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VEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

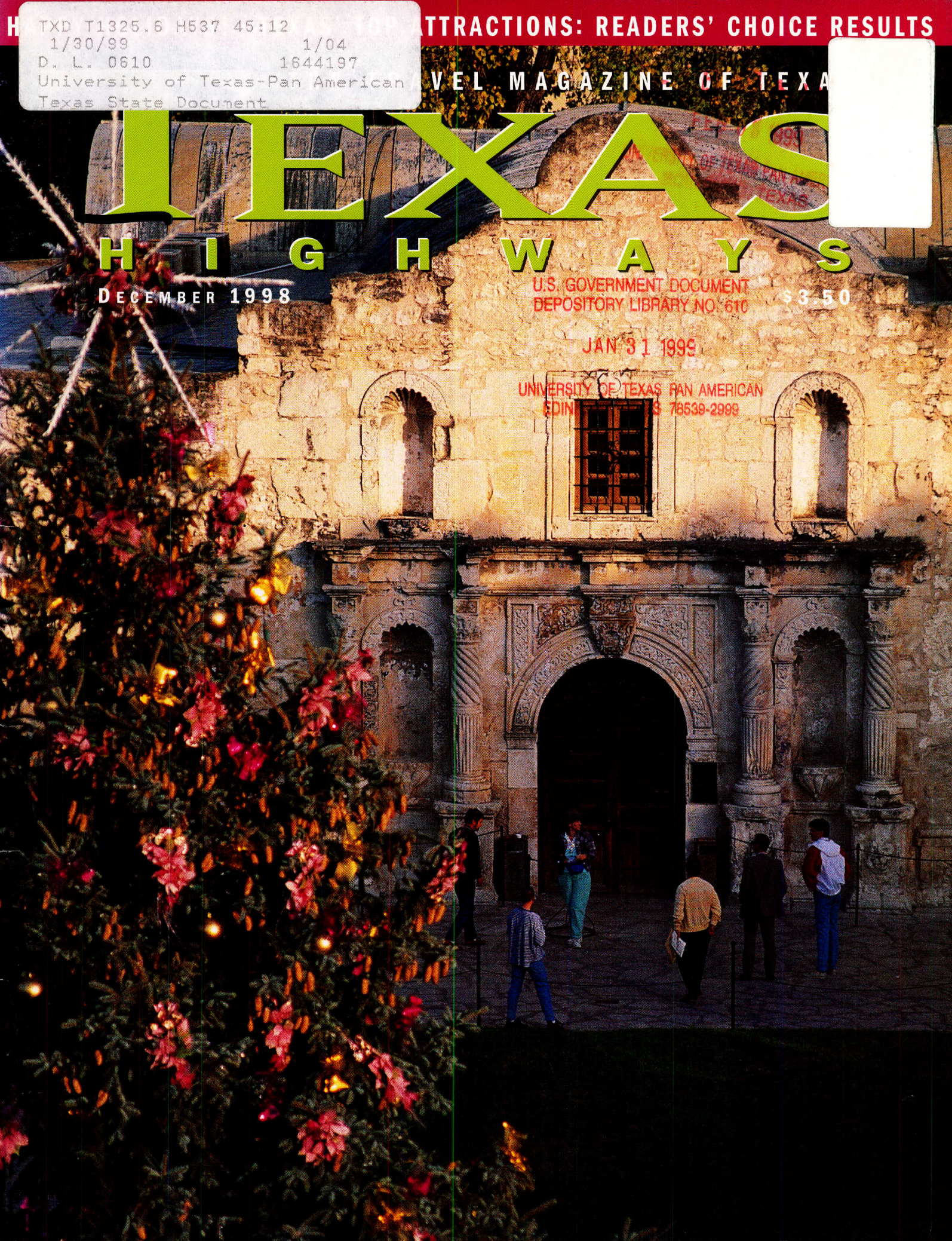
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Wyman Meinzer, our favorite photographer of Texas plains and prairies, shares the sheer grandeur of the North Texas landscape with you this month. In **"Flat Is Where It's At,"** we present you with Wyman's images of wide-open expanses, striking skies, and rugged people. A straight road that vanishes into the horizon, an orange sky filled with silhouetted geese, menacing clouds over a rough landscape... these are the images Wyman captures as he makes his treks across the Texas plains. For more remarkable images, look for Wyman's latest book, *Texas Sky*, a UT Press publication that captures the exceptional variety and beauty of Texas skylscapes.

Want to learn your fellow readers' choices for the Tops in Texas? San Antonio and San Antonio sites like the River Walk and the Alamo swept our **Readers' Choice** awards this year. Our results were painstakingly compiled by **Cynthia Kosel** (who takes on every special project we can dream up), **Julie Provost** (who runs the *Texas Highways* store), and **Nora Molina** (who runs the editorial office). Thanks to them and to all of you who voted!

Amanda Gardner writes about her great-great-grandfather, the colorful outlaw-turned-lawman, **John King Fisher**. In his early career, King Fisher had a tendency to overimbibe, whereupon he would turn ornery and shoot up towns, rustle cattle, steal horses, and make a general nuisance of himself. But his neighbors enjoyed his humor and thought his horseplay made things safer for them, so they refused to testify against him. Later in life, King Fisher cut down on the booze and became a deputy sheriff in Uvalde County. Mandy talks about his violent and early death, and about how the legend surrounding his lawless days continues to overwhelm the memory of his sober years.

It's **Christmastime** in Texas. This month, we take a look at **Santa Claus** and learn how he manages to get to so many places in just one night. Now we know: The right jolly old elf uses many modes of transportation in addition to his sleigh. **Marty Lange** says it succinctly in his tongue-in-cheek look at our very mobile Santa. In **"Tumbleweed Christmas,"**

Nelson England talks about the ways West Texas pioneers celebrated Christmas. And **Lori Moffatt** takes us to see the Sights & Sounds of Christmas in **San Marcos**, where the whole town takes part in a grand celebration that features old-fashioned foods, crafts demonstrations, live critters, shopping, merriment, and thousands of twinkling lights.



Richard and Angie Navarro's home floated through Cuero as floodwaters from the Guadalupe River rose October 19. Floods in much of Texas wreaked havoc in August and October.

We hope things are back in order in San Marcos and all the other Texas towns hard-hit by flooding. At press time, the state was recovering from the big October floods.

