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TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

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EDINBURG, TEXAS



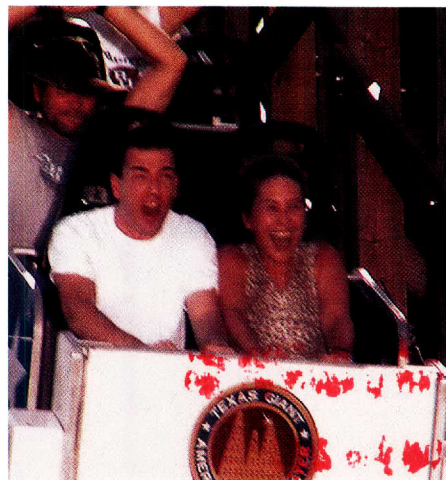
Our front cover this month features the Steel Eel at Sea World, one of Texas' sleek new generation of roller coasters. **Lori Moffatt**, our editor who wrote the stories on coasters and the **Orange Show** in this issue, *knows* roller coasters. The photo at right shows Lori and her fearless husband, **Randy Anthony**, conducting research aboard the Texas Giant at Six Flags Over Texas in Arlington.

"I think riding in the front car is always best, if only for the view," Lori says. "The Giant gets rougher and faster as the day progresses; the track gets hotter and the cars slide around more. Some folks get REALLY specific about where to sit and when to ride—for instance, they'll say for the best ride you have to sit in the second-to-the-last car after a rain on a hot summer day. People are nutty about these things."

For your coaster-riding pleasure, Lori offers this sage advice on avoiding long lines: "Go early, go on weekdays, and go on gray, drizzly days..."

Among our other stories this month, one of my favorites is **Brad Buchholz's** take on minor league **baseball** in Texas. As Brad's story points out so well, Texas baseball has given the game great players and grand traditions, but an element his story doesn't mention is the term "Texas leaguer," which refers to a fly ball that falls in the no-man's land between the infield and the outfield. Perhaps West Texas' legendary winds contributed to this phenomenon. Or maybe someone felt a need to attach the Texas moniker to the national pastime....

Readers, our **September 2000 special** issue is fast approaching! This year, we'll bring you a **travel extravaganza** that covers each of the state's



Our roller coaster author Lori Moffatt and her husband, Randy Anthony, research her story from the first car of the Texas Giant in Arlington. Lori says, "My favorite part about this photo is the guy behind us, riding there cool as a cucumber as we hollered and whooped. He looks like he's watching TV on the sofa."

seven regions from the knowledgeable perspectives of seven Texas travel experts. But, if you would care to help, we could use your input, too.

Here's your chance to **tell us about your favorite public place or event** in Texas. Let us know about a park, museum, restaurant, B&B, hike-and-bike trail, garden, scenic drive, pancake supper, theme park, observatory... the sky's the limit. We hope to publish some of your responses in the September issue, and others in the Readers Recommend section in future issues.

Send your suggestion (please, be specific...and brief) by June 20 to **Texas Faves**, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009. We have other special plans for this exceptional issue, so stay tuned....

Jack Lowry

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS TEXAS HIGHWAYS

MAY 2000

VOL. 47, No. 5

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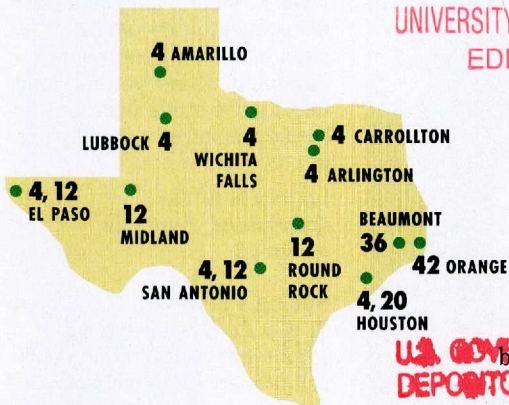
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EDINBURG, TEXAS

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From steel structures that twist and turn in impossible configurations to wooden classics that rattle and roll in all the right places, our coaster connoisseur crisscrossed the state to check out the rides

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MINOR LEAGUE, MAJOR THRILLS *by Brad Buchholz*

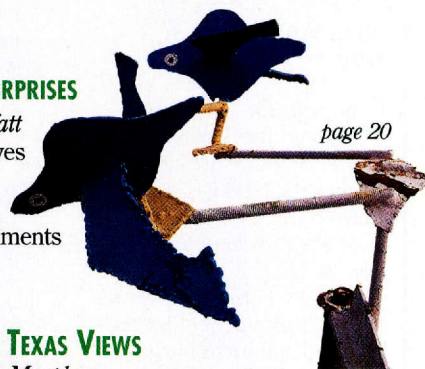
One of the oldest professional sports organizations in the nation, the Texas League offers baseball fans up-close views of the action and a chance to watch the game in a timeless setting. On a summer night, it doesn't get any better than this

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THE ORANGE SHOW: SURPRISES

FOR THE EYES by Lori Moffatt

A wild architectural collage in Houston now serves as Texas' epicenter of folk-art awareness. Throughout the year, the Orange Show Foundation introduces sightseers to other fanciful environments



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Introduction by Michael A. Murphy

Take a walk on the wide side as we present the first of two panoramic portfolios of the Lone Star State. This month's images are by Jeremy Woodhouse

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BEAUMONT BOTANICAL GARDENS *by Diane Morey Sitton*

This serene Southeast Texas oasis covers more than 23 acres and features more than 3,000 kinds of plants. During this month's 15th Annual Spring Garden Tour and Plant Sale, visitors can saunter, sniff, and marvel even more than usual

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THE APPEAL OF ORANGE *by Diane Morey Sitton*

With attractions ranging from a 25-year-old Gumbo Cookoff to gator tours, this Golden Triangle town shows a zest for life at every turn. Throw in several topnotch museums, an active community theater, and a slew of outdoor activities, and you've got a savory mix



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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS PAN AMERICAN
EDINBURG, TEXAS

ABOUT OUR COVERS

FRONT—With its multi-story drops, sinuous curves, and thrill-a-minute ride, the Steel Eel at Sea World San Antonio ranks high with coaster fans. For a joyful rundown of other Lone Star scream machines, turn to page 4. *Photo © R.C. French, Sea World, Inc.*

BACK—A greenhouse path at Beaumont Botanical Gardens winds through succulents (foreground) and tropics (background) to a water garden in the back. To see more lush foliage and beautiful blooms, turn to page 36. *Photo © Stephan Myers*

DEPARTMENTS

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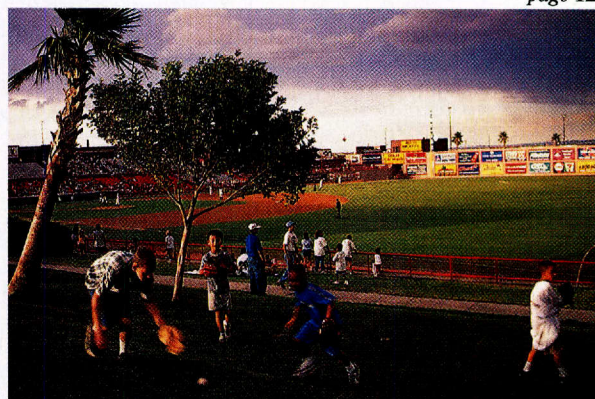
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Thwarting Warts

I found your article on "The Woman Who Buys Warts" (February 2000) very interesting. While in the Air Force, I wrote to my mother complaining of a wart on one of my hands. In her next letter was a nickel, and she said she was "buying my wart." I laughed and stuck the nickel in my nightstand drawer. But, yes, the wart went away. It just disappeared and left no scar. So if you have a wart you want to sell, find yourself a buyer.

LARRY WILSON
Flint

Playmakers

I enjoyed the Texas Sports Hall of Fame article in the December 1999 issue, but was amazed there was no mention of two high school football stars. Ken Hall, "The Sugarland Express," who still holds many national high school records, lives in Fredericksburg now. The other is Kyle T. Rote, who ranks as one of the best high school football players of all time. He went on to star for SMU and the New York Giants. Please don't let them be forgotten.

AL CARHART
Kerrville, via email

Gone Batty

I read with great interest your article in the November 1999 issue on my friend Brad Bailey and his baseball glove-making prowess. About five years ago, I combined my love of baseball and woodworking into one hobby—making wooden baseball bats. *Texas Country Reporter* featured me on a segment in 1998, and I became licensed with Major League baseball in the spring of 1999.

The process of turning a bat takes about four days. Each bat is turned on a lathe in my shop and is personalized with a name, signature, or logo laser-engraved into the barrel of the bat. Bats are custom made to the players' specifications. Most of my bats are given as trophies to display on a wall or in a trophy case.

ROB SELLERS
Waco

Ed. Note: *If you'd like to buy a custom-made bat from Rob (prices start at \$60 for Little League; \$100 for a Major League trophy bat), call 254/662-5041, or email shellisellers@juno.com. Brad Bailey, the "glove guy" we featured last November, has moved to 2624 Brennan Court in Plano (75075); 972/596-3603.*

Three-Faced

I loved your article on the Southwest School of Art & Craft in the April issue. There's a story behind the center's bell tower clock. It has only three faces—toward the east, south, and west—as they didn't think the city would grow to the north!

FRANCES WATTS
San Antonio

Ed. Note: *Thanks, Mrs. Watts. Mike Pecen, SSAC's public relations coordinator, says your explanation for the missing face on the north side of the dormitory clock tower is probably the most logical. However, local lore says that since the dormitory was built in 1866, right after the Civil War ended, the builders didn't want to give Yankees the time of day!*

"The Critics' Choice"

I don't think you were being fair when you listed all those fancy city restaurants in your February issue. What about the small mom-and-pop restaurants in country towns that are just as good, and usually less expensive? Not all of us are able to go to the big cities to eat.

AMANDA ALBERS
Vidor

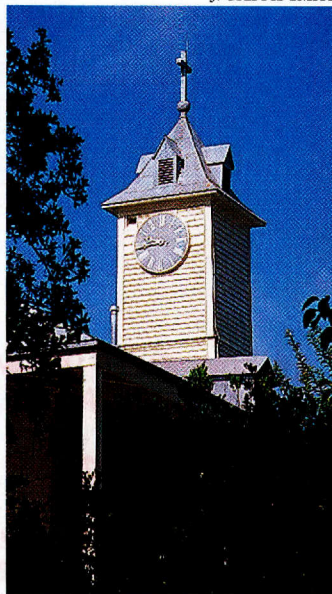
Taking Issue

I would like to commend and applaud each and every one involved in the two extremely well-written articles, and photos, in January on Judge Roy Bean and Charles Goodnight. This is Texas!

EUGENE A. REUSS JR.
Hurst

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.

J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Several timeless tales surround the clock tower at San Antonio's Southwest School of Art & Craft (featured in April).

The March issue had a great combination of places that I have been to or can't wait to get to. I especially enjoyed the stories and photography on Enchanted Rock, Wild Azalea Canyons, and Texas stars. And I always enjoy anything about Galveston. *Texas Highways* is doing a fabulous job!

NANCY WILLIAMSON, *via email*

Getting to Know You...

I am an Australian school student. A young man from Fort Worth stayed with us for a couple of days while he was in our country with a student ambassador program. He was very amusing in what little he knew about Australia. However, he left a few issues of *Texas Highways* with us that made me realize how little I knew about Texas. I discovered Texas was much more than just cowboys, rodeos, and desert. It is the most beautiful area of land I have seen, with so much history and a huge population that

loves its state. I am planning to visit next year—and I already know whereabouts I'm going! Thank you for your informative guide that has already captured a small place in my heart.

LAUREN HUNTER
Queensland, Australia,
via email

Spring Preview

My April issue arrived today. You've done yourself proud. Not much work got done around here this afternoon, but I sure enjoyed a mental trip home. Thanks for the most incredible pictures.

When people ask me where I'm from, I always say the same thing. I live in Indiana, but I'm from Texas. It's hard to believe that this summer will mark my 20th year of not physically residing in Texas, though my heart will always live there. I find myself adding places to the "things I want to see when I go home" list. I annually shed a tear while absorbing the April issue, when I remember that while it's just April in the rest of the world, it's truly springtime in Texas. Thanks for the wonderful stories of the usual and the unusual and for the visual reminder of what will always be home, no matter where I live.

DAWN CURLEE CARLSON
Terre Haute, Indiana,
via email

Not Nitpicky

I have truly enjoyed your magazine for a lot of years, and one question keeps popping up when I read the letters that people send in. Why in the world do some people have to scour their copies of *Texas Highways* for a minor mistake or two? I think it would be much more fun to just read the articles and look at the fine photography than to search for a mistake. After all, we are not going to be graded on the information. Just take a few minutes and enjoy this great magazine about this great state.

PAUL STRAKER, *via email*

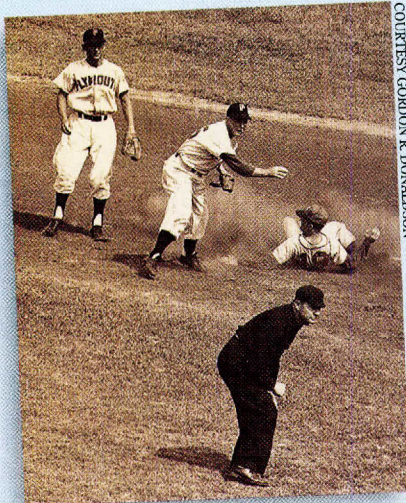
Waxahachie Wonder

An ambidextrous pitcher from Waxahachie went on to become one of the top managers in baseball over his 50-year career. Paul Richards, born in 1908, made a habit of watching the Detroit Tigers when they held spring training at Waxahachie's Jungle Park. When he injured his right arm as a child, he taught himself to throw left-handed. This ability served him well during his days with the local high school team, the Waxahachie Indians. Richards pitched right-handed to right-handed batters and left-handed to left-handed batters. The team won 65 straight games from 1925 to 1927.

Paul began his professional baseball career in 1926 as an infielder in the minor leagues. As a catcher, he played for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1932 and the New York Giants in 1933. In 1938, he assumed the dual role of catcher and manager for the Atlanta farm team and was named Minor League Manager of the Year by *The Sporting News*. He moved to the Detroit Tigers in 1943 as a player-coach. By 1949, he was devoting himself full time to managing at Buffalo. He joined the Chicago White Sox in 1950, then moved to the Baltimore Orioles in 1955.

In 1960, Richards was named the American League's Manager of the Year. The following year, the Texas Press Association chose him their first Texan of the Year. From 1966 to 1972, he served as vice president of baseball operations for the Atlanta Braves. Waxahachie renamed Jungle Field Paul Richards Park in his honor. He died in Waxahachie in May 1986.

—Cindi Myers, Bailey, Colorado



COURTESY GORDON R. DONALDSON

Sinton's Plymouth Oilers won two national semipro baseball championships. In this 1957 photo, shortstop Bob Koperwhats and the umpire watch the action as second baseman Gordon "Windy" Donaldson throws to complete a double play against the Alpine Cowboys.

Scintillatin' Semipros

Sizzling summer semipro baseball couldn't find a better stomping ground than Sinton in the 1950s. The town, home of the Plymouth Oilers, the company team of the local Plymouth Oil Company, boasted the best team in Texas from 1949 to 1957. The Oilers compiled a stunning record, taking the state semipro crown six times and winning the national championship in 1951 and 1957.

During those glory years, Mike Griffith

was vice president and general manager of the Plymouth Oil Company, headquartered in Sinton. "Mike was a walking chamber of commerce for Sinton and the Oilers," recalls Gordon Donaldson, the Oilers' second baseman from 1951 to 1957. "When he died in 1954, we lost our biggest cheerleader." Griffith is also remembered for having built a first-class ballpark, with the best lights of any field then in Texas.

Players from the minor leagues were given permanent jobs with the oil company and a chance to play ball. College players filled out the roster.

In 1957, the National Baseball Congress honored Sinton as the leading city in the nation for semipro baseball, and the Texas Legislature passed a resolution honoring the team and the city. At the end of that season, oil prices were dropping, and the company faced hard choices. Management disbanded the team, to the dismay of its South Texas fans.

—Sally Bickley, Sinton

Tangled Cobb Web

Legendary baseball battler Ty Cobb had one of the fiercest encounters of his career in Dallas. Before they were lured to Florida in the 1920s, sev-

eral major league teams conducted spring training in Texas. The teams included Cobb's Detroit Tigers, who worked out their winter kinks in Waxahachie, and the powerful New York Giants, driven into shape (by fiery manager John McGraw) in Marlin.

In 1917, the interleague rivals scheduled the opener of their exhibition season for March 31 at Gardner Park in Dallas. Cobb, who had paid little attention to spring training, annoyed his opponents by arriving just before game time after 18 holes of golf and forcing the team to wait while he cleaned golf-course mud off his baseball cleats. According to Cobb biographer Al Stump, Giants second baseman Buck Herzog yelled to the crowd that "the big shot finally got here" and called Cobb a Georgia redneck. "Go get yourself a banana, you ape," Cobb retorted.

After singling to right field and then warning Herzog he was coming, Cobb slid into second with spikes flying high, slashing Herzog's britches and drawing blood. A bench-clearing brawl ensued that prompted *The Dallas Morning News* to call the contest "a hurly-burly, wild-and-wooly West hotchpotch of baseball, football, soccer, and prizefighting."

At the Oriental Hotel that evening, where both teams were staying, Herzog challenged Cobb to another round of fisticuffs. The combatants met in Cobb's room; the Tigers' trainer came along as referee. Cobb had a distinct weight advantage, but Herzog had coached boxing in the Army. Cobb had pulled up the rug and watered down the floor, which provided good footing for his leather shoes, but a slippery surface for Herzog's tennis shoes. Cobb pummeled his opponent mercilessly until—with Herzog bent backwards over the foot of the bed and Cobb preparing to deliver another blow—the referee stopped the fight.

Herzog wasn't the only loser: The pouting Cobb refused to play the rest of the series, thus robbing Texas fans of the rare opportunity to see the game's greatest hitter work his magic with his hickory wand.

—Tom Peeler, Granbury

ROLLER

COASTERING

By Lori Moffatt

© WYMAN MEINZER

The fun is in the anticipation,

say some, in the moments before

you take the plunge, eyes wide open.

Other devotees praise the physical

and emotional release,

A C R O S S T E X A S

the adrenaline rush and elements

of surprise, that make you feel

unmistakably alive. Still others

rave about the euphoric moments

afterwards, when you can't wait

to repeat the experience.

When I set out last spring to ride as many of Texas' coasters as I could, I had no idea what adventures would unfold. I met new friends, shared new thrills with my husband and brother, laughed so much my sides hurt, and learned interesting bits of history they don't teach in school. Catherine the Great loved coasters. So did Albert Einstein. And Charles Lindbergh supposedly said that the famous Coney Island Cyclone (the model for Houston's own Texas Cyclone) was more exciting than flying solo across the Atlantic!

Having never flown solo over *any* body of water, I can't compare. But I can imagine, and that's the point. To me, riding a good coaster feels like flying. It feels like commanding my own spaceship over an exhilarating landscape of dips, flips, and dives. It feels like being a nine-year-old again, when new sensations presented themselves at every turn and I'd holler for the pure fun of it in my backyard. *That's* why people love roller coasters—because they're *fun*.

At an American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) convention in San Antonio last summer, I met Wanda Green and David Balmforth of Austin, who had so much fun riding the Rattler in 1995 that they fell in love. "We went to Fiesta Texas on one of our first dates," says Wanda, "and I was scared to death to ride a roller coaster. But finally Dave convinced me to ride the Rattler with him, and I got that adrenaline rush. All I could think about was running around and getting back on. I was hooked. We rode it more than a thousand times that summer."

This roller coaster craziness, it's a joyful addiction.

The zippy red-and-white Big Coaster outstrips the wind on the edge of Amarillo's cozy Wonderland Park.





That kind of enthusiasm isn't unusual among roller coaster nuts. Take Richard Fife of San Antonio, who has a tattoo of the Rattler on his left arm and rode the coaster 13,000 times before he stopped counting in 1997. Or 20-year ACE veterans Bill and Jacque Figie of Florida, who have ridden more than 300 coasters in 10 countries and give high marks to Arlington's wooden Judge Roy Scream for being a "good repeat ride." Or David Balmforth's folks, Barbara and Harry, who rediscovered roller coastering in their seventies and say it's something they do together as a family. "One of the things I love about ACE is that members range from children to folks in their 80s," says David. "There's a diversity of people and lifestyles, but we have one common interest—roller coasters."

Luckily for thrill-seekers, Texas has plenty of coasters to keep things interesting. *Park World* magazine editor Paul Ruben, who rode his first coaster in 1942 and now has a tally that tops 500, defines a roller coaster as anything that rides on rails and runs on gravity. "But," he adds, allowing for interpretation, "I always defer to the parks' definitions." Which means that, depending on whom you talk to, Texas boasts somewhere between 38 and 45 roller coasters, give or take a few free-fall rides or water coasters. (ACE lists 39 on its census.) Any way you slice it, only California and Ohio boast more ways to rejuvenate your soul.

The three biggies—the Six Flags parks in Arlington, Houston, and San Antonio, plus Sea World in San Antonio—claim Texas' most thrilling and technically advanced rides. Instant acrobat status can be yours: Just step right up, strap in, keep your eyes open, and remember to breathe. Steel coasters, with their soaring, brightly painted, spirograph-inspired architecture, promise multiple flips, dou-

Modeled after the famous Coney Island Cyclone in New York, Houston's exhilarating Texas Cyclone opened in 1976. As you zoom through the first turnaround, the cables that support the wooden framework throb with vibration.



KEEPING TRACK: SKY-HIGH ROLLING

It's tough to rank ones' favorite coaster, as any number of variables affect a coastering experience. Do you like the smooth speed of steel or the bumpy freedom of a classic woodie? Are you in the mood for an extreme adrenaline rush, or do you simply want to holler like you were a kid again? Make no mistake: Good company, a spectacular view, and the adrenaline-fueled thrill of doing something new can mark a coaster in your mind indelibly. Here are some of my favorites.

The Steel Eel—Sea World San Antonio. A 15-story first dive sends you gleefully plummeting; this is a good one for exercising your vocal chords—yaaaaaahhh!

The Great White—Sea World San Antonio. Twisty, turny, flippy, ahhhhh—that's what I wrote on my hand after my first turn on this coaster. Riding the Great White, with your legs dangling beneath you, feels like flying.

The Rattler—Six Flags Fiesta Texas, San Antonio. Lean forward, and don't forget to keep your eyes open as the coaster zooms toward the cliff.

Superman Krypton Coaster—Six Flags Fiesta Texas, San Antonio. New for 2000, the Superman flips riders through six inversions, all smooth as glass. During one spectacular roll, your body floats. Dreamy!

Mr. Freeze—Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington. Powered by linear induction motors (an electromagnetic technology invented in 1947 as a launching mechanism for rockets), this coaster's 60 mph adrenaline rush cured me of a bout of the blues. (Try the similar Poltergeist at Six Flags Fiesta Texas, too.)

