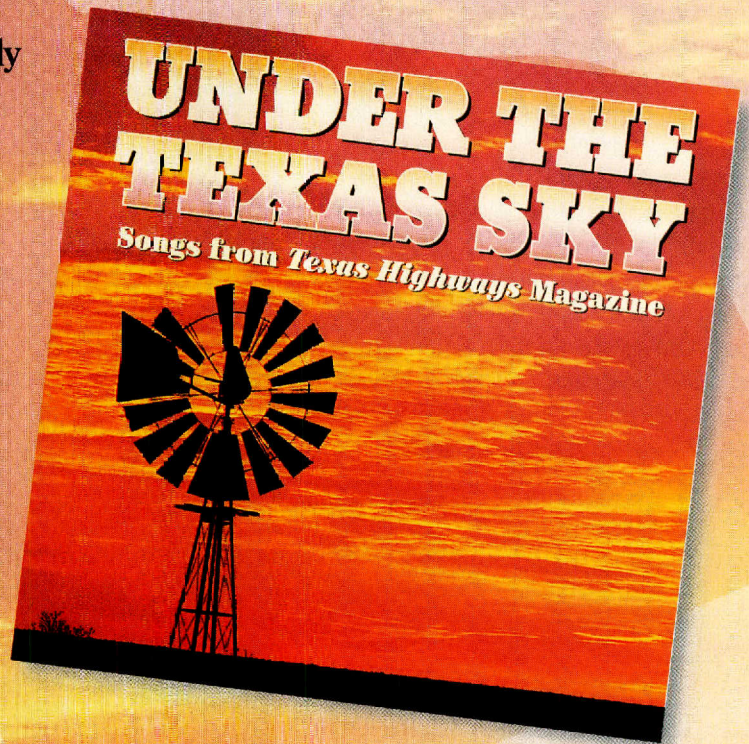
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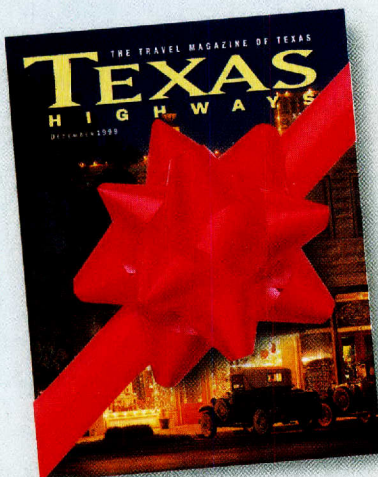


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Pennsylvania. For generations afterwards, breeders eagerly sought Copper Bottom's descendants.

The highest place in Texas Quarter Horse history, though, belongs to Steel Dust. Brought to the state from Kentucky in the 1840s, he galloped into history and lore as "the fastest short horse of his time." Steel Dust raced for only a few years before an injury reined him in, but his most famous contest, against a fast horse named Monmouth, drew such a crowd to McKinney that businesses in neighboring towns, as well as the local judicial court, shut down for the event. "Everything that wasn't nailed down went home with Steel Dust when he won from the favorite, Monmouth," wrote equine historian Robert Denhardt.

How to Spot an American Quarter Horse

So how *can* you tell if that beautiful horse out in the pasture is an American Quarter Horse?

The build is compact and heavily muscled, usually ranging from 14 to 15 hands in height (one hand = 4 inches). They come in 13 different colors, the most common being sorrel, or reddish-brown. Others may be bay, black, brown, buckskin, chestnut, dun, red dun, gray, grullo (brownish gray), palomino, red roan, or blue roan. If it has more than a very few white markings, you can bet your boots it's *not* an American Quarter Horse.

Besides its markings, its calm disposition sets it apart from most other breeds. So do its surefooted movements and quick responses to the rider's commands.

Keep your eyes open, and you will spot American Quarter Horses all across Texas.

—Candace Leslie



A love of Quarter Horses runs in the blood of the Stubbs family. From left, Reese, Russell, Corby, and Dawn (on Shorty, Levi, Sooner, and Baby) all compete in equestrian events across the state.

Following his injury, Steel Dust achieved further fame siring outstanding Quarter Horses. So desired were his progeny that Denhardt once wrote, "Every horse trader who has not recently joined a church will modestly admit that his horses are direct descendants of Steel Dust." Writer L.N. Sikes echoed Denhardt's sentiments: "So much of a reputation did Steel Dust get that, pretty soon, he began siring colts in places he'd never been." Even cowboys sang of "a Steel-dust cuttin' horse, the fastest in Texas."

Quarter Horses—or, at least, some shady owners—made reputations on the back side of the law, too. Notorious Sam Bass, showing signs of dishonesty before he turned full-fledged outlaw, once posed as a horse trainer, advising owners of slower horses to race against his own swift Denton mare, Jenny, a descendant of Steel Dust.

Over the years, the list of legendary horse-heroes grew—Shiloh, Old Billy, Cold Deck, Joe Reed, Peter McCue, and many others whose progeny still bring high prices.

Because of its versatility, the American Quarter Horse claims the distinction of most popular breed in the world. A rugged star of rodeos and short races; a performer in English dressage, show jumping, and other elegant events; and a worker on ranches and farms, the Quarter Horse today enjoys its greatest popularity with riding for fun. Whether riders are youngsters who have grown up with horses, or retirees putting foot in stirrup for the first time, their mounts will most likely be Quarter Horses.

Orin Barnes is one of those who show riders the ropes. At his Training Center in Canyon, he "trains horses to put up with people and people to put up with

American Quarter Horses



Corby Stubbs and his trusty mount close in on a calf at the family's home in Aledo.

horses," says Orin. His face reflects both a Panhandle Plains outdoor life and a quick sense of humor. "We have a BS in equine psychology," he says, with a grin, of himself and fellow trainer Beth Berggren. Orin, who began training in 1971 and judges competitions

The American Quarter Horse Heritage Center & Museum

is next to the American Quarter Horse Assn.'s international headquarters, at Interstate 40 East and Quarter Horse Dr. (exit 72A) in Amarillo. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 12-5.

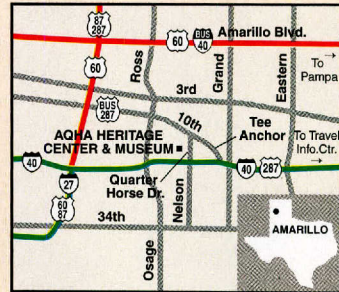
Admission: \$4, \$3.50 age 55 and older, \$2.50 ages 6-18, free age 5 and younger and for AQHA and AQHYA members. Group rates available. No admission charge to visit Quarter Horse Outfitters store. Wheelchair accessible.

Through Jan. 6, 2001, the museum presents *Horse Town*, an exhibit aimed at introducing kids to horses. Features include a farrier's stable, tack shop, veterinarian's clinic, and feed store.

For information, write to Box 200, Amarillo 79168; 806/376-5181 or 888/209-8322. Web site: www.aqha.com. Items from Quarter Horse Outfitters may be ordered by phone or online.

Events

Numerous Quarter Horse events are held across the state. Among the biggies is the AQHYA World Championship Show, held each year at Fort Worth's Will Rogers Memorial Center in early Aug. (Aug.



4-11, 2001). Call the AQHA's main number (806/376-4811) for details. This year, the MBNA America Challenge Championship races will be held on Oct. 28 at Lone Star Park in Grand Prairie. Call 972/263-7223. Web site: www.lonestarpark.com.

Quarter Horse Resources

Among Robert Moorman Denhardt's books on Quarter Horses are: *Quarter Horses, A Story of Two Centuries* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1967), *The Quarter Running Horse, America's Oldest Breed* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1979), and *The Quarter Horse*, 2nd ed. (a collection of articles; Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1982). L.N. Sikes' *Using the American Quarter Horse* (Cordova Corp., 1975) is out of print.

The AQHA publishes two magazines, *The Quarter Horse Journal* and *The Quarter Racing Journal*. Call 806/376-4811 for details.

For details on the Texas Quarter Horse Assn., write to Box 16229, Austin 78761; 512/458-5202. Web site: www.tqha.com.

The television show *GMC America's Horse* airs every Wed. at 12:30 p.m. Central Time on ESPN.

across the United States and in other countries, has seen plenty of Quarter Horses.

"They are beautiful pieces of art," he says, gazing out at several animals at work with their young owners. "And they're famous for their compatibility. They want to get along with you."

For anyone who wants to get acquainted with these amazing animals, Orin offers simple advice: "Go to a riding stable, then go out on the trail," he says. "The trail is the best for learning to ride, but if you want to hone your skills, find a trainer who does what you want to learn to do."

Orin believes riding should be fun. His philosophy of competition follows the same lines: "Everybody wants to win," he

says, "but if you don't do well at one event, there'll always be another."

The American Quarter Horse Association offers programs for members who compete in shows, rodeos, and other events, as well as for those who ride the trails for pleasure. The AQHA even has a referral service for folks looking for a horse. And for those who prefer to keep their feet on the ground, just cheering a roper and his horse at work, or quietly watching a young girl riding through sunlight across the back pasture can bring immense delight. ★

Writer CANDACE LESLIE of Bryan says, "If I could live my childhood over again, I'd fill it full of Quarter Horses."

JIM CROW of Mount Calm photographed the story on the Jersey Barnyard in the July issue.



BY RANDY MALLORY

POW WOW DANCE OF LIFE



As I walk across the parking lot, aromas of Indian tacos and fry bread tell me I'm at the right place. I pass traders selling handmade dream-catchers, jewelry, and pottery. Then I hear the drum . . . faintly at first. Not the ONE-two-three-four, ONE-two-three-four stereotype of childhood play and Hollywood westerns. More of a steady stream of beats—a strong beat, then a slightly softer one—as in the human heart.

Later, James Yellowfish, a Comanche drummer from Dallas, tells me: “The drum can seem monotonous to non-Indians, but it’s the heartbeat of the people. The spirit of the drum takes us over and makes us feel good.”

The magnetism of the sound pulls me into the powwow arena. The louder the drum, the more my steps fall into the rhythm.

In the center of the arena lie several concentric circles of activity.

At the core, six men sit around a drum that stretches nearly three feet across. They sing and pound its taut leather surface with long padded “beaters.” They work as one, almost as if part of the drum. Indeed, powwow singer-drummers and their instrument are collectively called “the drum.”

The master of ceremonies shouts, “Let’s have a good time. Everybody dance!” Around the drum flows a river of reds, yellows, pinks, browns, and blues—men, women, and children dancing clockwise in brightly colored clothing. Some swirl and leap. Others move erectly with small steps.

A long, blanket-draped bench rings the dancers, offering a place of rest between songs. Beyond that, a band of folding chairs encircles the scene, reserved for dancers’ families and friends.

Outside the powwow circle, spectators sit, mesmerized by these sights and sounds. The drumming picks up tempo, and the singing hits a high, almost scream-like pitch. Then, prompted by some signal I miss, the drumming and dancing stop abruptly.

“What does all this mean?” I wonder.

Harold Rogers of Grand Prairie whirls in a blur of bright feathers and beadwork in the Fancy Dance competition at the 2000 Quannah Parker Comanche Powwow in Fort Worth.

“One of our purposes is to teach the history and culture of America’s first inhabitants and dispel stereotypes.”

WALKS THE POWWOW TRAIL



At its noblest,
the powwow
trail nurtures
Native American
cultures—the
oral histories,
dances, songs,
and drumming
passed between
generations.

Powwow regulars call themselves “people of the circle.” They refer to the growing number of powwows held year round across Texas and the nation as the “powwow trail.”

At its noblest, the powwow trail nurtures Native American cultures—the oral histories, dances, songs, and drumming passed between generations. Monroe Tahmahkera of Dublin, Texas (a great-grandson of Quanah Parker, last chief of the Quahadi Comanches), puts it this way: “Without the powwow to teach traditions, we’ve lost what we tried to preserve all these years. Our ancestors went through a lot, so we must honor their sacrifices.”

Another Parker descendent, Dennis Wahkinney, agrees: “When I experience the songs and dances of our ancestors, a lot of pride wells up in me.” Dennis hosts a weekly American Indian music show heard in Dallas-Fort Worth on KNON-FM 89.3.

Powwows are also just plain fun. Spectators enjoy the pageantry, and participants thrive on the relaxed social atmosphere. “It’s like a family reunion,” says Billy Turpin (Muscogee [Creek]),

president of the Texas Intertribal Indian Organization, which hosts two annual powwows in Amarillo. “We call our summer powwow the ‘Homecoming,’ because people come in from all over. It’s the only time of year we see some of them.”

Some powwows are small, one-day events. Others last two or more days and draw large crowds, who come to watch top dancers compete for prize money. “Most competition dancers at the big powwows travel the country just like cowboys do on the rodeo circuit,” Billy explains.

For years, powwows also have aimed to educate non-Indians.

“One of our purposes is to teach the history and culture of America’s first inhabitants and dispel stereotypes,” notes Erwin De Luna, president of the annual United San Antonio Powwow.

Few Texas powwows teach more than the Austin Powwow and Native American Heritage Festival, held each November during American Indian Heritage month. “We ask visitors to participate, and they’re surprised. They find the experience more moving than they expected,” says one of the event’s organizers, Vince Bland (Creek-Cherokee). “We started in 1992 to help local Indian children appreciate their heritage. Now, 25,000 visitors join us each year.”

During the Austin Powwow, visitors wander in and out of the Toney Burger Center in southwest Austin. Inside, they watch dancing. Outside, they listen to traditional North American Indian storytellers and musicians and feast on Native American foods such as fry bread (tortilla-shaped fried dough) and Indian tacos (fry bread topped with beans, cheese, tomatoes, meat, and salsa). Dozens of American Indian artisans display their handmade jewelry, pottery, carvings, paintings, and the like.

Virgie Ravenhawk (Wichita-Aztec) of San Antonio travels the powwow trail playing and selling flutes made by her



Competition dancers join in as drummers and singers for Eagle Nation, an Oklahoma drum group that performs at the Quanah Parker Comanche Powwow in Fort Worth.

[FACING PAGE] A colorful feather bustle conceals a fancy dancer waiting his turn to perform at Fort Worth’s Cowtown Coliseum, where Chief Quanah Parker led a grand entry in 1908.





“Most competition dancers at the big powwows travel the country just like cowboys do on the rodeo circuit.”

brother. She also makes her version of traditional Indian spiritual items. For instance, rawhide stretched across a bow made from vines in the four directions of the compass comprises a medicine wheel. A twisted stick inlaid with precious stones, layered with beaded

deerskin, and hung with bells and feathers becomes a prayer stick.

“Those who dance do so for honor and joy. They are in prayer when they’re dancing,” says Virgie. “So, too, with my crafts. I’m nothing but a tool of the Creator.”

GOES WITH THE FLOW

All powwows begin with the grand entry, a formal procession of dancers and honored guests into the arena.

A military veteran leads the way holding the eagle staff, a tall curved rod with eagle feathers attached. A color guard of other vets follows, presenting the American and tribal flags. Then come parading dancers led by the head male and female dancers, and princesses selected to represent their tribes. The grand entry loops around the center drum until everyone is in the arena.

The drum performs a flag song, an anthem of unity and love of country. An invocation gives thanks to the Creator. Then the drum performs a memorial song (remembering ancestors) and a vic-

tory song (honoring veterans), and the vets post the eagle staff and flags.

Now, it’s time for dancing. Through lighthearted banter and clear instructions, the emcee keeps the dancing spirited and smooth-flowing.

Sometimes he exhorts, “Everybody dance!” That means intertribal dancing—open to all, including spectators in street clothes. The basic step is simple. On one drum beat, you tap the ball of one foot down, and on the next beat, you place your entire foot down. Do the same with the other foot on the next two beats. Keep it up, alternating feet as you move forward.

Spectators also may enter the arena for a blanket dance, in which you dance past a blanket on the floor and drop money on it to help with powwow expenses.

Sometimes the emcee calls for a particular dance style. Or he may call for a round dance (open to all dance styles), with men dancing close to the drum and women dancing around the men. Excitement builds when the emcee announces a competition dance. Dancers, all of the same style, vie for prize money under the watchful eyes of judges.

Powwows commonly exhibit eight to 12 dance styles. Each sports its own clothing style—referred to as regalia or outfits, but never as costumes—which vary somewhat by tribe. Dancers often make their own outfits, incorporating such natural objects as animal skins, bone, fur, and quills—plus beads, silver, and turquoise. Depending on the dance style, regalia may include necklaces, scarves, vests, chokers, breastplates, fans, shields, shawls, headbands, pouches, whistles, and bells. Not merely decorative, each component holds some cultural, spiritual, or personal significance. Most dancers wear beaded leather moccasins.