What a year this has been all over Texas. First, the drought parched us, then smoke from fires in Mexico and Central America choked us. An unseasonable heat wave made matters even worse. Gonzales County poultry farmers lost thousands of chickens to the heat in June. As one poultry grower put it, his chickens "just melted." Corn, sorghum, cotton, and citrus farmers also suffered major crop losses for lack of irrigation water. Then, between August and October, devastating floods hit riverfront communities large and small.

Here's some good news, though. We just learned that folks in the flooded towns say their Christmas events will go on. As one said, "This town *needs* a Christmas event."

May the holidays bring enchantment and milder weather.

Jack Lowry

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West Texans prove that Christmas traditions come in all shapes and sizes—even the lowly tumbleweed has a place in this region's holiday lore. Celebrants can revisit Christmas past at several annual events

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Ho, Ho, Howdy! *by Marty Lange*

Santa makes his yearly trek to towns across Texas this month. But don't count on him to show up in a sleigh. In the Lone Star State, he's apt to arrive on a horse, in a helicopter, or even aboard a pontoon boat

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FLAT IS WHERE IT'S AT *by Wyman Meinzer*

A lifelong resident of the Texas plains, Wyman Meinzer presents a show-and-tell on his favorite part of the world. If you're not a fan of the plains, you haven't seen them through this photographer's eyes

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Even if you didn't vote in our recent Readers' Choice poll on the Best of Texas, you can still compare your favorites with our list of winners. Check out categories like Most Memorable Scenic Drive and Best Cheap Tourist Thrill

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SIGHTS & SOUNDS *by Lori Moffatt*

To jump-start your holiday spirit, head to San Marcos, where the annual Sights & Sounds of Christmas festival features thousands of glittering lights and loads of small-town charm

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KING OF THE ROAD *by Amanda Gardner*

A notorious character in South Texas' wild-and-woolly Nueces Strip, John King Fisher lived on both sides of the law in the late 1800s. His great-great-granddaughter relates tales of the legend

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LOOKING BACK AT '98 *by Jack Lowry*

From medicinal fruits to memorable performances, Texas produced its share of noteworthy subjects in 1998. We mark the proud moments, as well as the sad

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Trying to track down a favorite article? Our annual index makes it easy

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ABOUT OUR COVERS

FRONT—The Alamo was designated Texas' top tourist attraction in our recent Readers' Choice poll (see page 24). At Christmastime, the shrine marks the season with a 50-foot white fir tree. *Photo by J. Griffis Smith*

BACK—Yes, Virginia, there really are "amber waves of grain," as illustrated by this wheat field southeast of Throckmorton. For more striking images of the Texas plains, turn to page 16. *Photo © Wyman Meinzer*

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Readers: Our November story on operas was a little off-key, so to speak. We said that the Austin Lyric Opera "wants to convince voters to approve bonds for renovating the '50s-era Palmer Auditorium," when, in reality, voters will not have to pay for the renovation; it will be done with private money. The November vote (which will occur after this issue goes to press) is only to approve leasing Palmer to ALO so they can then proceed with the renovation.

Garnering Gratitude

Darn those faulty synapses. Regarding my article on John Nance Garner (November), I forgot to thank Lora B. Garrison of Utopia for her help with "Cactus Jack." Several years ago, Lora gave a talk on Garner as a folk hero, when the annual meeting of the Texas Folklore Society took place in Uvalde. Thanks again, Lora.

GENE FOWLER
Austin

Rare-Book Footnotes

What a pleasure to revisit some of my favorite bookstores through Mike Cox's excellent article in the October issue. We all have our special places to hunt for rare or unusual book and paper collectibles. Two others deserving mention are Asylum Books in Austin and Lance Worley's "Paperworks" booth twice monthly at Austin's City-wide Garage Sale. [They're] a consistent source for all manner of wonderment, from early Golden Age comics in near-perfect condition to first-edition science fiction and Texana.

STEVE SPEIR
Austin

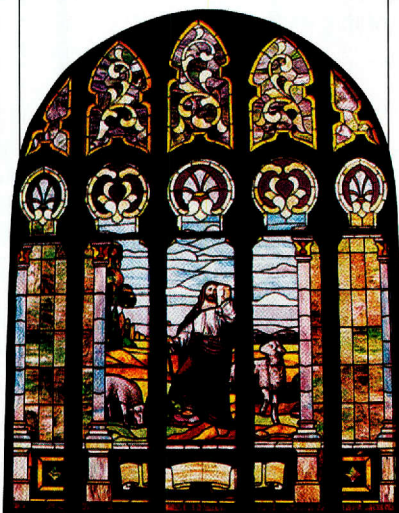
Out-of-print book shows, which bring dealers together for the convenience of the collector, are held in Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas, and Houston. Houston shows in 1999 will be held the weekends of March 27 and August 28. Check your newspapers for ads on shows in other locales. Plan to spend at least one full day viewing specialties such as Texana, Civil War, World War II, cookbooks,

children's books, mysteries, sci-fi, and more.

MARIA YOUNGER
Houston

Some people just want to read an old favorite again, and they are hard to find. Another good source is a store in Stephenville, at 2121 West Washington, called Buy the Book. It's operated by Brenda Lambert. In addition to new books of current interest, she has one section of out-of-print antiques. They make great gifts.

D.E. MITCHELL
Weatherford



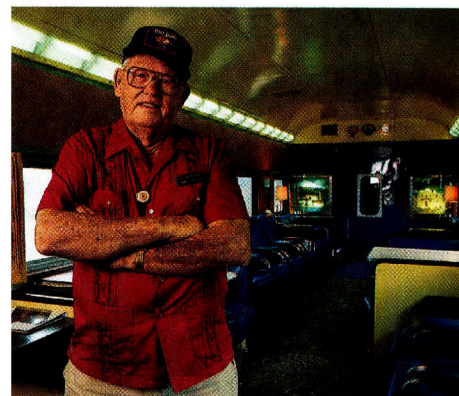
Designed by Helen Fern Goolsby around 1911, *Christ the Good Shepherd* graces the Methodist Church in Center Point.