The Texas Giant—Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington. My husband and I

rode the Giant—my favorite all-around coaster in Texas—six times in a row one lovely morning last summer. Speed, air time, 21 drops, a fabulously bumpy ride—I'm a fan.

Shock Wave—Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington. Smooth and fast (top speed, 60 mph), the Shock Wave zips along on track perched on spindly beams high above the park.

Judge Roy Scream—Six Flags Over Texas, Arlington. The smallest of Texas' wooden coasters, the Judge provides a rollicking ride. Put your hands up, way up! Wanna go again?

Texas Cyclone—Six Flags Astroworld, Houston. Stay loose on this famously interactive and noisy woodie, modeled after the classic Coney Island Cyclone. Ride in the front car (or another car with a view) if you can.

Ultra Twister—Six Flags Astroworld, Houston. This is the only coaster like it in the world, surprisingly small, fast, and steep. Its 90-degree drop—yep, straight down—is the steepest you'll find.

Galaxi—Joyland, Lubbock. Maybe I liked the Galaxi so much because I rode it repeatedly with polite, giggly kids who advised me to "put your hands up, ma'am." There are similar coasters in Amarillo and El Paso.

ble loops, heartline spins, g-forces comparable to taking off in fighter planes, and racy plummets of breathtaking speeds and lengths. You can ride with your legs swinging, you can ride standing up, and, on a brand-new ride Paul Ruben calls “a big old easy chair that runs amok,” you can ride on a coaster with no floor—it’s just you and the track, baby!

Texas’ four fabulous wooden coasters (“woodies” to those who love them) are here, too—intricate, lattice-like structures that creak and moan and look elegant in the setting sun. Oh, and did I mention they provide frenetic, rollicking rides that can turn back the clock? “I don’t like to go upside down, but I love the wooden coasters,” says Barbara Balmforth. “They’re more bouncy, and you get more air time.”

So, state-of-the-art technology aside, plenty of coaster fans still like their thrills the old-fashioned way—the nervous anticipation as the coaster train clackety-clacks up the lift hill and pauses at the summit, then the joy of barreling along a streamlined track. Smaller coasters provide thrills without chills, and Texas’ several family-owned parks—Joyland in Lubbock, Wonderland in Amarillo, Western Playland in El Paso, and the old-fangled Funland in Wichita Falls and Sandy Lake Park in Carrollton—offer rides without lines, plus charm to spare. So what are you waiting for?

© GEORGE HOSEK



© PAUL RUBEN

One of three inverted roller coasters in Texas, Houston’s Serial Thriller turns riders upside down five times, legs dangling. “Everyone likes to test the edge,” says roller-coaster fanatic Paul Ruben, who sent us the picture at left of himself and Kathleen Hill enjoying the ride.

Fifty-year-old Joyland Amusement Park unfolds amid Lubbock’s tree-lined Mackenzie Park, where families picnic, ride bicycles, and scout for prairie dogs. A candy-colored gondola ride carries folks from one end of Joyland to the other, affording bird’s-eye views of the park’s 24 rides, including a sight to behold for coaster fans: a fine kid’s coaster, the festively painted

Galaxi (which glitters with lights at night), and one of the state’s two “Mad Mouse” coasters—the latter a zippy trip through a maze of hairpin turns and whippy descents, made all the more exciting because you ride in a single train that looks like a cartoon race car. Go, Speed Racer, go!

“The Mouse gives you thrills you don’t get on a big, fast coaster,” says David Dean, who runs Joyland with his

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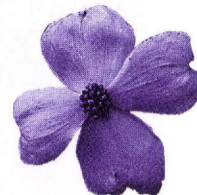
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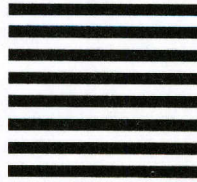
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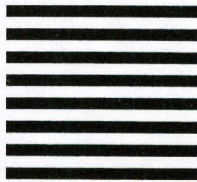
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wife, Kristi, and his mom, Katie. Two years after Katie and David's father, the late Jimmy Dean, purchased Joyland in 1973, they bought the Mouse from friends who run Bell's Amusement Park in Tulsa, Oklahoma. You'll find a lot of camaraderie among the owners of smaller parks—a warm, fuzzy feeling that somehow rubs off as you're scrambling for the next ride, slurping your snow cone.

David's first job, in fact, was as a ride operator at Amarillo's popular Wonderland Park, started in 1951 by the spirited Paul Roads and his wife, Alethea—one-time next-door neighbors of the Dean family.

From the 60-foot pinnacle of Wonderland's spectacular Wonder Wheel (where a couple exchanged vows a few years ago), a dizzying array of diversions on 16 acres presents itself. Here, you'll find water flumes, a spider-like Scrambler, bumper cars—25 rides in all, including a harrowing "mouse" ride, a snappy steel coaster, and the park's master stroke—a double-looped coaster called the Texas Tornado.

"It's *fantastic*," says park president Paul "P.D." Borhardt, who married Paul and Alethea's daughter, Paula. "When we were planning the ride, we thought, let's do a single loop, then a camel-back

hump, a high-speed turn, and another loop. Then, just to make things more interesting, we said, let's take it underground." Take it from me: By the time you emerge from the tunnel and screech to a halt at the station, you can hardly tell which way is up.

Of course, you can't take your five-year-old on the Texas Tornado. That's why parks like the newly refurbished Funland Amusement Park in Wichita Falls, with its collection of rides for kids, (including a restored 1922 Ferris wheel and a 1950s Allan Hirschell "Little Dipper" roller coaster) can be such fun. With a 12-foot lift hill and about 170 feet of track, the Little Dipper provides a nice smile for adults and a big thrill for little kids. "It goes pretty fast for a small coaster," says Ernie Baker, who bought the park in 1998 with his wife, Stephanie. "Everyone from toddlers to grandparents enjoy it. It's a classic, and one you can ride over and over."

In the Dallas suburb of Carrollton, David Rush agrees. Since 1970, three generations of the Rush family have operated a delightful, 60-acre oasis called Sandy Lake Park, which, like Funland, boasts a vintage Little Dipper. Between the pool, paddleboats, and 17 other rides, budding young roller coaster-lovers can whoosh

© DOUG SEHRES



Whoaaaaaaaa! Using electromagnetic technology developed to launch rockets into space, Six Flags Fiesta Texas' Poltergeist takes you from zero to 60 mph in less than four seconds. Keep your eyes open; it really does make a difference.

© MICHAEL MURPHY



VERTIGINOUS VOCABULARY:

A Guide to Coaster Conversation

Air time—a sensation of weightlessness, when you come out of your seat (usually at the crest of a hill). Also called negative gravity, or negative G's.

Bunny hops—also called speed bumps. A series of two or more hills, designed to provide air time.

Heartline spin—a corkscrew-like rotation with your heart as its axis.

Inverted—a coaster that rides below the track. Usually, this means your legs are dangling.

Out-and-back—a classic coaster layout that follows an elongated oval, then returns to the station.

Positive G's—the forces that pull you downward into your seat, at the bottom of a hill or inside a loop.

Safety dog—also called a ratchet. The steel bar that runs beneath certain coaster trains and makes that "clack, clack, clack" as you climb the hill; it keeps the train from rolling backwards.

Woodie—a coaster made of wood, as opposed to steel.

A TRIPLE TRIVIA TEASER

In 1975, with the Coney Island Cyclone fighting for its life, Astroworld manager Bill Crandall asked coaster designer Bill Cobb of Dallas to look into the logistics of moving the storied ride to Houston. Faced with prohibitive costs, Bill built his own version of the Cyclone at the Houston park. “Sure, you can make them higher, you can make them longer,” Bill later commented. “But I really don’t think you could improve the quality of fear.”

During World War II, Port Arthur’s long-gone Pleasure Pier roller coaster, advertised as the “largest in the South,” helped the war effort, recalls local historian Yvonne Sutherland. “The Camp Fire Girls collected newspapers for the war,” says Yvonne. “For every hundred pounds of paper we gathered, we got a free ride on the coaster.”

From the top of the 60-foot lift hill of El Paso’s red-and-white El Bandito, you can see two countries and three states (Texas, New Mexico, and Chihuahua, Mexico). Look to your left into El Paso, and you’ll see the southern tip of the Rocky Mountains; to your right, the Mexican state of Chihuahua. If you can stand to look behind you, there’s Mexico, New Mexico, and a great view of downtown El Paso. Then, whoosh, you’re off!

COURTESY ALBA COLLINS



COURTESY SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS



In the Twenties, some 1,500 wooden roller coasters operated in parks coast-to-coast. Vacationers in Galveston flocked to the Mountain Speedway.

around the oval track, preparing themselves, perhaps, for life’s inevitable ups and downs.

Human beings have enjoyed the exhilaration of speed and the experience of danger for centuries, of course, and historians often regard the hugely popular (and wildly decorated) ice slides, which stretched for blocks outside St. Petersburg in the 16th Century, as the precursors to today’s roller coasters. Some even credit

Almost a mile long, the Texas Giant makes the cut of most coaster-lovers’ Top Ten lists. What’s not to like? Speed, air time, 21 drops, a great view—this classic woodie provides a thrill at every hill.

Catherine the Great as the first coaster-lover to add wheels to a slide, thus succeeding in extending the season.

In this country, after the owners of a former Pennsylvania coal line called the Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway discovered they could earn money by transporting tourists instead of fuel, a light bulb came on for entrepreneurs such as La Marcus Thompson, who in 1884

May the G-Force Be With You

installed a 6 mph coaster he called the Switchback Railway at New York's Coney Island. Three years and 30 patents later, in Atlantic City, he unveiled the influential Scenic Railway, which changed the face of amusement parks forever. By the 1920s, more than 1,500 wooden roller coasters flourished in parks across the nation, including several in Texas.

Born in Galveston in 1928, Alba Collins literally grew up in the turnaround of the city's Mountain Speedway roller coaster, which her father, Roy Harm, operated for more than 30 years. Even as Alba talks about the interesting people-watching ("one time a girl emerged without her top on"), the items they'd find beneath the coaster, and the effects of the Depression, when Roy made a point to hire men with families, she makes the experience seem quite normal. "From the time I was a little girl, I rode the roller coaster constantly," says Alba. "I had a swing hanging from where the big dip was, and Mom had rose bushes and other flowers by the house. We let the back part, where we couldn't mow, go to black-eyed Susans."

In the coming decades, vacationers in Texas could spend their nickels at any number of amusement parks, most of which offered a roller coaster. Such destinations as Luna Park in Houston, North Beach at Corpus Christi, and Pleasure Pier in Port Arthur offered Texans a way to forget the woes of the Great Depression and, later, the Second World War.

"It was 1940 or so, and an inventor named Jimmy Johnson was making pinball machines up in Chicago when he got a phone call from a friend in San Antonio," says Ed Gaida, a historian in San Antonio. "This man says, 'Jimmy, there's gonna be a war. You ought to come down here and open up an arcade so the soldiers will have a place to spend their money.'"

The resulting arcade, which Jimmy opened adjacent to the Gunter Hotel, proved so successful that he soon opened a bona fide amusement park, eventually settling on a scenic spot near popular Brackenridge Park for his Playland Park. In 1947, he opened the Rocket roller coaster, charging 40 cents a ticket.

Texas' roller coasters are a far-flung bunch. Thrill-seekers can find these so-called "Great American Scream Machines" in Amarillo, Arlington, Carrollton, El Paso, Houston, Lubbock, San Antonio, and Wichita Falls. Operating schedules and admission prices vary, so check ahead.

Wonderland Park (3 coasters), at 2601 Dumas Dr. in Amarillo, opens Apr. 1-Labor Day. Write to Box 2509, Amarillo 79105-2509, or call 806/383-3344 or 800/383-4712. Web site: www.wonderlandpark.com.

Sandy Lake Park (1 coaster, an Allan Hirschell "Little Dipper"), at 1800 Sandy Lake Rd. in Carrollton, opens Mar-Sep. Write to Box 810536, Dallas 75381, or call 972/242-7449. Web site: www.sandy-lake.com.

Western Playland (1 coaster), at 6900 Delta in El Paso, opens Mar-mid-Oct. Write to 6900 Delta, El Paso 79905, or call 915/772-3953. Web site: www.western-playland.com.

Joyland Amusement Park (3 coasters), off I-27 in Mackenzie Park in Lubbock, opens Mar. 18-Oct. 8. Write to Box 2262, Lubbock 79408, or call 806/763-2719. Web site: www.joylandpark.com.

Jungle Jim's Playland (1 kiddie coaster), an "indoor children's entertainment

center" at Bitters and US 281 in San Antonio, opens daily, year round. Call 210/490-9595.

Sea World San Antonio (2 coasters), at 10500 Sea World Dr. (78251) in northwest San Antonio, opens Mar.-Oct. Call 210/523-3611. Web site: www.seaworld.com.

Funland Amusement Park (1 small Allan Hirschell "Little Dipper"), at 2006 Southwest Pkwy. in Wichita Falls (76302), opens Apr. 23-Oct. 31. Call 940/767-7911.

The three Six Flags parks (www.sixflags.com) open Mar.-Oct. **Six Flags Over Texas** (10 coasters) is just off I-30 at 2201 Road to Six Flags (76010) in Arlington; call 817/640-8900. **Six Flags Astroworld** (10 coasters) is at 9001 Kirby Dr. (77054) in Houston; call 713/799-1234. **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** (7 coasters) is at I-10 and Loop 1604 (17000 IH 10 West, 78257) in San Antonio; call 210/697-5050.

For information about joining the 5,600-member American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE), write to 5800 Foxridge Dr., Ste. 115, Mission, KS 66202, or check the Web site: www.ACEonline.org.

For information about joining the Texas-based WildWest Coaster Club, write to Box 610721, DFW Airport 75261-0721, or call 817/577-1426.

When Playland closed in 1980, coaster preservationists fought hard to save the Rocket. Just when things looked dire, the Knoebels family, who own a park in Elysburg, Pennsylvania, stepped in and saved the coaster, disassembling it and reopening it as the Phoenix. Today, coaster fans consider the Rocket/Phoenix—with its 72-foot drop and lots of air time—a model for coaster preservation.

Oddly enough, wooden coasters owe their continuance to the popularity of today's high-tech steel thrillers. "I got into this 25 years ago because it looked as though coasters were becoming extinct," says Paul Ruben. "But in the past few years, there have been more roller coasters erected since the days before the Great Depression."

Why the resurgence of interest, you might ask? "For one thing," says Paul, "the parks have discovered that a new coaster will pay for itself in just a few years, and every park likes to have bragging rights—if only for a short time—for the fastest, tallest, steepest coaster.

"Not everyone can be a race car driver or a sky diver," he continues. "But everyone can ride a roller coaster. It's a more practical way of testing the edge."

I'll meet you in the front car. ★

Associate editor LORI MOFFATT thanks the dozens of fascinating folks who shared their joy of coastering, as well as her intrepid riding partners, husband Randy Anthony and brother Hal Moffatt.



I IN THE HEART OF THE TEXAS LEAGUE

MINOR LE

BY BRAD BUCHHOLZ

THE PURITY OF THE GAME LIVES ON

MAJOR



LEAGUE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN STILLMAN

THRILLS

The baseball is rough, just a little wild—and the players are strangers to us. Yet our seats in the grandstand are so close to the diamond that we can see the uncertainty in the second baseman's eye when he muffs an easy ground ball. That's why we feel something for him, though we don't even know his name.

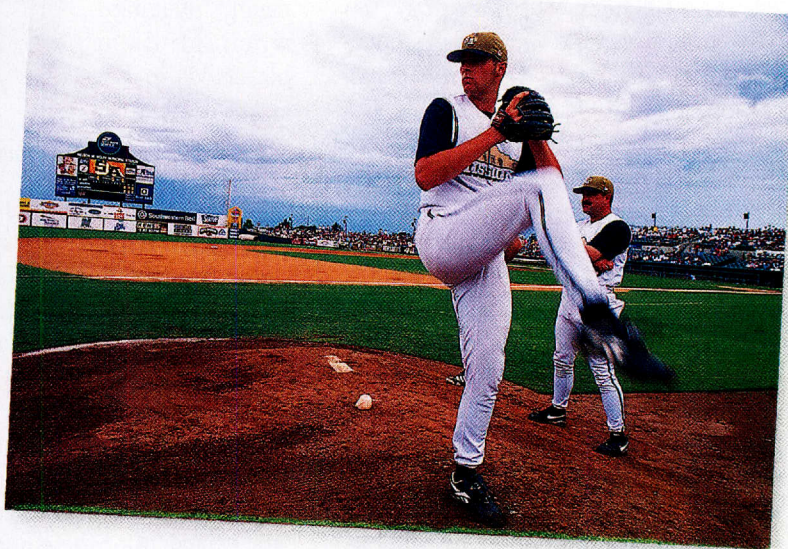
In the box seats, a Major League scout scratches notes in a spiral notebook. A schoolteacher grades a stack of essays as she listens to play-by-play on the radio. The spring breeze blows warm, and the air smells like roasted corn. It doesn't matter that the stadium is half empty tonight, for this is a place where the game is played on a human scale. There are no icons here. No expectations of grandeur. My ticket for tonight's game cost \$5—the price of parking at most Major League parks.

On the diamond, a pitcher throws a fastball to his catcher. On a grassy hill beyond left field, a father plays catch with his son. Who knows what the future holds—or what we might carry home with us from this night?

San Antonio. El Paso. Midland. The baseball here—TEXAS LEAGUE baseball—has little in common with the leviathan that is Major League baseball. But that's the very secret of its beauty. Here, the poetry of the game lives on, in a world far removed from domed stadiums and multimillionaire players. Here, where the stadiums are truly *parks*. Here, where the grass was *always* real.

The Texas League, founded in 1888, is one of the oldest sporting institutions in America. It existed before the creation of the World Series, before the birth of Babe Ruth, before the construction of Chicago's Wrigley Field (1914) or Boston's Fenway Park (1912). Dizzy Dean played in the Texas League. So did Duke Snider and Brooks Robinson, Joe Morgan and Mike Piazza and Darryl Strawberry.

Despite its name, the Texas League has rarely been an exclusively Texan enterprise. Today, for example, it includes franchises in Tulsa, Little Rock, Shreveport, and Wichita. Yet the Texas League has always



[ABOVE] San Antonio Missions left-hander Allen Davis warms up in the bullpen.

[FACING PAGE] A capacity crowd at San Antonio's Nelson Wolff Municipal Stadium enjoys an evening of Texas League baseball.

...THERE IS A SPECIAL JOY IN VISITING THE MORE
INTIMATE CONFINES OF TEXAS' MINOR-LEAGUE PARKS, TO
FEEL THE BEAUTY OF THE GAME IN ITS PUREST FORM....

been rich with Lone Star teams, particularly in the first half of the 20th Century, when Major League baseball had not yet ventured west of the Mississippi. The Austin Senators. The Beaumont Exporters. The Galveston Sandcrabs. The Dallas Steers. The Fort Worth Cats. The Houston Buffs. The Paris Parasites. The Longview Cannibals. The Waco Navigators. All form a part of Texas League history.

So, too, do the San Antonio Missions, the Midland RockHounds, and the El Paso Diablos—the keystone franchises in the current Texas League—and the brand new Round Rock Express. Even in an age when big-league baseball is thriving in Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth, there is a special joy in visiting the more intimate confines of Texas' minor-league parks, to feel the beauty of the game in its purest form....

OPENING DAY *San Antonio*

In the left-field bullpen of Wolff Stadium, a 23-year-old pitcher named Eric Gagne is throwing way too hard in the pregame warmup. It's opening day of the Texas League baseball season, and he's been designated the starting pitcher tonight for the San Antonio Missions. Pregame nerves manifest as a fastball bounces in the dirt, and another pitch rolls into the outfield. His bullpen catcher, Hector Ortiz, tries to calm him.

As a AA minor-league circuit, the modern Texas League is all about learning. And so it is today for Eric Gagne—who blew out his pitching arm two years ago and knows that he will discover, very soon, in the aftermath of surgery and rehabilitation, whether he still has a future in baseball. On the loudspeakers, before the game, lyrics from a rock song: "This is real life, this is real

love/These are real fears, these are real tears." For Eric Gagne, this is the soundtrack of the day.

Gagne's fastball, it turns out, is alive tonight. He strikes out four consecutive Midland batters in the early innings. But with two outs in the fourth, his concentration wanders. Gagne walks two batters in succession. His infield gets lazy and commits two errors that could have got him out of the inning. He labors on the mound. And though he ultimately gives up a single unearned run, Gagne is shaken. Angry, he slams his glove against the dug-out wall when he leaves the field between innings.

In the fifth inning, Gagne is frustrated, his attention still focused on the sloppy fourth. So he's caught off guard when Midland batter Mario Encarnacion bombs one of his fastballs over the centerfield wall. Incredibly, on the very next pitch, Midland's Justin Bowles goes deep, too. Flustered, Gagne grooves another fastball to RockHound third baseman Adam Piatt, who hits a towering homer to left....

Three pitches, three home runs. Eric Gagne's night is over. The Missions will lose big, and Gagne is so crushed he won't speak after the game.

"You know, you hate to take a guy out after he gives up a home run," Missions manager Jimmy Johnson says after-

ward, wondering aloud if he should have pulled Gagne after the first batter in the fifth. "Who would have thought he'd give up two? And then three! Geez!"

Johnson is sitting in his cinder block office, wearing a Dodgers T-shirt—San Antonio is the AA affiliate of the Los Angeles Dodgers—and typing at a portable computer. His postgame email transmission to Los Angeles is due within the hour. Obviously upset, he explains that his job this year involves protecting guys like Gagne, by teaching them how to hold their emotions on the diamond.

Johnson's hair is gray. Having been in the game for more than 30 seasons, his best years in baseball are behind him.

"I know I'm not moving on from here to a top-level spot in the Majors; it's not going to happen," he says quietly. "It's



Rocky the RockHound pauses for the national anthem along with umpires, players, and fans at Midland's Christensen Stadium.

my job to help these guys get to that level." And then he pauses, considering his own story. "Deep down, I know what I've done in baseball. Someday, I should sit down and make a list of all the guys I've helped get to the big leagues. But hey, life goes on."

EARLY INNINGS *San Antonio*

Texas League baseball games have a neighborhood feel. You notice children, families, soldiers, older folks. You notice integrated grandstands. You notice blankets on grass. You



Midland RockHound Jose Castro takes a rip.

hear the poing of footsteps on aluminum bleacher seats as children scramble toward the concrete stadium aisles.

Tonight, I notice Bill and Vivian Bryant, married for more than 50 years, sitting behind home plate. Bill, a veteran, wears a black cap that says USS *Mississippi* in gold letters with gold trim.

San Antonio's 6,300-seat stadium, built in the 1990s, is one of the most modern parks in the Texas League—but Bill has been watching this team for some 60 years. He and Vivian attended games together at the old Missions Stadium in the early 1940s, before they married, before Bryant left for “two years, seven months, and 22 days” of service in World War II.