Men’s dance styles include Traditional and Straight dances, war dances that retell tales of hunt or battle. The ancient Grass Dance features regalia of long fringe or yarn swaying like prairie grass. A modern version of the war dance, the Fancy Dance usually steals the show. Dressed in flamboyant outfits billowing with feather bustles, fancy dancers spin



Dancers in traditional regalia perform at the grand entry of the Alabama-Coushatta Powwow on the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation, between Woodville and Livingston.



[CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT] A young jingle dress dancer prepares to perform at the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation. Jingle dancers must keep the rhythm of the drum, as well as the rhythm of their jingles. As he spins in a blur of resplendent feathers and beadwork, a competitive fancy dancer concentrates on his movements and the beat of the drum. A dancer at the Alabama-Coushatta Powwow explains native traditions to an attentive spectator.



“When I experience the songs and dances of our ancestors, a lot of pride wells up in me.”

and jump athletically in a blur of blindingly quick footsteps.

Two traditional women’s dances—the Buckskin Dance and the Southern Cloth Dance—embody elegance. Moving slowly, the erect dancers bob and sway, displaying pride and grace. In the Fancy Shawl Dance, an upbeat modern women’s dance, dancers move their fringed shawls

like the fluttering wings of butterflies. The most exotic (and loudest) women’s dance is the Jingle Dress Dance. With hundreds of long tubular cones (historically made of snuff can lids) sewn to their dresses, jingle dancers bounce to the beat, creating a sound like rainfall on a metal roof.

Regardless of dance style (competitive or not), dancers appreciate a good drum, says Lyndon Alec, a dancer for 25 years from the Alabama-Coushatta Reservation near Livingston. “A good steady beat with everyone singing together helps us dance well. Dancers try to learn the songs, too, because in competition dancing, if you don’t stop exactly on the final beat, you’re automatically disqualified.”

Each dance style requires not only its own regalia but also its own songs. The powwow’s center drum, or host drum, located in the middle of the arena, is often flanked by one or more visiting drums who share musical duties. Together, they know dozens or even hundreds of songs to accommodate the emcee’s requests.

Each song is different, but follows a similar format of verses and choruses. Typically written as a prayer or as a celebration or honoring of an individual or event, songs may be ancient or new. Some have words in a native language, others in English. Still others feature

“vocables,” non-language sounds such as “Ah Hey Yah Ho.”

Before the grand entry, many powwows feature gourd dancing, a dance for military veterans, says Frank Kiowa Jim Tongkeamha of Dallas, great-grandson of Kiowa Chief Stumbling Bear. Gourd dancing, Frank explains, began two centuries or more ago as the dance of the Kiowa Gourd Clan, one of several warrior societies that protected the tribe and its traditions.

Legend holds that a brave young warrior, lost in a sea of tall buffalo grass, came across a red wolf singing and dancing. Before showing him the way home, the wolf gave the warrior his song and dance. The warrior presented these gifts to his tribe, and they passed them down through many generations and even to other tribes. In honor of the red wolf, modern powwows end each round of gourd dancing with howls and a shake of dancers’ rattles.

SPEAKS OF HISTORY

Tracking powwow history can prove problematic, says Vince Bland of the Austin Powwow. Oral histories and ceremonies vary among America’s more than 500 Indian tribes, he points out, and some tribes have no powwow tradition at all. Besides, much written Indian history came from whites who misunderstood native traditions and added their own Eurocentric interpretations.

The word “powwow,” for instance, derives from the Algonquin *pau wau*, meaning a meeting of medicine men or spiritual leaders. Construed by whites to mean any Indian gathering, the term eventually became adopted as more Indians learned English.

By most accounts, the powwow evolved from religious and social ceremonies. Songs and dances often imitated animals and natural forces and held



PHOTOS © RANDY MALLORY

[ABOVE, LEFT AND RIGHT] Rex Fremont of Houston, a member of the Omaha people, displays the regalia and cherished eagle staff he and his family made. Mark Self, a Menominee from Austin, competes as a grass dancer, which requires fancy footwork, fluid body movement, and stamina.

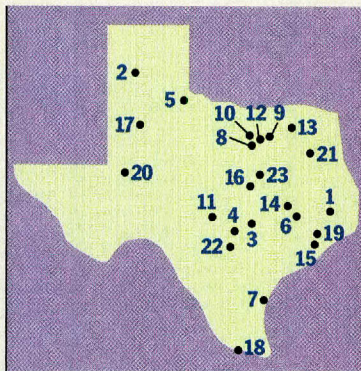
[FACING PAGE] Many Native American nations call the drum a “horse.” When a dancer “rides the horse,” he frees his mind and allows his body to become one with the power and beat of the drum, so that his spirit may travel.



Along the Powwow Trail

American Indians nurture their heritage in a powerful way virtually every month at Texas powwows. Powwows serve spiritual as well as cultural purposes, so visitors should respect the event and its participants by observing certain etiquette, often explained in powwow programs. Here are typical rules: Listen to the emcee for instructions (for example, when to stand out of respect); sit outside the arena circle reserved for dancers; enter the arena to dance only when invited by the emcee and only if dressed modestly (no shorts, tank tops, or flip-flops); take videos or photos only from outside the arena (the emcee may prohibit photos at certain times); ask permission for close-up photos of individuals; do not touch a dancer's regalia.

Listed here are Texas powwows open to the public. Admission is free or entails a nominal fee. Many powwows feature Blanket Dances in which you may contribute to help pay event expenses. Powwow vendors sell Indian-made arts, crafts, and food, typically all day long. **Times listed are for the grand entries and are approximate.** Gourd dancing normally precedes grand entry, and other events may occur throughout the day. For many powwows, you should bring your own folding chairs. Call ahead for details or



- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Alabama-Coushatta Reservation | 12 Grand Prairie |
| 2 Amarillo | 13 Greenville |
| 3 Austin | 14 Hearne |
| 4 Canyon Lake | 15 Houston |
| 5 Childress | 16 Killeen |
| 6 College Station | 17 Lubbock |
| 7 Corpus Christi | 18 McAllen |
| 8 Crowley | 19 New Caney |
| 9 Dallas | 20 Odessa |
| 10 Fort Worth | 21 Redland |
| 11 Fredericksburg | 22 San Antonio |
| | 23 Waco |

changes in dates or times. No drugs or alcohol are permitted at powwows.

September 2000

23-24: 7th annual Powwow by the Sea, Memorial Coliseum, 402 S. Shoreline, **Corpus Christi** (361/937-5335 or 883-9980). Begins Sat at 1 and 6:30, Sun at 1.

23: 6th annual Duwali (Chief

Bowles) Memorial Powwow, **Redland**, near Tyler (214/333-2322; email: eagle@airmail.net). Begins at noon. Take Texas 64 about 12 miles west of Tyler, go north on CR 4923, and look for signs.

October 2000

Sep. 30-Oct. 1: 1st annual Trans-Pecos Renewal Center Benefit Powwow, Odessa College Sports Center, 201 W. University Blvd., **Odessa** (915/536-2415 or 362-1359; Web site: www.tprc.free.servers.com/powwow.htm). Begins Sat at 1:30, Sun events from 12-6.

7-8: 5th annual Moving Waters Powwow, River Valley Resort, 14130 River Rd., **Canyon Lake** (830/964-3613). Begins Sat at 1 and 7, Sun at 1.

21: Texas Lumbee Intertribal Powwow, Eastside Park, 400 Norwood Ln., **Hearne** (409/828-4977). Begins at 1 and 6:30.

27-28: 11th annual South Texas Powwow, Brown Middle School Gymnasium, 2700 S. Ware Rd., **McAllen** (956/686-6696 or 583-1112). Begins Fri at 8, Sat at 7:30.

November 2000 (American Indian Heritage Month)

4: 9th annual Austin Powwow & American Indian Heritage Festival, Toney Burger Activity Center, 3200 Jones Rd., **Austin** (512/338-9860). Begins at 10, 1, and 6:30.

11-12: Texas Championship

Powwow, Traders Village, 7979 N. Eldridge Rd., **Houston** (281/890-5500). Begins both days at 1 p.m.

11: 8th annual Veterans Day Powwow, Kidd Springs Recreation Center, 711 W. Canty, **Dallas** (214/333-3908). Begins at 7 p.m. (Note: The powwow sponsor, American Indian Veterans Society, also holds powwows at the same location and hours on Dec. 16, 2000, Jan. 27, 2001, Feb. 24, 2001, and Mar. 24, 2001.)

11: Great American Indian Dancers, Vive Les Arts Theatre, 3401 So. W.S. Young, **Killeen** (254/699-3167; fax: 254/699-3038; Web site: www.fourwindstx.org). Begins at 3 p.m.

25: Alabama-Coushatta Childrens Powwow, **Alabama-Coushatta Reservation**, US 190 between Woodville and Livingston (936/563-4391). Begins at 7 p.m.

January 2001

20: 7th annual Greenville High School Benefit Powwow, Greenville H.S. Gymnasium, 3515 Lion's Lair Rd., **Greenville** (call Ron Shackelford at 903/457-2589). Begins at 1 and 7:30.

February 2001

9-10: Texas A&M Univ. Powwow, **College Station**. (For exact location call Dr. K.C. Williamson at 979/845-7052, or check the

sacred meanings. Some tribes gathered each summer in encampments, and others came together several times a year. The gatherings incorporated song and dance to celebrate events such as battles, harvests, or hunts; to perform religious ceremonies; and to solidify tribal unity.

Some say the modern powwow comes from late-19th-Century dancing done by Southern Plains tribes, such as the Ponca, Omaha, and Pawnee. Wild West shows of the early 20th Century employed Indians and encouraged performance-style dancing. During the late 1800s to early 1900s, the U.S. Govern-

ment tried unsuccessfully to suppress Native American culture. Gourd dancing, which is not a competition dance, almost became a lost tradition, says Frank Tongkeamha, but a handful of Kiowa elders who remembered the songs secretly revived the dance in Oklahoma during the 1930s. Warrior societies were also reestablished, and their dances welcomed Indian soldiers home from World War II.

Awareness of Native American culture rose among Indians and society in general during the civil rights era of the 1960s, and in 1978 Congress enacted the

Native American Religious Freedom Act to finally halt suppression of Indian traditions. (A law approved by Congress in June 1924 made all Indians citizens.)

Today, Native Americans celebrate their sacred ceremonial dances quietly out of public view, says Greg Howard, a Cherokee storyteller from Dallas. But public powwows—part cultural celebration, part performance event, part social gathering—continue to nurture native pride and safeguard native touchstones. Greg also emphasizes the family nature of the powwows, which welcome young and old alike, and do not allow drugs

Web site: <http://165.91.199.100/nasa>.) Begins Fri at 7, Sat at 2.

17: United San Antonio Powwow, **San Antonio** (call for location; 210/736-3702; email: nativeamerican@netscape.net). Begins at noon and 6:30.

(Note: Also in Feb., the Thunder Alliance Benefit Powwow is held at Richland College, 12800 Abrams Rd., **Dallas**. For exact date and times, contact Joe Bohanon at 817/545-9403, or visit the Web site: <http://home.flash.net/~jthunder>.)

March 2001

17: 11th annual Texas Inter-Tribal Indian Organization Benefit Powwow, Tri-State Fairgrounds, E. 10th at Grand St., **Amarillo** (806/358-3277). Begins at noon and 7.

24-25: 9th Annual West Texas Native American Assoc. Powwow, Fair Park Coliseum, Mackenzie Park, **Lubbock** (806/792-0757 or 793-5344). Begins Sat at 1 and 7, Sun at 1.

(Note: Also in late March or early April, there's the 8th annual Baylor University Benefit Powwow, Ferrell Special Events Center, 1900 S. University Parks Dr., **Waco**. Call 254/710-2371 for date and times.)

April 2001

20-21: 24th annual Texas Gulf

Coast Tia-Piah Annual Powwow, Albert Sallas Co. Park Rodeo Arena, **New Caney**, just north of Houston (713/475-0221). Begins Fri at 7, Sat at 2. Take New Caney exit (FM 1485) off US 59, and go south on the service road 1 mi. to McCleskey Rd.; go right 1 mi. to the park.

May 2001

4-5: Texas Tia-Piah Powwow, Queton Family Arena, **Crowley** (Call Clifton Queton at 817/297-3438). From Fort Worth take I-35 south to FM 1187, go west on FM 1187, and watch for signs. Begins both days at 8 p.m.

4-6: 8th annual Lords of the Plains Intertribal Powwow, Fair Park, **Childress** (940/937-2567). Go east on US 287, turn left on Commerce St., which ends at the park. Begins Fri at 8, Sat at 1 and 7, Sun at 1. Held in conjunction with the Rolling Plains Heritage Festival.

5-6: 4th annual Unity Powwow, Texas State Technical College, Murray Watson Student Center, 3801 Campus Dr., **Waco** (254/829-1415 or 829-1947). Begins Sat at 1 and 7, Sun at 1.

11-12: 3rd annual Founders Day Powwow, Fort Martin Scott, 1606 E. Main St., **Fredericksburg** (830/997-8925 or 997-9895). Begins at 7 p.m. both days.

19-20: 11th annual Honoring of the Graduates Powwow, Lubbock Memorial Civic Center, 4601 S. Loop 289, **Lubbock** (806/762-2545). Begins Sat at 2 and 6, Sun at 1.

June 2001

1-2: 33rd annual Alabama-Coushatta Powwow, **Alabama-Coushatta Reservation**, US 190 between Woodville and Livingston (936/563-4344 or 563-4391). Begins both days at 7 p.m.

16-17: Quannah Parker Comanche Powwow, Cowtown Coliseum, **Fort Worth** Stockyards National Historic District (817/625-7005). Begins Sat at 2 and 6:30, Sun at 1. Held in conjunction with the Chisholm Trail Round-Up.

August 2001

18-19: 11th annual Homecoming Powwow, Tri-State Fairgrounds, E. 10th at Grand St., **Amarillo** (806/358-3277). Begins both days at 1 and 7.

September 2001

8-10: 39th Annual National Championship Powwow, Traders Village, 2602 Mayfield Rd, **Grand Prairie** (972/647-2331). Begins Fri at 8, Sat at 1 and 7:30, Sun at 1.

15-16: 9th Annual Four Winds Powwow, Killeen Special Events Center, 3001 So. W. S. Young Dr., **Killeen** (254/699-3167; fax: 254/699-3038; Web site: www.fourwindstx.org).

Resources

Several recent books feature outstanding photos and commentary on powwows: *Powwow: Images Along the Red Road* by Ben Marra (Harry N. Abrams Publ., 1996); *We Dance Because We Can: People of the Powwow* by Don Contreras and Diane Morris Bernstein (Longstreet Press, 1996); and *Powwow Country: People of the Circle* by Chris Roberts (Meadow-lark Publ., 1998; Web site: www.powwowcountry.com).

The Pow Wow Trail: Understanding and Enjoying the Native American Pow Wow (Book Publishing Co., 1996), by Julia C. White, describes powwows, dances, and regalia (Web site: www.power-source.com/gallery/powwow). *Powwow Calendar 2000: Guide to Native American Gatherings in the U.S.A. and Canada* (Book Publishing Co., 2000) provides a nationwide schedule of powwows. Both titles are available by calling the publisher at 800/695-2241.

Two of many Web sites about powwows are www.powwows.com and <http://library.thinkquest.org/3081/index.htm>.

Each Sun from 6-8 p.m., listen to *Beyond Bows and Arrows* with Dennis Wahkinney, a program of traditional and contemporary American Indian music, aired in Dallas-Fort Worth on KNON-FM 89.3.

or alcohol. "You can see sleeping babies right behind the big drum," Greg says.

George Catlin, who gained fame as a portraitist of American Indians, first traveled west in 1832, to a Mandan village on the upper Missouri River. Of the dancing, singing, and drumming he observed there, he wrote: "... when one gives them a little attention, and has been lucky enough to be initiated into their mysterious meaning, they become a subject of the most intense and exciting interest."

After several hours at the powwow, I try to understand a little about these "mysterious meanings." My mind swims

with intense images: of respected elders dancing slowly, prayerfully. Of young fancy dancers twirling frenetically, trying to win the prize. Of Indian military veterans proudly carrying the eagle staff alongside the American flag. Of a young boy sitting at his grandfather's knee, singing his heart out, learning the songs of the drum.

Juan Mancias, a leader of the Carrizo-Comecrudo Indians in Lubbock, puts it in perspective for me: "For those of us who grew up in the Native American world, the powwow is the tip of the iceberg. You have to be part of the iceberg

to really understand. But for spectators, it's a beginning."

And an important beginning at that, adds Frank Kiowa Jim Tongkeamha: "I want people to understand what they see and hear at a powwow. If they enjoy my drumming and singing, it makes my heart happy. I know there's a bridge between them and the Indian world that wasn't there before." ★

RANDY MALLORY of Tyler has been fascinated with Native American powwows since he first attended the Crow Fair on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana more than 20 years ago.