COURTESY NANCY DUNWODY DAILY

Colorful Inspiration

Our Methodist Church at 118 Church Street in Center Point (10 miles east of Kerrville and 10 miles west of Comfort) contains two of the most beautiful stained-glass windows I've seen anywhere. The huge, 10-by-15-foot windows in the sanctuary are breathtaking and colorful. Our congregation meets at 9:30 a.m., and the win-

Beloved Liberty Hill historian James Vaughan passed away on October 12.



J. GRIFFITH SMITH

dows, with the sun shining through them, preach a powerful sermon. The amazing fact is that the windows were designed around 1911 by a young Helen Fern Goolsby (later Slimp) from San Antonio. It was her first design job for the San Antonio Art Glass Company. She returned to Center Point several times in her nineties and once stated, "I think my masterpiece is in the little Methodist Church in Center Point." Mrs. Slimp died in 1995 at age 105, but her windows will live on for years as a tribute to this talented woman.

NANCY DUNWODY DAILY
Center Point

Sweet Scraps

Thank you for October's story on Eilenberger's Bakery in Palestine. As a teenager in 1946-48, I sacked groceries on Fridays and Saturdays at the A&P next to the bakery. Late each Saturday afternoon, Bud Sammons would give me a quarter to go to Eilenberger's to buy a sack of "Scrap Cake" (broken cookies), which we shared. What wonderful cookies; what wonderful memories.

EDWIN WOODARD
Marshall, via email

Real Rangers

I enjoyed the article about the Texas Rangers in the October issue. However, I had to write to take you to task for failing to mention two of the most famous of Texas Rangers,

Captains Woodrow F. Call and Augustus McCrae. These two fictional characters from Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* were a true portrayal of the early Texas Ranger. They were much more real than the characters in either *The Lone Ranger* or *Walker, Texas Ranger*.

LYNDA N. HILL
Idalou, via email

British Bravos

Thanks to the generosity of the Flanagan family from Lubbock, I get my monthly fix of *Texas Highways*, and what a brilliant fix it was last August. What with the photos by Keith Carter, one of which (*Pine Springs Cafe*) now adorns my wall, and the West Texas dug-outs and Buddy Holly stories (both penned by Nelson England), I was spoilt for choice. Well done, *Texas Highways*.

DAVID READ
Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, England

Fond Farewell

I would like to thank you for Gene Fowler's fine article about Liberty Hill in the October issue. Also, Griff Smith did a great job with the photos. I do have a sad footnote to your story, however. James R. Vaughan, who gave Gene most of his information, passed away on October 12. Pictured on page 45, he owned one of the passenger cars on the *Hill Country Flyer*. Liberty Hill and the Austin Steam Train Association will miss this special man.

DIANE POGUE, EDITOR/PUBLISHER
The Liberty Hill
Independent newspaper

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 we print. Write to Letters Editor, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009, or fax 512/486-5879.

Many a kid of the 1920s and '30s treasured the memory of a wiry old frontiersman passing through town. Bearded, wild-haired, riding his beloved burro named Tipperary as he crisscrossed the country, Raymond Hatfield Gardner—better known as Arizona Bill—enthralled young and old with a repertoire of tales that chronicled the American West.

Born in Louisiana in 1845, Gardner said that Comanches had captured him from a wagon train crossing Texas before he could walk. Traded to the Sioux some years later, the red-headed boy didn't know he wasn't an Indian until he rejoined his own culture around the age of 13 (probably after a rescue by soldiers). When the Civil War broke out, the teenager joined the Union Army, serving as a courier for General Ulysses S. Grant. Gardner reenlisted several times and became a valued scout in the Indian wars. Generals Crook and Miles renamed him Arizona Bill during their hunt for Geronimo in the land of the giant saguaros. Gardner also scouted for Custer, but luckily missed out on the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Gardner's varied resumé also included a stint riding pony express for Wells Fargo, and—like anybody who was anybody in the Old West—he also per-

formed with Buffalo Bill for a time. Along the way, Arizona Bill found time to dabble in mule-trading and gold-prospecting.

From the mid-1930s on, when he wasn't wandering the country, Arizona Bill lived at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Unaccustomed to sleeping indoors, the elderly scout preferred to bunk in the stables beside Tipperary. Army medic George Miller heard Arizona's colorful tales in 1939, when Bill checked into Fort Benjamin Harrison Hospital in Indiana. When he checked out, he invited Miller to visit him in "my city," San Antonio.

Arizona Bill died in "his city" the following year, but he was buried in an unmarked grave in San Fernando Cemetery #2, instead of at Fort Sam, because the Army couldn't locate his service records. Porter Loring Funeral Home donated an olive green casket with brass bugles for handles.

When George Miller moved to San Antonio in 1950 as a retired Master Sergeant, he undertook a 26-year quest to prove that Arizona indeed had served his country. After the old scout's enlistment papers were finally located, in dusty cavalry archives, Arizona Bill was reburied with full military honors in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, on Veterans Day in 1976.

—Gene Fowler, *Austin*

In the days before mechanical refrigeration and other modern means of preserving foods for long periods of time—in other words, for most of the world's history—long journeys, whether by ship, horse, carriage, or shank's mare, could prove hunger-inducing undertakings. Gail Borden Jr. helped change all that.

Born in New York state in 1801, Borden arrived in Galveston in 1829. In Texas, he farmed, took over from his brother Thomas as surveyor for Stephen F. Austin's colony, laid out the city of Houston, and prepared the first topographical map of Texas. He also tried his hand at politics and publishing. But inventing would prove his forte.

In the late 1840s, Borden found that boiling beef down to an extract, mixing it with flour, then baking it resulted in a light-colored "biscuit." Made without salt or other flavoring, the biscuit was virtually tasteless, but a cook could add any seasoning desired and use it as a base for soup, stock, gravy, and pies.

Borden set up a plant in Galveston and marketed his Meat Biscuits worldwide, with some success: They accompanied a party of forty-niners heading west; a sea captain bought 1,500 pounds for his ship's stores; the American explorer Dr. Elisha Kent Kane took a supply on two Arctic expeditions. The product even won an award, at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. But when he failed to receive hoped-for military contracts, Borden (who had moved back to New York to be nearer the centers of trade) turned his attention to condensing other foods, such as milk, fruit juices, and coffee. His condensed milk, named Eagle Brand in 1866, gained everlasting fame. The Civil War created a lucrative demand for it, and after the war, it quenched the thirst of many a cowboy on trail drives.