“We went to Major League games for awhile [in the 1960s and 1970s], but it was too expensive and too far away,” says Bill. “I like these games better. The players hustle. They have a goal. They want to win.”

RAIN DELAY *El Paso*

Over the last 25 years, the biggest success story in minor league baseball may be the El Paso Diablos. The franchise consistently draws the Texas League's largest crowds. What's more, the team has set

the standard for promotions and community relations.

Cohen Stadium, the Diablos' 10-year-old ballpark, is an architectural joy—set low to the ground, painted in pink and brown desert hues, and affording a magnificent view of the Franklin Mountains from the left-field boxes. The Diablos' owner mandated that the concession stands be built within view of the field, so it's impossible to miss a play while standing in line for a hot dog. The summer nights are delightfully cool. And the baseball is good.

“We're about quality, family entertainment—and it works here, because the El Paso community is all about family,” says Diablos president Rick Parr, who has been with the team since 1975. “The day we stop catering to the family is the day we die.”

The hero of the Diablos is Jim Paul, the renaissance man of the Texas League, who bought the team in 1975 when it was considered one of the worst investments in professional sports. Paul, a native of El Paso, knew nothing about baseball and nothing

about running a team. But he had a great imagination—and his spirit of whimsy is the Diablos' legacy.

In those “old days,” the Diablos played in a scruffy facility from the 1920s called Dudley Field. The team played a great game of make-believe with their simple adobe stadium, pretending it was a vast, Major League park with a modern, retractable glass dome.

“We called it the Dudley Dome,” says Rick Parr, who was Paul's right-hand man in those days. “It was our answer to the Astrodome.... We actually used to play a tape whenever we ‘uncovered’ the dome at night. We'd say something like, ‘Hey folks, it's time to open the dome! The bad weather is gone.’ And this tape would make all these creaky noises. People loved it, and it worked just because it was funny!”

“As the years passed, people who wanted to stage events at Dudley Field would get confused. They'd call us and say, ‘Well, we hear you have a dome.’ And we'd say, ‘That's right.’”

In the spirit of fun, the modern Diablos go wild over promotions. In fact, there's a special promotion *every*

PROVING GROUND

Many Hall of Fame baseball players first distinguished themselves in the Texas League. While playing with Beaumont in 1907, the great Tris Speaker led the league in batting, with an average of .314. Pitching for Houston in 1931, Texas League Player of the Year Dizzy Dean topped all pitchers, with 26 wins, 303 strikeouts, and an earned-run average of 1.57. Immortal slugger Hank Greenberg led the Texas circuit with 30 homers for Beaumont in 1932.

But two baseball legends proved dismal failures in Texas—one played too soon, one too late. In 1914, to appease ace spitball hurler Everett “Pep” Hornsby, the Dallas Giants gave Pep's 17-year-old brother, Rogers, a tryout. Rogers Hornsby lasted only two weeks of the regular season, and never got in a game. After being cut,

Rogers caught on with the Hugo team of the Class D Texas-Oklahoma League, which folded after a few weeks and sold the infielder to Denison for \$125. As baseball fans everywhere know, Rogers Hornsby would go on to become the greatest right-handed hitter in baseball history, with a career batting average of .358.

In 1930, the Dallas team, then called the Steers, signed the legendary Grover Cleveland Alexander, who had accumulated 373 big-league wins. In his Texas League debut against the Fort Worth Cats, “Old Pete” gave up 11 hits, 6 runs, and was knocked out of the box in the fourth inning. A box-office draw, Alexander didn't have much left on the mound. He won only one game that year, finishing with an earned-run average of 8.25.

—Tom Peeler



Play Misty for Me. It's the "cool zone" at El Paso's Cohen Stadium.

Because he knows the fans will be back, tomorrow. In El Paso, they always come back.

THE CHICKEN SPEAKS

El Paso

As "The Famous Chicken," Ted Giannoulas estimates he has performed in hundreds—even thousands—of minor-league ballparks over the last 22 years, but he says the Texas League is his favorite, not just in baseball, but in all of organized sports.

"I like the 'Wild West' feel of it," says Giannoulas, a chicken out of costume, sitting in Rick Parr's darkened office 30 minutes after the thun-

derstorm. "Maybe that has something to do with its history, or because the promotions are more outlandish, or because the teams score so many runs. But this league has always had a kind of Barnum & Bailey feel to it. What's more, the people here are proud of it.

"When you walk into the offices in San Antonio, they have the photos of all the old Missions, in their baggy jerseys, and it's something you don't see in the Eastern League, or the Southern League," Giannoulas continues. "I love it! It's what baseball is all about. And that's why, to this day, I love the minor leagues more than the Majors. The Majors are very corporate, very sterilized. But in the minors, you can still find that 'Boys of Summer' spirit—especially in the Texas League."

Giannoulas is charmed by the Texas League custom of collecting "home run" dollars. Whenever a hometown player homers in El Paso, fans approach the dug-out with a cash reward. In San Antonio, Missions faithful pass a bucket through the crowd for the rest of the inning. It's a 60-year-old Texas League tradition, and the players are very much aware of the potential bonus. A two-out homer is great, but that can mean little time to accumu-

single night during the season. The team distributes color, poster-size calendars (one side English, one side Spanish) to keep the fans abreast of each event. Yo-Yo Night. Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders Night. Jersey Night. Twenty-five-cent Hot Dog Night. A Beach Boys concert. Postgame fireworks. Midget wrestling.

You name it, they've probably tried it. Fans appreciate the entertainment value.

Tonight's attraction is Ted Giannoulas, "The Famous Chicken." And though a ferocious pregame desert thunderstorm has flooded the field, blown out the stadium lights, and forced the cancellation of the game, Rick Parr is all smiles.

AA BASEBALL

Major League baseball operates a vast, elaborate, minor-league farm system, in which individual clubs develop and train young prospects. Within the minors, there are four tiers of competition—Rookie League, A, AA, and AAA—that can lead to the Majors. The Texas League has been an AA league since this modern classification came into existence in 1946.

For the last five to seven years, Major League teams have begun to change the way in which they think of AA. In the past, players closest to Major League caliber spent most of their developmental time in AAA. Today, however, AA appears to be the

key proving ground for young talent. Increasingly, clubs will place a promising player in AA with the expectation that he might advance to the Majors with only a short stop in AAA. For example, Midland pitcher Tim Hudson began last season in AA Midland and ended the year as one of the most effective pitchers in the Major Leagues with Oakland. Astute baseball fans have come to realize that AA baseball is the place to watch rising stars on the fast track. Consequently, baseball purists place special emphasis on games played in April, May, and June, because the brightest prospects are often pushed along by mid-season.

—Brad Buchholz

late a big collection. The savvy Texas League hitter knows the payoff's better with a leadoff, no-outs home run....

For the last 40 years, the Texas League has gained the reputation as a hitter's league. In 1983, for example, El Paso beat Beaumont 35-21. And, in 1985, El Paso beat Midland 31-5, scoring 29 runs in the first five innings. Two years ago, Arkansas Traveler outfielder Tyrone Horne made history in San Antonio when he hit the first known "home run cycle" in professional baseball history. Horne hit a two-run homer in the first inning, a grand slam in the second, a solo home run in the fifth, and a three-run homer in the sixth. No home run dollars, though, because Horne was a player for the visiting road team.

Although Jim Paul sold the Diablos in the 1990s, his promotional stunts remain the stuff of legend—even such disasters as "flashlight night," which almost resulted in a forfeit when fans directed their flashlight beams toward the mound and disoriented the visiting pitcher.

It was Paul who invited Ted Giannoulas' character, the Chicken, to perform in the minor leagues for the first time, in 1978. Out of gratitude, Giannoulas debuted his new "Famous Chicken" act in El Paso in 1979 after winning a lawsuit that gave him independent control as a performer.

The young Giannoulas, as a student at San Diego State, was hired by local radio station KGB to pass out Easter candy while wearing a chicken suit at the San Diego Zoo during spring break. A star was born. The "San Diego Chicken" proceeded to entertain fans between innings of San Diego Padres games. National attention with requests for appearances soon followed. The radio station

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"The Famous Chicken" loves the Texas League. "It's what baseball is all about," he says.

sued for a piece of the action, but Giannoulas won, though he had to drop the "San Diego" name and alter his chicken suit.

"It's fun to come here. The people really know how to laugh," says Giannoulas, who estimates he's made more appearances in El Paso (70) than in any other minor-league city. "I've often thought that Texas League players are more relaxed than other players in the minors, and I think this is a reflection of the fans' attitude. Fans in the northeast bring a lot of stress to the ballpark. They're uptight, and they'll tear up some of the players. Here, the attitude is much more encouraging. After an error, it's like: 'It's OK, you'll get it next time.'"

MIDDLE INNINGS *Midland*

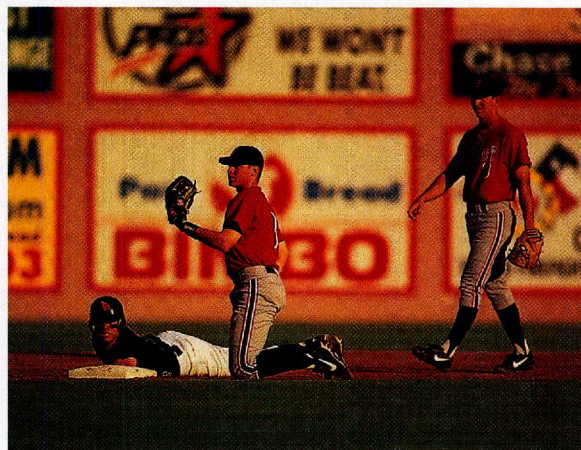
Christensen Stadium is a hokey little place, past its prime, a little shabby. The players hate it. The pitcher's mound is hard, and the wind is bad. Once, a game here was called on account of grasshoppers. But for the baseball traditionalist, it's the perfect Texas League stop because it is gloriously authentic.

Before the game, Midland's Latino players stretch in the outfield grass and chat with the groundskeepers in Spanish. A worker in blue jeans and a work shirt hoses down the infield. The air smells a little bit like petroleum (this is oil country, after all), or country pasture, or cotton candy; it all depends on which way the wind blows.

"...IN THE MINORS, YOU CAN STILL FIND THAT 'BOYS OF SUMMER' SPIRIT—ESPECIALLY IN THE TEXAS LEAGUE."

The aluminum grandstands are almost empty, since most hard-core RockHound fans are eating in "The Rock Garden," a field-level picnic area beyond the bleachers on the third-base line. "Take Me out to the Ballgame" blares from the speaker system, ragtime style, then a little ditty that goes "Baseball, baseball...ain't it a dandy old game." The park's color scheme is red, white, and blue. The mood is 1899.

Midland plays El Paso this evening—but the game is subordinate to setting. A mascot called "Juice the Moose" races around the outfield warning track on a revved-up mini-tractor. A freight whistle blows when the RockHounds hit home runs. Between innings, the public address system broadcasts ads for Granger Industrial Supply, Johnny's Pit Bar-B-Q, and the Mattress and Furniture Center, where, of course, *se habla español*.



An El Paso Diablo beats the tag at second.

The sun sets, casting long shadows across the infield, and those of us on the tenth row of the left-field bleachers can see our silhouettes on the third-base grass. A moon rises over the golf course that lies beyond the first-base line. Delicate webs of lightning, far away, flash in the sky beyond right field.



Kids play a little ball themselves down the right-field line in El Paso.

In the box seats, teenage girls flirt with the RockHound players as they leave the dugout. In Midland, you can sit that close. There's only a sliver of foul territory, leaving on-deck batters in the line of fire from foul balls. You can see the batters swat away the gnats at home plate and hear them chat with the umpire.

When it's over, a cluster of devoted fans waits to wish the players well on the upcoming road trip to El Paso. Their favorite is third baseman Adam Piatt, who has a chance to become the first Texas League player in decades to lead the league in batting average, home runs, and RBI. It's a dream season for Piatt—and he'll eventually achieve the Triple Crown—but his focus is the Oakland A's.

"Here, everyone has one goal, and that's to get to the Major Leagues," he says, as he walks with his wife to the parking lot after signing autographs. "Years from now, no one will remember how you hit in the minors. Do you remember how many home runs Ken Griffey Jr. or Mark McGwire hit in the minor leagues?"

SEVENTH-INNING STRETCH

San Antonio

In the top of the seventh inning, the Missions' game has reached a dramatic climax. Thousands of fans at Wolff Stadium are standing and clap-

ping. The hometown players are up in the third-base dugout, pointing to action on the field. The stadium is alive with noise.

On the diamond, a little boy—no more than five years old—is waddling around the base path in pursuit of the Missions' team mascot, Henry the Puffy Taco. It's a tradition in San

Antonio: Each night, a child is selected to chase—and tackle—the Taco before the mascot reaches home plate.

The Taco looks delightfully ridiculous, running tall in his floppy tortilla jacket, the lettuce and tomato dangling as he bobbles around the bases. Players on both teams are laughing at the act. Lost in the moment, the Missions infielders join in, guiding the little boy around the dirt infield. The third baseman swats at the Taco with his glove as the chase heads for home....

In this moment, there is no curtain separating the world of the player and the world of the fan. There is only the awareness of sharing the night. This connection—this intimacy—is what the Texas League is all about.

BULLPEN WORK El Paso

In the lazy afternoon heat, San Antonio pitcher Eric Gagne throws fastballs in the bullpen at Cohen Stadium. It's just a workout, between starts. There's only one week left to play in the Texas League season. And for Gagne—the kid who got shelled on opening day—it has turned out to be a great season.

With one start left in

the season, Gagne is now 12-4—the most effective right-handed pitcher in the league. He leads the league in strikeouts and ranks second in ERA. Since the loss on opening day, he has developed a curve ball. He hasn't lost a game in almost two months.

"I've learned a lot this year: how to pitch, how to be aggressive," he says after finishing his pregame workout. "I'm learning how to command the plate, to teach people it's mine. I've always been a good thrower, but this was the year I learned how to pitch.

"I've also learned to keep my emotions inside, to keep a straight face," Gagne continues. "I'm a hockey player, you know. We're pretty expressive. And while hockey is so much action and reaction, baseball is more about thinking. I remember that first game. I was nervous, trying to do too much. But the pitching coach here, Dean Treanor, told me: 'Keep your emotions inside.' And while that's hard for me, I've learned to stay calm, to analyze the situation. To sit back...."

On the stadium loudspeakers, music fills the air: "Any time that you want me. Any time that you need me...." That's the question of the moment. Are the Dodgers ready? Will they call Gagne up to the Major Leagues next week, when teams are allowed to expand their rosters?

Gagne isn't scheduled to pitch tonight, so he showers, changes into street clothes, and takes a seat in the grandstand behind home plate. Though he may be playing in Dodger Stadium within a week, his job as a minor leaguer tonight is to hold the radar gun, chart pitches, and keep a scorecard for the coaches.

No one in the stands recognizes Eric Gagne. Season ticketholders arriving late are surprised to find a stranger



© JOHN DAVENPORT, SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS

Eric Gagne emerged as a top Major League prospect over the course of the San Antonio Missions' 1999 season.

Texas League Baseball

sitting in their seats. They ask him to move, once, twice. Gagne is polite and moves on.

Eric Gagne will get the call, next week. In his first Major League start, he throws six innings of no-run ball, striking out eight. The kid is on his way.

LATE INNINGS *El Paso*

On the final home stand of the season, the El Paso Diablos have little to play for. Their best players were called up to the Arizona Diamondbacks months ago, at mid-season. There's no chance for a Texas League championship. The team has been out of the hunt for weeks.

Yet the stands at Cohen Stadium are jammed throughout the weekend—for the final standings have less meaning than the beauty of the night. There will be discount hot dogs, sing-alongs, between-inning sumo wrestling, and postgame fireworks.

The sun sets behind the Franklin Mountains. Lights flicker in the foothills. The desert air is chilly. There is a beautiful moonrise. The Diablos trail 10-1. But even with the game out of reach, the team puts two on with no outs in the bottom of the seventh. First baseman Mike Wolff steps to the plate.

"Let's keep the home rally going!" shouts the PA announcer, who then makes like a "wolf" and howls into the night. "Out-out-a-rooooo! A-rooooo! Out-out-a-roooooo!"

"C'mon fans, that moon's getting bright! A-roooooo!"

Infatuated, the fans join along. "A-roooooo! A-roooooo!"

There's no chance for the Diablos to win—or is there? Who can say what the future holds? For now, there is only baseball, and this life, and the chance to howl like a wolf at the Texas moon. ★

Longtime Austin feature writer BRAD BUCHHOLZ loves sports, travel, and the arts.

Staff photographer KEVIN STILLMAN looks forward to watching Express baseball in his hometown, Round Rock.

The Texas League teams are the El Paso Diablos, Midland RockHounds, Round Rock Express, San Antonio Missions, Wichita Wranglers, Tulsa Drillers, Shreveport Captains, and Arkansas Travelers.

The season opens Thu. Apr. 6. (San Antonio at Midland; Round Rock at El Paso) and ends Sep. 3. Divisional playoffs: Sep. 5-9. League championship: Sep. 11-17. Write to the Texas League, 2442 Facet Oak, San Antonio 78232; 210/545-5297. Web site: www.texas-league.com.

El Paso Diablos

AA affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks
Cohen Stadium (seating capacity 10,000; wheelchair accessible) in northeast El Paso. Take the Diana Dr. exit off US 54 (Patriot Freeway). Mailing address: 9700 Gateway North Blvd., El Paso 79924. Web site: www.diablos.com. Tickets: 915/755-2000. Box seats: \$6. Reserved: \$5. General admission: \$4. (Visa and MasterCard accepted.)



New kids on the block. Round Rock Express president Reid Ryan (left) and manager Jackie Moore eagerly anticipate the 2000 Texas League season at The Dell Diamond.

Midland RockHounds

AA affiliate of the Oakland A's
Christensen Stadium (seating capacity 5,000; wheelchair accessible) in north Midland, near the intersection of Loop 250 North at N. Lamesa Rd. Mailing address: 4300 N. Lamesa Rd., Midland 79705. Web site: www.midlandrockhounds.org. Tickets: 915/570-7489 or 683-4251. Box seats: \$7. Reserved grandstand: \$6. General admission: \$5. Senior citizens and ages 6-12, general admission: \$2.50. (Credit cards accepted on phone orders.)

Round Rock Express

AA affiliate of the Houston Astros
The Dell Diamond (seating capacity 9,816; wheelchair accessible), 4 miles east of Interstate 35 on US 79 (Palm Valley Blvd.). Mailing address: 3400 E. Palm Valley Blvd., Round Rock 78764. Web site:



www.roundrockexpress.com. Tickets: 512/255-2255. Box seats: \$8. Reserved: \$7. General admission: \$5 and \$4. (Credit cards accepted on phone orders.)

San Antonio Missions

AA affiliate of the Los Angeles Dodgers
Nelson Wolff Municipal Stadium (seating capacity 6,300; wheelchair accessible) in west San Antonio, near the intersection of US 90 West and Callaghan Rd. Mailing address: 5757 US 90 West, San Antonio 78227. Web site: www.samissions.com. Tickets: 210/675-7275. Lower box seats: \$8.50. Box: \$7.50. Upper box: \$6.50. Upper reserve: \$5.50. Outfield reserve: \$4.50. General admission: \$4, \$2 age 12 and younger. (Visa and MasterCard accepted on phone orders.)

Books

Look in your local library or bookstore for *The Texas League 1888-1987: A Century of Baseball* by Bill O'Neal (Eakin Press, 1998), a straightforward decade-by-decade account of Texas League history that focuses on records and dates, and *When Panthers Roared: The Fort Worth Cats and Minor League Baseball* by Jeff Guinn with Bobby Bragan (TCU Press, 1999). *The Texas League Media Guide and Record Book*, available from the Texas League office, is filled with information and statistics.

Exhibits

The Texas Sports Hall of Fame (see *Texas Highways*, December 1999) in Waco (254/756-1633 or 800/567-9561) showcases a variety of Texas League memorabilia within its Texas Baseball Hall of Fame.


The Legends of the Game Baseball Museum and Learning Center (817/273-5600) at The Ballpark in Arlington (see *Texas Highways*, March 1997) has an entire hallway of historical items from the Texas League.



the Orange Show

One
Man's
Trash is
Another Man's
Treasure

S u r p r i s e s



When the weather's nice, 65-year-old Cleveland Turner can often be found puttering around his yard in Houston's Third Ward, visiting with curious passersby, and tending to the papaya trees and sundry other plants that grow every which way in beds made from painted tires and cinder blocks. Then, admiring his handiwork, he's apt to tweak the placement of any of the thousands of objects that adorn his home's exterior. A plastic pony perched beneath an awning strung with Christmas lights. Painted birdbaths and planters, the latter spilling with a flowering succulent he calls a "cabbage cackler." A wire guitar from Mexico, given to him years ago by a friend. Hula-Hoops and painted balcony railings, gently leaned against crape myrtles exploding with watermelon-red blooms.

Cleveland describes his favorites with infectious enthusiasm. "You see my water lily down there? Oooh, it blooms so pretty! See that old tea kettle? Why, it's nearly as old as I am! Over there, see all these little mirrors I've glued everywhere?" He smiles broadly. "You look in a mirror, and you see a little bit of heaven."

Puzzled yet captivated? That's the goal of Houston's Orange Show Foundation, which, as part of its mission to preserve folk art in America, leads outings called Eyeopener Tours to Cleveland Turner's little bit of heaven, as well as to dozens of other imaginative environments across Texas. In the upcoming year, travelers interested in having their eyes opened can visit sites as varied as the Western-themed downtown dwelling that Howard Porter painted with a feather duster, and the boyhood home of influential musician Albert "The Iceman" Collins, the latter part of a rollicking Blues Music Tour in November.

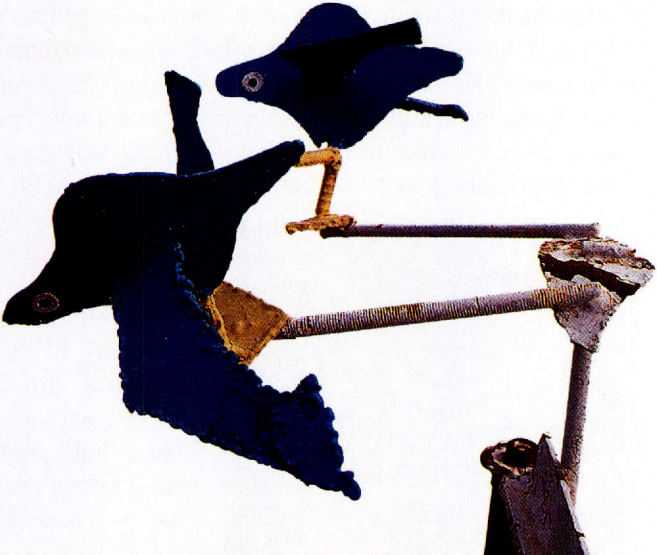
But first stop on any Eyeopener Tour of Houston is the Orange Show Foundation's whimsical namesake itself, the Orange Show, a madcap environment as difficult to define as true love. It's a circus tent run amok, an amusement park for the imagination, a testimony to the power of creativity, and truly, a sight for sensory-deprived eyes.