BY JOE CRISP
PHOTOGRAPHS BY J. GRIFFIS SMITH

I GREW UP FEELING THE PRESENCE OF THE EARLY SETTLERS and walking the ground they walked upon." That's how Tillie McGill Bright (1910-1999) remembered growing up in Gonzales. Tillie's book-length memoir, *A River, a Town, and Memories*, proclaims Gonzales' proud heritage and the author's wish that it be remembered.

Many residents of this city of 6,000 on the Guadalupe River share that sentiment. Located just over an hour from both Austin and San Antonio, and two hours from Houston, Gonzales recalls the historical ambiance of a New England village and the elegant charm of a Victorian town.

In March 1836, however, Gonzales tottered on the edge of extinction. Five months earlier, when Mexican soldiers had demanded surrender of the town's cannon, the citizens replied, "Come and take it!" and fired off the first shot of the Texas Revolution. Then, when Colonel William B. Travis called for help in San Antonio, 32 Gonzales men slipped through Mexican lines to join the defenders of the Alamo. The town waited in fearful expectation until March 12, when Susannah Dickinson, a Gonzales citizen who had joined her husband at the Alamo, returned home with news of the mission's fall.

Townfolk packed their belongings and fled before Santa Anna's advancing army. Sam Houston ordered



← COME AND TAKE IT IN → GONZALES



the Texian Army, camped at Gonzales, to burn the town rather than leave it to Mexico. Citizens and soldiers moved eastward in the panicked retreat now known as the "Runaway Scrape."

After the Texian victory at San Jacinto, though, Gonzales residents returned to rebuild and to remember the epic events that took place in their town. They are still remembering today. Each October (October 6-8, 2000), they commemorate the famous cannon blast

[ABOVE] Gonzales boasts a number of beautifully restored Victorian homes-turned-bed-and-breakfasts, like the handsome Houston House, built by cattle baron W.B. Houston and his wife, Sue, in 1895.

[LEFT] Reenactors at the annual Come and Take It festival fire a replica of the cannon that started the Texas Revolution and made Gonzales the "Lexington of Texas." Entertainment at the three-day event ranges from street dances to washers tournaments.

© RICK WILLIAMS



Reflecting the Spanish influence of central plazas, Gonzales was laid out with seven squares that formed the shape of a cross. Buildings facing Confederate Square include the three-story 1896 Randle-Rather Building (far right) and the 1899 Burchard Building (second from left), both restored.

with one of Texas' most noteworthy festivals. The three-day event, called "Come and Take It," draws visitors from around the state with arts and crafts booths, tasty food, two street dances, and a parade. It also brings many Gonzales natives back to their roots. "It's like a homecoming," says former resident Jamie Schacherl, who now lives in Victoria. "That's the best part."

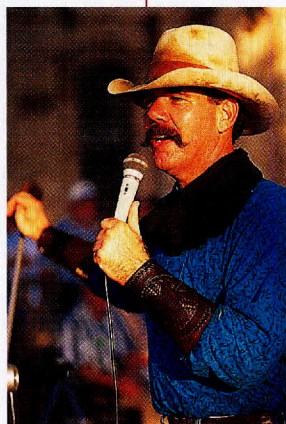
On the Saturday of "Come and Take It," some 40 reenactors, under the direction of the Crossroads of Texas Living History Association, gather at Gonzales Pioneer Village to portray the battle that made Gonzales the "Lexington of Texas." "They'll portray some of the discussion among the 1835 residents, then lead up to the battle itself," says Larry Finch, a local accountant who has been involved in the festival for many years. "We don't fire the actual cannon anymore. We use a replica." Replica or not, the cannon blast draws cheers from spectators as it again echoes across the prairie.

Tales from the Texas Revolution form the stuff of history for most Texans. But

in Gonzales, says longtime resident Sandra Mauldin, "History whispers everywhere." She should know. Her ancestor George Washington Davis Jr. hid the now-famous cannon from the Mexicans. Davis' stepson, John Gaston, fought with the "Immortal 32" who died at the Alamo.

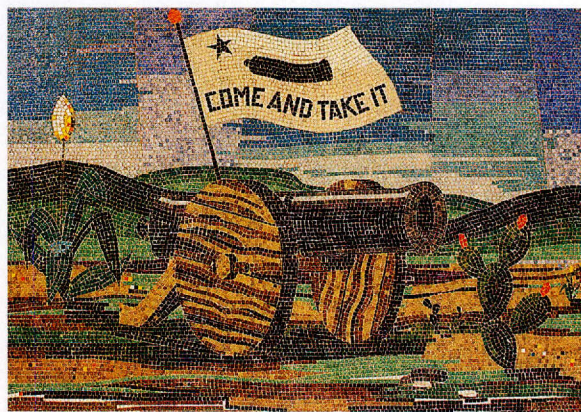
Despite her background, Sandra doesn't live in the past. Until recently, she served as the city's Main Street program director and oversaw a variety of projects that have poured more than \$8 million into renewal efforts since 1988. "We all have such deep roots here," says Sandra. "Many of us grew up looking at old letters and daguerreotypes saved by our ancestors in trunks and attics. We want to maintain and share what we have with other people."

Established in 1825 as the capital of empresario Green DeWitt's colony, Gonzales first attracted settlers with its rich, rolling farmland and ready supply of



© RICK WILLIAMS

EACH OCTOBER,
GONZALES RESIDENTS
COMMEMORATE THE
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TEXAS REVOLUTION
WITH ONE OF THE
STATE'S MOST NOTE-
WORTHY FESTIVALS,
"COME AND TAKE IT."



[ABOVE] A large ceramic tile mosaic on the exterior of the Municipal Building depicts the famous cannon and the town's pride in its heritage.

[ABOVE LEFT] Cowboy poet and storyteller Dennis Gaines of San Antonio tells tall tales to a receptive audience at a recent Come and Take It festival.



[ABOVE AND RIGHT] Built in 1875 by Thomas H. Spooner as a wedding gift for his bride-to-be, today's Spooner-Reese Bed and Breakfast features a handcarved walnut staircase and a revolving stained-glass window inside. Noel Reese, co-owner of the inn, has restored several other old buildings in town.

[TOP, RIGHT] A former bed and breakfast, the 1883 Twin Oaks Inn now offers a gracious setting for parties, wedding receptions, and other special occasions (306 St. Paul; 830/672-9145).

water. Having survived the uncertain early days, when Indian attacks and the war with Mexico threatened its existence, Gonzales by the turn of the 20th Century had become an important center of commerce, cattle, and cotton. In those days, the money flowed, and prosperous citizens built many of the large Victorian homes that line the town's tree-shaded streets.

Gonzales opens many of those gracious residences during its annual celebrations. Historic homes tours highlight both Springfest and Winterfest (three house-museums are open for tours year round). A number of the homes have been beautifully restored, and feature antique furnishings, wide staircases, and lavish use of

mahogany, walnut, and pine in paneling, stairways, and mantels. The candlelight tour during Winterfest, held the first weekend of December (December 2-3, 2000) takes visitors back to pre-electricity Christmas holidays.

One of the oldest homes in town, the 1883 Twin Oaks Inn (formerly a B&B), offers settings for wedding receptions and other special events. Frederick E. Ruffini, designer of many early Texas courthouses, drew the plans for this elegant house, which has two massive, 450-year-old oak trees in the front yard. An upstairs bedroom features 1850s Belgian furnishings, and an unusual chandelier of deer antlers overhangs the richly appointed gentleman's parlor, which looks out onto an expansive patio.

Gonzales' growing bed-and-breakfast

upstairs offers four guest bedrooms furnished with antiques dating from the Civil War to the end of the Victorian era—but also with cable TV and VCRs.

"More and more people are coming here to experience the small-town way of life, and to see the houses," says innkeeper Gene Smith.

Along with specialty breakfasts of Bavarian pancakes and cinnamon-raisin French toast, Gene also serves up a heaping helping of history. A former state archeologist, Gene loves to show guests around town in his 1941 Packard. "See that house over there?" he'll say, pointing to what appears to be an ordinary residence. "It dates to the Civil War."

A few blocks away from the Houston House, the spacious rooms of the St. James Inn recall the days of the cattle

barons. Built in 1914 by rancher Walter Kokernot, the restored mansion offers rooms twice the size of typical Victorian-style houses. The five-course gourmet breakfasts may include tropical fruit, English scones, quiche, or omelets, but one of the standards is lively conversation with hosts Rew and Ann Covert, who live on the premises and enjoy interacting with their guests. "One of my specialties is telling people about the history of Gonzales," says Rew. "I really have fun when guests are from out of state." Since opening the St. James in 1989 as Gonzales' first B&B, the Coverts have had guests from all over the United States, as well as from 17 foreign countries.

GONZALES' GREATEST ATTRACTIONS ARE ITS UNDERSTATED SMALL-TOWN CHARM AND ITS UNCONTRIVED SENSE OF HISTORY.

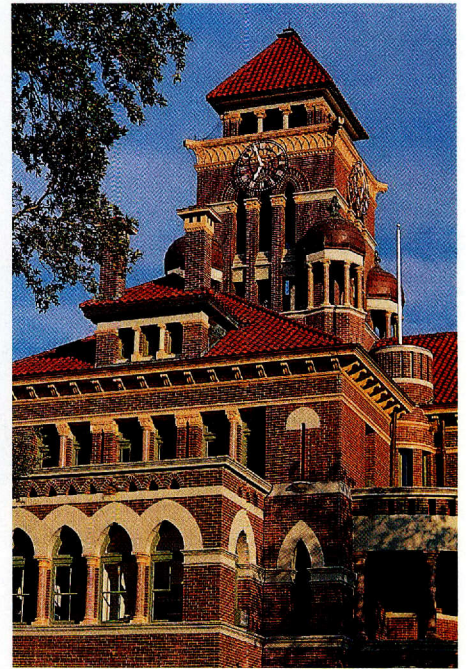
Other lodging choices include the 1913 Boothe House, near Confederate Square, which features an extensive garden of antique roses, in keeping with the era of the house. The Apothecary Bed and Breakfast overlooks downtown's Texas Heroes Square. The Spooner-Reese Bed and Breakfast, a restored 1875 mansion, offers four upstairs bedrooms furnished with period pieces, and four porches from which to view the expansive, oak-shaded grounds.

Noel Reese and his wife, Kerry, run the Spooner-Reese. Noel, an energetic attorney who grew up here and now practices law near downtown, embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that built Gonzales' first great era of prosperity. He has bought several abandoned buildings in the downtown area and tagged them for restoration. "My first goal is to make Gonzales one of the top five history-tourism destinations in the state," says Noel. "After that, one of the top destinations in the nation."

Gonzales offers plenty to enjoy right now, however. Confederate Square, downtown, is a good place to start. The Old Jail Museum, on the south side of the square, preserves the building that

served as the city jail from 1887 to 1975. The first floor houses a local law enforcement museum and the chamber of commerce, and the second-story cellblock gives a graphic history lesson in Texas justice. "Restored" is perhaps not the word for this structure—it looks as though the prisoners left just yesterday. Grim rows of iron-barred cells cluster around a massive, reconstructed gallows. If you're so inclined, you can climb the steps and stand on the platform beneath the hangman's noose.

From the jail's south windows, look up at the courthouse clock—just as prisoner Albert Howard did while he awaited the noose in 1921. According to local legend,



Designed by J. Riely Gordon, the 1894 Romanesque Revival-style Gonzales County courthouse sparkles from its recent \$3.2 million restoration.



The Old Jail Museum contains a replica of the former gallows and the original, iron-barred "death cells" that faced it. The layout must have given condemned prisoners plenty to contemplate. One of the jail's regular cells once held John Wesley Hardin.



A reflecting pool fronts the Gonzales Memorial Museum, one of nine museums built across the state in honor of the Texas Centennial.

Howard declared as he was hanged that the clock would never again keep correct time, and many locals say he was right.

The courthouse itself is well worth a tour. A \$3.2 million restoration project, completed in 1999, has returned the 1894 red brick, Romanesque Revival-style building to its original splendor. The beautifully restored courtroom, with its surrounding balcony, could have served as a movie set for the trial scenes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

The J.B. Wells House, at 823 Mitchell Street, was built in 1885 and purchased by the Wells family in 1890. Members of the family lived in the home until the early 1960s. In 1999, the family donated the handsome structure to the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, Inc. as a house-museum. Managed by the Gonzales chapter of the DRT, the home opens for tours on Saturdays. (The chapter also manages the reconstructed 1840s Eggleston House on St. Louis Street.)

On the northern edge of town, Gonzales Pioneer Village recalls life on the Texas frontier. The collection of restored 19th-Century buildings includes log cabins, a blacksmith shop, and a church. Pioneer Village is open throughout the year, but during Winterfest and the Come and Take It festival, it comes vibrantly to life with demonstrations of broom-making, butter-churning, and other frontier skills.

A short drive east of town leads to the

1843 Braches House, located on the site where the fleeing Texian Army stopped to rest in 1836. Sarah Ashby McClure Braches, whose life is chronicled in the historical novel *True Women* by Janice Woods Windle, remembered seeing Sam Houston sitting on his horse under a live oak tree here. Sarah and her second husband, Charles Braches, built the Greek Revival-style plantation house. Restored several years ago by Fletcher and

Jane Johnson, the Braches House opens for tours several times a year and by appointment. Visitors can stroll beneath the spreading boughs of the very tree—called the Sam Houston Oak—under which the great general rested. A quarter-mile path through an adjacent pasture leads to the McClure-Braches Cemetery, where Sarah is buried.

Nine miles southwest of town on Texas 97 lies the site of the Battle of Gonzales, which ignited the Texas Revolution in 1835. A large granite marker with a detailed bas-relief stands near the site at the community of Cost. A short drive leads to the Guadalupe River: Somewhere among the trees along the riverbank, the famous first shot was fired.

Back in town, visitors can shop for treasures in the city's many antique shops. "Gonzales has become an antique mecca," says Barbara Crozier, owner of Laurel Ridge Antiques, a store offering American Victorian items. (The store also contains a holiday shop where you can buy Christmas decorations year round.) Just down the street, Bowden's Antiques specializes in high-quality French furniture and chandeliers, both from around the turn of the 20th Century. "We also carry American antiques," says owner Connie Bowden.

Violet's Treasures offers one of the largest collections of furniture and gift items in Gonzales. Situated inside an 80-year-old, 10,000-square-foot building, the

unusual store sells antiques and collectibles, appliances, tools, and pottery. Owners Cheryl and Roy Humphries also display Roy's collection of animal mounts—including a standing, 10-foot Kodiak bear.

Still, Gonzales' greatest attractions are its understated small-town charm and its uncontrived sense of history. Mary Bea Arnold, curator of the Gonzales Memorial Museum, sees to it that history is not forgotten. She tends to the museum's colorful collection of exhibits, which depict local history from Native American days to the present.



The Gonzales Memorial Museum showcases the little cannon that could: a small, iron salute cannon that many think started Texas on the road to independence.

The museum's centerpiece is an iron cannon that many believe fired the Texas Revolution's famous first shot. The cannon, found near Gonzales after a major flood in 1936, is surprisingly small, considering the role it may have had in such a great revolution. But, as with the city itself, size is deceptive.

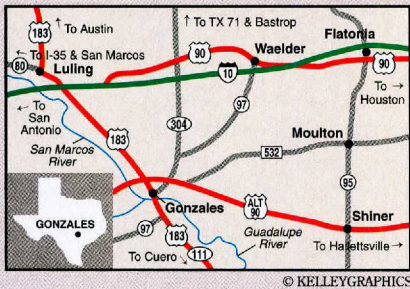
Tillie Bright need not have worried about people remembering Gonzales. Whether they are natives who trace their ancestry to the Texas Revolution, or visitors who come for a weekend, people delight in this historic gem on the Guadalupe. ★

Writer JOE CRISP hails from Victoria. This is his first feature story for *Texas Highways*.

Staff photographer GRIFF SMITH shot the story on dude ranches in the June issue.

Gonzales

Gonzales, seat of Gonzales County, is about 60 miles south of Austin on US 183, about 70 miles east of San Antonio on Alt. US 90, and about 150 miles west of Houston on Alt. US 90. For a visitors' packet (includes driving tour and historic homes brochures) and information on events, lodging, and restaurants, write to the Gonzales Chamber of Commerce, 414 St. Lawrence St., 830/672-6532 or 888/672-1095. **Gonzales' area code is 830; its zip code is 78629.** All sites are wheelchair accessible unless otherwise noted.



© KELLEYGRAPHICS

Events

Courthouse Trade Days, featuring food, music, and commerce, takes place from 9-5 on the last Sat. of Apr., May, and July, and the first Sat. of Dec. Some 50 booths on Courthouse Square and Confederate Square offer arts and crafts and collectibles.

Three annual festivals celebrate the town's heritage. Most activities are wheelchair accessible; call the chamber of commerce for details.