Though he lived elsewhere after 1851, Borden had family and business connections in Texas and spent his last few winters in the state. He died in January 1874 in the Colorado County town named for him.

—Eva Jolene Boyd, *Ingram*

A "Arizona Bill" Gardner, a true Old West character, led a peripatetic life—and death.



COURTESY MARTIN CALLAHAN AND DON BEARDSLEE

Christmas Eve in Notrees, Texas,
wind blowing through the cactus,
Santa Claus was a rich kid's saint and a poor kid's dream.
But I'd trade every fancy present
I ever had or I ever will get
for the night of the tumbleweed Christmas tree.

—"The Tumbleweed Christmas Tree" by Andy Wilkinson

t u m b l e w e e d

CHRISTMAS

By Nelson England
Photographs by Wyman Meinzer



W HEN Lubbock balladeer Andy Wilkinson sings about the oil-driller dad, "west of Odessa in a town they called Notrees," who brings his family a tumbleweed on Christmas Eve because he can't afford a tree, you just have to believe it really happened. The 1990 song has certainly captured the imaginations of many West Texas folks. While a tumbleweed is just one of the items residents have used in place of traditional Christmas trees, thanks to the song, it's become a regional holiday symbol.

WEST TEXAS PIONEERS had their own ideas about how to

Millsie King, former postmistress of Notrees, which really exists, recalls the 1990 Christmas season, when a big TV camera crew from the *Today* show temporarily doubled the town's



Visitors to the Ranching Heritage Center's Candlelight at the Ranch celebration have an opportunity to revisit West Texas Christmas traditions each December. Comprised of 34 original pioneer structures, many of which hail from West Texas, the Lubbock museum re-creates holiday scenes appropriate to each building and its era. For example, children in the Bairfield Schoolhouse, above, make 1890s-era holiday decorations by lamplight.

population of 33 in order to film Andy singing the new ballad. "It was quite a to-do," says Millsie. "A lot of the town's old-timers came back for the filming, and everyone helped decorate a tumbleweed. We used...buttons on a string and tinfoil chains made from chewing gum wrappers, just like in Andy's song."

Andy, who grew up near Lubbock, admits his dad was a farmer rather than an oil-field roughneck, and his family never decorated a tumbleweed at Christmas. But, he says, "I wanted to write a song about what it's like to be poor at Christmas. I figured

if you were so poor you couldn't afford a tree, maybe you'd use a tumbleweed."

celebrate the holidays.

Andy's friend and fellow musician Ron Riley did grow up in the oil patch west of Odessa in the 1950s. Ron remembers his family's once using a tumbleweed for a Christmas tree, though

it was "more from an inspiration to create with what we had, than out of economic necessity," he says.

Ron's dad, W.T. Riley, grew up in the 1930s in a family of seven children that sounds a lot like the one in Andy's song. W.T.'s dad moved his family from ranch to ranch, hiring out for work wherever he could find it. "When we were kids down in Concho County near Paint Rock, we were poor, even though we didn't know it at the time," recalls W.T. "Some parts of that country had cedar trees, and we'd go out and find the most decent-looking one and cut it out, or sometimes we'd just cut a limb off an old mesquite tree and rig it up in the corner of the house for a Christmas tree."

More than likely, early pioneers celebrated with a cedar tree just as W.T. describes. Richard Mason, who interviewed early settlers for several years as a field representative for the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, cites



[ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT] Luminarias light the pathway that leads visitors from one building to another during Candlelight at the Ranch. Inside the Barton House, whose size and style clearly spelled ranching success in 1909, reenactors portray a turn-of-the-century holiday scene. In the Masterson JY Bunkhouse, a cowboy relaxes in front of a fireplace, a cozy sight to spectators looking in on a cold winter night.

dozens of recorded interviews, conducted in the 1960s and '70s, in which West Texans discuss their long-ago experiences. The tapes are housed in the Southwest Collection archives. "Even on the treeless plains, one of the varieties of the ubiquitous evergreen junipers—which Texans usually refer to as 'cedars'—could often be found growing in canyons, in breaks, or along creeks," says Richard.



CHILDREN usually decorated a cedar for the church or schoolhouse in preparation for a community Christmas celebration. Fairly typical of pioneer recollections is this scene described recently by Marcia Lockwood, 78, of Lorenzo.

"The men went down into the breaks and cut down a big tree for our little community [Robertson, in Crosby County]," says

Marcia. "They patched it up with branches they cut from other cedars to make it look full. We decorated it with cranberries, popcorn, and paper chains. Then we had a night service with a Nativity program. People... dressed up as Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and the wise men. Everyone brought gifts for their own families and hung them on the tree."

Sometimes, the men would take a day or longer to find a good tree, then haul it home in a horse-drawn wagon. Of course, if cedars were scrawny or scarce, the pioneers would make do with what they had. Gertrude Gindorf of Slaton told interviewers in 1978 how her father kept the same cedar post from one year to the next. To make the family Christmas tree, he trimmed branches from trees in a cedar windbreak he had planted, then stuck them into holes in the post.



Another pioneer, Lois Wingerd, remembered her first Christmas in Brownfield, in 1904: "We built a tree out of two-by-fours. The women wrapped it in green calico, and at the base they put bear grass [yucca], because there was nothing green with which to have a tree." Helen Hart related that a two-by-four frame also served as a beautiful community tree at the Methodist Church in Seminole in the early 1900s. The Seminole folks dressed the frame with branches cut from scrub cedar growing in a nearby draw. The January 3, 1906, issue of the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal* reported: "The Methodist Sunday School had a Christmas ladder Saturday night, December 23. They thought they could get a tree, but being disappointed in

this, some ladders were arranged and tastefully decorated and well filled with presents, many of which were very beautiful and expensive."

Down in the sure-enough-tree-scarce Permian Basin, Lyda Watson told local historians the tale of Midland's first Christmas tree, in 1900. It seems Lyda had just moved to Midland from the pine forests of Arkansas. Distressed at having no Christmas tree, she sought the aid of a local resident named Mrs. Preston. Mrs. Preston told Lyda to send her boys out to cut a mesquite tree and gather some greasewood. "I'd never heard tell of greasewood before," Lyda recalled. "[The boys] came in with a very shapely [mesquite] tree that looked almost as *(continued on page 9)*

WE BUILT A TREE out of two-by-fours. The women wrapped it in calico, and at the base they put bear grass, because there was nothing green with which to have a tree."