By Lori Moffatt

Photographs by
Tracie Cambre Pierce

Orange Show creator Jeff McKissack (1902-1980) found most of the site's tractor seats, wagon wheels, and other embellishments as he delivered mail in Houston and during his annual sojourns to "take the waters" in Arkansas.

As part of its mission to preserve folk art in America, the Orange Show Foundation leads outings called Eyeopener Tours to imaginative sites across Texas.



f o r t h e E y e s



Eccentric creator Jeff McKissack, who from 1956 to 1979 single-handedly built the Orange Show as a tribute to the wonderfulness of oranges, his favorite fruit, suffered no lack of confidence. He said he was sure that 80 to 90 percent of all Americans would want to see the Orange Show and would prefer it to the Grand Canyon or Disneyland. After all, he figured, "It's the biggest thing to hit Houston since the Domed Stadium."

Born in 1902 and a longtime postman when he retired in 1968, Jeff had known a variety of careers, including stints as a Wall Street investor, a dance hall proprietor, and a nurseryman. He had even considered a

career as a beautician, figuring it would be a good way to meet women. But during the Depression, he trucked oranges throughout the Southeast, a job that aligned him with "the mission of the orange farmers of America" and inspired him to build his most lasting legacy. "The main purpose of the Orange Show," explained Jeff, "is to encourage people to eat oranges, drink oranges, and be highly amused."

You'll be amused, yes, and inspired, and agog. Built almost entirely from items that Jeff found along his postal route and on his travels to Arkansas to "take the waters," the Orange Show bursts forth on two city lots, smack-dab in the middle of a quiet neighborhood. Wildly spinning whirligigs and undulating Texas flags announce the site's presence from blocks away. Then, up close, orange awnings and a mortared-rock border frame the entrance, which is emblazoned with giant orange letters: THE ORANGE SHOW.

COURTESY THE ORANGE SHOW FOUNDATION



In the Twenties, Jeff McKissack (photo at left) met Thomas Edison at the Edison factories in West Orange, New Jersey. In 1979, Jeff told a reporter that meeting the famous inventor helped him form his own "great idea." Below, the Orange Show's main stage begs a dramatic soliloquy.



Look up, and orange-and-white umbrellas crown a series of decks ornamented with wagon wheels, nearly 100 painted tractor seats, and kaleidoscopic, wrought-iron scrollwork. A maze of tiled pathways, encrusted with Jeff's assorted words of wisdom ("EAT ORANGES AND LIVE," "GO ORANGE BE STRONG," "I LOVE ORANGES") leads to a wishing well, and then to a circular amphitheater featuring a small steamboat. Here, Jeff McKissack hoped to host performances of all kinds, including a "show" featuring a battery-operated monkey and a beautiful woman playing an organ.

cameras, and shaving cream-filled kiddie pools, the parade's 200 or so wheeled contraptions bask in the glow of celebrity as they garner applause. Throughout the city during this weekend, art-car enthusiasts hold symposiums and lectures, movie screenings, and parties in honor of their ornamented autos.

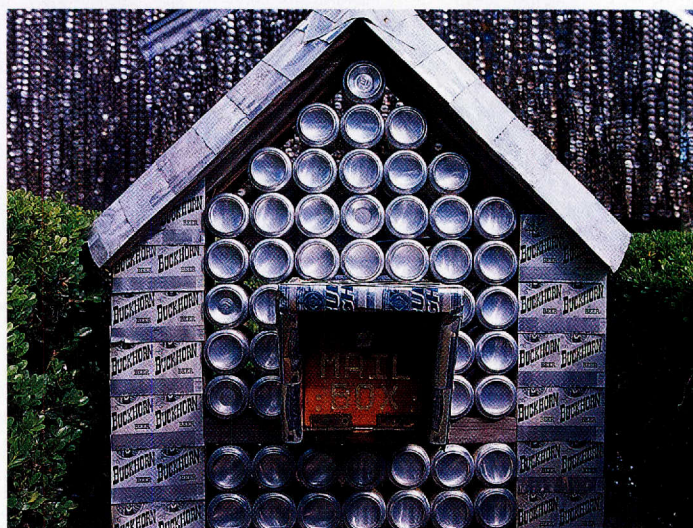
That high-profile event aside, throughout the year, thousands of schoolkids visit the Orange Show itself to participate in such activities as making Halloween masks, celebrating Houston's hip-hop culture, making and using pinhole cameras, and hunt-



The late John Milkovich clad his Houston home with more than 50,000 flattened beer cans. His widow, Mary, says she most likes the tinkling pull-tab curtain that hangs from the eaves.

Though Jeff died only six months after the Orange Show's grand opening in 1979, some visitors swear his enthusiastic spirit still permeates the wild architectural collage to which he devoted so much energy. Perhaps Jeff is smiling his ear-to-ear grin from a whirligig-festooned celestial sphere, proud that his one-man show is finally bringing joy to so many people.

Thousands of creative souls turn out in droves every April to enjoy the Orange Show Foundation's best-known spectacle, the Art Car Parade, which wends its way through downtown as part of the Houston International Festival. Embellished with items like plastic fruit, fully operational





Cleveland Turner's infectious enthusiasm for life shines as he shows off his Third Ward "flower house." In the springtime, the house is so covered with found objects and blooms that you can barely see the walls.

ing for Easter oranges (after all, oranges are the perfect food here, not eggs). Still others visit the Orange Show on field trips with their schools, during which teachers use Jeff McKissack's unrestrained use of color and design to demonstrate basic elements of art and theater. Where else can a kid put on a play on

a Greek immigrant named John Gavrelos, who for 25 years fashioned wooden produce crates into models of the Statue of Liberty, the Tower of Babel, and other famous structures. He called his creation *The Eye of the World*, and today, people visit the J&J as much for its visionary cityscape as for its T-bones.

a multicolored stage framed with spindly steeples and birds with iron wings? And multitudes of other folks—kids and adults alike—venture to the Orange Show merely to snap photos and revel in its creative energy.

The desk of Susanne Theis, who spearheads the Orange Show's many programs and serves as its executive director, lies buried beneath folders representing unusual artists and sites from all across Texas—each one a potential attraction for future Eyeopener Tours. "The Orange Show Foundation seeks to raise the level of appreciation and awareness of folk-art environments," Susanne says. "Sometimes, we can do that through presentation and popularization, as we've done with the Art Car Parade. Sometimes, though, we do it through education."

To Susanne, education means teaching people that sometimes, the most interesting things in the world lie right beneath your nose. For example, she sings the praises of an unexpected Eyeopener attraction in Beaumont, which she calls "one of my favorite things in the state." There, in the back room of a 50-year-old eatery called the J&J Steakhouse, you can see the life's work of

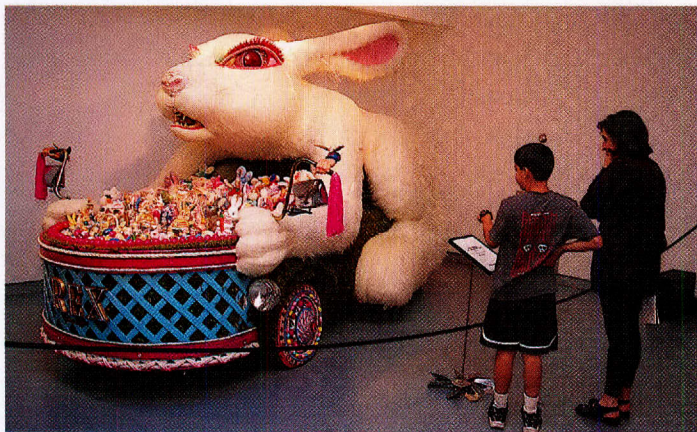
© EARLE HUDNALL/COURTESY THE ORANGE SHOW FOUNDATION

Some 200 miles west of Houston, San Antonio unveils its own unexpected treasures: a local artist's collection of intricately carved birdhouses, a multimedia front-yard zoo, and retired plumber Barney Smith's collection of more than 500 painted and decorated toilet seats, which he displays in his garage-turned-museum in Alamo Heights. And outside the state, Eyeopener Tours have expanded participants' visions of such places as Baltimore, New Orleans, Birmingham, and Xilitla, Mexico, site of a spectacular surrealist sculpture garden.

But it's the nation's fourth-largest city—Houston, with old and new architecture, flourishing gardens, lack of zoning ordinances, and wonderful enclaves of ethnic groups and their associated foods, religion, and music—that remains close to the Orange Show Foundation's heart. As you might have surmised by now, anything goes on an Eyeopener Tour, from the lacquered and inlaid façades of the city's Buddhist temples to its Art Deco apartment buildings and historic blues clubs. And don't forget this perennial Eyeopener favorite: the gleaming, marble-studded, and musical home known as the Beer Can House, which the late John Milkovisch artfully covered in flattened beer cans.

John, who died in 1988, evidently scoffed at the idea of artistry. An upholsterer by trade, he simply liked to drink beer, and he and his wife, Mary, liked to go dancing at day's end. They'd dress up, Mary says, and "dance all night at the Rice Hotel, the End of Main, the Warwick, and the Sons of Hermann." With only 24 hours in a day even back in the Sixties, John didn't have much time left over to paint the house or mow the grass. So John, who prided himself on his resourcefulness, began to cover the house with beer cans—homemade aluminum siding—plus streamers and other decorative pieces to keep Mary happy. Before long, he started paving the yard with concrete, adding colorful accents with some 28,000 marbles, but leaving plenty of room for plants, trees, and Mary's beloved periwinkles, which still bloom in profusion each summer.

The Beer Can House, along with Cleveland Turner's home and several other unusual Houston landmarks, comprise the



The Orange Show's Mother's Day Eyeopener Tour includes a stop at the Art Car Museum (713/861-5526), which houses creative conveyances from across the country and beyond.

Orange Show's popular Classic Tour, which this year takes place on Mother's Day.

It's fun to wonder what conversations might have ensued had Jeff McKissack, Cleveland Turner, and John Milkovisch gathered socially in the 1970s. Jeff, who was building his monument to the orange; Cleveland, who was building his flower house in a pact with God to help him stay sober; John, who didn't want to spend time mowing or painting. Would they have understood how much they had in common? Whatever their inspiration, their wacky, extraordinary environments make the world a more joyful place.

Never underestimate the beauty of surprise, I commented to Cleveland as he showed me a towering yucca, whose spines he had topped with Styrofoam to resemble blooms. "Yeah! The world just needs more things to make ya smile," he said. "I always like it when the tours come by, 'cause the more they look, the more they see." ★

Associate editor LORI MOFFATT also wrote this month's story on roller coasters.

Houston photographer TRACIE CAMBRE PIERCE is contributing to next month's story on horse racing.

WHEN...WHERE...HOW

The Orange Show

The Orange Show is at 2401 Munger St. in Houston. From I-45 South, take the Telephone Rd. exit, and stay on the feeder road. Before Telephone Rd., turn right on Munger, and drive 2 blocks. You can't miss it.

In 2000, the Orange Show opens Mar. 25-Dec. 16, Sat-Sun noon-5 and by appt. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the site also opens Wed-Fri 9-1. Admission: \$1, free age 12 and younger. Not wheelchair accessible.



Upcoming Eyeopener Tours include the Mother's Day Classic (May 14, \$35 general public), Dallas/Fort Worth Folk Art (May 27-29, day and package prices available), Places of Worship (July 9, \$35 general public), Architecture (Sep. 10, \$50 general public), and the Blues Music Tour (Nov. 12, \$35 general public). Art workshops for children and adults take place throughout the year.

The 2001 Art Car Parade will take place Apr. 14, during the annual Houston International Festival.

Annual memberships to the Orange Show cost \$25. Members receive a quarterly, fun-to-read newsletter full of information about the folk-art world, as well as discounted admissions to Orange Show activities.

For more information, write to 2402 Munger St., Houston 77023; 713/926-6368. Web site: www. orangeshow.org.



T H E

B I G

P I C T U R E

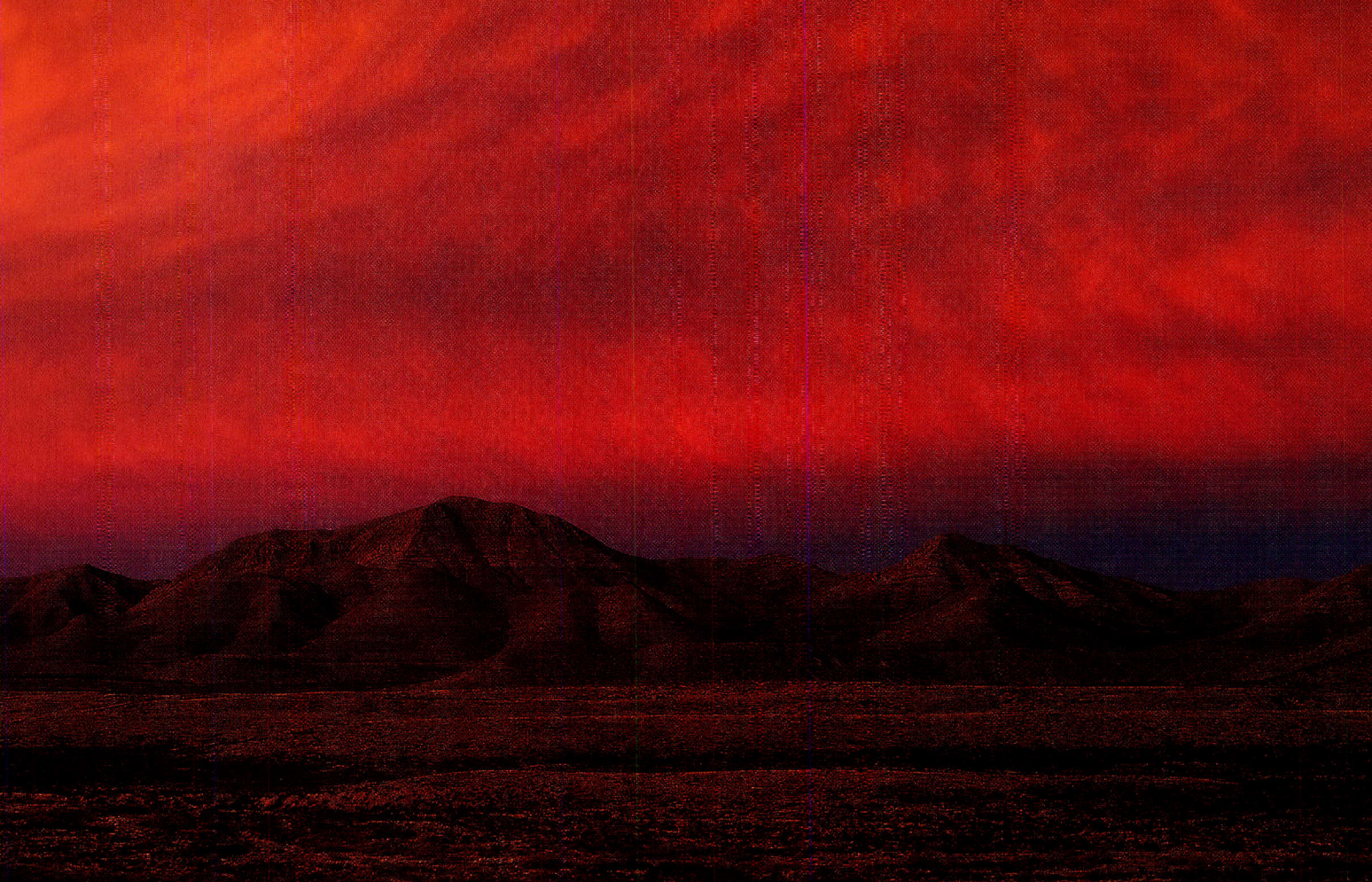
Panoramic photography, which renders for its viewers a wide, encompassing image of a scene, came into being shortly after Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, a French artist and designer of elaborate dioramas for the theater, announced his invention, the daguerreotype, in 1839. The first practical means of capturing a permanent image, the daguerreotype allowed photographers to make the very earliest panoramic views by combining several pictures alongside one another. These pieced-together panoramas satisfied photographers' desire to present the "big picture" as they experienced it.

Soon thereafter, in the 1840s and 1850s, inventors began designing and manufacturing special cameras, each yielding a single panoramic image. The earliest of these cameras captured a view with an arc ranging from 120 to 150 degrees. Later inventors developed cameras that covered a full 360 degrees.

Over the years, dozens of different panoramic cameras offered photographers the ability to capture sweeping vistas onto negatives sometimes as large as 18 by 48 inches. Contact prints from these negatives allowed viewers to see exquisite encapsulations of various scenes.

Today, more than 150 years after the first panoramic image was created, a small number of photographers still go after the wide view.

Two years ago, photographer Jeremy Woodhouse sent us some of his photographs to consider. I'd not seen his work before, and immediately became interested, because all the images were panoramas. I called Jeremy to inquire about his other panoramic Texas vistas and found that he already possessed a small collection that he was augmenting as quickly as possible. We agreed to aim at running a photo feature in late 1999 or 2000, and the rest, as they say, is panoramic history...!



P A N O R A M I C T E X A S V I E W S

First in a two-part series

B Y J E R E M Y W O O D H O U S E

Jeremy, who lives in The Colony, north of Dallas, only recently took up panoramic photography, shooting his first panoramic in 1997. In 1998, he began specializing in this type of photography, using a Fuji 6x17 camera with interchangeable lenses. This camera, a modern-day adaptation of its bulky predecessors, uses 120 or 220 roll film and yields transparencies (or negatives) measuring 2¼ by 6½ inches. Smaller and more portable than yesteryear's cameras, the Fuji still yields the best results when mounted on a tripod.

Over the past two years, Jeremy has indulged his penchant for panoramas by shooting in southern Africa, the British Isles, and the United States. He recently finished a project to shoot 26 city skylines around the country, logging 20,000 miles in two months.

Born in Nigeria, Jeremy also spent growing-up time in Pakistan and Argentina, and developed his love of photography when his father (a civil engineer and avid amateur photographer) took the family on photographic journeys into the foothills of the Himalayas. Jeremy has been exposing film since the mid-1980s.

Interestingly, as we began producing this story, four other Texas photographers sent in packages containing panoramic photographs. When we splayed all the scenes out on our light tables, the resulting effect caused much joy and discussion among the editors. We decided that you, our loyal readers, deserved to share in the spectacle, so we juggled our editorial calendar and made room for "The Big Picture, Part II" in next month's issue.

Now, please ride along with us over the next few pages, and savor the results of Jeremy Woodhouse's large-as-life labor of love. And stay tuned for next month's return of the long shot.

—*Michael A. Murphy*

[ABOVE] Dusk descends over the Delaware Mountains in West Texas.



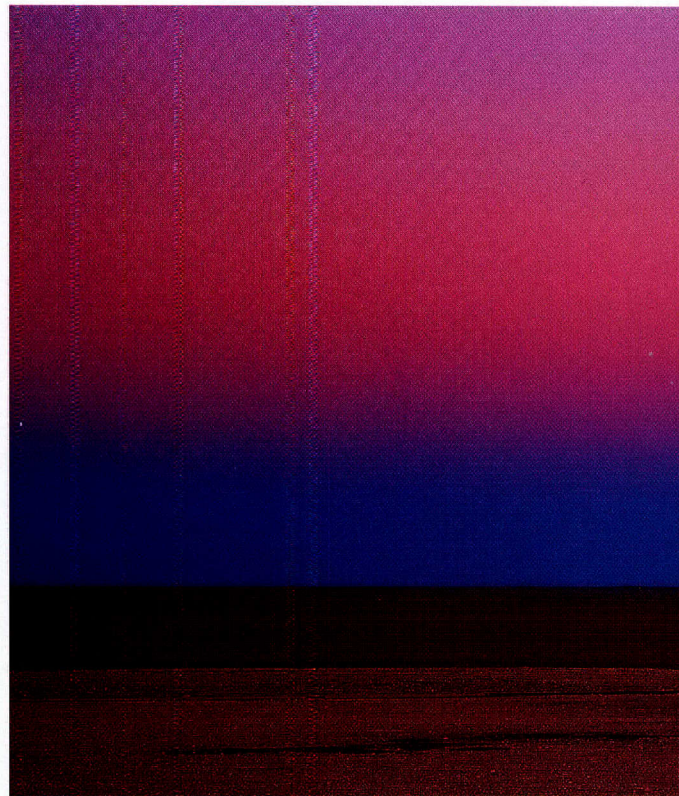
[ABOVE] Sunrise unveils the scenery at Caprock Canyons State Park, near Quitaque.





[BELOW] A Texas madrone sprawls in McKittrick Canyon, part of Guadalupe Mountains National Park.





El Capitan Peak dominates this vertical vista of Guadalupe Mountains National Park.



A pre-dawn sky colors a pump jack along U.S. 180 in West Texas.



Water cascades through Inks Lake State Park en route to the lake.



[ABOVE] Floating clouds and gently curling waves signal sunrise at Padre Island National Seashore.





[BELOW] The Tarrant County courthouse still commands attention in this view of the Fort Worth skyline at dusk.



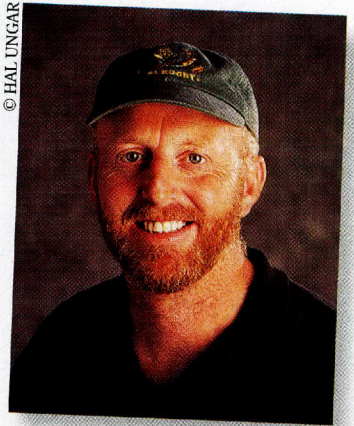


[ABOVE] Spring breezes whisk wildflowers in the Hill Country near Llano.





© HAL UNGAR



Photographer JEREMY WOODHOUSE and his wife, Nicole, especially love traveling to the Big Bend region of Texas to experience its expansive scenery, wildlife, and hiking opportunities.

[BELOW] A hot air balloon drifts dreamily above Plano's Bob Woodruff Park at sunrise.





BEAUMONT

BY DIANE MOREY SITTON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHAN MYERS

Botanical Garden

Texas Highways



A bromeliad collector once wrote that the Greek god Zeus was so smitten by the dramatically marked plants he found growing on a jungle floor that he transported them to the heavens and shaped them into stars. Eventually, the narrative continues, Zeus' treasured "earth stars" fell back to earth, landing in Brazil, where they flourished and charmed everyone with their whimsical shapes.

The story refers to *Cryptanthus*, a genus of earth-hugging bromeliads known for their vividly marked foliage and fanciful forms. Today, the most diversified collection of *Cryptanthus* known in the world thrives at the Warren Loose Conservatory, one of Beaumont Botanical Gardens' newest attractions.

But earth stars aren't the only intriguing plants showcased at the conservatory. This 10,500-square-foot tropical paradise boasts, among other fascinating species, a palm with a velvety three-sided trunk (*Neodypsis decaryi*) and a water lily with immense floating leaves that can support 100 pounds (*Victoria cruziana*).