"Come and Take It," the biggest festival, is held the first weekend in Oct. (Oct. 6-8, 2000). The 3-day event includes a parade, a carnival, food booths, 2 street dances, musical entertainment, tournaments (softball, volleyball, horseshoes, washers, and bridge), and a historical program. The highlight of the weekend, the reenactment of the famous first shot of the Texas Revolution, takes place on Sat. at Gonzales Pioneer Village (see column 3). Admission: Free, except for street dances (\$7 per person) and events at Gonzales Pioneer Village.

Springfest, held the last weekend in Apr. (Apr. 28-29, 2001), features a Historic Homes Tour, a historical program, Courthouse Trade Days (see above), and a Dutch Oven Cookoff at Gonzales Pioneer Village. Admission: Free, except for homes tours (\$3 per home) and events at Gonzales Pioneer Village (\$5, \$3 ages 6-8, free age 5 and younger; includes sampling of cookoff dishes).

Winterfest begins on the Sat. after Thanksgiving and continues through Dec. (Nov. 25-Dec. 31, 2000). On the beginning Sat., Gonzales Pioneer Village holds its Fall Festival and offers demonstrations of frontier skills such as broom-making, butter-churning, and quilting. The Historic Homes Tour, held the first weekend in Dec. (Dec. 2-3, 2000), is a candle-light tour, with homes displaying period Christmas decorations. Other events include a Texas history authors' presentation and Courthouse Trade Days, both on the first Sat. in Dec. (Dec. 2, 2000). Throughout Winterfest, celebrants can drive the city's Trail of Lights. Admission: Free, except for events at Gonzales Pioneer Village (see column 3) and homes tours (\$3 per home).

Museums and Historical Sites

Gonzales Memorial Museum, at 414 Smith St., displays the cannon that many believed fired the first shot in the Texas Revolution. Hours: Tue-Sat 10-noon and 1-5, Sun 1-5. Admission: Free; donations accepted. Call 672-6350.

The Old Jail Museum, at 414 St. Lawrence St. (just south of Confederate Square in downtown Gonzales), is in a former jail. A local law enforcement museum and the chamber of commerce office are downstairs. Upstairs, visitors can view the cells in their original condition, as well as a replicated gallows. Hours: Mon-Fri 8-5, Sat 9-4, Sun 1-4. Admission: Free; donations accepted. Not wheelchair accessible. Call 672-6532.

Gonzales Pioneer Village Living History Center, on Bus. US 183, about 1.5 miles north of Courthouse Square, is a collection of restored 19th-Century homes and buildings. Hours: Sep-May, Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5; Jun-Aug, Fri 10-4, Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5. Admission: \$3, \$2.50 age 60 and older, \$1.50 ages 12-17, free age 11 and younger. Hours may vary during winter months; call 672-2157 to confirm hours or to make reservations for group tours. Buildings not wheelchair accessible.

The 1843 **Braches House**, about 8 miles east of Gonzales, is just off Alt. US 90 on CR 361. The Sam Houston Oak is on the grounds. Hours: Open for tours from 2-6 on the last Sat. of Apr.,



At Gonzales Pioneer Village, **Dirty Lil**, aka Lillian Fortune, enjoys telling stories about frontier times.

May, and July; the first Sat. and Sun. of Oct.; the first Sat. and Sun. of Dec.; and by appt. (call 800/892-0214 or the chamber of commerce). Admission: \$3, \$1 age 11 and younger. Not wheelchair accessible.

The **J.B. Wells House** is at 823 Mitchell St. Hours: Sat 10-12 and 2-4, and by appt. for groups of 10 or more (call 672-3309 to arrange group tours). Admission: \$2.50. Not wheelchair accessible.

The reconstructed **Eggleston House**, on St. Louis St., behind the Gonzales Memorial Museum, is the oldest structure in Gonzales. The 1840s dogtrot cabin was the first home built after the Runaway Scrape. Hours: Same as those at Gonzales Memorial Museum. Admission: Free. Not wheelchair accessible. Call 672-6350.

Civil War buffs can clamber up the earthen remains of **Fort Waul**

(adjacent to Gonzales Pioneer Village), built by the Confederate Army in 1863 as a defense against a Union attack that never came.

Antiques

Laurel Ridge Antiques, 827 St. Joseph St. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 1-4. Call ahead for wheelchair assistance. Call 672-2484 or 800/951-9518.

Bowden's Antiques, 620 St. Joseph St. Hours: Mon-Tue 9:30-5:30, Thu-Sat 9:30-5:30, Sun 1:30-5:30. Closed Wed. Call 672-7770.

Violet's Treasures, 712 St. Joseph St. Hours: Mon-Sat 9:30-6. Call 672-9744 or 800/933-9744.

Bed and Breakfasts

A number of historic homes offer accommodations, including **The Houston House**, at 621 E. St. George (888/477-0760; Web site: www.houstonhouse.com); **St. James Inn**, at 723 St. James (672-7066; Web site: www.stjamesinn.com); **Apothecary Bed and Breakfast**, at 301½ St. Lawrence (512/301-3455; email: kathleen@ecpi.com); **Boothe House**, at 706 St. George (672-7509 or 877/245-0011; Web site: www.bbonline.com/tx/boothehouse); and **Spooner-Reese Bed and Breakfast**, at 207 St. Francis (877/672-4422; Web site: www.spooner-reese.com).

Palmetto State Park

Named for the dwarf palmetto, a species of palm tree native to the region, **Palmetto State Park** lies 12 miles north of town on US 183. Visitors can camp, picnic, hike, swim, and fish in the San Marcos River. Write to Park Mgr., Rt. 5, Box 201; 672-3266. For reservations, call Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. at 512/389-8900 (Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us).

Books

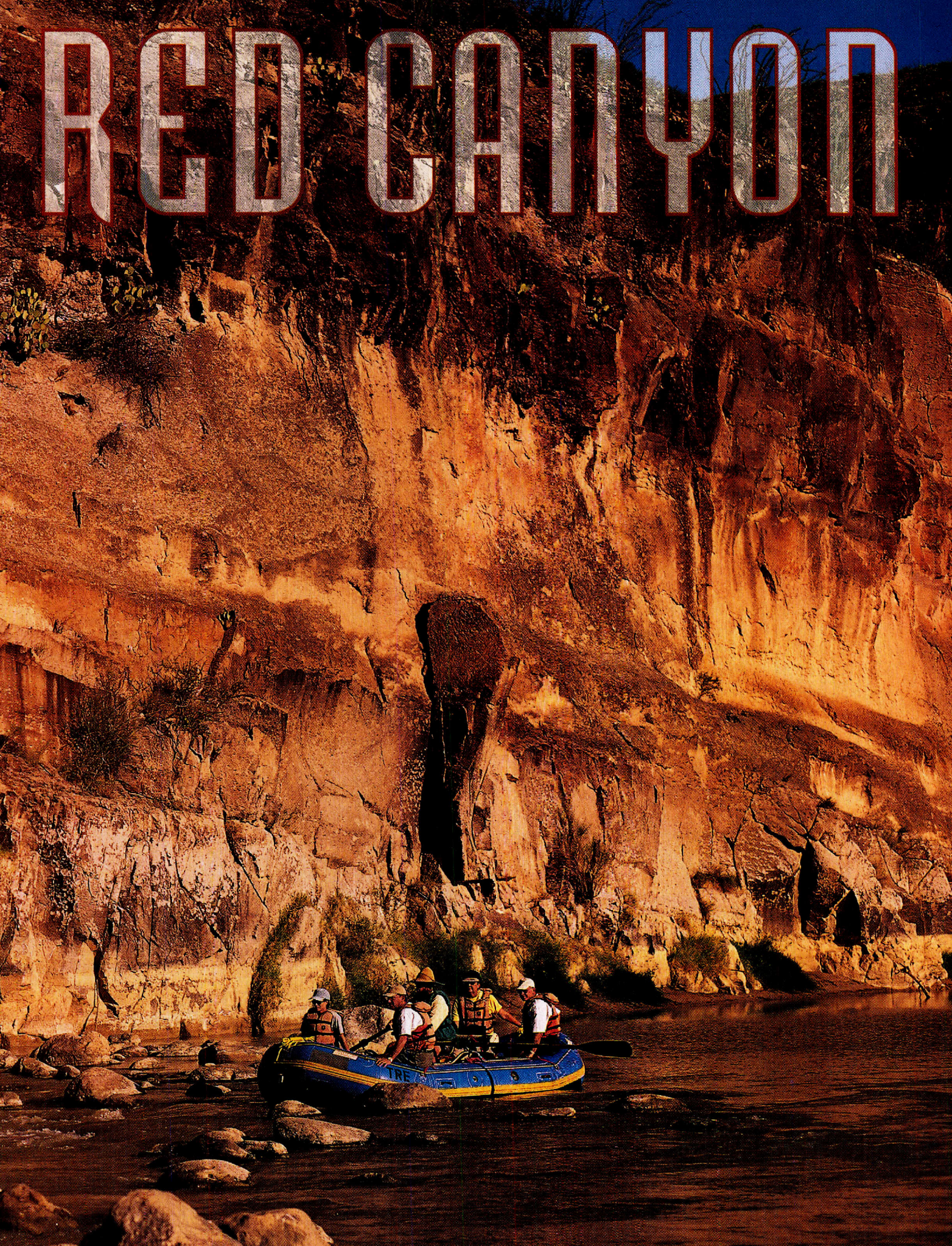
While you're in Gonzales, look for Tillie McGill Bright's memoir, *A River, a Town, and Memories* (1998), and *Historic Homes of Gonzales* by Paul Frenzel (Reese's Printing, 1999) at the chamber of commerce, as well as at many shops in town. You can order either book (\$10 each, plus tax, shipping, and handling) by calling the chamber of commerce.

COLORADO CANYON

RAFTING THE

BY JANET R. EDWARDS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHAN MYERS

RED CANYON



AS THE MORNING SUN bursts above the rugged Bofecillos Mountains in the West Texas badlands of Big Bend, it ignites the face of a richly hued, almost hidden canyon. Moving slowly, the amber illumination flows down like honey, penetrating the cracks and crevices composed of lava and ash. Nearing a rocky base, the light glitters off the surface of a narrow stretch of the silt-laden Rio Grande, the waterway that gouges through the area's great igneous mountains as it has for millions of years.

In some spots, the river runs deep and silently through a gorge framed by giant volcanic blocks and eroded columns. In other places, multitudes of large, polished boulders lie awash in pleasant palisades of whitewater, blocking the rio's path. This 14-mile section of the river, known as Colorado (Spanish for reddish or ruddy) Canyon, boasts vertical cliffs and cactus-studded hillsides notable not so much for their towering heights as for their kaleidoscopic, rough-hewn textures in shades of red, black, brown, and amber.

Situated along the U.S.-Mexican border in the heart of Big Bend Ranch State Park, the canyon sits in wild, sweet desolation. Yet, on most early mornings the silhouettes and shadows reveal people shuffling along a sandy stretch of the riverbank, carrying inflatable rafts that, despite their hefty size, are dwarfed by the canyon's steep walls. These visitors, having traveled many hundreds of miles to come here, are preparing to explore what is considered by many to be Texas' most beautiful river canyon.

"Colorado Canyon was my very first river trip on the Rio Grande 15 years ago," says Jan Forte, a former guide and now co-owner of Big Bend River Tours, based in Lajitas. "Though I've been through all five of the canyon systems in Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park, Colorado Canyon is still my favorite. It has gorgeous colors you won't see in other canyons, and the scenery changes around each meander of the river. Add to that a lot of splashy rapids [the most found on any Texas Rio Grande float trip] and you've got the recipe for some great fun."

[RIGHT] A grand view of the Rio Grande as seen from Big Hill.

[PREVIOUS SPREAD] Rafters on the Rio Grande negotiate a set of rapids as they course through Colorado Canyon.







SOON, THE RIVER settles down, sliding like a silver snake past water-worn rocks, eroded hillsides, and sheer cliffs. Eager chatter gives way to whispers, then a pleasant silence, testimony to the majestic scenery.

This compelling, secluded landscape owes its existence to two great forces: ancient volcanic unrest in West Texas and a relentless, wild river intent upon eroding these stunning mountains and sending them into the Gulf of Mexico, about 900 river miles away.

Some 25 to 30 million years ago, the land now known as the Texas Big Bend exploded in clouds of searing ash and streams of molten lava. Driven through vents and fissures by enormous pressures deep within the earth, these incandescent materials solidified, forming the Sierra Rica and Bofecillos Mountains, as well as other gargantuan geologic features, most of which have since been worn away by freezing, thawing, wind, and rain.

Since that time, water draining from highlands in what is now Colorado and New Mexico has traversed the path of least resistance as it flowed to the sea, creating a torrential river that eventually carved a series of gorges, hillsides, and flood plains through layers of igneous and limestone substrata—a meandering waterway we now call the Rio Grande.

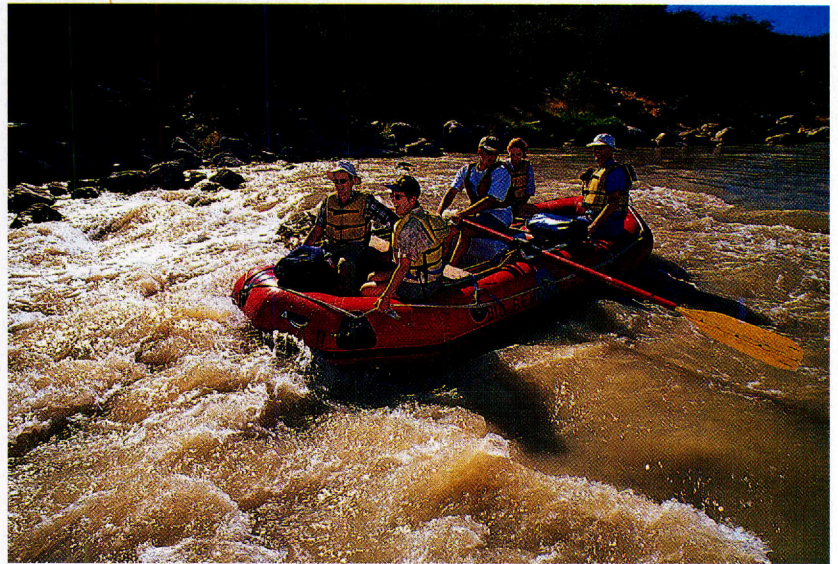
To explore this remote stretch of the river, you can bring or rent your own flotilla, but rafters must obtain a permit through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Many folks opt for a one-day trip with one of five experienced outfitters based in the tiny communities that dot the Big Bend region: Terlingua, Lajitas, and Study Butte. Should you choose to spend more than one day and camp beneath the stars, these professional guides provide everything you need, except personal effects and bedding.

With vans loaded by midmorning—passengers and trailers piled high with boats and gear—our journey to Colorado Canyon begins with a drive to the Rancherías river access point, a sandy, shallow-water boat launch off FM 170, 23 miles west of Lajitas. While the guides assemble and load the rafts, passengers crane their necks to see the crest of canyon walls soaring several hundred feet overhead on the Mexican side of the river. Though the walls may seem intimidating, their rugged reflec-

tion gently undulates in the surface of the river, lulling the mind to a state of profound tranquility.

After a safety talk and a check of everyone's life vest, we board the raft, which, for all its sturdy utility, looks and feels as comfy as a good old tennis shoe. Guests find a seat atop the boat's inflated gunwales aft and forward, while our guide grabs the oars at midship and heads downstream.

In minutes, rippling waters splash against the raft bottom just enough to make passengers realize they're now afloat, and our hearts pound a little harder at the sight of deeper rapids just ahead. As the river's turbulence surrounds the boat, the guide maneuvers us past scores of giant boulders. Yet sometimes the craft can't avoid an encounter, bouncing off a rock's slippery surface like a bumper car, then spinning full circle. The excitement of the rocky ride keeps even neophyte "river rats" hollering for more.



Panther Rapids offers the longest stretch of whitewater on the trip.

Soon, the river settles down, sliding like a silver snake past water-worn rocks, eroded hillsides, and sheer cliffs. Eager chatter gives way to whispers, then a pleasant silence, testimony to the majestic scenery. Red-eared slider turtles, sprawled along the bank, lift their heads toward the sun. Hungry catfish prowl beneath underwater boulders and in the shade of overhanging river cane, prompting some passengers to wish for fishing gear.

About midmorning, our guide pulls off the river so we can stretch our legs with a short hike through Corral Canyon. In the shade of this canyon, drafts of cooler air kiss your face, neck, and arms as you crunch across the pebbles of a dry stream bed at the base of the narrow passage. Farther on, the canyon walls disappear, giving way to a sprawling, mountain desert dotted with the relics of an old stone corral.