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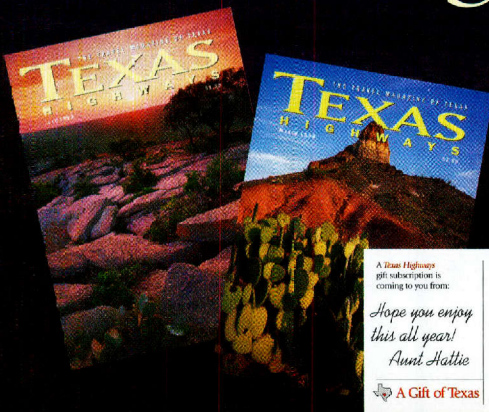
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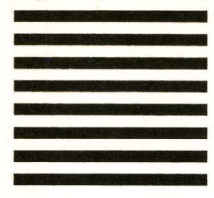
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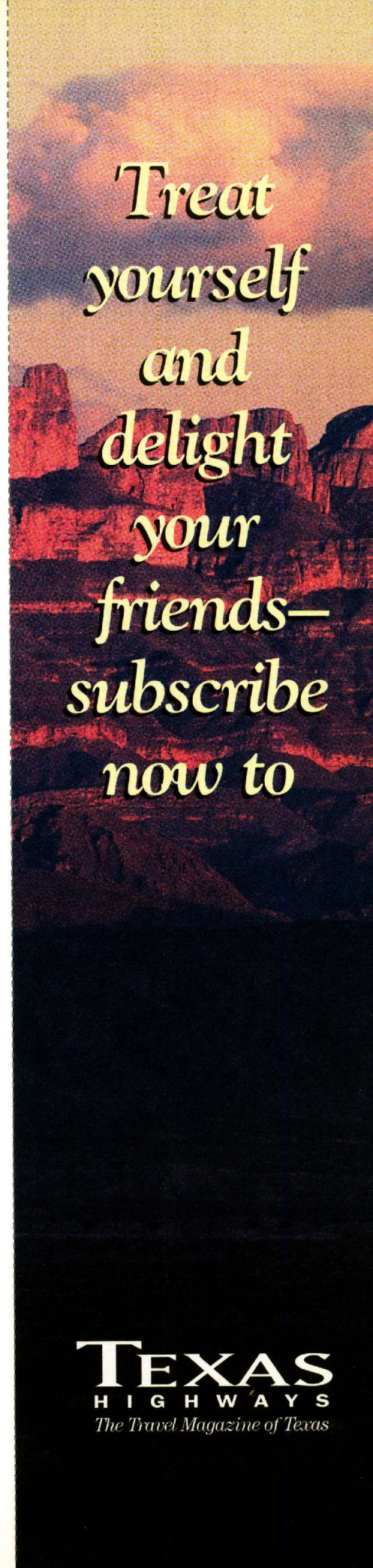
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The Travel Magazine of Texas

(continued from page 7) verdant as a valley of dry bones. Mrs. Preston and I tied the greasewood on and made a beautiful tree.”

Up in Lipscomb County, in the Panhandle’s far north-east corner, Lottie Koch told an interviewer how her Russian-German immigrant family converted a dormant wild plum tree, chopped from the creek bottom, into an evergreen. To make the tree look like a conifer, the family fashioned green needles out of crepe paper and tied them onto the plum’s naked branches.

REACHING farther back in time, C.W. Jones (in a 1927 newspaper interview) related that in 1881, the residents of sparsely settled Dickens County celebrated Christmas in the area’s biggest dugout. “The tree was a chinaberry full of yellow balls, the balls gleaming like gold amid the white cotton trimming of the tree,” C.W. remembered. “In addition, wreaths were made from algerita bushes, the green adding a pretty, finishing touch to the festive scene.” Adella Shaw Drew, who grew up near Gail, seat of Borden County, also remembered a late-19th-Century Christmas held in the dugout that served as the community school. She



Members of the 4th U.S. Cavalry Regiment (Memorial), a local reenactment unit, participate in the annual Candlelight event, setting up a close-to-authentic camp on the grounds of the Ranching Heritage Center.

recalled how the teacher hung sheets on wires to make draw curtains, so the kids could have “a real Christmas program right there in that old dugout school.”

These pioneers remembered gifts as being homemade and simple: rag dolls for the girls, stick horses for the boys, and maybe a hand-sewn scarf and handkerchief for mom and dad.



The visitors’ center at the Ranching Heritage Center offers quilting demonstrations by members of the Chaparral Quilters’ Guild of Lubbock, as well as an opportunity for holiday trekkers to warm up. Thousands of Lubbock-area residents, who brave the weather each year, have made a visit to Candlelight at the Ranch a new Christmas tradition.

Oranges and apples are frequently mentioned as gifts. Since oranges had to be freighted by wagon from the nearest railroad depot, most children were unlikely to taste them at any other time of year. Fruits, nuts, and small gifts doubled as tree ornaments. Besides popcorn and cranberries, other popular tree decorations included mistletoe, and balls of cotton used for snowballs. The latter, when combined with small candles that were clipped to the tree, created a real fire hazard. Though the first electric Christmas tree lights were invented in 1882, most parts of rural West Texas lacked electricity until well into the 20th Century.

PIONEERS REMEMBERED GIFTS as being homemade and simple: rag dolls for the girls, stick horses for the boys, and maybe a hand-sewn scarf and handkerchief for mom and dad.

At community Christmas tree gatherings, a Santa sometimes appeared, to distribute gifts to the children, though he was more likely to arrive with a flourish of cowbells than sleigh bells. One Lubbock County settler remembered a time when antelope ran and leaped beside her family's wagon on the way to the community festivity. The child's mother told her they were Santa's reindeer.



ANY OF these early West Texas holiday scenes are reenacted every December during the two-night "Candlelight at the Ranch" celebration (December 11-12, 1998) at Lubbock's Ranching Heritage Center, an outdoor living-history museum. Luminarias guide visitors along the pathway that connects 34 original pioneer structures, which were moved from ranches and then reconstructed on the center's 14 acres.