Outside, along the winding paths, visitors encounter more-familiar flora: drifts of salvia, verbena, and other butterfly-enticing flowers; planters filled with fragrant herbs, including scented geranium, Copper Canyon daisy, and pineapple sage; and shade gardens softened with ferns and violets.

Beaumont Botanical Gardens covers 23½ acres of Tyrrell Park, a 500-acre, tree-studded public playground on the city's south side. The gardens opened in 1969 and continue to be designed, planted, and maintained by the 20 clubs of the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs.

Last year, the Botanical Gardens' more than 3,000 kinds of plants lured visitors from every U.S. state and 40 countries. Nature-lovers come here to identify resident and migratory bird species, admire butterflies, and observe squirrels, rabbits, and other wildlife.

[FACING PAGE] Within Tyrrell Park in south Beaumont, the pathways of Beaumont Botanical Gardens wind through lush woodland settings.

[ABOVE] The palm-like cycad is the most primitive of living seed-bearing plants. With few exceptions, bromeliads (foreground and inset at left) hail from the tropical Americas.

gardens

The bounteous blend of *flora* and *fauna* has earned *Beaumont Botanical Gardens* certification as a *Texas Wildscape* Demonstration Site.

A special event, the 15th Annual Spring Garden Tour and Plant Sale (May 6-7, 2000) provides opportunities to chat with gardening experts, browse educational exhibits, and shop the array of unusual plants. Selections include a bromeliad with bright pink leaves (*Cryptanthus* 'Arley'), a succulent with spiny foliage (*Aloe ferox*), and a red-blooming Texas wildflower called Indian-pink (*Spigelia marilandica*). Five private gardens also open for the event.

For visitors eager to sample plant treasures from exotic settings (during the Spring Tour and throughout the year), the conservatory is the first stop. Folks enter this rainforest habitat (admission required; open Wednesday-Sunday only) through the new Binks Horticultural Center. (The Binks Center is in front of the Loose Conservatory, connected by an art gallery.) Bromeliads and other tropical species surrounding a fountain portend the plant treasures to come.

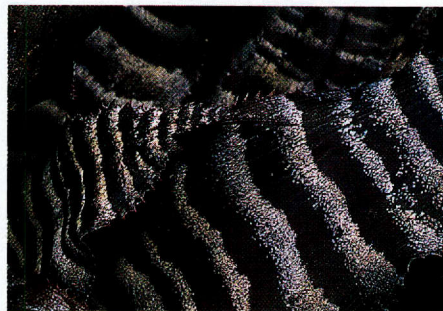
Inside the conservatory, a waterfall cascading into a long reflection pool permeates the scene with soothing sound and mesmerizing motion. Beds filled with palms and bromeliads—including earth stars (*C. zonatus variegata*)—complete the breathtaking vignette.

"At the 1994 World Bromeliad Conference in Orlando, one *C. zonatus variegata* sold for \$550," says Bob Whitman, president of the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs, pointing to a hot pink-and-silver zebra-striped plant. "It was the highest price ever paid at auction for an earth star." Whitman, a bromeliad expert, cofounded the International Cryptanthus Society with the late Warren Loose, the conservatory's namesake.

For youngsters, who come to the conservatory in school groups as well as with their families, the 28-foot-long brachiosaurus in the Prehistoric section creates a priceless first impression. The motion-activated model, surrounded by

nearly five dozen varieties of staghorn fern and 14 tons of petrified stumps and logs, "munches" treetop vegetation.

"The Prehistoric section contains plant species that existed when the



A specialty of Beaumont Botanical Gardens is a bromeliad affectionately known as an "earth star." Pictured is *Cryptanthus* 'Black Mystic,' easy to grow as a house plant.

dinosaurs roamed the earth," Bob Whitman says. "The palm-like plants are cycads. Their big, bantam egg-size seeds sometimes take a year to germinate. Some cycads take 1,000 years to grow 10 feet tall. That's why they are called 'living fossils.'" (The conservatory's oldest cycad is about 40 years old.)

Next to the Prehistoric section, a bench-lined plaza proves popular with brides. Passion flower, bromeliad, anthurium, and *Thumbergia mysorensis*, a native vine of India with immense, pendulous clusters of yellow, red, and orange blooms, color the romantic setting.

"The conservatory has a beautiful flow to it, like nature itself," says Angela Westerman Meza, a newlywed who illuminated the flower-filled plaza with 150 candles for her wedding ceremony last November.

Just ahead, the walkway loops back across a footbridge that spans the reflection pool. After pausing to inspect the koi swimming below, visitors enter a tropical-fruit garden. Rose apple, star fruit, breadfruit, bananas, mangoes—the collection includes 35 species. The garden's pond-side bench provides a place to enjoy goldfish capering among water lilies.

Next, more than 100 selections of Hawaiian ti (pronounced "tea") flaunt flamboyantly colored tufts of red, pink, purple, and orange foliage from the tops of

Banana trees, hibiscus, and other tropical plants grace this pool within the Warren Loose Conservatory, one of the botanical gardens' newest attractions.



Tyrrell Park and Cattail Marsh



Cattail Marsh reflects a glowing sunrise and six-foot tufts of bulrush.

In 1923, when he gave the City of Beaumont 500 wooded acres for “a great park or playground,” it’s likely Captain W.C. Tyrrell envisioned families playing and picnicking under the towering pines and massive oaks. But even Tyrrell, a prosperous land developer, may not have foreseen the array of diversions that eventually would draw more than 70,000 visitors annually to Tyrrell Park and the adjoining Cattail Marsh.

Today, besides sinking a putt on the 18-hole golf course where *Sports Illustrated*’s “Female Athlete of the Century,” Babe Didrikson Zaharias (born in nearby Port Arthur), honed her world-class skills, visitors can stroll the paths of Beaumont Botanical Gardens, observe dozens of species of resident and migratory birds, and gather at shelters and other facilities constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) nearly 65 years ago.

“The CCC made bricks by mixing sand and cement with shells collected at Sabine Pass,” says Lewis Hiltbold, the city’s park manager. “The old cypress ‘sinkers’ that had settled to the bottom of the Neches River were one source of lumber.” To collect the felled tree trunks, the CCC set up camps at sites where early loggers had dumped the trees into the river for the float trip downstream. They lifted the submerged logs with a crane mounted on a large barge.

For nature-lovers—bird-watchers, especially—the rustic picnic tables at the south end of Tyrrell Park are a handy place to ready their binoculars, field guides, checklists, and cameras before entering Cattail Marsh. In this 900-acre wetland, white pelicans with nine-foot wingspans glide above the glimmering water, roseate spoonbills explore the reed-filled shallows, and river otters slip down banks like children on playground slides.

From spring through fall, brown-eyed Susans, Texas vervain, asters, sunflowers, and other wildflowers blanket the levees.

To the 350 or more species of birds and other wildlife that come here to feed, frolic, and rear their young—and to the nature-fanciers who come to observe them—it’s incidental

that the principal function of this artificial wetland is to purify, or “polish,” Beaumont’s wastewater before it seeps into Hillebrandt Bayou and on to the Gulf of Mexico.

For visitors, the eight miles of gravel-topped levee roads that outline the eight marsh ponds and the trail through the adjacent 250-acre reclaimed marsh provide opportunities to hike, jog, ride bikes, and photograph wildlife. Participants in the Great Texas Birding Classic, the nation’s largest birdwatching competition, visit the marsh each spring. Experienced birders may observe 60 species or more during a single visit.

In the large pond just inside the gate, families sometimes encounter cinnamon teal, blue-winged teal, and the fulvous whistling duck. Stands of California bulrush grow alongside cattail, switchgrass, arrowhead, blue flag iris, smart weed, alligator weed, and other aquatic species.

“Aquatic plants polish our wastewater by providing an environment where microscopic organisms can grow,” explains Thomas McDonald, superintendent of the city’s water reclamation division. “The bacteria, or ‘bugs,’ do nature’s work of converting ammonia to nitrates, nitrates to nitrites, and nitrites to atmospheric nitrogen.”

Gravity carries approximately 20 million gallons of water through the system each day, making Cattail Marsh the largest constructed wetland (by amount of water flow) in the nation. After leaving Cattail Marsh, the water seeps through a reclaimed natural wetland verdant with moss-draped cypress, willow, parsley hawthorn, and other native trees. Ibis, snowy egrets, herons, and other wading birds animate the pristine setting.



Even the bugs are beautiful here. A luber grasshopper munches on ornamental cabbage.

“It’s hard to believe there is so much nature only five miles from downtown Beaumont,” says Thomas McDonald. “We have wonderful native flora, and we are located on the central and eastern migratory flyways. In fall, the sky above Cattail Marsh is black with birds. They come up in clouds off the water when someone passes, then they sit back down. The marsh is a world of its own.”

—Diane Morey Sitton



At the rear of the Loose Conservatory, a waterfall spills into a pond where colorful koi swim.

their cane-like trunks. “The tree of kings” eventually grows up to 12 feet tall.

“On South Pacific islands, priests once wore leis woven from ti leaves,” says Bob Whitman. “Ti plants were an emblem of royalty and a symbol of divine powers.”

No special powers are attributed to the 100 species of mistletoe cactus (*Rhipsalis*) that occupy the area ahead, unless it’s the “spell” cast by the plants’ waxy white berries. For some observers, the small, round orbs jog holiday memories of the (unrelated) “kissing plant” and their experiences under its white berry-laden sprigs.

Outside of the conservatory in the gardens, red maple, Shumard oak, and other massive trees—at least 34 species—share the park-like setting with raccoons, possums, turtles, rabbits, squirrels, and other critters. The bounteous blend of flora and fauna has earned Beaumont Botanical Gardens certification as a Texas Wildscape Demonstra-

tion Site. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department awards the designation to habitats that are so ideally interspersed with native plants that they serve as wildlife-nurturing models.

“Beaumont is uniquely positioned on the dividing line between the coastal plain and the heavily forested Big Thicket,” says Myra Clay, a dedicated green-thumber who has served the garden in every capacity from council president to tour guide. “Our garden is diversified. It is filled with plants that thrive in Southeast Texas.”

Most people begin their tour in the theme gardens adjacent to the Garden Center Building. After inspecting the daylily beds, visitors meander through an antique-rose garden displaying ‘Old Blush,’ ‘Seven Sisters,’ and other varieties that existed before 1840. The garden commemorates Texas’ Sesquicentennial. Nearby, herbs spill from a brick planter.

“A loose definition of ‘herb’ lets us include useful plants like green cotton,” says volunteer Frank Male. Browsers in the herb garden enjoy brushing against the foliage of thyme, lemon balm, mint, and other culinary herbs to release the fragrant oils. Other plant-lovers savor examining old-timey medicinal herbs like aloe and comfrey.

From April through October, *Aechmea mexicana* (a rose-colored bromeliad that stretches 36 inches across) and other bromeliads enliven the shady niche ahead. Farther on, stepping stones through a woodland glen invite inspection of five varieties of ferns, including asparagus fern, maidenhair fern, and cinnamon fern. Next, a bench surrounded with white-blooming petunias, periwinkles, impatiens, and azaleas suggests a cooling respite.

Nearby, a 12-sided gazebo serves as the hub of the native-plant area, but it’s the salvia, spiderwort, penstemon, Indian-pink, Turk’s cap—and the butterflies and hummingbirds they attract—that steal the show.

“In spring, the white, nectar-rich blooms of parsley hawthorn [*Crataegus marshallii*] lure hairstreak, skipper, and swallowtail butterflies,” says Sharon Odegar, president of the Beaumont Chapter of the Native Plant Society of Texas. “In fall, birds flock to its bright red fruits.”

The small, comely tree shares the native plant garden with at least 16 other indigenous tree species.

Ducks hang out at the pond, just ahead, eagerly greeting families offering bread crusts. In summer, crinum lily, the “milk-and-wine lily” of Southern homesteads, enriches the setting with drooping, bell-shaped flowers that exude a sweet fragrance.

Rose-fanciers favor the heady perfumes wafting from nearly 75 varieties of roses, next on the path. “Mister Lincoln’ is a tall, lanky, hybrid tea rose with notoriously fragrant flowers,” says rosarian Tommy Hebert. ‘Fancy

Pants,’ a miniature selection, fascinates onlookers with its multihued pink, red, yellow, and orange blooms.

Before circling back past the camellia beds, many strollers ascend the



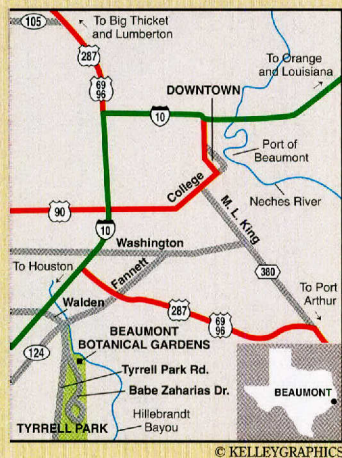
Blooms of the spectacular Hanging Heliconia, also known as Lobster Claw, will last more than two weeks as a cut flower. The plants grow wild in Trinidad and Tobago.

Beaumont Botanical Gardens

Beaumont Botanical Gardens is in Tyrrell Park, on the south side of Beaumont. To reach the park from Interstate 10, take the Walden Rd. exit, follow Walden across Fannett Rd. (Texas 124) to Tyrrell Park Rd., and bear left onto Babe Zaharias Dr. The park entrance is about 1 mile from I-10. Follow the signs to the botanical garden. Parking is available in front of the Garden Center Bldg. Enter the gardens by way of the building entrance. Grounds hours: Daily 7:30 a.m. to dusk. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible.

The climate in the **Warren Loose Conservatory** simulates that of a rainforest. Visits in spring, fall, and winter are the most comfortable. Enter the conservatory through the Bert and Jack Binks Horticultural Center. Hours: Wed-Fri 10-2, Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5; also open by appt. Admission: \$3, \$2 age 60 and older, \$1 ages 6-12, free age 5 and younger. Wheelchair accessible.

Events at the Botanical Gardens include the annual **Spring Garden Tour and Plant Sale** (May 6-7, 2000, 1-5 p.m.). This self-guided jaunt features 5 private gardens and the Botanical Gardens grounds. Highlights at the Garden Center Bldg. include a plant sale, educational displays, and plant experts to answer questions. Proceeds from the tour help maintain the gardens. Admission: \$6 in advance (available at The Collage, 2470 N. 11th St., and The Paper Clip, 4383 Calder at Thomas Rd.), \$7 at the



door of all gardens on tour day. Map included with ticket purchase. Tour admission does not include admission to the conservatory (see previous paragraph for details).

The Beaumont Botanical Gardens and the Loose Conservatory rely heavily on gifts for maintenance, plant purchases, and expansion. For a donation of \$25 or more, contributors receive a quarterly newsletter with a schedule of events.

To schedule group tours, to obtain information about becoming a volunteer, or to make a donation, write to 6088 Babe Zaharias Dr., Beaumont 77705; 409/842-3135.

Tyrrell Park and Cattail Marsh

To reach **Cattail Marsh**, enter Tyrrell Park on Tyrrell Park Rd., then bear left onto Babe Zaharias

Dr. After driving about 1 mile, turn right into the marsh parking lot (at the sign). Maps are available at the interpretive display inside the gate. Recreational opportunities include hiking, jogging, and bicycling on the 8 miles of graveled levee roads that wind through the marsh. No cars or motorized vehicles allowed. The 2.7-mile loop through the adjacent reclaimed marsh is recommended for experienced hikers (wear hiking boots or waterproof footwear). The loop starts at the bridge on the south side of Cattail Marsh (about 2 miles from the entrance) and follows the banks of Hillebrandt Bayou. Check the trail's status with Cattail Marsh personnel before leaving, especially during the rainy season.

Note: Alligators, poisonous snakes, fire ants, and mosquitoes reside in the marsh; use common

sense. Bring drinking water and mosquito repellent. (Drinking water and a shelter are in the parking lot at the marsh entrance.) Pets must be leashed.

With advance notice, Cattail Marsh personnel can help accommodate visitors in wheelchairs. Free, guided, open-air bus tours of the marsh are available with 2 weeks' prior arrangement for groups of 4 or more. Call the Water Reclamation Dept. at 409/842-0458.

Tyrrell Park offers covered picnic areas, a children's playground, and an 18-hole golf course. Restrooms are near the marsh entrance.

Tyrrell Park and Cattail Marsh hours: Daily dawn to dusk. Admission: Free. For information on Tyrrell Park, write to the City of Beaumont, Box 3827, Beaumont 77704-3827; 409/838-3613.

The outside gardens include several elevated plantings, which afford an "insect's-eye" view of plants like these petunias.



shady knoll to the Japanese garden. Welcoming benches provide a place to observe Japanese maples, dwarf Japanese yews, and junipers. A symbolic gate, or *chumon*, made of wooden shingles, rounded timbers, and bamboo, invites visitors to leave their troubles behind.

"One day, while I was watering, I noticed a young woman walking down the path as if she were being chased," says

Myra Clay. "I called to her and said, 'Slow down. Take time to smell the flowers.'

"You're right," she answered. "I'm just getting off work. This is my decompression chamber."

About 30 minutes later, Myra looked up and saw the woman leaving the garden. She was strolling slowly with a smile on her face.

Beaumont Botanical Gardens melds flowers, fragrant herbs, quiet niches,

calming waters, and the play of nature's creatures. It is a setting where earth stars thrive and where tranquillity blossoms. Zeus himself couldn't have created a more inviting sanctuary. ★

DIANE MOREY SITTON wrote stories on Wild Azalea Canyons and the Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens for the March issue.

Longtime contributor STEPHAN MYERS photographed the March story on Wild Azalea Canyons.

BY DIANE MOREY SITTON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN STILLMAN

The Appeal of Orange

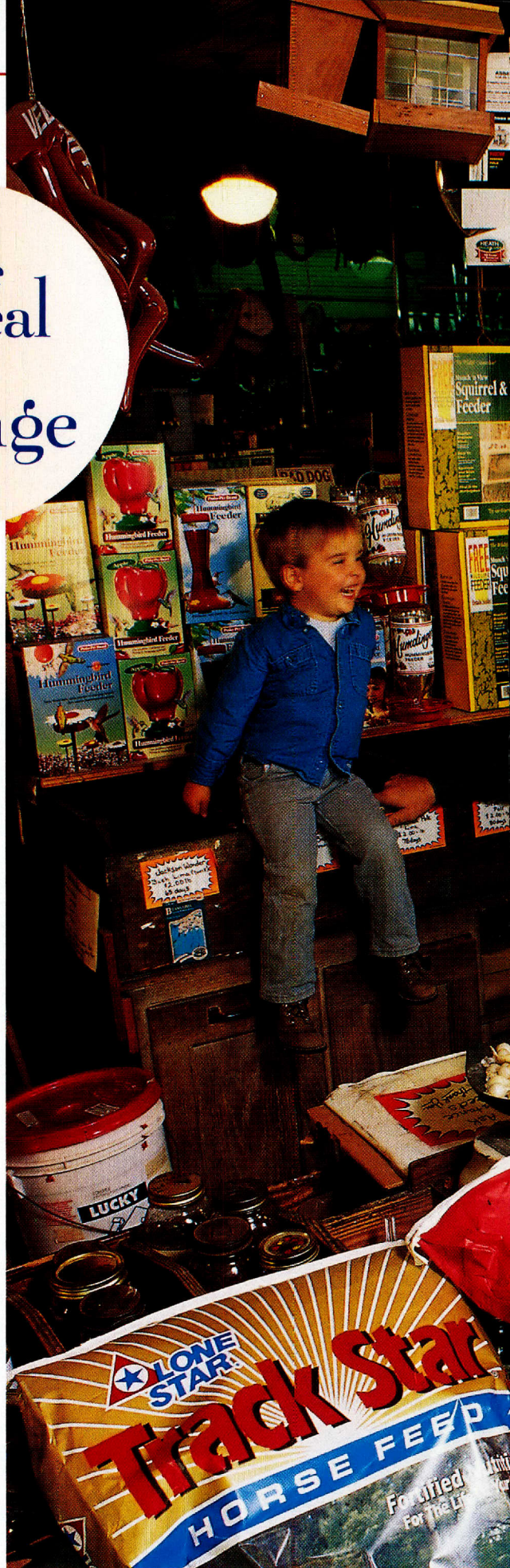
ORANGE ACQUIRED ITS JUICY NAME IN 1858. But it's not *when* city fathers decreed the name Orange that piques the imagination, it's *why*. According to local legend, orange trees once grew along the Sabine River where the city now stands. Supposedly, Jean Lafitte and his band of pirates spit orange seeds overboard while looking for places to hide treasure, and they washed ashore and sprouted. Other folks claim the seeds came from English ships whose sailors pitched the seeds, pith, and peelings of their citrus rations into the water. Some historians believe a somewhat drier version—that the city was named for Orange, New Jersey, the hometown of A.H. Reading, an official who helped organize Orange County in 1852.

As visitors discover, the attractions that brighten this Southeast Texas port are as diverse as the speculation over its name. Besides touring a mansion and a church from the early 1900s, visitors can explore several treasure-filled museums and an award-winning winery, enjoy a Broadway musical, and shop at an old-fashioned general store. They can also hop aboard an airboat and glide on nearby waterways, where they can observe an array of birds and aquatic critters.

And there's more. Folks in Orange enjoy entertaining visitors with savory food and family fun, especially during their annual Gumbo Cookoff (May 5-6, 2000). Lively Cajun and country music, children's games, clowns, a carnival, and the mouthwatering waftings from spicy gumbo annually attract more than 22,000 people (including spy cooks from Louisiana posing as tourists). They come to Ochiltree-Inman Park's riverfront walk to sample the *joie de vivre* and the secret recipes of some two dozen contestants.

"Good roux makes good gumbo," says Larry David (pronounced dah-VEED), who has won several first-place trophies at the cookoff. (Categories include *Gibier*

Traditions matter in Orange. If four-year-old Casey Harris follows in his father Dan's footsteps, he will be a fifth-generation owner of Farmer's Mercantile. To see more examples of city heritage, check out the city's 25th Annual Gumbo Cookoff on May 5-6.





(Poultry), *Poisson* (Seafood), and Combination (Poultry and Seafood). Larry is a repeat winner in the latter category, and he also brought home a coveted Best Overall trophy in 1998.

“I start by mixing a half-cup of oil to one cup of flour,” he says, describing his method of making a roux. “Then I stir it over low to medium-low heat until it almost burns. That’s the trick—*almost*. If it burns, you start over. To my way of thinking, the darker the roux, the better. Mine looks like chocolate.” (Larry’s roux looks so much like chocolate that his

stepdaughter Jenny once found a pan of it cooling on the stove and proceeded to sample it, thinking it was fudge.)

Larry comes by his talent for making gumbo naturally. Although his 81-year-old father, Jules David, no longer enters competitions, he still makes seafood gumbo several times a year for family gatherings. “There are nine kids, and when all of our families get together, we have as many as 60 people,” says Larry, “and there are usually friends on top of that. It takes at least 10 gallons of gumbo to feed a group that size.”

As visitors discover, the attractions that brighten this Southeast Texas port are as diverse as the speculation over its name.