Back on the river, the sun rises higher. With good weather and water conditions, the guide will often stop for lunch along a sandy bank near a *tinaja*, an eroded, natural basin formed near the base of a cliff. While the guide prepares the meal, passen-

[FACING PAGE] Morning light strikes the canyon's face and the boulder-strewn river.



In late October, even the desert develops autumn foliage. Colorful leatherstem, strawberry cholla, and cholla cacti accent the Colorado Canyon landscape.

gers can explore the tinaja, where collected rainwater nurtures small fish and dense growths of tall grasses. Horizontal stripes of silt ripple along the walls of the basin and lead the eye upward, where haunting, almost surrealistic shapes in the rock record eons of erosion. Hunger pains soon remind us to turn back toward the river, and by the time we arrive, a spread of delicacies, pickles, tomatoes, salad, chips, dips, and cookies lies fresh and ready for rapid consumption.

Within an hour or so, the river's cool waters beckon us to resume our odyssey. With the afternoon sun bearing down, some rafters can't resist sliding overboard to swim or float alongside the raft. Near the base of the cliffs, layers of smooth, silt-covered rock gradually give way to stones of deeper texture and color, rising toward the canyon lip in angular slabs and crevices so dark and foreboding you might wonder if they harbor hidden caverns once occupied by ancient tribes of hunter-gatherers.

Soon, the canyon walls fall away to rolling grasslands populated with prickly pear, strawberry cholla cacti, creosote bush, and tall, buggy-whip stems of cholla. Yet a dense, verdant ribbon of grasses and river cane flourish along the banks here, creating a veritable oasis in the midst of the harsh, uncompromising desert. The birders among us spend a lot of time peering through binoc-

ulars along this stretch of the river, hoping to glimpse golden eagles, peregrine falcons, and canyon wrens, three of the 400 or so species that frequent the Big Bend region over the year.

By midafternoon, just as we're about to nod off for a brief nap, the call rings out: "Panther Rapids!" Here comes the best rough-water ride of the journey.

"Panther Rapids are a good example of why Colorado Canyon rafting is ideal for families with kids as young as five, because the shoreline is close by and the water is shallow," says Gay Davidson, co-owner of Far Flung Adventures, based in Terlingua. "Children love this trip because it offers lots of splashy rapids, but their parents love it because it's not only serene and beautiful, but safe as well."

Fully energized by the river's eloquent, white-water encore, we gaze up in awe once again, this time at a pair of cliff faces so gargantuan they appear to defy gravity. Composed of igneous slabs, blocks, and columns the color of incandescent charcoal, these jagged walls, called Dark Canyon, rise on both sides of the river some 500 to 600 feet to form the precipitous Big Hill. For people who might be looking down at the river due west from FM 170, called the River Road, (where it ascends the Big Hill's

steep slope), the approaching raft appears as a mere speck. Meanwhile, we river riders soon pass into the canyon and are swallowed in a shadow so cool and deep it feels like floating in a subterranean cavern.

Before long, beyond Dark Canyon, the scenery reopens to a luxuriant flood plain that quickly yields to a sun-baked, mountainous desert. If you watch the Texas side of the river for the next half mile, you may spot three teepees at a rest area east of the Big Hill. A bit farther on, we encounter the last rapids of the journey, a boulder outwash from Madera Creek that speeds you along to the take-out point at Madera access (if the river is low), or to a spot about three miles downstream called Grassy Banks (if the river is high).

When the raft comes to its final rest on the river bank, we reboard the vans to return to headquarters. Traveling back toward Lajitas on the River Road, my mind is filled with visions of the journey's beginning, when the sun traced the tale of time on Colorado Canyon's walls in colors so radiant you could almost feel their warmth. The whispered secrets of the Rio Grande may remind you of your own frailty in the grander scheme of things, or perhaps more poignantly, you come to appreciate the miracle of this gorgeous canyon's very existence in the sublime and forbidding Big Bend landscape. ★

Longtime *Texas Highways* contributors JAN EDWARDS and STEPHAN MYERS covered the Piney Woods in last month's Texas Travel Special. They encourage you to experience the thrills of a Big Bend raft trip down the Rio Grande.

Rafting Colorado Canyon

To hear the roar of the Rio Grande and soak up the colors of Colorado Canyon, plan your trip with care and call ahead for reservations. The Big Bend rafting business' busiest season is during spring and fall, but winter and summer also sing delightful river songs to those who come prepared for possible temperature extremes. A wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses,

and sunscreen are recommended year round, along with comfortable, fast-drying clothes (either loose-fitting or layered, as the season dictates). Stout rubber sandals or canvas tennies (that you don't mind getting wet) serve well as river shoes, while a hooded, waterproof parka may come in handy for warding off a chilly wind. If you plan to stay overnight, be sure to bring along your sleeping bag and linens, or arrange to rent these essential items from the tour company. Along with food, drinking water, and emergency first-aid supplies, moisture-proof boxes are provided by river guides for any gear you don't want to get wet. Be sure to bring a camera, as well as binoculars, swimsuit, journal, or fishing gear, depending on your recreational interests.

Tour Information

At least five experienced, professional river tour companies in the Big Bend region are glad to serve your needs with a varied, imaginative assortment of tours spanning half a day to a week or more, according to available time, number of guests, and river levels. Longer trips offer the option of guided hikes through numerous canyons that vein away from the Rio Grande at various points, offering guests a chance to explore in greater detail the region's natural history and geology.

With advance notice, **specialty tours** can be booked, which may include star parties (some tour companies provide night trips when there is a full moon), gourmet meals (see *For the Road*, page 54), musical entertainment, trail rides,



photography and naturalist workshops, and/or survival training as part of your itinerary. If river levels fall or if guests prefer, canoes or paddle rafts (where the river guide acts as team leader for a group of paddlers) may be substituted for oar rafts (where the guide does all the work).

Arrangements (which include transportation services) can also be made for visitors who wish to pilot their own raft or canoe, as water conditions and guest experience permit. **Day trips** (the most popular tour length for Colorado Canyon) cost roughly \$100 to \$150 per person, depending on group size and chosen itinerary.

Major tour companies include: **Big Bend River Tours**, Box 317, Lajitas 79852, 800/545-4240 or 915/424-3219, www.bigbendrivertours.com; **Far Flung Adventures**, Box 377, Terlingua 79852, 800/359-4138, www.farflung.com; **Texas River and Jeep Expeditions**, Box 583, Terlingua 79852, 800/839-7238 or 915/371-2490, www.texasriver.com; **Rio Grande Adventures**, Box 229, Terlingua 79852, 800/343-1640; and **Desert Sports**, Box 448, Terlingua 79852, 888/989-6900, www.desertsportstx.com.

If you plan to bring your own equipment, be sure to obtain a permit from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at the **Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center** in Lajitas. Rangers will evaluate your experience level and inspect your equipment, which should include a life jacket for each person, a pump and a patch kit (for

rafts), a bailing bucket, extra paddles, and a metal fire pan or gas stove for cooking. Portable toilets are recommended, along with a first-aid kit, and an ample supply of drinking water. For more information, call the state park at 915/424-3327.

Accommodations

Overnight accommodations in the Big Bend region include **Chisos Mountain Lodge**, Big Bend Natl. Park, 79834-9999; 915/477-2291. (Make reservations 3 to 6 months in advance, especially during

FM 170, provides a resort setting with recreational opportunities like golfing, swimming, tennis, horseback riding, and shopping, as well as facilities for campers. For more information, write to HC 70, Box 400, Terlingua 79852, or call 817-LAJITAS, 800/944-9907, or 915/424-3471. Email: info@lajitas.com. Web site: www.lajitas.com.

Additional hotel, cabin, and camping accommodations (some of which include full hookups) are available in the Big Bend area. For more information, contact the **Big Bend Area Travel Assn.**, Box 401, Alpine 79831. Web site: www.visitbigbend.com. Send \$1 in postage to receive a copy of the



It's a river, a border, a canyon, a welcome escape, and an adventure, all rolled into one.

spring and fall.) Motel-style rooms and stone cottages are situated near a dining room, coffee shop, gift shop, and small library. There's also a primitive overnight campground (community water supply and composting toilets, no electricity). **Primitive camping** is also allowed in designated areas at **Big Bend Ranch State Park** (915/424-3327), with prior permit.

Lajitas on the Rio Grande, on

Big Bend Area Travel Guide or request a free copy of the brochure *Heart of the Big Bend*.

Other Resources

A variety of maps, guidebooks, and other information about the Rio Grande and the Big Bend region are available from the **Big Bend Natural History Assn.**, Box 196, Big Bend Natl Park 79834; 915/477-2236. Email: bbnha@nps.gov.

ROAD TRIP WEEKEND

Three Days in Search of



OUR MISSION sounds ambitious but doable. My wife, Sallie, and I set out from our Piney Woods to visit as many Hill Country vineyards as possible in a three-day getaway. Wine-lovers but educational. Little did we know what serendipity lay ahead.

Serendipity and Spirits

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY RANDY MALLORY



home in Tyler one fine October morning armed with lists, maps, and directions. We're determined, hardly connoisseurs, we view the adventure as a lark—dependably entertaining and probably

Clouds billow above rolling hills and freshly turned fields along Texas 16 between Fredericksburg and Kerrville.

ROAD TRIP WEEKEND



DAY ONE

By the time we get to Georgetown, we're already primed for surprises.

In Waco earlier that morning, we had made an unplanned detour to Baylor University's Armstrong Browning Library. Built in 1951 to house the collection of English professor A.J. Armstrong, it remains the world's largest depository of materials related to 19th-Century British poets Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The Renaissance structure—with massive bronze doors, statuary, paintings, and stained-glass windows—evokes the ambiance of Italy, where the Brownings lived for many years.

After our visit, feeling classic to the core, we exit Interstate 35 to Texas 29 in search of our first winery. At Bertram we notice a flurry of monarch butterflies flitting by. By Burnet, where we stop for gas, the flur-

ry has become a blizzard of yellows and oranges moving incessantly southward as far as the eye can see.

"On a good year, it's like this for several weeks," the convenience store clerk claims. Later, I check with the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, and she's right. During this migration, which covers the largest distance of all insect migrations, monarchs typically appear in Central Texas from late September until the third week of October. Somehow these delicate beauties (fourth- or fifth-generation offspring of monarchs that made last year's journey) know the way across thousands of miles of unfamiliar terrain to overwintering sites in central Mexico.

We're happy just to find our way to FM 2241 along the northwestern shores of Lake Buchanan. The scenic route takes us to a narrow gravel drive flanked

[ABOVE] Wildflowers and other untamed flora thrive in creek bottoms along Gillespie County's famed Willow City Loop.

The Willow City Loop offers a dozen miles or so of some of Texas' best scenery, which begs for slow going. Wherever we go, the monarchs seem to follow.

by cypress trees and 65 acres of vineyards—the entrance to Fall Creek Vineyards.

In 1973, while traveling through France, Ed and Susan Auler noticed how much the French wine countryside resembled their Hill Country ranch. Two years later, after much research, they established Fall Creek Vineyards to combine European viticulture traditions with modern wine-making technology. Some two decades and many awards later, their winery remains so popular that some years the Aulers have to buy grapes from other Texas vineyards in order to meet their 30,000-cases-a-year production goal.

On a brief tour, Ed explains the hideaway's microclimate: "Desert winds from Mexico bring warm days, and winds off the lake keep night temperatures cool. Those are optimum growing conditions for wine grapes."

In Fall Creek's light and airy tasting room, we believe him after a taste of Chardonnay, one of the winery's six white wines. We sense a dry and fruity taste balanced by a slight woody flavor. "That's because 30 percent of this wine is aged in French oak barrels for four months," Ed explains.

After walking us past tall, stainless-steel tanks in which 50,000 gallons of wine are fermenting, he shows us some of these oak barrels. They line a wine cellar bathed in orange light coming from a stained-glass window. Enhancing the room's European ambiance, massive wooden stable doors secure the cool space. The doors came from a laboratory near Paris, where famous chemist Louis Pasteur researched the fermentation process.

Ed says he wishes we had been there for the winery's Grape Stomp Festival in August, which features such frivolity as visitors stomping



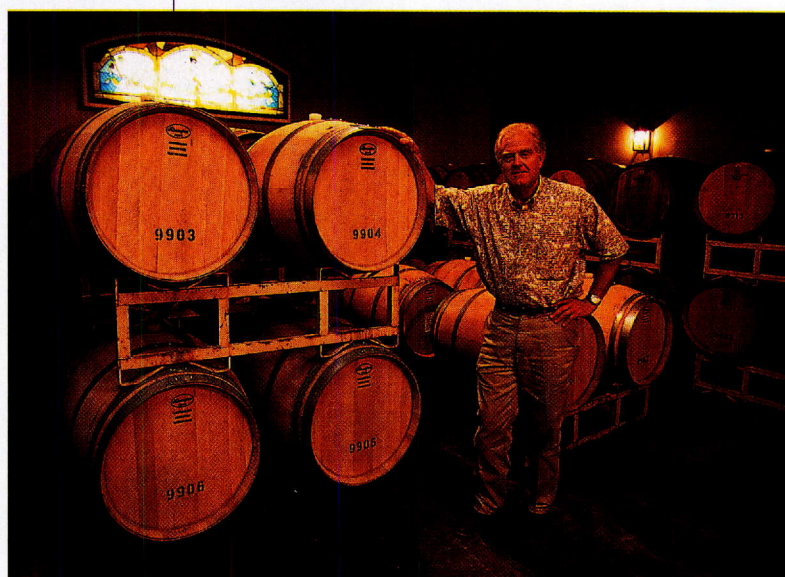
Monarch butterflies migrate through Central Texas en route to Mexico each fall.

grapes while watching Lucille Ball do the same in an episode of *I Love Lucy*. We make a mental note to remember the event next year and pack several bottles of Chardonnay safely in the trunk. Driving off in the brisk morning air, we pass grapevines settling in for the coming winter's sleep.

A perfect microclimate also blesses our next stop, Bell Mountain Vineyards, located at a 2,000-foot elevation

near Fredericksburg in Texas' first designated viticultural area. In 1986, as part of a program to identify outstanding wine regions, the federal government designated the area as Bell Mountain Viticultural Area, now one of only six such appellations in Texas. The name recognizes the region as a well-defined grape-growing area with soil, climate, history, and geography that set it apart from surrounding regions.

Owners Bob and Evelyn Oberhelman make sure their 62 acres of vineyards live up to the honor. In Bell Mountain's rich soil, they grow seven varieties of Old-World grapes, training them onto six-foot-high trellises for maximum fruit and foliage production.



Ed Auler, who owns Fall Creek Vineyards with his wife, Susan, shows off the French oak barrels that help give Fall Creek wine its rich character.

ROAD TRIP WEEKEND



Kenny and Jan McCorquodale of Houston enjoy the patio of the Altdorf Biergarten Restaurant in Fredericksburg.

After destemming and crushing, white wine grapes are pressed immediately, then rapidly chilled and inoculated with cultured yeast. Slow fermentation of the white grape juice proceeds in stainless-steel vats at cool temperatures (50-55 degrees Fahrenheit). Crushed red grapes, on the other hand, are fermented for seven days at higher temperatures before being pressed, to extract the desired color and flavor. The red wine then goes into stainless-steel vats for secondary fermentation, and then on to oak casks for barrel aging. After barrel aging, both white and red wines are bottled. But they require still more aging, Bob explains—six months to a year for whites and one to two years for reds.

As we leave with bottles of Pinot Noir and Merlot, Evelyn reminds us that, for maximum enjoyment, we should serve them at room temperature and allow the opened bottle to breathe for at least a few minutes before we imbibe.

Onward! We can hardly wait for the magnificent drive right around the bend. This is Sallie's first time on the famed Willow City Loop, a dozen miles

or so of some of Texas' best scenery, which begs for slow going. Our turtle's pace pays off: A large-racked white-tailed deer, poised in the middle of the road, stops us in our tracks, then bounds effortlessly over the nearest fence. Then a chaparral races across the road. We meander past breathtaking vistas and into a narrow canyon of granite walls. Wherever we go, the monarchs seem to follow.

Giddy over our "Loop" experience, we reach downtown Fredericksburg energized enough to peruse the two dozen or so wines produced at the Fredericksburg Winery. The winery opened in 1995, but brothers Bert, Jene, and Cord Switzer—who, along with their families, own and operate the winery—have worked in the Texas wine industry since 1978. They do so the old-fashioned way, fermenting wine in small tanks and filling, corking, and labeling the bottles by hand in their 10,400-square-foot facility. While we sample some of the 20 wines open for tasting, Cord nods toward 80-year-old Oma Switzer. "We even have an antique labeling machine," he jokes, as his grandmother smiles and hand-labels another bottle.

The Switzers name their wines to celebrate notable Texans or Texas tales and traditions, with each story printed on the label. For instance, we select the *Freiwilliger Johannisberg Riesling*. *Freiwilliger*, meaning "volunteers" in German, honors local volunteers who enthusiastically keep Fredericksburg hopping with special events. After reading the label, we both notice our stomachs enthusiastically grumbling for dinner.