Visitors follow a route that shows the evolution of ranch architecture, from cabins and dugouts to stylish, turn-of-the-century houses. On the way, they encounter a group of 1870s buffalo hunters repairing their gear and cooking a Christmas dinner of wild game over a campfire. Nearby, members of the 4th U.S. Cavalry Regiment (Memorial) tell stories around a campfire,



Troubadour Andy Wilkinson composed "The Tumbleweed Christmas Tree," a song that has become a fixture in many West Texans' holiday celebrations. An author and playwright as well as a musician, Andy often writes and sings about his homeland on the plains.



Youngsters study by candlelight at a table in Las Escarbas, a limestone building that in the 1880s served as one of seven divisional headquarters for the 3 million-acre XIT Ranch.

and a cowboy cooks Christmas dinner next to a chuck wagon. In a half-dugout, 1880s cowboys beside a tumbleweed Christmas tree make music with fiddle and harmonica. At the one-room Bairfield Schoolhouse, volunteers portray a Donley County holiday of the 1890s. Children sing and recite their Christmas program for an audience of attentive parents. In the rock-walled JY Bunkhouse (moved from King County), Santa's cowboy helps shell pecans and whittle small, wooden rocking horses for the kids by the light of kerosene lamps.

The merriment extends to the 1909 Barton House, a three-story Queen Anne house from Hale County. Here, three generations of a prosperous ranch family make a gingerbread house and decorate a tall cedar tree, representing a cedar that

West Texas Christmas Traditions

would have been cut in nearby breaks.

Lubbock staged another nostalgic holiday celebration in December 1996, when the local symphony presented "Tumbleweed Christmas." Since Andy Wilkinson's tumbleweed ballad had by then pretty much established itself as *the* official West Texas Christmas carol, Netherlands-born conductor Albert-George Schram decided to orchestrate the song. Before a sellout audience in the Lubbock Municipal Auditorium, Andy strummed his guitar and sang about Christmas Eve in Notrees, Texas, accompanied by the full-scale orchestra.

Of course, most West Texans don't look on tumbleweeds with much kindness. "When you're a farmer, tumbleweeds are a bane of your existence," says Marcia Lockwood. Her nephew Charlie Wheeler, 65, recalls a year from his childhood when the tumbleweeds were so bad "my mother was just disgusted with them." Nevertheless, he says, she pushed one into the house as Christmas approached, "nearly breaking it getting it through the door, it was so big." The family decorated it with icicles and angel hair.

Tumbleweeds evoke mixed emotions in West Texans around Christmastime. Perhaps they have a grudging admiration for the resilient weed, seeing in it a reflection of their own gritty determination to survive in a tough environment. In fact, the tumbleweed may just be the perfect symbol of Christmas hope and rejuvenation. If evergreen trees suggest the continuation

of life during the dead of winter, tumbleweeds also begin their migrations in winter, spreading their seeds as they go. Maybe West Texans need a nomadic symbol of renewal, as much as they need a rooted one. Then again, perhaps feelings of peace and goodwill are so prevalent at Christmas that folks just invite their old enemy, the tumbleweed, into their homes for a day of truce and celebration. Maybe Andy's song says it best:

Well, I was just six, going on seven/but being poor is an

Andy Wilkinson's song "The Tumbleweed Christmas Tree" is on his double-album set, *Storyteller*, which is available in both compact disk and audiocassette. For ordering information, write to Grey Horse Press, 612 Broadway, Lubbock 79401; 806/740-0100.

Events

The Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock will feature **Candlelight at the Ranch**, its annual reenactment of traditional pioneer holiday celebrations, on Dec. 11-12, 1998, from 6-8 p.m. People with special needs may attend an early staging on Dec. 12 from 5-6 p.m. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. The Ranching Heritage Center is at 3121 Fourth St., near the intersection of Fourth and Indiana. Write to Box 43200, Lubbock 79409; 806/742-0498.

On Dec. 4-6, 1998, San Angelo celebrates its annual **Christmas at Old Fort Concho**, where more than 400 living-history buffs enliven the former frontier fort with portrayals of soldiers, cowboys, and buffalo hunters. The celebration offers an array of shopping, food, musical entertainment, and children's activities. (See "A Concho Christmas," Dec. 1997.) Hours: Fri 1-9, Sat 10-9, Sun 10-5. Admission: \$4, \$2 age 62 and older, \$1 ages 6-12, free age 5 and younger. Write to Fort Concho, 630 S. Oakes, San Angelo 76903; 915/481-2646.

The annual **Cowboys' Christmas Ball** (Dec. 17-19, 1998) in Anson dates to 1885, when all-night Christmas dances on the far-flung ranches of West Texas often drew folks from a radius of 50 miles or more. Anson is 25 miles north of Abilene on US 83/277. The ball is held in Pioneer Hall, 3 blocks east of US 83/277, just south of town. The music lasts from 7 p.m. to midnight. Michael Martin Murphey (a regular at the event) performs Fri. night at 9. Terry Sneed and the Up the Creek

Band provide dance music on Thu. and Sat. and open for Murphey on Fri. night. Admission: \$5 per person Thu. and Sat., \$12.50 Fri. (*Fri. night is sold out.*) Women should wear a skirt or dress; men should wear jeans and boots. (*No hats allowed on the dance floor.*) Write to the Anson Chamber of Commerce, Box 351, Anson 79501; 915/823-3259.

For information on the 1998 **Tumbleweed Christmas Trail**, a roundup of holiday celebrations in Lubbock, Levelland, Post, and Plainview, contact the Lubbock Convention and Tourism Bureau at 806/747-5232 or 800/692-4035.

Archives

You can hear taped interviews of pioneers describing frontier life in West Texas at **Texas Tech University's Southwest Collection**, adjacent to the main library on the Texas Tech campus at 15th and Boston Ave. Hours: Mon, Wed, and Fri 9-5; Tue and Thu 9-7; Sat 10-5. Write to the Southwest Collection, Texas Tech University, Box 41041, Lubbock 79409-1041; 806/742-3749.

Books

A.C. Greene's *The Christmas Tree* (Encino Press, 1973) tells the story of a 10-year-old boy growing up in West Texas in the 1920s, who learns about the meaning of Christmas when his family goes to the breaks to cut down a cedar tree. If you still have dry eyes by the time you finish this tale, you're tougher than a Mexican juniper.