The only one of its kind in the United States, the opalescent dome in the sanctuary of the Lutchter Memorial Building First Presbyterian Church no doubt inspires worshipers to sing praises to the highest. Frances Ann Lutchter commissioned the building in 1908.



Although orange groves prove an unusual sight in Orange, truck farmer Charles Wilcox has been growing Satsumas for some 20 years. Look for them from late September through January at Wilcox Market Garden (4701 27th St.; 409/886-3539), which sells other produce, too.

Festival-goers and weekend travelers can also sample other local fare, including a cluster of landmarks in downtown’s Civic Plaza (just four blocks north of Ochiltree-Inman Park). The four attractions—the venerable Lutchter Memorial Building First Presbyterian Church, the W.H. Stark House, the Stark Museum of Art, and the Lutchter Theater for the Performing Arts—are linked by three generations of a philanthropic family whose matriarch, Frances Ann Lutchter, was known for her devotion to beauty in art and architecture.

Nowhere is her esthetic sense expressed with more elegance than in the Lutchter Memorial Building First Presbyterian Church, a majestic structure boasting a native Texas pink granite exterior. The Lutchter family, whose immense wealth accrued from lumber and landholdings, helped organize the First Presbyterian Church soon after moving to Orange from Pennsylvania in 1877. Frances Ann designed and commissioned the current church to honor her husband, Henry Jacob Lutchter, and their family. The congrega-



Passengers keep a lookout for alligators and other wildlife as Stan Floyd's airboat skims the surface of the Sabine River. Boasting a backdrop of cypress trees and a smooth-as-silk ride, Stan's Super Gator Tours attract nature-lovers and photographers year round.

tion dedicated the church (built three blocks from the original wooden church) in 1912, the year in which Henry died.

Looking upward in the sanctuary, visitors marvel at the 36-foot-diameter opalescent glass dome, the only one of its kind in the United States. Each of the 16 arched panels that make up the dome depicts an angel holding a dove, a chalice, or another Christian symbol.

Angels also grace the three 6-by-12-foot leaded, stained-glass windows that dominate the upper foyer. "Mrs. Lutcher's inspiration for the building came from these windows," says Sharon Stanley, a member of the congregation who has researched the church's history. "She bought them in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair." The renowned J&R Lamb Studios of New York depicted "religion" in the central window as angels surrounded by the tree of life. A sword-wielding angel dressed in armor, symbolic of the church warring against evil, adorns the east window, while the west window displays a palm frond, a crown, and Biblical figures, all symbolizing "the church triumphant."

Two blocks east of the church sits the W.H. Stark House, a three-story Victorian mansion built of longleaf yellow pine, with gables and galleries, "fish scale" shingles, beveled siding, and a six-sided turret.

On guided tours, which begin south of the main house in the carriage house, visitors learn that in 1881, Miriam Lutcher, the oldest daughter of Frances Ann and Henry Jacob Lutcher, married W.H. Stark, a self-made tycoon who amassed a financial empire from timber, oil, rice, insurance, and banking. Miriam and her

husband built their 15-room home in 1894.

As you enter the house through a door of exquisite beveled, leaded glass from France, you know that Miriam inherited her mother's eye for beauty. In the entry hall, bronze candelabras, keyhole-shaped windows of stained glass, and distinctive paneling of long-leaf yellow "curly pine" hint at the splendor to come.

The dining room displays intricately carved mahogany furnishings, including a table, sideboard, teacart, and two china cabinets. The music room boasts an 1890 Steinway grand piano, a 100-year-old Aubusson rug, and a large, oval ceiling mural of cherubs painted by Chicago artist E.T. Behr.

"Miriam liked cherubs," says docent Patsy Herrington. "You see them on the wall sconces and lace curtain panels. They even adorn the urns and the clock."

After Miriam and W.H. Stark died in 1936, their only son, Henry Jacob Lutch Stark (known as H.J. Lutch Stark or Lutch Stark), closed the house and stored the furniture and artworks. Several decades later, Lutch Stark's wife, Nelda, supervised the home's restoration, a 10-year project that put the mansion in the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The W.H. Stark House, which began welcoming visitors in 1981, is also a Texas Historic Landmark.

For many folks, touring this lavish house whets the appetite for the artworks and artifacts displayed at the Stark Museum of Art, a short walk away. The majority of the collections showcased in the modern, white Vermont marble museum belonged to



Featuring leaded glass windows, bronze candelabras, and other elaborate furnishings, the 1894 W.H. Stark House reflects the immense wealth of the Stark and Lutch families. A portrait of Miriam Lutch Stark hangs above the keyhole-shaped window.

Lutcher Stark. After he died in 1965, his wife, as chairman of the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutcher Stark Foundation, commissioned the building of the museum, which opened to the public in 1978.

Mesmerizing landscapes and Western scenes by Thomas Moran, Paul Kane, and other 19th-Century masters decorate the museum walls; bronze sculptures by Frederic Remington and Charles M. Russell animate the two-story lobby; porcelain birds and flowers by the late Dorothy Doughty, a prominent ceramic artist in the first half of the 20th Century, fill an entire gallery. Other holdings include hand-colored wildlife prints by John James Audubon, and American Indian artifacts, such as Pueblo pottery, Zuni and Hopi kachina dolls, and Navajo rugs and blankets.

The museum's Steuben glass collection contains numerous bowls, plates, and plaques. Crowning the collection is the only known complete set of *The United States in Crystal*, a series of crystal bowls engraved with scenes of historic events, legendary personalities, and landmarks of each state. Lutcher Stark ordered the series in 1959.

The Stark Museum of Art features a series of intricately engraved crystal bowls that represents all 50 states.



tage fashions, including diaphanous chiffon dresses with hats and purses to match, men's suits from the Twenties, and early football gear complete with leather helmet. Cooks touring the house enjoy reading the handwritten recipes for dumplings, waffles, and pound cake that are scrawled on the backs of the pantry doors in the kitchen.

Another attraction, the Heritage History Museum of Orange County, sits nearby. Here, exhibits and artifacts, including a marine signal light, a log book, a battle flag, and a recipe box from various ships built in Orange during WWII, tell how shipbuilding, along with timber, oil, cattle, and rice, helped shape the region's early economy. Other exhibits illustrate how paper corporations and "Chemical Row" (some 15 chemical companies, including E.I. DuPont, Chevron, and Bayer) became local influences in the last half of the 20th Century.

"Our waterways were, and still are, our most important asset," says retired museum director Carolyn Rose, referring to the Sabine River, Sabine Lake, the Gulf of Mexico, and the deepwater port that connects Orange to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. (The port sits south of downtown, on the Sabine River.) "These waters lured the early sawmills and shipyards to Orange. Later, they attracted petrochemical companies and paper corporations. Rice- and cattle-growers in the area depend heavily on water, too."

Those who enjoy stepping back in time at the Heritage House and the Heritage History Museum will relish browsing the corn shuckers, well buckets, horse collars, and other old-fashioned gizmos at Farmer's Mercantile, located two blocks south of the

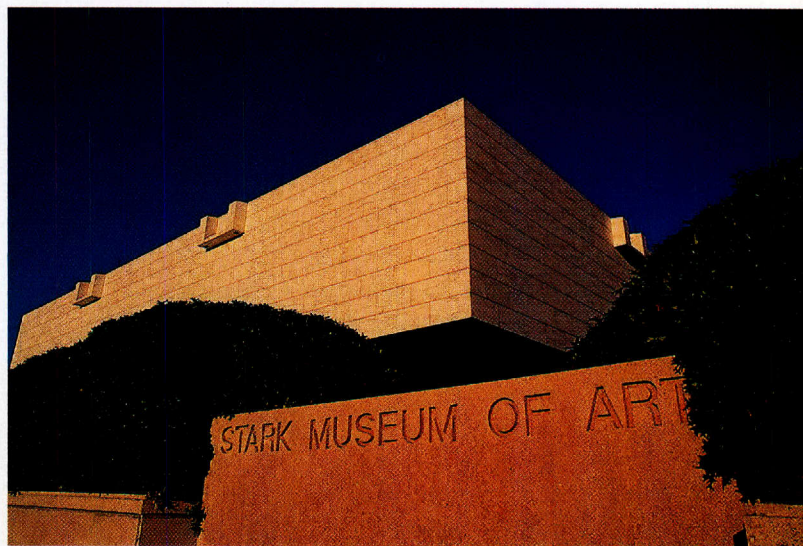
Touring the lavish Stark House whets the appetite for the artworks and artifacts displayed at the Stark Museum of Art.

"The engraving on the *Texas* bowl depicts the Battle of the Alamo and the Lone Star," says tour coordinator Monica Reimer. "The battle scene is underscored with the historic battle cry, 'Remember the Alamo.'"

Outside the museum, a walk past the fountain in Stark Park takes you to the 1,500-seat Frances Ann Lutcher Theater for the Performing Arts, which sports a recently refurbished limestone-and-granite facade. The theater's 21st season of Broadway blockbusters, classical ballet, riveting folk dance, appearances by international stars, and other performances begins this October.

In contrast to the art and opulence that pervade Civic Plaza's attractions, the eight-room Heritage House (three blocks south) illustrates the upper-middle-class lifestyle of the J.O. Sims family, who lived there from 1902 until 1968. Sims began his banking career in 1889 at the age of 15, starting as an errand boy for the First National Bank of Orange and working his way up to chairman of the board.

Although unusual for this era, each of the four bedrooms has a closet. Visitors can open the closet doors and discover vin-



Built of white Vermont marble, the Stark Museum of Art showcases a range of artworks, from bronzes by Frederic Remington to hand-colored wildlife prints by John James Audubon. Most of the collections belonged to Lutcher Stark.

A Slice of Orange

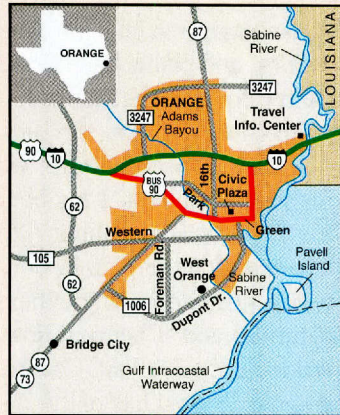
Orange, seat of Orange County, is one of 3 cities in the Golden Triangle. It lies 20 miles northeast of Port Arthur and 25 miles east of Beaumont on Interstate 10, near the Texas-Louisiana state line. To reach downtown's **Civic Plaza** (where many of the attractions lie) from I-10, take the 16th St. exit (Texas 87), drive south about 2 miles, and turn east on Green Ave. For information on lodging and dining, write to the Orange Convention & Visitors Bureau, 1012 Green Ave., Orange 77630; 409/883-3536 or 800/528-4906. Web site: www.org-tx.com/chamber. Orange's area code is 409.

Events

The **25th Annual Gumbo Cookoff** (May 5-6, 2000), in Ochiltree-Inman Park (Front Ave. at 4th St.), features Cajun and country music, children's games, a carnival, and a gumbo cookoff. Hours: Fri 5 p.m.-11 p.m., Sat 10 a.m.-midnight. Admission: \$5, \$1 age 12 and younger. Wheelchair accessible. Contact the C&VB.

Attractions

For a good overview of the city, pick up the brochure **Walking**



© KELLEYGRAPHICS

Tour of Downtown Orange at the C&VB. It describes 22 points of interest on a self-guided tour, including the **First United Methodist Church** (ca. 1919), which has some 2 dozen large stained-glass windows. A good starting point is the Civic Plaza, which features 4 landmarks linked to a single family.

Docents at the **Lutcher Memorial Building First Presbyterian Church**, 902 Green Ave., offer free tours *by appt. only* (call a few days ahead) Sep-May, Mon-Fri 9-3. Visitors are also invited to Sun.

services, which begin at 11 a.m. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 902 Green Ave., Orange 77630; 883-2097. Web site: www.presbys.org/fpo.

The **W.H. Stark House**, a 3-story Victorian mansion (ca. 1894) at 610 W. Main, also offers guided tours (*reservations recommended*). Hours: Tue-Sat 10-3:30. Admission: \$2. Admission is limited to adults and those ages 14-17, if accompanied by an adult. Not wheelchair accessible. Write to Drawer 909, Orange 77631-0909; 883-0871.

The 30,000-square-foot **Stark Museum of Art**, at 712 Green Ave., displays a range of artworks and artifacts, many with a Western theme. Hours: Wed-Sat 10-5, Sun 1-5; closed major holidays. Admission: Free. Children age 11 and younger must be accompanied by an adult. *Group tours by appt. only*. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 1897, Orange 77631; 883-6661. Web site: www.starkmuseumofart.org.

The **Lutcher Theater for the Performing Arts**, 707 W. Main, which will begin its 21st season in Oct., features traveling Broad-

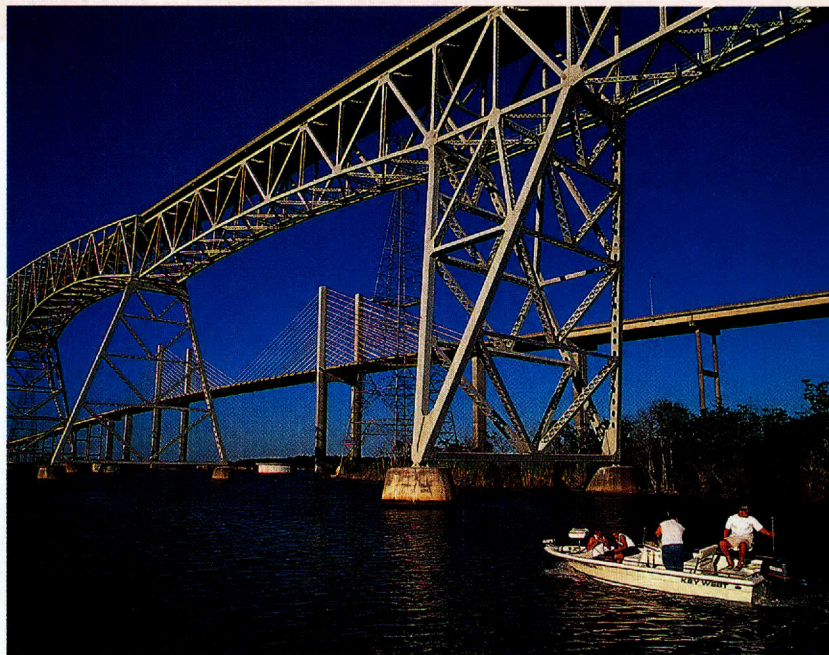
way plays and musical acts. Wheelchair accessible. Large-print programs and hearing-assistive devices available. For a schedule of events and ticket information, write to Box 2310, Orange 77631-2310; 886-5535 or 800/828-5535. Web site: www.lutcher.org.

The 98-year-old, 2-story **Heritage House Museum**, 905 W. Division, features original or authentic-for-the-period furnishings, 5 fireplaces, and a slate roof. Only the lower floor is wheelchair accessible. The adjacent **Heritage History Museum of Orange County** depicts area history through exhibits and photos. Artifacts include an 1800s-era ship telescope, the destroyer escort USS *Harveson's* logbook, and vintage clothing. Both attractions are designated as Texas Historic Landmarks and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The **research library** in the adjacent offices of the Orange County Heritage Society includes photographs and genealogy materials. Hours: Tue-Fri 10-5. Open weekends by appt.; closed major holidays. Admission: \$1 each museum. Wheelchair

museum. "Old-timers like to sit on the nail kegs—like they've been doing since the store opened—and trade stories," says Dan Harris, who runs the general store. "In the winter, we roast peanuts for them to pass around." Dan's great-grandfather F.A. Harris opened the business in 1928.

An enterprise of another sort attracts nature-lovers to Cypress Bayou, about two miles north of downtown. At American Airboats, home of Super Gator Tours, entrepreneur Stan Floyd offers airboat tours of the Sabine River wetlands. Grab your hat—and your camera—and step aboard.

Powered by aircraft engines and 78-inch propellers, the lightweight crafts seem to fly across the open wetlands before gliding at a slower pace through marshes teeming with nutria, turtles, water snakes, and other fascinating creatures. If you don't spot an alligator in the wild (they hibernate in cold weather and aren't as easy to spot then), don't worry. Six-foot gators lurk behind a fence in a man-made swamp beside Stan's office and souvenir shop. You



Ten miles southwest of Orange on Texas 87, the Rainbow Bridge and the newer Veterans' Memorial Bridge (background) span the Neches River to join Bridge City and Port Arthur. With Sabine Lake and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway also nearby, water recreation proves abundant in the area.

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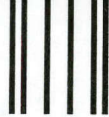
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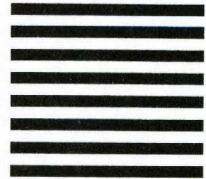
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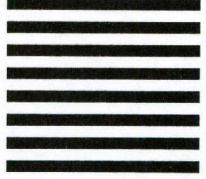
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accessible. Write to 905 W. Division, Orange 77630; 886-5385.

Piney Woods Country Wines, 3408 Willow Dr., offers self-guided vineyard tours, free tastings, and wine sales. *Adults only*. Guided winery tours by appt. Hours: Mon-Sat 9-5. Only the Tasting Room and Winery are wheelchair accessible. Write to 3408 Willow Dr., Orange 77632; 883-5408 or 888/857-9575.

Firefighters at **Central Fire Station**, 501 N. 7th St., invite tourists to browse their collection of firefighting memorabilia and to inspect the 1920 American LaFrance pumper truck on display. Hours: Mon-Fri 8-10:30 and 1:30-5. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 501 N. 7th St., Orange 77630; 883-1050.

Since 1928, the Harris family has welcomed browsers to its **Farmer's Mercantile**, at 702 W. Division St. Old-timey merchandise fills the original wooden shelves and display cases of this 5,500-square-foot store. Hours: Mon-Fri 8-5:30, Sat 8-3. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 782, Orange 77630; 883-2941.

Sightseers are welcome at the **Orange County Navigation and Port District Office** building (ca. 1913), at 1201 Childers Rd. The 2-story, Mission-style, brick-stucco-and-tile structure housed the offices of the Lutchter and Moore Lumber Company until the 1930s. The structure bears a Texas Historic Landmark medallion. Visitors welcome during business hours (Mon-Fri 8-5). Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 1201 Childers Rd., Orange 77630; 883-4363.

TxDOT's recently opened **Travel Information Center**, 3 miles northeast of downtown Orange, near the Texas-Louisiana state line on Interstate 10, offers free information, maps, and literature about every part of the state. A boardwalk at the scenic center extends 600 feet over the Blue Elbow Swamp. Call 409/883-9416.

Outdoor Activities

Anglers recommend the following **fishing sites**: Lake Sabine (redfish, speckled trout, and flounder), the Sabine River (large-mouth bass, crappie, striped bass, and blue catfish), and Blue Elbow

Swamp (bass and bream). For a map of the area's waterways, plus a list of guides, boat launches, and seasonal tips, contact the C&VB.

Area **birding sites** featured on The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail include Tony Houseman State Park and Wildlife Management Area, the Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area, Tyrrell Park, and Cattail Marsh (see page 41 for directions to Tyrrell Park and Cattail Marsh). Write to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin 78744-3291; 800/792-1112. Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us.

Super Gator Tours, on I-10, 2 miles west of the Texas-Louisiana state line, offers airboat tours of the Sabine River wetlands. Tours depart Mon-Sat at 10, noon, 2, and 4. Admission: \$23.65, \$18.95 age 60 and older and students with ID, \$11.95 age 12 and younger. Not wheelchair accessible. **Cypress Lake RV Resort**, at the same location, offers full RV hookups. Rates: \$18/night, \$75/week. Prices for oversize trailers and groups vary. For reservations and information,

write to 108 E. Lutchter Dr., Orange 77632; 883-7725 or 800/241-6390. Web site: www.pnx.com/gator.

Clabourne West Park, 12 miles west of Orange off I-10, is a haven for birds and other wildlife. Amenities include a fishing pond, mountain bike trail, tennis court, softball field, nature trails, playgrounds, and picnic areas. The park's diversity of birds earned it a spot on the Sabine Loop of The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. Hours: Nov.-Mar., daily 7:30 a.m.-7 p.m.; Apr.-Oct., daily 7:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Admission: Free. Primitive camping \$3 per night. Wheelchair accessible. Write to 4105 North St., Vidor 77662; 409/745-2255 (Mon-Fri 7:30-4).

Books

Look for Robert Everett Russell's 1911 diary, reproduced as a book titled *A History of Orange* (1998) and sold for \$7.50, at the Heritage House Museum. The museum also has two books by local historian Dr. Howard A. Williams: *Gateway to Texas: A History of Orange, Texas* (1986) and *Picturing Orange* (2000). The latter sells for \$35. Call the museum for details.

know you've arrived at American Airboats when you see the 12-foot-tall, moss-draped swamp monster—made of aluminum and fiberglass—that stands at the entrance.

About two miles west of Super Gator Tours, Alfred J. Flies (pronounced "fleece") welcomes visitors to Piney Woods Country Wines, a family-owned and -operated winery. Here, you can sample Texas fruit wines like blueberry, strawberry, peach, and plum, as well as seven varieties of muscadine wine, and learn about winemaking on tours of the winery and the six-acre tract of vineyards and orchards. Since Alfred opened his doors in 1987, his Heart of Texas Red Muscadine and other selections have won many awards in contests like the Lone Star Wine Competition and the People's Choice Competition at Grapevine's GrapeFest.

Coffee-lovers will delight in discovering Pecan Mocha Wine. "You get a nice coffee aroma to begin with," says Alfred, "then you taste chocolate and pecan on the back of your tongue. This may be the only pecan mocha wine in the world." Blueberry-fanciers gravitate to the blueberry dessert-style wine. "We make it from the last harvest of the season," Alfred says, "when

the sun has fully sweetened the fruit." Paired with cheesecake at a luncheon, this top-seller once drew a standing ovation.

But applause and standing ovations are nothing new to Orange and its varied attractions. In 1911, traveler Robert Everett Russell recorded his impressions of the burgeoning county seat in his diary: "...although I have traveled to some extent, I have never seen any place that I prefer to Orange. To me, it is the dearest spot on earth."

Russell would no doubt have marveled at modern Orange. Today, his beloved city entertains travelers with not only alligators, artifacts, and artwork, but also award-winning wine, first-rate theater, and some of the best gumbo anywhere. Were Russell traveling today, we can only guess at the kudos that might flow from his pen. ★

Colmesneil's DIANE MOREY SITTON also wrote the story on Beaumont Botanical Gardens in this issue.

Staff photographer KEVIN STILLMAN says that for nature-lovers like himself, it's definitely worth the time to take the airboat ride at Super Gator Tours. He also recommends checking out the boardwalk at the new Texas Travel Information Center near Orange.

Fun Forecast

June 2000						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

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

Sometimes dates change after the magazine is printed.