Rough Men and Tough Times, a bronze sculpture by Hill Country artist H. Clay Dahlberg, makes a statement in the lobby of the YO Ranch Resort Hotel in Kerrville.

Aldorf Biergarten Restaurant, which operates down the street in an 1840s house, catches my eye. The open-air patio—complete with oompah music—is a dead ringer for German biergartens I'd seen years ago when I lived in Europe. Owner

On 200 acres of wildflowers grown for seeds, Wildseed Farms provides a blaze of color along US 290, marking the horizon like a giant candy stick.



Wildseed Farms at Fredericksburg makes a colorful side trip. If you visit in the fall, pick up a few packets of seeds and plant them when you get home; when they bloom in the spring, you'll have a colorful reminder of your adventure.

Cameron Baird gave up corporate life in Houston in the mid-Eighties to buy this restaurant from the original owners, Tom and Alethia Alt. Cameron readily admits that Biergartens aren't part of Fredericksburg's tradition. "This town isn't German, it's American with German ancestry," he says, adding that some local patrons, in fact, prefer his Mexican dishes. Visitors like us pick the schnitzel, a seasoned and breaded veal cutlet. Our generous portions come with vinegary, hot German potato salad and sauerkraut made from *rotkohl* (red cabbage). Despite the purpose of our trip, I have to wash it down with a stein of cold beer.

DAY TWO We begin with the robust breakfast buffet in the Sam Houston Dining Room of Kerrville's YO Ranch Resort Hotel. We feast on mounds of fresh fruit and Danish pastries, then proceed to scrambled eggs, grits, sausage, and biscuits topped with cream gravy. The orange juice tastes so delicious that we go back for seconds and thirds.

As much as the food, we enjoy the YO's decor. Built of limestone and timbers, the expansive lobby features branding-iron chandeliers and rawhide chairs circling a large statue entitled *Rough Men and Tough Times*. The bronze, by Hill Country sculptor H. Clay Dahlberg, depicts a mounted cowboy fending off an unruly steer.

After fending off hunger, we long for a cappuccino for the road. A quick check of Kerrville's phone book turns up the Java Pump. This cozy joint is housed in a converted 1928 service station. We admire the old Coca-Cola signs as proprietor Jacki McGuyer foams our drinks. "How about a fresh-baked orange muffin to go with that?" she tempts us. Full but unable to resist, we head to the car with one warm muffin to split. Five minutes down Texas 27, we wish we'd bought two.

Over the next few hours, we poke along Texas 27, which shadows the clear, cold Guadalupe River. The relaxing drive takes us to Comfort, where we maneuver

ROAD TRIP WEEKEND



Built with local limestone, Becker Vineyards' winery and large tasting room resemble a German stone barn. Nearby, an 1890 log cabin serves as a rustic bed and breakfast.

toward FM 473 but somehow get on Interstate 10 pointed toward San Antonio. Exit 533, several miles later, turns us back north, right to the front door of the Po Po Family Restaurant. Housed in the 1929 Nelson Dance Hall and decorated with almost 1,700 collector's plates from around the world, the eatery is named for Popocatepetl ("El Po-Po"), the volcano at Puebla, Mexico. We choose the award-winning catfish and fried chicken and top it all off with apple dumplings à la mode. Owners Jerry and Jenny Tilley suggest the nearby Welfare-Waring Road as a picturesque "back way" to get us on track.

As it turns out, the community of Welfare likely got its name in 1880 from the German word *Wohlfahrt*, meaning "pleasant trip." Rambling past gurgling creeks and herds of grazing goats, we follow the appropriately named byway back to FM 473, then on to Sisterdale.

I peek inside Sisterdale General Store to get direc-

tions to Sister Creek Vineyards. Store owner Valerie Woolvin is hosting a birthday party for three of her regular domino players. Along one wall of the narrow building stretches a shuffleboard table. Another wall sports a bar and counter, made of century-old curly pine, that used to be in a dance hall-saloon across the road. Mostly, Valerie serves beer, cold drinks, and snacks ("chips, nuts, pickled eggs—the usual," says Valerie)—plus unlimited quantities of congeniality. Notices taped by the front door tout music shows in nearby Luckerbach and Waring.

Down the road at Sister Creek Vineyards, several acres of traditional French varietal grapes grow peacefully between the cypress-lined east and west branches of Sister Creek. A weathered 1885 cotton gin houses the winery and tiny tasting room. We like the subtle fruitiness of the Chardonnay and the crisp taste and deep ruby color of the Cabernet Sauvignon. Wine-

Built of local limestone to resemble a German barn in the Hill Country, Becker Vineyards features a large, high-ceilinged, and elegantly appointed tasting room.

maker Danny Hernández tells me he captures the maximum flavor from his grapes by minimizing the filtration of his wines. It seems to work, since the small winery typically sells out each year's entire production of 2,500 cases.

From Sisterdale, we continue north to US 290 and veer east toward Stonewall. Up ahead, a blaze of color—lavenders, reds, and whites—curiously marks the horizon like a giant candy stick. It's Wildseed Farms, 200 acres of wildflowers grown for seeds. The self-guided walking tour takes us through brilliant fields of zinnia, verbena, and cosmos alive with fluttering butterflies. We're glad to see that the farm's gift shop features Texas wines—along with Hill Country-themed decorative items, Texas foods, and 100 varieties of wildflower seeds. We have vowed to buy spirits straight from the winery, however, so it's off to nearby Grape Creek Vineyard.

The description of Grape Creek's Cuvée Blanc (a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay) sounds enticingly yin-yang—"crisp acidity" with a "smooth, silky finish." We simply like its dry but fruity taste. Sold!

At Becker Vineyards a short drive away, the elegantly appointed, high-ceilinged tasting room is packed with visitors. East Coasters Sharon Stiles and Brian Donahue belly up to the bar, delighted to discover that Texas has a thriving wine industry. They prefer red wines, so we join in, settling on the Cabernet Sauvignon. Next to the winery, which resembles a Hill Country German barn, we fall in love with an 1890 log cabin. Built by German immigrants, it has been restored as a rustic bed and



Wine connoisseurs like East Coasters Brian Donahue and Sharon Stiles demonstrate their motto, "Swirl, smell, then taste."

breakfast by winery owners Bunny and Richard Becker. Unfortunately, the B&B is booked for the night. Such are the vagaries of spur-of-the-moment travel.

DAY THREE

More successful than expected (six wineries in two days!), we decide to roam homeward along backroads.

On the map, the name "Red Rock" catches my eye, only because friends near Tyler have a ranch called Red Rock. We decide to have a look at this hamlet southwest of Bastrop. At the Red Rock General Store & Feed—amid shelves of groceries, freezers of TV dinners, and miscellaneous hardware items—Tracy Hill sells us a souvenir Red Rock cap and tells the history of the once-thriving cotton and railroad town. Her fascination with the town's history runs in the family; her older brother, John Pilot, collected the historical photos of Red Rock that hang throughout the store. And in the feed room next door, Tracy and John's mother, Myrna Bushnell, who owns the store, shows us an oval-shaped



Don't know the difference between a Chenin Blanc and a Cabernet Franc? Find out inside the airy tasting room at Becker Vineyards, where you can compare "mouth feels" and "distinct noses."

ROAD TRIP WEEKEND

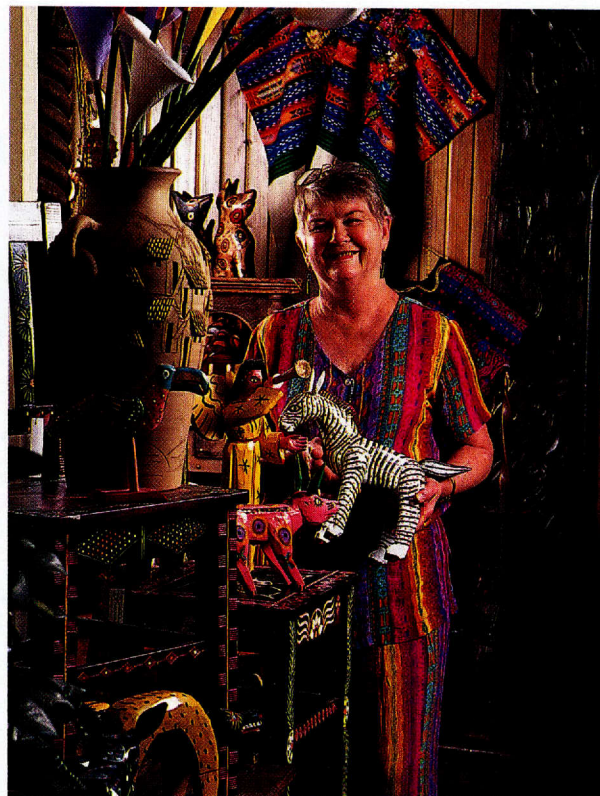
pastoral scene painted on the brick wall. “A hobo coming through town in the 1930s painted it there,” she says, “in exchange for a hot meal.”

Meal? Lunchless, we head east on FM 20. Three miles down the road, we pass Rockne, where we spy the Phillip Goertz Pioneer Log Cabin. In 1860, German immigrant Goertz built the two-room dogtrot cabin, where he held many social and religious events. The Rockne Historical Association moved the cabin and restored and furnished it with period pieces in 1993 under the supervision of Fred Goertz, great-grandson of the original builder. Rockne was first known as Walnut Creek, but in 1931, after the untimely death of football coach Knute Rockne, local schoolchildren voted to honor their hero by changing the town’s name.

FM 535 eases us into Smithville, where a spruced-up downtown—red brick buildings, a restored rail depot, and old-fashioned street lamps—looks like a movie set. (Parts of the 1998 film *Hope Floats*, starring Sandra Bullock and Harry Connick Jr., were indeed shot here.)

Aromas emanating from the Back Door Cafe on Main Street smell like those from a gourmet cookoff. Chef-owner Rob Remlinger dishes up a daily buffet that ranges from chicken-fried steak to stromboli. As we feast on marinated, grilled chicken, we ask Rob about the bicycles hanging from the ceiling. When he and his wife, Janet, opened the cafe in 1994, they decided that Rob’s collection of antique bikes would add a decorative flair to the building’s exposed-brick interior. A life-long bike-lover, Rob tells us that his favorite bike is the green 1951 Firestone Super-Cruiser. When he lived in Austin, Rob rode the Super-Cruiser to work 14 miles each day—even took it mountain biking a time or two. Now, he has hung it up—literally.

Aimless wandering (our favorite way to travel) has put us only four hours from Tyler. Reluctantly, we head for the car. Out on the sidewalk, a side glance brings one last diversion. Across the street, brightly colored wooden animals, ceramics, and furniture beckon from a shop called Interweavers. Fans of Latin American folk art, we find MaryAnn Walborg unpacking new arrivals from Guatemala. MaryAnn travels to Central America several times a year to purchase hand-



MaryAnn Walborg sells whimsical Latin American folk art at her shop, Interweavers, housed in a converted domino hall in downtown Smithville.

crafts from local artisans. “It’s very special,” she says, “to work with these artisans who, though poor, find something in their own spirit to make art.”

This sweet sentiment lingers as we wheel homeward, ending three fine fall days of discovery.

Webster’s Dictionary defines serendipity as “the faculty of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for.” For Sallie and me, October’s whirling wind now stirs not only leaves, but also memories of wines aging in wooden kegs and of delightful places and people happened upon. It reminds us of monarchs winging southward, guided by a mysterious compass. And, pulled by our own wanderlust, we think of the rolling hills and flowing waters—and spirits—of the Texas Hill Country.

One thing’s for sure, we’re certain that we’ll be back, with serendipity still on our minds! ★

Freelance writer and photographer RANDY MALLORY also wrote “Powwow: Dance of Life,” on page 12 in this issue.

Hill Country Weekend

Wineries

The following Hill Country wineries sell their wines at their vineyards, as well as wine-related gift items. All feature wine tastings, which are generally free; some also offer tours. Call for details.

Fall Creek Vineyards is on FM 2241 approximately 2 miles north of Tow (915/379-5361). Hours: Mon-Fri 11-4, Sat 12-5, Sun 12-4 (other times by arrangement). Partially wheelchair accessible. Fall Creek's 12th Annual Grape Stomp Harvest Festival is Aug. 18 and Aug. 25, 2001. The event features grape stomping, winery tours, wine tastings, hayrides through the vineyards, entertainment, cooking demonstrations, and lake cruises. Write to 1111 Guadalupe St., Austin 78701; 512/476-4477. Web site: www.fcv.com.

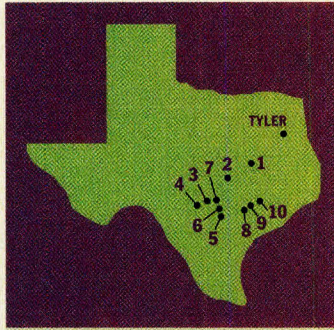
Bell Mountain Vineyards is on Texas 16 approximately 14 miles north of Fredericksburg. Hours: Sat 10-5, with winery tours at 11, 1, and 3. Wheelchair accessible. Write to HC 61, Box 72, Fredericksburg 78624; 830/685-3297. Email: bellmntn@ctesc.net.

Fredericksburg Winery is at 247 W. Main, Fredericksburg 78624 (830/990-8747). Hours: Mon-Thu 10-6, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Wheelchair accessible. Web site: fbgwinery.com.

Sister Creek Vineyards is on FM 1376 approximately 13 miles north of Boerne. Partially wheelchair accessible. Hours: Daily 12-5. Write to 1142 Sisterdale Rd., Boerne 78006; 830/324-6704.

Grape Creek Vineyard is 4 miles west of Stonewall on US 290 (9 miles east of Fredericksburg). Hours: Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5. Wheelchair accessible. Bed and breakfast (not wheelchair accessible) located above the tasting room. Write to Box 102, Stonewall 78671; 830/644-2710. Web site: www.grapecreek.com.

To reach **Becker Vineyards**, go 10 miles east of Fredericksburg on US 290, and follow the signs eight-tenths of a mile to the vineyards. Hours: Mon-Sat 10-5, Sun 12-5. Wheelchair accessible. Bed and breakfast (not wheelchair accessi-



- 1 WACO**
Armstrong Browning Library
- 2 TOW**
Fall Creek Vineyards, 2 miles north
- 3 FREDERICKSBURG**
Bell Mountain Vineyards, 14 miles north
Fredericksburg Winery
Altdorf Biergarten Restaurant
Becker Vineyards, 10 miles east
Wildseed Farms, 7 miles east
Willow City Loop, 14 miles northeast
- 4 KERRVILLE**
YO Ranch Resort Hotel
Java Pump
- 5 BOERNE**
Po Po Family Restaurant
- 6 SISTERDALE**
Sisterdale General Store
Sister Creek Vineyards
- 7 STONEWALL**
Grape Creek Vineyard, 4 miles west
- 8 RED ROCK**
Red Rock General Store & Feed
- 9 ROCKNE**
Phillip Goertz Pioneer Log Cabin
- 10 SMITHVILLE**
Back Door Cafe
Interweavers

ble) is available in a 19th-Century log cabin. Write to Box 393, Stonewall 78671; 830/644-2681. Web site: www.fbg.net/beckervyds.

Other Attractions

The Armstrong Browning Library is on the Baylor University campus on Speight Ave., between 7th and 8th streets in Waco. Hours: Mon-Fri 9-5, Sat 9-noon. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 97152, Waco 76798; 254/710-3566.

The Sisterdale General Store is in Sisterdale approximately 13 miles north of Boerne on FM 1376 (1211 Sisterdale Rd.). Hours: Tue-Wed 10-6, Thu-Sat 10-7, Sun 12-7. Wheelchair accessible. Call 830/324-6767.

Wildseed Farms is 7 miles east of Fredericksburg on US 290. Hours: Daily 9:30-6. Write to Box

3000, Fredericksburg 78624; 800/848-0078. Web site: www.wildseedfarms.com.

The Red Rock General Store & Feed is at 201 Lentz-Main St. in Red Rock (78662). Hours: Mon-Sat 5:30 a.m.-10 p.m., Sun 6:30 a.m.-10 p.m.. Wheelchair accessible. Call 512/321-3360.

To reach the **Phillip Goertz Pioneer Log Cabin**, take US 71 to TX 20 (near Bastrop), and go south 8 miles to Rockne. For guided tours (not wheelchair accessible), write to Minnie L. Bartsch, Rockne Hist. Assn., 167 Lehman Lane, Bastrop 78602; 512/303-3179.

Interweavers is at 114 Main St. in Smithville (78957). Hours: Mon-Fri usually 10-3, always the first Sat. of the month 10 a.m.-9 p.m., and by appt. Wheelchair accessible. Call 512/237-2410.