Check your bookstore for *Tumbleweed Christmas* by Alane Ferguson (Simon and Schuster, 1996), a children's story in which young Scotty makes the most out of Christmas Eve at the Dry Bean Hotel after his mother's car breaks down in the desert.

To learn more about traditional Texas Christmas celebrations, look for *Christmas in Texas* by Elizabeth Silverthorne (Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1990).

education/and that night I learned a lot about just what Christmas means./It means love and it means loving/and it means money don't mean nothing/and it means a tumbleweed can make a Christmas tree. ★

Austin writer NELSON ENGLAND wrote October's article on quilting. Look for his story next month on the Comanchero Trails.

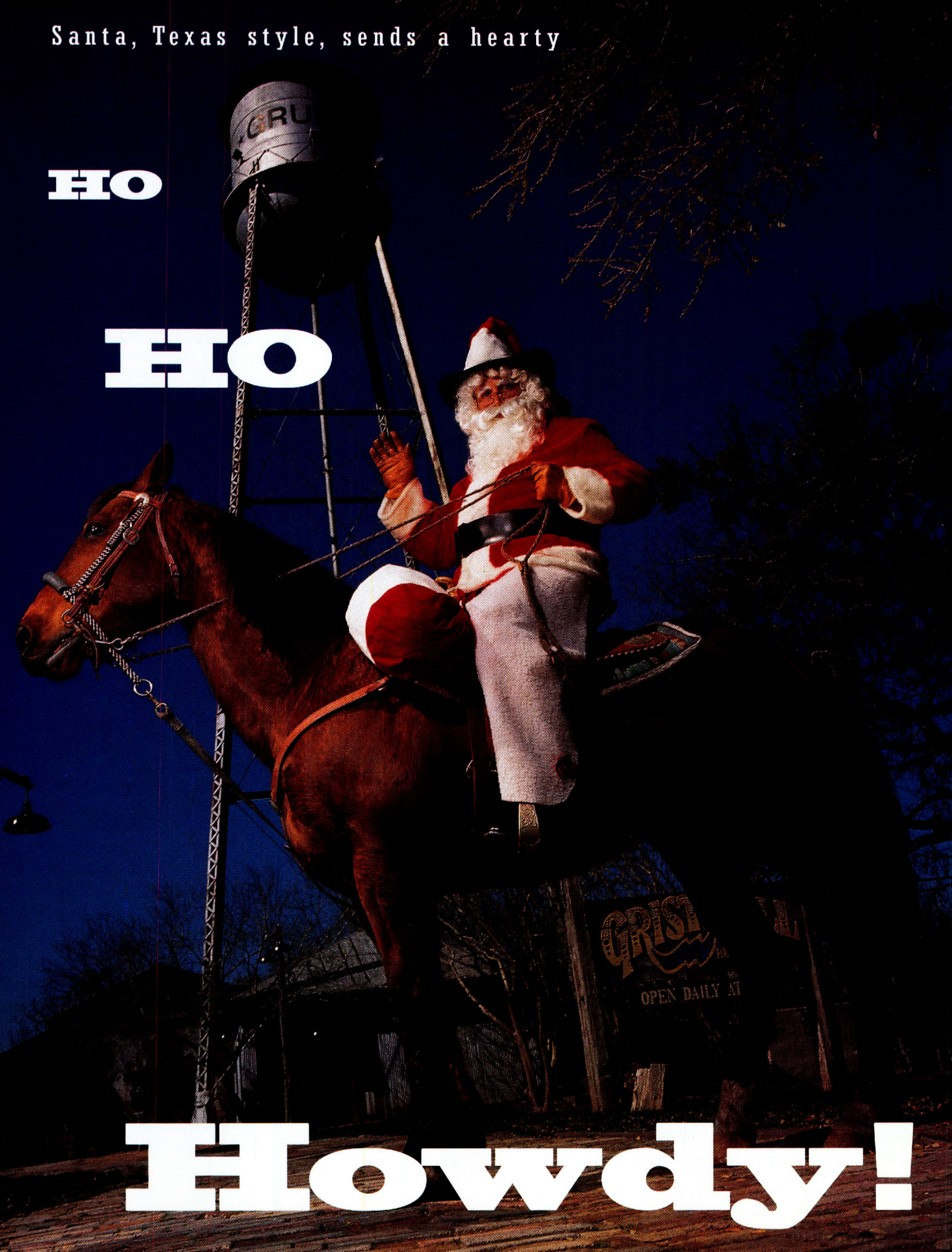
WYMAN MEINZER's photographs and story on the Texas plains also appear in this issue.

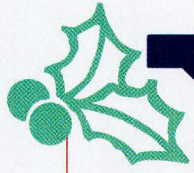
Santa, Texas style, sends a hearty

HO

HO

Howdy!





Y

ou know him, you love him, you can't live without him. And even if you could, it's not possible to escape his

countenance during the holiday season. So, you better watch out. You better not cry, and you better not pout, 'cause Santa's a pretty big deal in these here parts, whether he's wearing a red-and-white toque or a well-worn Stetson. The guy's an icon, a saint, a reindeer wrangler, an elf manager, chimney-stack diver, giver of goods, white-bearded behemoth, and symbol of seasonal jollity.

Having evolved from more than 1,600 years of history and tales from an expansive variety of cultures, the cult of Santa claims origins in Turkey, Greece (*Hagios Nikolaos*), Italy, Holland, Russia, Finland, Germany, and England. Indelibly rooted in the American vernacular through the early Dutch settlers of New York as *Sinterklaas*, Santa shows up in traditions both Christian and pagan. Of course, Texas has a way of shaping its characters as much as its characters shape the state. So, we hope you get into the spirit with these statewide snaps of the mythical mogul of mirth.