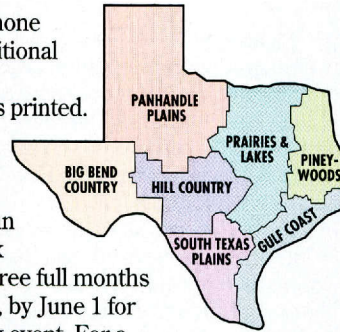
Before you drive miles to an event, confirm the date by calling the number listed next to the festivity or by contacting the local chamber of commerce.

If you wish to submit an event for Fun

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

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

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



Panhandle Plains

- 1-3**
EDEN
Jr Livestock Rodeo
915/869-4301
- JACKSBORO**
Jack Co Sheriff's Posse Rodeo
940/567-5338
- 1-4**
HASKELL
Wild Horse Prairie Days
940/864-2477
- 1, 8, 15, 22, 29**
LEVELLAND
South Plains Opry
806/894-3157
- 2-4**
HAMLIN
Back to Rath's Trail
915/576-3501
- SWEETWATER**
International Arabian Cutting Horse Show
915/235-3484
- 2-4, 30-Jul 2**
POST
Old Mill Trade Days
806/495-3529
- 3**
ABILENE
Zoo Day
915/876-6085
- ALBANY**
Western Swing Party
915/762-2269

- 3**
BIG SPRING
Model Aircraft Show
915/399-4793
- BORGER**
Fish Fry
806/274-2211
- LUBBOCK**
Celebration for the Green
806/742-0498
- QUANAH**
Special Events at Copper Breaks State Park
940/839-4331
- RANGER**
OF Time Country Festival
254/647-5353 or 647-5265
- WICHITA FALLS**
Lake Arrowhead State Park Fishing Contest
940/528-2211
- 3-4**
ABILENE
Quilt Show
915/676-6211
- VERNON**
Youth Rodeo
940/552-5474
- 4**
LEVELLAND
Country Showdown
806/894-3157
- 4-10**
ABILENE
Texas High School Rodeo Finals
915/676-2556 or 677-4376
- 6, 13, 20, 27**
WICHITA FALLS
Outdoor Concert
940/761-7490

- 7-10**
WICHITA FALLS
Red River Rodeo
940/322-4411
- 7-Aug 19**
CANYON
Texas
806/655-2181
- 8-10**
AMARILLO
Cowboy Roundup USA
806/376-7767 or 372-4777
- DUMAS**
Doggie Days
806/935-9777
- 9-10**
WICHITA FALLS
Relay for Life
940/692-7201
- CROSS PLAINS**
Robert E. Howard Days
254/725-6284
- 10**
ASPERMONT
Double Mountain Gospel Jamboree
940/989-3197
- DENVER CITY**
Roughneck Rodeo & Farnboy Jamboree
806/592-5424
- HEREFORD**
Town & Country Jamboree
806/364-3333
- JACKSBORO**
Jack Co Jamboree
940/567-3506

- 10**
MEADOW
Meadow Musical
806/539-2266
- TUSCOLA**
Pioneer Day
915/572-3204
- 10-11**
BAIRD
Antiques Market/ Trades Days
915/854-2008
- BIG SPRING**
Fly-In
915/399-4793
- STANTON**
Old Sorehead Trade Days
915/756-2006
- 11**
SWEETWATER
Horse Show
915/235-3484 or 800/658-8757
- WICHITA FALLS**
Forever Plaid
940/322-5000
- 14-17**
BIG SPRING
Cowboy Reunion & Rodeo
915/267-7466
- 15-18**
ABILENE
Quarter Horse Show
915/677-4376
- 15-17, 22-24, 30-Jul 1**
ABILENE
Don't Dress for Dinner
915/873-7082

- 15-Jul 2**
LUBBOCK
Texas Tech Summer Rep
806/742-3603
- 16**
SAN ANGELO
Harvey Herbert Blues Competition
915/653-1206 or 800/375-1206
- 16-17**
CLAUDE
Melodrama Performance
806/226-2187
- SWEETWATER**
Ranch Rodeo
800/658-8757
- 16-18**
SAN ANGELO
Fiesta del Concho
915/655-4136
- WICHITA FALLS**
South Pacific
512/463-5535
- 17**
CLAUDE
Joplin & Co Musical Revue
806/226-2451 or 226-2187
- JACKSBORO**
Car Show
940/567-6530
- SAN ANGELO**
Dinosaur Walk
915/949-4757
- Frontier Day
915/657-4444
- 17-18**
ABILENE
Arts & Crafts Festival
915/876-6211

- 18**
VERNON
Car Show
940/552-2949
- 21-24**
WICHITA FALLS
Legends of Western Swing Music Festival
405/949-0992
- 22**
WICHITA FALLS
Oil Bowl Basketball Classic
940/766-4511
- 22-24**
VERNON
4-H Horse Show
940/552-5474
- 22-24, 29-Jul 1**
ALBANY
Fort Griffin Fandangle
915/762-3642 or 762-3838
- 23-24**
SEYMOUR
Barbecue Cookoff
940/888-2921
- 23-25**
JACKSBORO
Twin Lakes Summerfest
940/567-6321
- 24**
LUBBOCK
The Original West Texas Saturday Night & Ice Cream Social
806/742-0498

- 24**
WICHITA FALLS
Oil Bowl Football Classic
940/766-4511 or 800/799-MPEC
- 24-25**
JACKSBORO
Trade Days
940/567-2602
- 27**
LUBBOCK
Texas Tech Summer Jazz Festival
806/742-2270
- 27-Jul 4**
DENVER CITY
Gold Fever Week/ Great Gold Rush Picnic
806/592-5424
- 29-Jul 1**
AMARILLO
Range Riders Rodeo
806/355-2212
- COLEMAN**
PRCA Rodeo/ Jr Rodeo
915/625-4111 or 348-3933
- 30-Jul 2**
COLORADO CITY
Celebrate 2000 July Fourth Celebration
915/728-3403
- 24**
LUBBOCK
The Original West Texas Saturday Night & Ice Cream Social
806/742-0498
- 24**
SWEETWATER
Cutting Horse Show
915/235-3484

- Prairies and Lakes**
- 1-3**
DALLAS
Dallas Black Dance Theatre
214/871-2390
- FORT WORTH**
North Texas High School Rodeo Finals
817/625-1025
- MCKINNEY**
(began May 30)
Lions Club Carnival
972/542-7100
- NOCONA**
Western Swing Weekend
512/441-9255 or 940/825-3757
- 1-4**
FORT WORTH
42nd Street
817/467-2787
- WAXAHACHIE**
(began May 1)
Scarborough Faire
214/938-1888 or 972/938-3247
- 1-25**
GRANBURY
100 Years of Country Music
817/573-0303
- 1, 8, 15, 22, 29**
LANCASTER
Musicfest Concert
972/227-1112
- SHERMAN**
Hot Summer Nights Concerts
903/893-1184
- WACO**
Summer Sounds Concerts
254/750-8696 or 800/922-6386
- 1-Jul 2**
GRANBURY
George M
817/573-9191
- 1-Aug 31**
GLEN ROSE
The Promise
800/687-2661
- 2**
DALLAS
Hispanic Festival Concert
214/692-0203
- 2-3**
BRYAN
Bluegrass Music Festival
979/361-3656

- 2-4**
ARLINGTON
Texas Scottish Festival & Highland Games
817/654-2293
- DALLAS**
Antique Show
214/670-8843 or 670-0265
- Festival of Arts & Jazz
214/855-1881
- Southwest Black Arts Festival
214/827-7110
- SEGUIN**
Quarter Horse Show
800/580-7322
- YOAKUM**
Tom Tom Festival
512/293-2309
- 2-10**
NAVASOTA
Grimes Co Fair
936/873-2185
- 2-17**
IRVING
Harvey
972/252-2787
- 2-18**
FORT WORTH
King Lear
817/784-9378
- 2, 9, 16, 23, 30**
TEMPLE
Hot Summer Sounds
254/298-5415
- 2-4, 30-Jul 2**
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The Mountain Wild West Adventure
903/567-STAY
- WEATHERFORD**
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817/594-3801 or 598-4351
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903/676-BASS
- BEDIAS**
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936/395-2805 or 395-6404
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817/466-2707
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Cruise Night
940/627-6555 or 627-1553

3 EUSTACE Kids' Fish & Play Day 903/425-2332 FARMERS BRANCH Dallas Symphony Orchestra Under the Stars 972/247-3131 GATESVILLE Shivaree 254/865-2617 HICO Vintage Car Show 800/361-4426 McKINNEY Home & Garden Tour 972/727-1390 SNOOK Snookfest 979/272-3732 SULPHUR SPRINGS Kids' Fishing Day 903/945-5256 WOLFE CITY Kids' Day at the Lake 903/496-2323	5 WATAUGA Doc Moore, Texan Storyteller 817/283-3406 5-10 MABANK Western Week 903/887-2121 6-10 GRAND SALINE Salt Festival & Rodeo 903/962-7147 6, 13, 20, 27 LEWISVILLE Summer Music Concert Series 972/219-3550 8-10 CLEBURNE Mustang Scooter National Convention 817/558-8868 8-11 HEARNE Wings Over Texas Model Airplane Rally 512/489-9044 LOCKHART Chisholm Trail Roundup 512/398-2818 8, 15, 22, 29 DALLAS Noches Norteñas 214/750-1038 DUNCANVILLE Summer Concert Series 972/780-5099 9 FORT WORTH Pronto Auto Parts 400 NASCAR Truck Series Race 817/215-8500 9-10 CLARKSVILLE Rodeo 903/427-2805 GRAND PRAIRIE Auto Swap Meet 972/647-2331 WEIMAR Gedenke Celebration 409/725-9511 or 888/393-4627 9-11 BOWIE Trade Days 940/872-1680 or 872-1173 CANTON Classic Motorcycle Rally 817/589-2867 or 972/563-9383	9-11 DALLAS Festival of Arts & Jazz 214/855-1881 DUBLIN Dr Pepper Days 254/445-3939 or 445-3422 GAINESVILLE Antique Airplane Fly-In 940/668-4565 GLEN ROSE Miniature Horse Show 254/897-4509 HILLSBORO Bond's Alley Summer Festival 254/582-2481 or 800/445-5726 PLANO Craft Show 800/783-4526 9-Jul 2 SHERMAN Fiddler on the Roof 512/463-5535 10 BASTROP Pine Street Market Day 512/303-6233 BELTON Arts & Crafts Show 254/760-3713 BREMOND Polski Dzień (Polish Day) 254/746-7421 COLUMBUS Texas Swing Spectacular 979/732-2917 or 877/444-7339 DECATUR Fishing Derby 940/627-3107 FORT WORTH Indy Racing League 817/215-8500 GODLEY Community Service Club Old-Time Fun Fest 817/309-2622 or 389-3722 HEMPSTEAD Kickback Country Weekend 936/826-4111 IRVING Heritage Festival 972/252-3838 LANCASTER Second Saturday on the Square 972/227-2579	10 McKINNEY Collin Co Bicycle Classic 972/735-8334 PLANO Picnic in the Park 972/941-7250 SULPHUR SPRINGS Dairy Festival Fun Run & 5-K Milk Run 903/885-8345 10-11 BRENNHAM Antiques Show 409/251-9455 BRENNHAM Second Weekend on the Square 979/277-0913 or 888/273-6426 10-17 GATESVILLE Fine Arts Festival 254/865-8951 10-11, 17-18 GATESVILLE You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown 254/865-8951 10, 24 BOWIE Gospel Music 940/841-2041 10, 16-17, 20, 23-24, 30 ROUND TOP International Festival-Institute Summer Concert Series 409/249-3129 10-Jul 4 FORT WORTH Concerts in the Garden 817/665-6000 11 GRAND PRAIRIE Metroplex Sprint Triathlon 817/355-1279 or 214/821-0909 IRVING Historic Homes Tour 972/252-3838 SAN FELIPE VFD Barbecue 409/885-2586 11, 25 RICHARDSON Community Band Summer Series Concert 972/385-2999 12 EULESS Shelly Kneupper, Storyteller 817/283-3406	12-17 FAIRFIELD Freestone Co Fair 903/389-3434 GREENVILLE Hunt Co Fair 903/454-1503 13-18 FORT WORTH Arabian Horse Show 817/871-8150 13-25 DALLAS The Sound of Music 972/298-1217 14-17 CLEBURNE Johnson Co Sheriff's Posse PRCA Rodeo 817/373-2382 15 GRANBURY Gospel Concert 817/572-0881 or 800/354-1670 16-17 WACO Juneteenth Celebration 254/756-0933 15-18 WEATHERFORD Parker Co Frontier Days Celebration 817/594-3801 15, 22, 29 CORSICANA Music in the Park 903/872-2100 16 BEDFORD Cowboy Poetry 817/952-2290 16-17 SULPHUR SPRINGS Hopkins Co Dairy Festival 903/945-3436 or 885-6515 16-18 FORT WORTH Chisholm Trail Roundup/Chief Quanah Parker Comanche Powwow 817/625-7005 McKINNEY Flamefest Invitational Soccer Tournament 214/220-1080 Trade Days 972/562-5466	16-19 DENTON Juneteenth Celebration 940/387-4247 16-25 GARLAND The Music Man 972/205-2790 16, 23, 30 PARIS Municipal Band Concerts 903/784-7579 17 CLIFTON Trades Day 254/675-3720 DALLAS African-American Heritage Festival 214/421-5141 GRAND PRAIRIE Chili Cookoff 972/647-2331 Juneteenth Celebration 972/237-8100 HOLLAND Corn Festival 254/657-2368	17 IRVING African-American Drumming & Dance Clinic 972/252-7588 LANCASTER Juneteenth Celebration 972/227-2579 McKINNEY Summer Sounds Concert 888/649-8499 PALESTINE African-American Heritage Celebration 800/659-3484 STEPHENVILLE Dairyfest 254/965-2406 17-18 DALLAS Antique & Collector Market 405/478-4050 17-19 BASTROP Juneteenth Celebration 512/301-0001	17-19, 23-25 CLEBURNE Guys and Dolls 817/558-7197 18 SAN FELIPE Father's Day Barbecue 409/865-2583 18-21 DALLAS Turtle Creek Chorale 512/463-5535 19 ENNIS Juneteenth Celebration 888/366-4748 FORT WORTH Juneteenth Celebration 817/335-9605 LA GRANGE Juneteenth Celebration 979/247-4029 20 LOCKHART Country Music Jamboree 512/376-3430	20-24 CANTON Texas State Bluegrass Festival 903/785-5394 20-25 FORT WORTH Red, White & Tuna 817/467-2787 22 BEDFORD Dixieland Favorites 817/952-2290 HURST Jazz Corner 817/283-3406 22-24 BOGATA Rodeo/ Frontier Days 903/632-5248 BOWIE Jim Bowie Days/ Rodeo 940/872-1173 or 872-2822
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Pay homage to the bottling works during Dublin's Dr Pepper Days, June 9-11.



Have an ear at the Holland Corn Festival, June 17.

26
LOCKHART Opry 512/601-2154
26-Jul 8
FORT WORTH American Paint Horse World Championship Show 817/871-8150
28
KELLER Jan Ryberg, Classical Guitar 817/283-3406
29-Jul 1
HONEY GROVE Roundup Club Rodeo 903/346-3482
30-Jul 1
ROWLETT Festival of Freedom 972/412-6193
SEGUIN Freedom Fiesta 800/580-7322
WACO Tennis Tournament 254/750-8662
WHITESBORO Wild West Rodeo Days 903/564-3993
30-Jul 3
BELTON PRCA Rodeo 254/939-3551

Pineywoods

2-3
EASTON Heritage Turnip Green Festival 903/643-7819
LIVINGSTON Alabama- Coushatta Indian Powwow 409/563-4391
2-4
LONGVIEW Alleyfest 903/237-4040 or 753-3281
2-4, 9-10
CONROE 1776 409/441-2787
2, 4, 8, 10
LONGVIEW The Merry Widow 903/234-1300

2-3, 9-10, 16-17, 23-24
RUSK "Boxcars, BBQ, & The Bridge" 903/683-4242 or 800/933-2381
3
GARRISON Heritage Day 936/347-2260
JASPER Kids Fish Flop Tournament 409/384-5231
RUSK Texas State Railroad Steam Engine Shop Tour 800/442-8951
TYLER Kid Fish 903/597-5338
3-4
JEFFERSON Bayou Classic Golf Tournament 903/665-7245
NACOGDOCHES Air Show 888/564-7351
4-10
HEMPHILL Scarecrow Contest 409/787-2732
LONGVIEW Chairing Challenge Bicycle Race 800/374-2453
7-10
GLADEWATER Roundup Rodeo 903/845-5501 or 800/627-0315
MOUNT PLEASANT Rodeo 903/572-8474
8-11
LIVINGSTON Lend Me a Tenor 936/646-5038
9-10
JACKSONVILLE Tomato Fest 903/586-2217 or 800/376-2217
9-11
LONGVIEW Juneteenth Celebration/ Rodeo 903/753-3165
LUFKIN Horse Show 409/637-3976
MONTGOMERY Old West Festival 936/449-MOWF
NACOGDOCHES Texas Blueberry Festival 409/560-5533

10
JASPER Kid Fish 903/836-4336
10
KIRBYVILLE Country Music Show 409/423-5744
NOONDAY Onion Festival 903/561-6128
12-17
NACOGDOCHES Vintage Chevrolet Meet 888/564-7351
16-17
LUFKIN Truck & Tractor Pull 409/637-3976
16-18
LIVINGSTON Trade Days 409/327-3656
TYLER Trade Days 903/595-2223
17
HUNTSVILLE Juneteenth Celebration 409/294-0676
JASPER Floating the Forks 409/384-5231
MOUNT PLEASANT Barbecue Cookoff 903/575-4000
17-18
TYLER Juneteenth Celebration 903/535-4817

Gulf Coast

1-4
LAKE JACKSON Craft Show 409/297-8001
1, 8, 15, 22, 29
CORPUS CHRISTI Bay Jammin' Concert Series 361/880-3461
2
BEAUMONT Hurricane Party 409/832-1644
2-3
PORT ARANSAS Take a Kid Fishin' Tournament 361/749-5252

22-25
LULING Watermelon Thump 830/875-3214
RICHARDSON The Wizard of Oz 972/690-5029
23
FORT WORTH Trisha Yearwood 214/373-8000
GRAND PRAIRIE All-Star Jockey Championship 972/263-7223

23
WACO Ray Valentine Circus 254/776-1161
23-24
NAVASOTA Blues Festival 936/825-6600 or 800/252-6342
RICHARDSON Coin Show 254/799-4342
23-25
MADISONVILLE Madison Co Trade Days 409/349-0163

23-25
PLANO Sci-Fi Expo & Toy Show 972/578-0213
23-24, 30-Jul 2
GRAND PRAIRIE South Pacific 972/642-2787
23-Jul 9
FORT WORTH A Midsummer Night's Dream 817/784-9378

23-Aug 4
NORTH RICHLAND HILLS NRH20 Family Waterpark Dive-In Movies 817/427-6609
24
BEDFORD A Barnyard Opera 817/952-2290
CEDAR HILL USARA Adventure Series Race 972/291-3900
DALLAS Saturday in the Park 214/942-3678

24
GLEN ROSE Bike the Riv 254/897-2860
LEWISVILLE Festival of Sails 972/219-3550
SULPHUR SPRINGS Gospel Concert 800/525-3171
TEMPLE Pioneer Day 254/778-4444
WAXAHACHIE Cow Creek County Classic Bicycle Rally 972/937-2379

24-25
ARIINGTON Gem & Mineral Show 817/489-1535
24-25
DALLAS Dallas Zoo Weekend at Fair Park 214-670-5656
Hoop-It-Up 972-392-5750 or 670-0265
SEALY Polka Fest 409-885-6786