Eateries

Altdorf Biergarten Restaurant, at 301 W. Main St. in Fredericksburg, features a polka band on Fridays. Hours: Mon-Sat 11-9, Sun 11-4. (Closed in Jan.) Wheelchair accessible. Call 830/997-7865.

The YO Ranch Resort Hotel, at 2033 Sidney Baker (TX 16) in Kerrville, serves a Sat. breakfast buffet 6:30-11 and a Sun. brunch 11-2. Wheelchair accessible. Call 830/257-4440 or 800/YO-RESORT.

The Java Pump is at 1028 Water St. in Kerrville. Hours: Mon-Thu 7 a.m.-6 p.m., Fri 7 a.m.-11 p.m., Sat 9 a.m.-11 p.m. Partially wheelchair accessible. Call 830/895-PUMP.

Po Po Family Restaurant is at 829 FM 289 in Boerne. Hours: Mon-Thu 4-10 p.m., Fri-Sun 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Wheelchair accessible. Call 830/537-4194.

The Back Door Cafe is at 117 Main St. in Smithville. Hours:

Mon and Wed-Sun 11 a.m.-2 p.m., and Thu-Sat 5:30 p.m.-9 p.m. Wheelchair accessible. Call 512/237-3128.

Willow City Loop

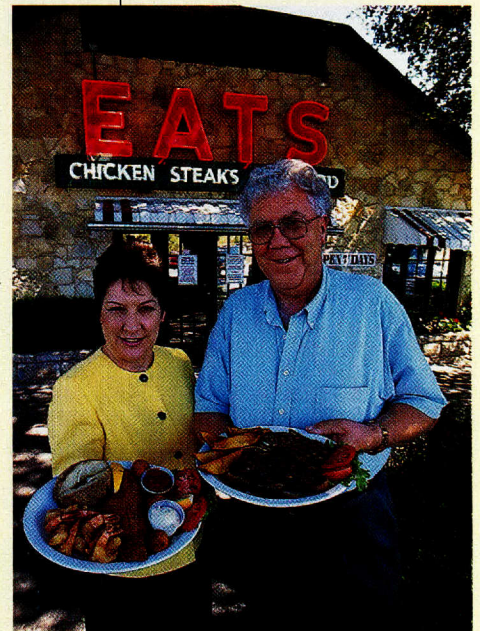
To reach the Willow City Loop from Fredericksburg, take Texas 16 north for 11 miles. Turn right on FM 1323, and drive 3 miles to the Willow City school. Turn left at the "Willow City Loop" sign. The 12-mile drive returns you to Texas 16. All land along the loop is private. Watch for cattle on the road.

Fredericksburg Food & Wine Fest

The 10th annual Fredericksburg Food & Wine Fest, on Oct. 28, features wines from 20 Texas wineries and more than 40 food booths—plus live entertainment and cooking and wine-tasting schools. The fest runs noon-7 downtown on Market Square (at Adams and Main streets). Write to 703 N. Llano St., Fredericksburg 78624; 830/997-8515.

Resources

For a statewide look at Texas' wineries, plus tips on making the most of a vineyard visit, check out *Touring Texas Wineries* by Thomas and Regina Ciesla (Gulf Publ. Co., 1998) and the companion Web site: www.texaswinetrail.com.



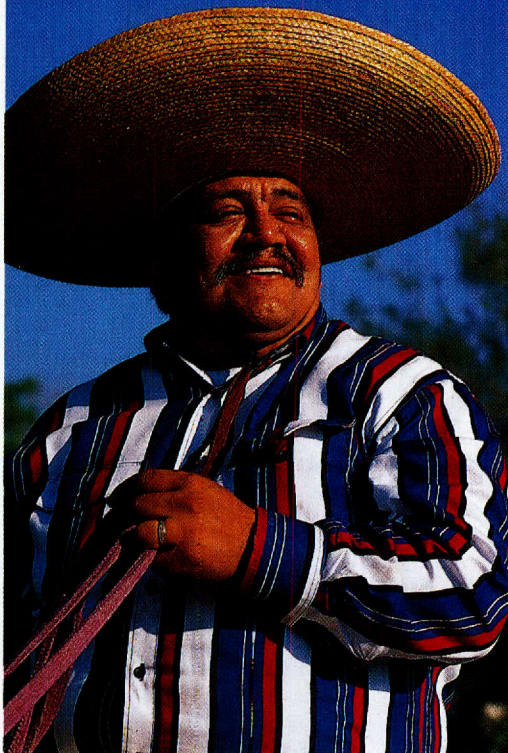
Jenny and Jerry Tilley serve folks from across the globe at their Po Po Family Restaurant in Boerne.



Fiesta

del Rancho

By Arturo Longoria • Photographs by Bob Parvin



Mesquite smoke laden with the savory aromas of fajitas, cabrito, and menudo drifts through the air. Resonating rhythms from accordions and guitars spark an exuberant ring of dancers. Booths filled with leather goods, cowboy hats, T-shirts, and handmade jewelry abound. And a spirited bingo game plays into the night as carnival lights glitter and flash in the distance.

Yet walk a few yards in any direction, and you find yourself amidst mesquites and ebony, enveloped by the quiet of deep woods. You might even catch the wailful yodel of a coyote.

[TOP] From modest 19th-Century beginnings when South Texas farmers and ranchers gathered at a small plaza to celebrate the harvest, Fiesta del Rancho has blossomed into a favorite fall event in Conception.

[ABOVE] Trail rider Florencio Segura of Alice commands attention in his classic sombrero.

Therein rests the magic of the Fiesta del Rancho, which takes place annually during the first weekend of October in Concepcion. Like an enchanted celebration, the fiesta blends the merriment of dance, renewed friendships, and scrumptious food with the tranquil spirit of the land.

Concepcion is in Duval County, in the heart of the South Texas ranch country. The people of the region share an impassioned devotion to *el monte verde*—the green woods of the Texas brushlands, where more than a thousand rugged plant species form a domain rich in wildlife and beauty.

The origin of the fiesta dates to the late 1800s, when *los campesinos* (farmers) and *rancheros* (ranchers) gathered at the small plaza across the street from the Catholic church to celebrate the harvest. In those days, the fiesta was known simply as “Plazas.”

“There would be food and dancing, and

By the mid-1970s the people of Concepcion—who affectionately call their town “La Chona”—decided the time had come to give Plazas a bigger home. Duval County leaders purchased 15 acres at the northeast edge of town for a civic center and festival grounds, and the Fiesta del Rancho was born.

Nowadays, the fiesta begins on the first Friday of October and runs through the weekend (Oct. 6-8, 2000). Along with the traditional cabrito cooking contest, the event includes a trail ride. The ride begins on Saturday morning in the nearby hamlet of Realitos and heads east along FM 716 for about 14 miles before reaching the fairgrounds.

“The first time we had the trail ride was in 1980, and there were only 35 horses



Augustine Perez of Benavides prepares barbecue fit for a Fiesta.

Concepcion's **Fiesta del Rancho**, in the heart of the South Texas ranch country, blends the merriment of **dance**, renewed **friendships**, and **scrumptious** food with the **tranquil** spirit of the **land**.

booths where people sold the things they'd made for ranch work,” says Lorrin Muñoz, a lifelong resident of Concepcion. “It was also a place for the young people from the ranches to meet each other,” she adds.

Over time, more activities were included in the Plazas celebration.

“They had weddings and christenings, and bingo all day long,” says Ella Mae Ellis, who comes home from San Antonio each year for the fiesta. She notes that on occasion there were even shootouts when cowboys from ranches farther off got too friendly with the local girls.

Plazas grew even larger as big money-crops like cotton energized the local economy, and then waned or vanished altogether during the world wars.



Fiesta trail riders give their mounts time to refresh. The group making the 14-mile trek from nearby Realitos to Concepcion has grown to include several hundred participants.



Built in 1947, historic Inmaculada Concepción Church once hosted Fiesta del Rancho, now at Conception's Civic Center due to the event's increasing popularity.

and three goats,” says Ernesto Gonzalez, one of the Fiesta del Rancho founders. “Now we have between 200 and 300 horses and riders, and we have chuck wagons and a big feast at a ranch halfway between Realitos and Conception.” Trail riders come from all over the Rio Grande Valley, and some travel from as far away as Houston and Dallas.

The small, but potent, Benavides I.S.D. High School band ushers the trail riders into the fairgrounds. The escort also sports a raft of pretty girls atop convertibles and in the backs of fancy pickups, with local dignitaries and law enforcement officials following suit. All the while, lines of cars and trucks stream along the narrow ranch roads leading into Conception.

By Saturday night—the biggest night of the fiesta—between 10,000 and 12,000 partygoers gather to dance, eat, and shop at the booths. Cabrito, taquitos, carne guisada, menudo, and pan de campo please party palates, while wood crafts, dolls, shirts, handmade clothes, and cowboy hats please shoppers. Proceeds aid the community scholarship fund, other civic activities, and also ensure a future Fiesta.

“They’ll have top bands on Saturday night,” says Homero Vera, who publishes *El Mesteño*, a Premont-based magazine dedicated to the lore and history of South Texas’ Tejano culture.

Best of all, access to the fairgrounds and dances is free.

“The vendors pay for the fiesta, along with sponsors and advertising,” says Christine Cavazos, a resident of Conception who was the 1999 fiesta president.

On Saturday night, the band, with a light show pulsating overhead, booms out favorite Tejano hits on Fiesta’s outdoor stage. Children scamper noisily and munch on cotton candy

and snow cones. And relatives from as far away as California and Michigan embrace local family members, connecting—if only for a moment—with the lifeblood of their homeland.

“Concepcion is a small community with a big heart,” proclaims one of the musicians loudly. The crowd cheers, and the dancing and eating and merrymaking resume. Quite possibly, from the thick woods skirting the festivities, a coyote and a badger, and maybe even a white-tailed deer, stand watching, too. *La vida loca? No. La vida buena? Sí.* ★

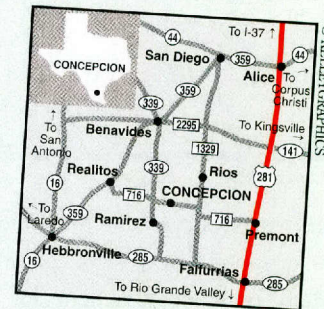
ARTURO LONGORIA lives in McAllen. He is the author of *Adios to the Brushlands* (1997) and *Keepers of the Wilderness* (2000). Both books are available from Texas A&M University Press and major bookstores across the state.

Longtime Texas photojournalist BOB PARVIN, who resides in Bastrop and Goliad, has an affinity for South Texas’ cultural heritage.

WHEN...WHERE...HOW

Fiesta del Rancho

Concepcion, in Duval County, is about midway between Laredo and Corpus Christi in deep South Texas. If you're heading south on US 281, turn right (west) at Premont, and take FM 716, about 16 miles into Concepcion. If you're driving south on Texas 16, turn left (east) on Texas 285 in Hebbronville. Go about 24 miles until you reach the intersection with FM 1329. Turn left (north) on 1329, and left again (west) at FM 716, and drive 5 miles into Concepcion. The Concepcion Civic Center, home of Fiesta del Rancho, is on FM 716 at the northeast edge of town.



The nearest motels are in Falfurrias, Premont, Hebbronville, and Alice. Fiesta del Rancho coincides with the mourning dove season, so make your motel reservations early if you plan to attend. Bring plenty of sunblock and a hat. If you forget your hat, don't worry, as vendors at the fiesta sell a variety of sombrero styles.

The fiesta begins Fri. afternoon on the first weekend of Oct (Oct. 6-8, 2000). The trail ride starts in Realitos on Sat. morning. Riders arrive at the fiesta in Concepcion about midafternoon. Tejano dances are held on Fri. night, Sat. afternoon and evening, and Sun. afternoon and evening. For more information, write to Box 54, Concepcion 78349, or call 361/539-4700 or 539-4131.

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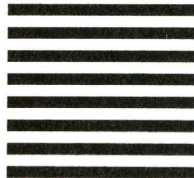
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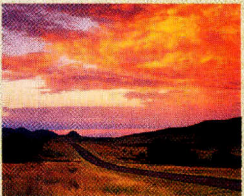
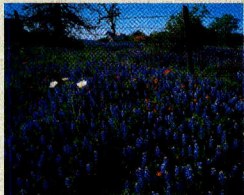
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<p>10-12 BOWIE Trade Days 940/872-4861</p> <p>FORT WORTH St Demetrios Greek Festival 817/626-5578</p> <p>SALADO Gathering of the Scottish Clans 254/947-5232 or 947-5040</p> <p>11 AMMANNSVILLE Houston Bayou Banjo Jam Session 800/524-7264</p> <p>BASTROP Pine St Market Days 512/309-6233</p> <p>COMANCHE Old Cora Trade Day on the Square 915/356-3233</p> <p>CORSICANA Arts & Crafts Fair 903/872-5411</p> <p>EDGEWOOD Log Cabin Christmas Bazaar 903/896-1940 or 896-4326</p>	<p>11 FORT WORTH Rodeo 817/625-1025</p> <p>GREENVILLE Craft Fair 903/457-0735</p> <p>HEARNE Veterans Day Parade & Carnival 979/279-2351</p> <p>LANCASTER Second Saturday on the Square 972/227-2359</p> <p>PALESTINE Veterans Day Celebration 800/659-3484</p> <p>PARIS Red River Valley Bluegrass Jam 903/785-5394</p> <p>SALADO Family 5-K Turkey Trot 254/947-5482</p> <p>SAN FELIPE Birding Tour 281/445-1187</p> <p>VENUS Opry & Bluegrass Show 972/366-3334</p>	<p>11-12 ARLINGTON Auto Swap Meet 254/751-7958</p> <p>BONHAM Trade Days 903/583-2367</p> <p>BRENHAM Second Weekend on the Square 979/277-0913 or 888/273-6426</p> <p>GRAND PRAIRIE Mountain Man Weekend 972/647-2331</p> <p>RICHARDSON Sports Collectors Show 972/255-9062</p> <p>11-Jan 2 BELTON Nature in Lights 254/287-2523</p> <p>14 YOAKUM Country Music USA 361/293-2309</p> <p>14-15 LYONS Christmas Cottage Gift Fair 979/596-1974</p>	<p>15 IRVING Lone Star Youth Orchestra 972/580-1566</p> <p>15-19 DALLAS Meadows School of the Arts Dance Production 214/768-2787</p> <p>16 DENTON UNT Symphonic & Concert Bands 940/498-1366</p> <p>GRANBURY Gospel Concert 817/572-0881 or 800/354-1870</p> <p>16-Dec 31 GRAND PRAIRIE Prairie Lights 972/264-1558 or 263-9588</p> <p>17 BEDFORD Jenny & Katie Glass, Irish Harp & Flute Concert 817/952-2290</p> <p>DALLAS SMU Meadows Chorale & Opera Theatre 214/768-2787</p>	<p>17-19 ARLINGTON Arts & Crafts Show 817/459-5000</p> <p>CUERO DeWitt Co Museum 1836 Living History Thanksgiving 361/275-2112</p> <p>ENNIS Super 10 Drag Racing Championship 972/873-2641</p> <p>FORT WORTH World Pro Youth Bull Riding Championships 817/625-1025</p> <p>17-Dec 23 GRANBURY Christmas Homecoming at Granbury Live 817/573-0303</p> <p>18 CLIFTON Trades Day 800/344-3720</p> <p>DECATUR Arts & Crafts Bazaar 940/627-3332</p> <p>DENISON Fine Art Tour 903/465-1551</p>	<p>18 ENNIS Arts & Crafts Show 972/878-4748</p> <p>GLEN ROSE Star Watch 254/897-2960 or 897-3785</p> <p>HARWOOD Bluegrass Show 512/263-7193</p> <p>ROUND TOP Hakan Rosengren Concert 979/249-3129</p> <p>SEGUIN Pecan Fest 800/580-7322</p> <p>WACO Jazz Fest 254/756-0933</p> <p>18-19 BRENHAM Poinsettia Celebration 979/836-0084 or 888/273-6426</p> <p>MESQUITE Gem & Mineral Show 972/495-1789</p> <p>TEMPLE Merry Mistletoe Market 512/441-7133</p>	<p>21 DENTON One O'Clock Lab Band 940/565-3743</p> <p>LOCKHART Country Music Jamboree 512/376-3430</p> <p>24 DALLAS Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration 214/748-4801</p> <p>FORT WORTH Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony 817/926-3262 or 658-5978</p> <p>Parade of Lights 817/870-1692</p> <p>GRANBURY Country Christmas Celebration 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212</p> <p>Lighted Christmas Parade 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212</p> <p>24-25 BASTROP Arts & Crafts Fair 512/303-6283 or 321-2419</p>	<p>24-26 BELTON A Sami Show 512/441-7133</p> <p>MADISONVILLE Madison Co Trade Days 936/349-0163</p> <p>RICHARDSON Crafts Show 800/783-4526</p> <p>WACO Homestead Heritage Crafts & Children's Fair 254/829-0417</p> <p>WAXAHACHIE Candlelight Historic Homes Tour 972/937-2390</p> <p>24-Dec 10 FORT WORTH National Cutting Horse Assn Futurity 817/871-8150</p> <p>24-Dec 24 DALLAS A Christmas Carol 214/522-8499</p>	<p>24-Jan 1 DALLAS Galleria Holiday Festivities 972/702-7100</p> <p>GRANBURY Lone Star Lights 817/573-5548 or 800/950-2212</p> <p>25 ANDERSON Twilight-Firelight 936/873-2633</p> <p>CLIFTON German Heritage Celebration 254/675-3599</p> <p>GLEN ROSE Hike the Rim 254/897-2960</p> <p>GONZALES Pioneer Village Fall Festival 830/672-6532</p> <p>LEXINGTON Christmas Bazaar 512/273-2551</p> <p>LULING Arts & Crafts Show 830/875-3214</p>
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© RANDY MALLORY

You'll have a sweet time at Henderson's Heritage Syrup Festival, on November 11.

Float Your Boat

For adventure with flair, try a Gourmet Raft Trip through Big Bend's Santa Elena Canyon. Since 1987, François Maeder, owner-chef of Crumpets in San Antonio, has teamed with 24-year-old Far Flung Adventures of Terlingua to offer three-day floats on the Rio Grande in fall and spring that combine fabulous food and fantastic scenery.

When Chef Maeder begins cooking, guests gravitate eagerly toward delicious aromas emanating from portable stoves and tables (with tablecloths!). For breakfast, perhaps eggs Benedict. Dinner may be grilled salmon with snow peas, or duck breast in a red wine sauce with shallots and mushrooms. Dessert? *Mais oui!* Try white-chocolate mousse or raspberry trifle.

A soupçon of surprises: More peregrine falcons live here than in any other national park in the Lower 48. Before the Rio Grande was dammed, the height of the cliff swallows' nests predicted the river's height for the year. Within the canyon (second day, depending on river level), violet-green swallows wheel overhead, and wild primroses bloom in the rockface. *A dash of daring:* Where rapids present challenges, extraordinary guides like Cynta de Narvaez and Tommy Moore steer the rafts with skill and verve. On calm stretches, oars stop, and you glide through sunshine and shadow, awash in beauty and quiet.

Come evening, tents go up on a shoal beneath 1,000-foot cliffs. Wine complements camaraderie as musicians—often

© CAROLYN BROWN, PRESENTED BY THE STUDY OF EARTH AND MAN AT SMU



Carolyn Brown showcases her photography at the Hall of State during the 2000 State Fair of Texas in Dallas. Her image of Mexico's Popocatepetl volcano is mural-size.

To reach the grounds, take exit 302 (Nugent Ave.) off I-35 in Temple. Admission: \$4, free age 12 and younger. Call 254/298-5720 or 774-9988. Web site: www.ci.temple.tx.us.

renowned Texas songsters Steve Fromholz or Butch Hancock—offer serenades. Overhead, the Milky Way thinly veils the blackness, and constellations emerge in brilliance.

Remoteness gussied up like this proves delectable. For information on Gourmet Raft Trips, write to Crumpets, 3920 Harry Wurzbach, San Antonio 78209; 210/821-5600. Email: francosis@aol.com. Fall 2000 dates: Sep. 29-Oct. 1, Oct. 13-15, Nov. 10-12, and Dec. 1-3. Spring 2001 dates: Feb. 9-11, Mar. 2-4 and 23-25, and Apr. 6-8 and 27-29.

Brave Little Tractors

On any other weekend, the sputters, pops, and purrs coming from the sprawling grounds of Temple's Texas Early Day Tractor and Engine Association might be cause for alarm. But on October 6-8, admirers of tractors and other

vintage farm equipment recognize the sounds of a celebration.

Indeed, the Texas Early Day Tractor and Engine Association, formed in 1971 to preserve vintage farming equipment and to educate folks about agrarian history, throws one heck of a party. At the annual fall show, hundreds of brightly painted tractors (dating from the 1890s to the 1950s) are on display, many pulling and parading as if the calendar had stood still.

Other old-timey labor-saving devices, including steam-powered threshing machines, corn grinders, washing machines, and ice-cream makers, plus mule-powered syrup presses and hay balers, also come to life. Tractor-pulled hayrides transport folks to and from various areas on the 48-acre grounds.

Antique-tractor collector Darwin "Monk" Ivicic, a past association president who serves as the show's parade announcer every year, loves the stories behind the metal treasures. "My favorite," he says, "is a 1915 one-cylinder Mogul tractor now owned by collectors Louis and Ray Miller of Georgetown. That tractor was lost in a great flood down the Rio Grande in 1927. Sixty years later, a gravel-pit operator south of Mercedes unearthed it, and the Millers bought it and restored it."

Taking It to the Streets

Some of the world's finest Latino art comes to the El Paso Museum of Art this fall for a touring show organized by the Smithsonian. *Arte Latino: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum* samples the rich traditions, wit, political and social observations, and artistic innovations of Latino artists in the United States.

Among the show's 66 paintings, sculptures, and photographs, Texas artists figure prominently. Look for the vibrant, voluptuous fiberglass sculptures of El Pasoan Luis Jiménez, Carmen Lomez Garza's whimsical folk-art depictions of her Kingsville childhood, the hand-painted photographs of San Antonio resident Kathy Vargas, and monumental granite sculptures by Rockport's Jesús Bautista Moroles alongside works by other nationally and internationally known artists. *Arte Latino* runs through November 12.

The El Paso Museum of Art, at One Festival Plaza (across from the Civic Center), opens Tue-Sat 9-5, Sun noon-5. Admission \$1, 50¢ age 12 and younger and 65 and older; free on Sun. Wheelchair accessible. For more information, call 915/532-1707. Web site: www.elpasoartmuseum.org.



COURTESY SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

In a touring show organized by the Smithsonian, Latino art takes center stage at the El Paso Museum of Art. This is *Heirs Come to Pass*, by Martina Lopez.

Have You Heard?

Just 30 miles north of Dallas' concrete metropolis, the town of McKinney unfolds amid prairies and farmland. Here, on 289 acres of protected grassland, the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary offers an uncommon combination of indoor exhibits, colorful native-plant gardens, and hiking trails through woods populated by some 240 species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. With founder Bessie Heard's diverse collections of rocks and minerals, seashells, Chinese art, and nature-oriented lithographs as its indoor centerpiece, the Heard also delves into Collin County history and the legacy of the Heard family, who settled the area after the Civil War.

Outdoors, fall at the Heard lends unexpected surprises. Among the many autumn bloomers in the Native Plant Display Gardens, spiky pink plumes of gayfeather, yellow goldenrod pyramids, and the purple tufts of ironweed create a dazzling palette. On the trails, keen-eyed hikers may spot such migrating birds as broad-winged and Swainson's hawks, Merlin falcons, orchard orioles, Nashville warblers, and ruby-crowned kinglets, as well as the preserve's regular assortment



Gardener Charlene Rowell tends to the native plants at the Heard in McKinney.

of cardinals, bluebirds, and chickadees. Fall-visiting butterfly watchers may want to call ahead for a monarch update; over the period of a week every

fall, tens of thousands of monarchs roost at the Heard, dappling the trees with brilliant shades of orange.

The Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary, at One Nature Place in McKinney (75069-8840), opens Mon-Sat 9-5, Sun 1-5. Admission: \$4, \$2 ages 2-17. Mostly wheelchair accessible. Call 972/562-5566. Web site: www.heardmuseum.org.

Fair Game

Every year at the Texas State Fair (Sep. 29-Oct. 22 this year), more than 3 million visitors take in the attractions held at Dallas' splendidly Art Deco Fair Park. With the theme "Celebrating the 21st Century," the 2000 fair will also see the debut of a permanent addition to the park, The Women's Museum, a project created in association with the Smithsonian Institution.

Other not-to-be-missed attractions include an eye-opening photography exhibit at the Hall of State called *Sacred Space: Man and the Divine in Mexico, Central America, and the Southwestern United States*, a collection of more than 200 images, many of them mural-size, by Dallas photographer Carolyn Brown. Audiotapes in English and Spanish help immerse viewers in the landscapes and explain their importance in history.

For more information about the 2000 State Fair, write to Box 150009, Dallas 75315, or call 214/565-9931. Web site: www.bigtex.com. Also see www.thewomensmuseum.org and www.visitSacredSpace.org.

By the Way...

Beginning October 8 through January 28 at the Dallas Museum of Art, art-lovers can view some 110 paintings, sculptures, photographs, and works on paper by modern artists of Mexico. *Modern Masters of Mexico: Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, The Gelman Collection* features

works acquired over a 60-year period by Natasha Gelman and her husband, Jacques Gelman, who made his fortune representing Mexican comic actor Mario Moreno (1911-1993), known as Cantinflas....call 214/922-1200.

On October 21 in San Angelo, join cowboy poets, musicians, storytellers, artists, historians, and honest-to-goodness cowboys for the 4th Annual Cowboy Symposium. Highlights of the event include guided trail rides, Fort Concho Cavalry demonstrations, Texas Ranger reenactments, and a barbecue....call 915/949-4757.

See Frida Kahlo's *Self-Portrait with Monkeys* at the Dallas Museum of Art.

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Give peas a chance, say the folks in Athens. For three decades, they've embraced the town's best-known product, the tasty black-eyed pea, at the Annual Black-Eyed Pea Fall Harvest Festival, which celebrates its 30th year October 14. Featuring cookoffs, contests of pea-shelling and pea-eating, as well as arts and crafts, a carnival, and sporting events, the event has in recent years attracted the likes of lifestyle maven Martha Stewart, as well as other peas-ful folks....call 903/675-5181 or 800/755-7878.

How long has it been since you've watched a greased-pig contest? Why, that's been too long, my friend. At the Elgin Hogey Festival on October 28, you'll smile enough to erase the wrinkle from your brow. Surrounded by restored historic buildings (set off nicely by a huge, styrofoam pink pig), take in an antique car show, arts and crafts booths galore, a pork cookoff, a hog-calling contest, a children's costume parade (very cute), and, in an odd juxtaposition, an art auction and a cutthroat game of Cow

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Patty Bingo. Did we mention the dance?...call 512/281-5724.

More than 100 state parks promise recreation, adventure, and relaxation this fall. And best of all, on October 21-22, as part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Lone Star

Legacy Weekend, admission to every park, as well as to participating state fish hatcheries and some wildlife management areas, is free. For information about state parks, call 800/792-1112. Web site: www.tpwd.tate.tx.us.

If you'd like to

try your luck at growing roses, mark your calendar for next month's Fall Festival of Roses (Nov. 3-5) at The Antique Rose Emporium in Independence. In the meantime, pick up a copy of Emporium owner G. Michael Shoup's authoritative and colorful book *Roses in the Southern Garden*, which reveals much of what he has learned since he founded the business 16 years ago. In his book, Mike profiles hundreds of rose varieties and includes photos, growing tips, history, and trivia. Order (hardback, \$35) from The Antique Rose Emporium by calling 800/441-0002.

Beginning October 6 and continuing through October 29, Galveston Island throws the "Ghosts of Galveston" City-Wide Festival. Activities include a pumpkin-carving party, cemetery tours, performances of *The Passion of Dracula* and a screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* at the Strand Theatre, trick-or-treating for kids, and even an, ahem, blood drive....call 888/GAL-ISLE. Web site: www.galvestoncvb.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...

Loved the food, service, and atmosphere at the "haunted" **Catfish Plantation** (see *Texas Highways*, Oct. 1997) in **Waxahachie**. The catfish, fries, and blackberry cobbler were all first-rate.

North Callahan, Austin, via email
Catfish Plantation, which claims three resident ghosts, is in an 1895 Victorian-style house at 814 Water St.; 972/937-9468.

In the small town of **Seagraves** [60 miles south of Lubbock], the old Simpson Hotel has been beautifully renovated and re-named **The Cherry Blossom Inn**. In the restaurant, you can feast on steaks marinated in garlic, build-your-own chiles rellenos, and chicken-fried steak. And when you stay in the bed and breakfast, you'll enjoy a tasty, made-to-order breakfast.

Beverly Holmes, Midland, via email
The Cherry Blossom Inn is at 302 Main St.; 806/546-1407 or 877/646-1407. Web site: www.cherryblossom-inn.com.

The Web site www.ballistic.com/~possum/ is full of wonderful pictures, humor, and other information about the great state of Texas. Be sure to sign the guestbook and follow all the links to appreciate this Web site.

Ken & Jeanie Huckabee, Tucson, Arizona, via email
"Dave & Sugar's" Texas Web site features humorous quotes and links to sites about Texas fishing, outdoors, cooking, wildflowers, and lots more.

TO THE ZOO

The new **Lacerte Family Children's Zoo**, in the ZooNorth section of the **Dallas Zoo**, opened Sep. 9. Among the four-acre area's learning opportunities for youngsters are an outdoor amphitheater for live wildlife presentations, a meandering stream where kids can get happily wet as they play, and The JC Penney Discovery House, which highlights animals that live in urban environments—from opossums to cockroaches. *The Farm* exhibit gives children the chance to interact with goats, ponies, and potbellied pigs. They can also explore *The Underzone*, where naked mole rats abound. The Dallas Zoo is at 650 South R.L. Thornton Freeway (I-35E); 214/670-5656. Web site: www.dallas-zoo.org.

OODLES OF OOMPAH!

For those who enjoy the peppy polkas of German Oktoberfest celebrations each fall, you'll find the same infectious music year round at the **Fredericksburg Festhaus**, on US 87, 1.7 miles south of **Fredericksburg**. Kick up your heels to tunes played on accordion, tuba, and unusual Alpine folk instruments by the **Sauerkrauts Band**. (The Sauerkrauts also entertain at Six

Flags Fiesta Texas in San Antonio.) The *biergarten*-style **Fredericksburg Festhaus**, which serves sandwich and cheese platters, opens at 7 p.m. Wed-Sat (closed on Oct. 6-7, 13-14, 18-21, and Nov. 3-4, 8-11, and 22-25, when the band is traveling). Show time is at 8. Call 830/990-5032 or 877/990-5032.

NEW PARK PROGRESS

Scheduled to open in late 2001 or early 2002, **Government Canyon State Natural Area** in northwest **Bexar County** will form one of the nation's largest urban parks. The natural area at **San Antonio** will offer visitors several miles of hike-and-bike trails, as well as a look at well-preserved dinosaur tracks and a natural



MICHAEL A. MURPHY

accordionist **Robert Atwood** regularly "oompahs it up" with the **Sauerkrauts** at the **Fredericksburg Festhaus**.

wildlife habitat. The 7,000-acre park is the result of a public-private partnership. Call 210/688-9055. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/govcan/govcan.htm.

BIG PLANS IN BIG D

This past summer, **Dallas** officials unveiled designs for two major additions to the Dallas arts and museum scenes: the **Nasher Sculpture Center** and a new building for the **Frontiers of Flight Museum**, currently housed in the Dallas Love Field terminal.

The \$32 million sculpture garden, a gift to the city from

developer **Raymond D. Nasher**, will occupy a 2.4-acre site adjacent to the **Dallas Museum of Art** and will display art from Nasher's world-renowned sculpture collection, including works by Calder, Miró, Rodin, and de Kooning. "It's like a small Central Park in the middle of the city, an oasis," Nasher told David Dillon, architecture critic of *The Dallas Morning News*. The center will encompass a series of pavilions, galleries, terraces, and groves, as well as a reflecting pool, a bookstore, cafe, and auditorium. Completion is scheduled for 2002.

The new three-story **Frontiers of Flight Museum**, which will stand on Lemmon Ave. at the southeast corner of Dallas Love Field, is scheduled to begin construction in 2001 and to take about two years to complete. The 100,000-square-foot facility will be large enough to house the museum's current collection, along with several newly acquired airplanes and a 200-seat theater. Meanwhile, **Frontiers of Flight** continues to operate on the second floor of the Dallas Love Field terminal, with displays of such historic aviation memorabilia as a radio operator's chair that survived the *Hindenburg* disaster; the first pilot's license ever issued (to Glen Curtiss); and Admiral Richard Byrd's fur parka and compass. Call the museum at 214/350-1651. Web site: www.flightmuseum.com.

Down the Road

Explore the historic Texas Forts Trail, drop by laid-back Bastrop, breathe in the autumn air at Daingerfield State Park, sample some Dutch-oven delectables, then journey to Canton for a shopping spree at First Monday Trade Days—all in the November issue.

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

MICHAEL A. MURPHY



Early morning sunshine spills across a Panhandle Plains pasture along US 83 near Guthrie, illuminating golden grasses that hint at fall's arrival.