2-4 HOUSTON Houston Ballet 713/522-5538	9-25 NASSAU BAY <i>I Love You</i> 281/335-5228	17-18 PORT ARTHUR Trade Days 409/982-4950	2-3 SAN ANTONIO Symphony 210/554-1010	24 BIGFOOT Reunion 830/665-5054 or 663-2419	4 KYLE Open House at Claiborne Kyle Log House 512/268-2531	16-17 STONEWALL Peach Jamboree & Rodeo 830/644-2735	30-Jul 1 INGRAM <i>The Point in Review</i> 830/367-5122	16-Sep 2 MIDLAND Summer Mummers 915/570-4011
2-11 DICKINSON <i>Sylvia</i> 281/337-7469	10 CORPUS CHRISTI C-101 C-Sculptures 361/289-0111	19 HOUSTON Juneteenth Celebration 713/284-8952	2-Jul 1 SAN ANTONIO <i>South Pacific</i> 210/733-7258	30-Jul 2 SAN ANTONIO Freedom Fest 210/207-8600	6, 13, 20, 27 BANDERA Cowboy Capital Rodeo 800/364-3833	16-18 MARBLE FALLS Jr Rodeo 830/693-5758	Big Bend Country	17 FORT STOCKTON Fiesta de San Juan 915/336-6261
3 GALVESTON Sandcastle Competition 888/425-4753	EAST BERNARD Czech Kolache-Klobase Festival 409/335-4827 or 335-7907	23-25 TEXAS CITY Funfest 409/935-1408	3-4 SAN ANTONIO Tejano Fest 210/207-8600	Hill Country	9 AUSTIN Acoustic Alchemy 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW	17 MENARD Jim Bowie Days 915/396-2365		1-10 EL PASO (began May 26) <i>Transformations</i> 915/532-3799
HOUSTON All-British Car Show 281/890-5500 or 444-1679	GALVESTON Caribbean Festival 409/643-7944 or 763-5700	Trade Days 409/949-9273	6 THREE RIVERS Brush Country Music Jamboree 361/449-2636 or 786-8334	1-3 GEORGETOWN Sheriff's Posse Rodeo 512/869-2648	9-10 AUSTIN Civic Orchestra at Zilker Park 512/990-8226	17 BLANCO Market Day 830/833-5101	1-Aug 26 EL PASO <i>Viva El Paso!</i> 915/565-6900	17-18 ODESSA Juneteenth Celebration 915/337-2440
NASSAU BAY Clear Lake Symphony Concert 713/639-0702	LA PORTE Bay Day Festival 281/332-3381 or 713/863-9994	24 SWEENEY Trade Day 409/548-3249	7-28 SAN ANTONIO <i>The Emperor's New Clothes</i> 210/408-0116	1-11 KERRVILLE (began May 25) Folk Festival 830/257-3600	Symphony Pops 512/476-6064	SABINAL Cypress Day Celebration 830/988-2588 or 988-2995	2-3 IRAAN Alley Oop Day & Chili Cookoff 915/639-2301 or 639-2952	18 EL PASO The Iguanas 915/541-4481
VICTORIA Kids Fishing Tournament 512/575-6366	PORT BOLIVAR Birding Tour 281/445-1187	24-25 HOUSTON Antique Market 405/478-4050	10 GOLIAD Market Day 361/645-3563 or 800/848-8674	1-18 AUSTIN <i>Camelot</i> 512/448-8484	ELDORADO Schleicher Co Days/Rodeo 915/853-2770	17-18 GRUENE Market Days 830/629-6441	2-3 JOHNSON CITY Father's Day at LBJ Boyhood Home 830/868-7128	20-21 FORT STOCKTON Horse Show 915/336-6261
3-4 GALVESTON Garden Tour 409/762-3363	10-11 ALVIN Tour de Braz Bicycle Ride & Race 281/331-3944 or 800/331-4063	26 CORPUS CHRISTI Cultural Sunset Celebration 361/883-0639	10, 16-17 STOCKDALE Watermelon Jubilee 830/996-3866 or 996-1143	1-24 INGRAM <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> 830/367-5121	Market Trail Day 830/741-3841	18 KERRVILLE Jazz Festival 830/367-3750	2-4 MIDLAND Mex-Tex Meundo, Chili, & Fajita Cookoff/ Family Festival 915/682-2960	22-25 VAN HORN Frontier Days 915/283-2682
HOUSTON Antique Show 713/869-6329	SEABROOK Back Bay Market 281/474-3869	26-Jul 4 TEXAS CITY Fishing Tournament 409/945-7774 or 935-1408	11 SAN ANTONIO Charreada 210/554-4575	1-Jul 27 SAN MARCOS Summer in the Park Concert Series 512/393-8400	KERRVILLE Cowboy Life 830/257-5392	19 GEORGETOWN Juneteenth Celebration 512/863-3228	2-18 MIDLAND <i>The Foreigner</i> 915/682-4111	23-24 EL PASO Zarzuela 915/747-5606
4, 18 CORPUS CHRISTI Waterfront Art Market 361/880-3461	11 PORT ARTHUR Texas Artists Museum Second Sunday 409/983-4881	27-Jul 2 GALVESTON <i>Red, White and Tuna</i> 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894	13-14 SAN ANTONIO <i>Rapunzel</i> 210/340-4060	2-4 BOERNE Antique Car/Truck Swap Meet 210/698-9575	RIOMEDINA Market Trail Day 210/538-2441	23-25 FORT STOCKTON The Pickin' Professors 915/336-2167	8 FORT STOCKTON Rodeo 915/336-6261	
8-10 BRAZORIA No-Name Festival 409/798-6100	12-17 VICTORIA Bach Festival 512/463-5535	27-Jul 9 HOUSTON <i>Cabaret</i> 713/622-7469	14-Jul 8 SAN ANTONIO <i>Ma'ii, The Coyote</i> Navajo Stories from the Fourth and Fifth Worlds 210/351-7787 or 271-3151	3 BURNET Concert Under the Stars 512/756-7636	SAN MARCOS Texas Water Safari 512/353-2181	23-25 BURNET Burnet Co Fair & Rodeo 512/756-4297	9-10 EL PASO Ballet Folklorico Cuahtli 915/855-2675	
CROSBY Fair & Rodeo 281/328-7113	16 CORPUS CHRISTI Festival Millennium Concert 2000 361/888-6520 or 888-7444	30-Jul 1 HARLINGEN <i>Guys and Dolls</i> 956/412-7529	15 SAN ANTONIO Botanical Garden Concert Under the Stars 210/207-3255	GEORGETOWN Saddle Series Riding Competition 512/259-4161 or 254/547-2419	10-11 BOERNE Market Days 830/816-1796	9-10 STONEWALL Antique Machinery Show 830/997-3012	24 AUSTIN Leon Russell 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW	
HOUSTON Accordion Kings 512/441-9255	8-18 HOUSTON <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> 512/463-5535	30-Jul 4 FREEPORT Fishin' Fiesta 409/235-3356 or 233-3306	15-18 SAN ANTONIO Latino Laugh Festival 210/229-1420	HONDO Hootenanny 830/426-3438 or 426-3438	FREDERICKSBURG Volksport Events 830/997-8056	24 AUSTIN Capital City Men's Chorus 512/477-SING	10 MIDLAND Midland City Limits 915/683-2882	
9-10 NEDERLAND Gulf Coast Jam 409/722-3699	9-11 CORPUS CHRISTI Powerboat Shootout 361/985-1555	17 BAY CITY Market Day 979/245-8333	16-22 SAN ANTONIO Southwestern Bell Dominion Sr PGA Golf Tournament 210/698-3582	NEW BRAUNFELS Garden Show 830/625-1051	11 GEORGETOWN Market Day 512/868-8675	24 KERRVILLE Music in the Park 830/257-5392	25 EL PASO Karisma Band 915/541-4481	
9-11 PORT ARANSAS Grand Slam Fishing Tournament 361/749-3474	17-18 GALVESTON Texas Nationals Pro Jet Ski Races 409/762-3930	South Texas Plains	15-18 SAN ANTONIO Juneteenth Celebration 800/447-3372	3-4 BOERNE Natl Dodge Charger Meet 210/981-5383	15 AUSTIN Texas Fine Arts Association Lecture Series 512/453-5312	24-25 AUSTIN Capital City Men's Chorus 512/477-SING	10 MIDLAND Midland City Limits 915/683-2882	
WINNIE Trade Days 409/892-4000 or 296-3300	17 BEAUMONT Charlie Pruitt's Country Music Show 409/727-2955	1-4 SAN ANTONIO Texas Folklife Festival 210/458-2300	3-4 ROUND ROCK Williamson Co Old Settlers' Celebration 512/388-1733	15-17 MENARD <i>A Song of Silver</i> 915/396-2365	15 GEORGETOWN Market Day 512/868-8675	24 AUSTIN Leon Russell 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW	25 WINK Roy Orbison Festival 915/527-3441 or 527-3365	
	17-18 GALVESTON Texas Nationals Pro Jet Ski Races 409/762-3930	1, 8, 15, 22, 29 SAN ANTONIO Rivercenter Mall Concert Series 210/225-0000	4 BANDERA Horse Show 830/796-7871	15 AUSTIN Texas Fine Arts Association Lecture Series 512/453-5312	15 GEORGETOWN Market Day 512/868-8675	28-29 HONDO Horse Show 830/741-6180	11 EL PASO Blues Concert 915/541-4481	
		2-3 PEARSALL Potato Festival 830/334-9414	19 SAN ANTONIO Juneteenth Celebration 800/447-3372	15-17 MENARD <i>A Song of Silver</i> 915/396-2365	16-17 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP Goat Roping 915/392-3737	30-Jul 1 AUSTIN Royal Winnipeg Ballet's Evelyn Hart 512/329-6753 or 469-SHOW	13 EL PASO Tigua St Anthony Day 915/859-7913	
						16-18 MIDLAND West Texas Open Tennis Tournament 915/687-4046	26 EL PASO Country Music Festival & Fair 915/566-9301	
							30-Jul 2 EL PASO Hispano Music Festival 915/852-4749 or 852-0310	
							MARATHON Reunion 915/386-4511	

Texas Curiosities

First there was the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Now there's the *Encyclopedia Texana-ca*. Or call it *The Handbook of Goofy Texas Stuff*. Austin *American-Statesman* columnist John Kelso's new book, *Texas Curiosities*, describes what must be every quirky site, event, and person the Lone Star State can claim. Kelso drove nearly 13,000 miles to compile the 250-odd (and odd) listings.

Perhaps you already knew about Marshall's FireAnt Festival and the giant mosquito statue in Clute. But did you know that Dallas Cowboys cheerleader hopefuls have to take a *written* test (85 questions) about football? And you thought...well, never mind. How about the Washing Machine Museum, in Mineral Wells? The Texas Tornado Museum, in Amarillo? The Tornado Museum blew in just in front of the Big Texan Steak Ranch, a longtime curiosity in itself. (At the Big Texan—a favorite eatery of *Texas Highways* readers and many others—you get a free meal if you can eat the 72-ounce steak and trimmings in an hour. Thousands have done it—and lived.)

How about this one: Russell Slaton of Malakoff can play the "Aggie War Hymn" using his armpit. (Kelso notes the noises also sound like someone "repeatedly and rapidly squeezing a toad.") Herein you'll also find details about a 25-foot-long display in Beaumont of Biblical and other scenes, carved by one man out of scrap wood over a 25-year period, and a 57-foot-long transportable meat smoker in Justin (yep, Texans like their meat; see Big Texan above).

Some of this stuff might make even true-blue Texans

cringe, but most of it will make you grin, and *none* of it will bore you. The book is arranged by regions, so you can easily find out what oddities lurk on your turf. Look for John Kelso's *Texas Curiosities* (\$12.95) in bookstores, or order it from Globe Pequot Press by calling 800/243-0495.

Luling Double-Take

A green-and-white water tower (completed just in time for last June's annual Watermelon Thump) slows traffic approaching Luling these days. Once motorists confirm that the "giant floating melon" is mounted on six steel legs, they often stop to find out what else is new. A good move, because the former Oil Patch town is full of surprises.

For example, at **The General Store** on US 183, you'll find hand-crafted log furniture and Western accessories like horseshoe picture frames and antler lamps. Big-city boutiques have nothing on this trendy outlet when it comes to style and selection. In the same building, **Caroline's Texas Homeland Gifts** and **Two Cousins** offer treasures ranging from gourmet foods to porcelain dolls. Just down the road, **Nature's Nest** sells candles, birdhouses, and more. Be sure to visit the live doves cooing in the back.

Colorful farmers' markets have long been fixtures on the town's main drag. **Black Diamond Produce**, a market on the east side, specializes in local pecans and New Mexican chile *ristras*. Outside, an array of landscaping rock—including huge volcanic specimens from Mexico hollowed out to hold plants or water—also catches the attention of passersby.

Attention, art-lovers: A couple from North Carolina has begun renovating the town's old icehouse (circa 1927) for use as

MICHAEL A. MURPHY



Gourd grief! Make a point to stop in Luling soon, where the whimsically painted water tower is but one of many surprises.

Donham died in the early 1980s, his widow bequeathed her late husband's collection to the fledgling museum he had started.

Now housed in the Travis Street Substation, which provided electricity to 22 cities in Southeast Texas as early as the mid-Twenties, the museum contains thousands of items related to Edison's role in the development of electricity, motion pictures, gemology, highway technology, food preservation, and just about anything else you can think of. You'll find dozens of Edison's prototype light bulbs here, a 10,000-watt bulb used on a lighthouse, movie cameras, a collection of old phonographs, a working telegraph, appliances such as vintage hair dryers and ornate toasters, and even an early diving suit. To further tell the inventor's story, the museum includes a list of Edison's 1,093 patents, as well as correspondence from Helen Keller, for whom Edison created a special phonograph that allowed her to feel the vibrations in music.

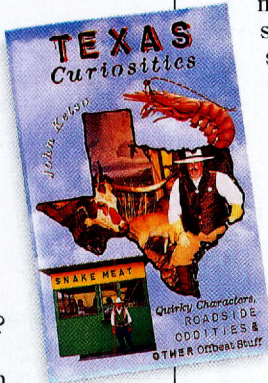
The Edison Plaza Museum,

a studio and gallery. Slated to open this month, **Luling Ice-house Pottery** will feature a full line of hand-turned and decorated stoneware.

Some Luling businesses close on Tuesday, so check before you go. For more information about the town and its attractions, write to the **Luling Chamber of Commerce**, Box 710, 78648, or call 830/875-3214.

Lessons from Edison

The port city of Beaumont boasts a lion's share of interesting sights and museums, including one particularly electric attraction: the Edison Plaza Museum. Well, no, Thomas Alva Edison never lived in Beaumont. But the CEO of the city's Gulf State Utilities, the late W. Donham Crawford, so admired the prolific inventor that he became an avid collector of Edisonia—items owned by, invented by, or influenced by Edison. When W.



Sofia Gomez has sold brooms for 18 years in East Los Angeles. A landmark exhibit at the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio presents 120 images of Latino life in the United States.

at 350 Pine Street in Beaumont, opens Tue-Fri 1-3:30 p.m. and by appt. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible with assistance. Write to Box 2951, Beaumont 77704, or call 409/839-3089.

La Vida Latina

May 5 is Cinco de Mayo, the day that in 1862, the Mexican army defeated French forces at Puebla. As part of this year's independence day celebration in San Antonio, the Institute of Texan Cultures opens a traveling exhibition of photography called *Los Americanos: Latino Life in the United States/La Vida Latina en los Estados Unidos*. Part of a multimedia project (photography, film, music, and the printed word) celebrating Latino culture, the photography show was produced by the Smithsonian and includes 120 contemporary images by 30 of the nation's top Latino photojournalists.

In his introduction to the exhibit, actor-producer Edward James Olmos writes, "*Americanos* tells the stories of Latinos, and in so doing, it tells the story of America." Organized into themes of family, work, community, sports, and the arts, the images present an intimate portrait of the depth and variety of the American Latino experience. After the exhibition closes in the Institute's Lower Gallery on July 30, it will head to the Field Museum in Chicago.

The Institute of Texan Cultures, at 801 Bowie St. in San Antonio (78205-3296), opens Tue-Sun 9-5 (closed May 30-31). During the Texas Folklife Fest (Jun. 1-4, 2000), hours change; please call. Admission to the Lower Gallery is free. Wheelchair accessible. Call 210/458-2300. Web site: www.texan.cultures.utsa.edu.

By the Way...

Through May 14, Lubbock's National Ranching Heritage Center showcases the work of photographer Bob Moorhouse, who is also the

general manager of the historic Pitchfork Ranch—a cowboy photographer in every sense of the word. The exhibit, *Hoofbeats on the Pitchfork*, includes some 30 images—cowboys working cattle, horses running across the plains, early-morning sunrises—timeless scenes that look as though they could have been taken a century ago...call 806/742-0498.

It's swimming season! In 1996, Austin writer and avid swimmer Chandra Beal began researching her neighborhood pools, a project that grew into a full-fledged book about where to get wet (and stay cool) in the Lone Star State. *Splash Across Texas!* delves into the details of some 150 beloved swimming spots in Central Texas, from neighborhood pools to rivers and legendary swimming holes. When the temperature soars this summer, readers of this book won't sweat it. Look for *Splash Across Texas!* (\$16.95, La Luna Publishing) in bookstores, or call 512/441-6524.

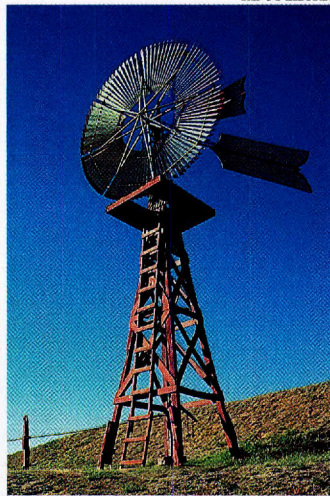
Spring has sprung, and festivals abound to celebrate the season. On May 6, the third annual **Mesquite Mayfest** takes place in Opal Lawrence Historical Park, with such activities as an art show, live music, games and races, living history demonstrations, storytelling, and tours of the grounds. Kids can even learn to make and fly kites, time-tested toys that have survived the prevailing winds of change...call 972/216-6468.

Speaking of wind, if you're in the Panhandle this summer, be sure to stop by the **American Wind Power Center** in Lubbock. While the museum is continually expanding (with a 28,000-square-foot building slated to open in November), there's plenty to see now: Some 50 examples of American windmills from 1876-1942 fill the museum's interior, while about 20 whirl and spin outside. Storyboards explain the interesting history and fascinating uses of windmills through the years.

Besides grinding grain and providing water for irrigation, one creative soul used his mill to run a pump organ...call 806/747-8734.

The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio presents the **19th Annual Tejano Conjunto Festival** May 9-14 at the historic Guadalupe Theater

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At the American Wind Power Center in Lubbock, you can see some 70 windmills from 1876-1942 and learn about their history.

and at Rosedale Park. Some 30 musical groups, ranging from traditional conjunto ensembles to progressive Tejano bands and including such acts as Grupo Vida and Mingo Saldivar y sus Tremendos Cuatro Espadas, will perform over the festival's 6-day run. A kids' accordion recital, inductions into the Conjunto Music Hall of Fame, the poster-contest awards presentation, and plenty of dancing also lure revelers...call 210/271-3151.

Through May 28 at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, the exhibit **Giovanni Battista Moroni: Renaissance Portraitist** highlights 10 of the Italian artist's finest paintings. The first in the Kimbell's new series of small, focused exhibits on rarely explored artists or themes, *Renaissance Portraitist* borrows works from private collections, U.S. museums, and lenders in

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Canada and the United Kingdom...call 817/332-8451.

In the 1950s and '60s, photographs taken from unmanned American and Soviet spacecraft allowed scientists to see a world of which they had only dreamed. Through June 4, the Menil Collection in Houston presents **Lunar Landscapes**, a collection of more than 30 of these original prints, including extraordinary views of the Moon's craters, Earth as seen from the dark side of the moon, and remarkable images of the earth rising...call 713/525-9400. Web site: www.menil.org.

With homes tours, a parade, a quilt show, a Civil War reenactment, music, trolley rides, and boat trips down the Cypress River, the northeast Texas town of Jefferson hosts its **53rd Annual Historical Pilgrimage** May 5-7. The annual spring fling also includes the popular *Diamond Bessie Murder Trial* play, presented on the stage of the Jefferson Playhouse, as well as special tours of the town's Gone with the Wind Museum, Jefferson Historical Museum, and Texas History Museum...call 903/665-2672 or 888/GO-RELAX. Web site: www.jefferson-texas.com.

There is an old saying that "every Czech is born with a violin in his hand," an adage you won't doubt as dozens of bands take the stage at the **National Polka Festival** in Ennis, May 26-28. Besides the music, attractions include a 100-float parade, costume displays, a sporting event dubbed the "Polka and Sausage Olympics," tours of the town's Czech sites and businesses, and some 100 arts and crafts booths...call 972/878-4748 or 888/366-4748. Web site: www.visitennis.org.

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...

In **Nederland**, a meat market called **Butcher's Korner** serves up real pit barbecue you can eat in or take out. You can also purchase meats to take home and cook. They have pork spareribs, barbecue sandwiches, chicken, homemade *boudain*, stuffed and baked potatoes, sliced beef, and deli-style sandwiches. Specialty items include smoked, Creole, and Italian sausages; smoked turkeys; and stuffed pork chops, turkey rolls, and chicken breasts. Their food is simply Texas delicious!

Frank Piersol, via email
Butcher's Korner is at 1155 Boston Ave.; 409/722-4831.

On the first Saturdays of May through October (except July), **Decatur** has the "**Courthouse Cruise In**," a wonderful car show [and competition] around their lovely old Wise County courthouse—which reminds me of a Disney castle. They block off the streets and play Fifties music from the courthouse tower. The area has a lot to offer. In Decatur, you can also find a great selection of stores and B&Bs; the growing Oak Grove Polo Club, which plays every weekend from April through October; and the Wise County Heritage Museum, housed in what was once the old Decatur Baptist College.

Margaret Atkinson, via email
Vehicles usually begin arriving at the courthouse for Decatur's first-

Sat. "*Courthouse Cruise In*" at about 4 p.m., and judging ends about 7. The show/competition includes anywhere from 70 to 140 original and modified antique, classic, and special-interest automobiles and trucks (and sometimes tractors and motorcycles); call **Gordon Hofstra** (940/627-5185) for more information. To learn about the *Oak Grove Polo Club*, which welcomes all, call **Barbara Branson** (940/627-6855). The *Wise County Heritage Museum* is at 1602 Trinity St.; call 940/627-5586.

For information about lodging and other Decatur events and attractions, call the chamber of commerce at 940/627-3107.

BEAUMONT HOT SPOT

Hot dog! The world's largest fire hydrant has found a fitting home in southeast Texas. A gift from the Walt Disney Studios, it sits beside the **Fire Museum of Texas in Beaumont**, where it forms the focal point of a memorial plaza (scheduled to open next year) that will honor firefighters from 1881 forward. The 24-foot-tall, black-and-white spotted hydrant once served as a centerpiece for a Walt Disney extravaganza celebrating the re-release of the film *101 Dalmatians*. The giant attraction, which actually works, spews water for special occasions.

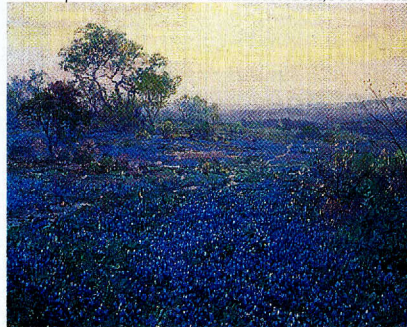
Visitors to the Fire Museum of Texas, a former fire station,

can view displays of antique firefighting equipment and exhibits that trace the history of fire departments across the state. The museum is at 400 Walnut St. in Beaumont. Call 409/880-3927.

AMARILLO GOES HOLLYWOOD

Movieland mania premieres in the Panhandle this month (exact date not set at press time), when the **Hollywood Museum** opens at Interstate 40 and Lakeside in **Amarillo**. The museum will house more than 1,000 movie and celebrity items, including costumes, props, and

COURTESY AMON CARTER MUSEUM, FORT WORTH



Julian Onderdonk's A Cloudy Day, Bluebonnets Near San Antonio, Texas (1918) is among the works on display at The Carter Downtown in Fort Worth.

personal belongings of a multitude of such stars as John Wayne, Tom Hanks, Judy Garland, Elvis Presley, and Elizabeth Taylor.

Displays will feature familiar and fascinating items that evoke memorable moments in the entertainment industry: the prop box of chocolates from *Forrest Gump*; the shower curtain from *Psycho*; and Harry Houdini's locks and keys. Call 806/358-9226.

SPOTLIGHT ON SPORTS

Sports and the Nation, a new exhibit at the **Legends of the Game Baseball Museum at The Ballpark in Arlington**, showcases artifacts from legendary sports

figures of the 20th Century. The exhibit, which began a year-long stint at the museum on March 24, is presented by Origins, in association with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Among other things, you'll see Muhammad Ali's robe, Bob Cousy's Boston Celtic uniform, and paintings from the National Portrait Gallery of Babe Ruth, Nolan Ryan, and Mickey Mantle. Call the museum at 817/273-5600, or the Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau at 800/433-5374 (Web site: www.arlington.org).

CARTER DOWNTOWN

While **Fort Worth's** celebrated **Amon Carter Museum** undergoes extensive expansion and remains closed until the fall of 2001, art-lovers can still view some 35 works from the museum's extraordinary collection of American art at **The Carter Downtown**, 500 Commerce St. Call 817/738-1933. Web site: www.cartermuseum.org.

Meanwhile, back at the museum's original site (3501 Camp Bowie Blvd.), area schoolchildren have worked with the Amon Carter's Education Department to brighten the construction fence at Lancaster Ave. and Will Rogers Rd. The children created and painted four-by-four-foot panels with imaginative and colorful themes that interpret the museum's permanent collection.

Down the Road

Join us in June as we reveal the fate of some fabled old ghost hotels, sit tall in the saddle at a passel of dude ranches, explore scenic Pedernales Falls State Park, and serve up a story on tasty Texas tomatoes. And stay tuned for "The Big Picture, Part II."

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

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A roomy pier, a sunny afternoon, and reflective waters provide the perfect means to while away a beautiful spring day. This retreat, near Jacksonville, is but one of thousands dotting the Lone Star State. Take the plunge....