—*Marty Lange*

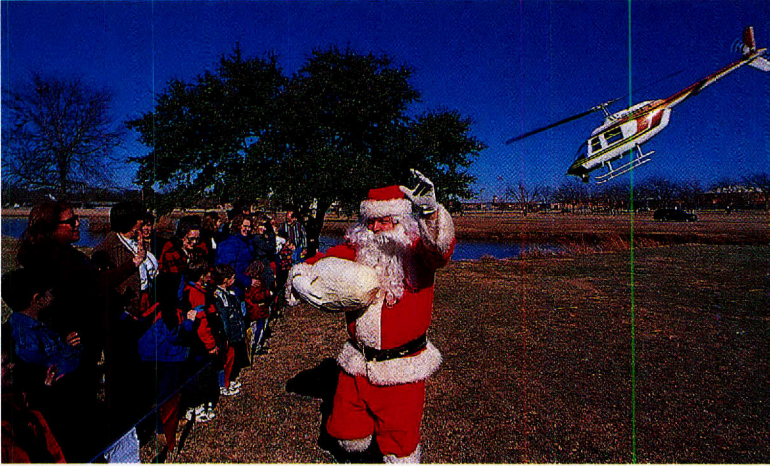


Santa and the horse he rode in on wish you a "Merry Christmas" from historic Gruene, near New Braunfels. This "Cowboy Kringle" Santa ceremoniously turns on the community's holiday lights.



"I've been good," Santa thought, while pausing on his motorcycle in Lexington. "A little twist of the throttle and a little wind in the beard while sailin' down a stretch of highway might feel pretty nice. Besides, the reindeer deserve a rest every now and then."

© GEOFF APPOLD



[LEFT] Santa, with many elves and transportation modes at his disposal, decided to drop in on a Wichita Falls Children's Museum benefit via helicopter.

[BELOW, LEFT] A red outfit with white trim, a red truck with white trim. Fashion-conscious Santa knows how to color-coordinate at Round Rock's Brown Santa toy donation.

© KEVIN STILLMAN



© KEVIN STILLMAN

[ABOVE, RIGHT] Santa enjoys Austin's Trail of Lights on a bicycle built for two, because Christmas can be a lonely time for some.

[RIGHT] Sometimes Santa likes to fish, and sometimes he just likes to cruise around Caddo Lake in his pontoon boat, as he gears up for Uncertain's Christmas Boat Parade.



© RANDY MALLORY



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY WYMAN MEINZER

FLAT

The intrepid Wyman Meinzer searches the Texas plains for images of what is, in reality, a variegated landscape

While the state's Hill Country meadows and Gulf Coast shorelines have long drawn the masses, "flat is where it's at" for many folks.

For those who appreciate the sheer magnitude of endless horizons, **nothing can match the allure of the Texas plains.** This vast region—roughly the size of Kansas—is bounded (approximately) by the 98th meridian on the east, New Mexico on the west, the Pecos River to the south, and the Texas-Oklahoma line, where panhandle meets panhandle, on the north.

Though characterized by its flatness, **the region is far from monotonous.** Geographers often break it into two parts: the High Plains, or western portion, and the Rolling Plains, with the spectacular **Caprock Escarpment** as a dividing line. The terrain includes not only a vast area of table-flat land in the Panhandle, but **rolling hills and badlands** along the meandering course of the Canadian River, undulating **prairies** east of the Caprock Escarpment, and **canyonlands** sliced by the waters of major rivers like the Red, the Brazos, and the Colorado.

With **cities and towns often separated by miles** of range or farmland, the Texas plains form a region to be reckoned with. To be a patron of the plains, one must be an ardent fan of **distance on a grand scale.**

A late-afternoon thunderstorm builds, its menacing, towering clouds bouncing warm, diffuse light onto a stretch of US 82, east of Lubbock.

IS WHERE IT'S AT



Those who know this country also find other aspects spell-binding: the ferocity of a spring storm churning over a sea of land... the splendor of canyon chasms bathed in a blanket of fresh snow... the frozen tranquillity at dawn following a night's wintry glaze of ice. And the sky... **nowhere can you find such skies!** Columns of evening thunderstorms, shimmering rays of magenta in a winter morning's sunrise, the phosphorescent light of a full moon on a clear summer night. These are but a few of the phenomena that bewitch plains sky-watchers.

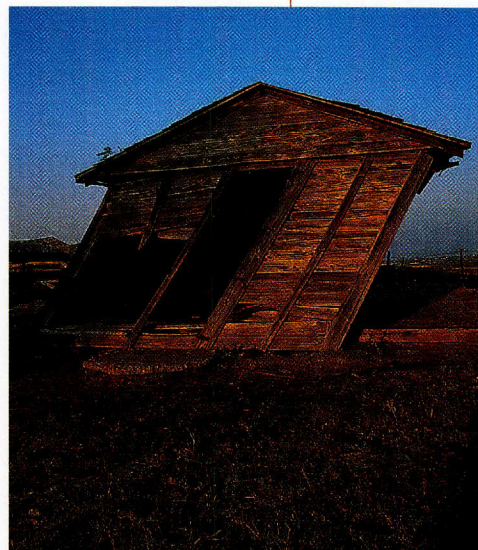
Big skies, unobstructed horizons, and a land stern in its majesty. Combine these CinemaScopic images with **a Texas plains history steeped in the legends** of the conquistador, Comanchería, cibolero, and cowboy, and you begin to understand why the region engenders such tremendous reverence.

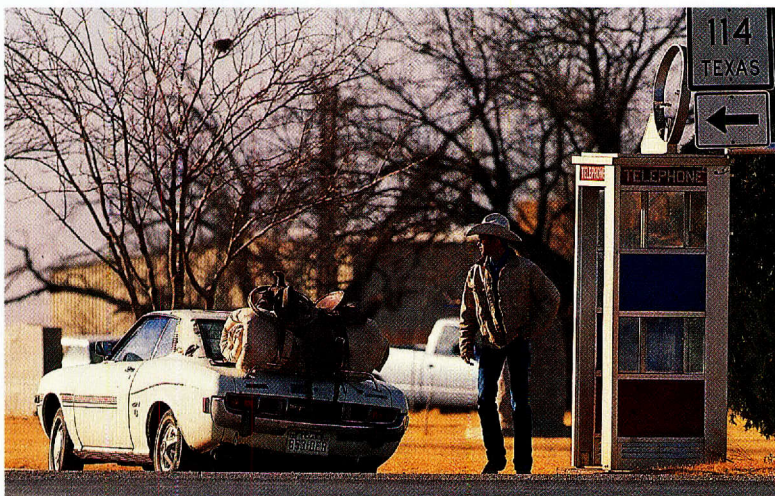
Twentieth-Century historian Fabiola Cabeza de Baca writes of the Llano Estacado in her classic work, *We Fed Them Cactus*: "It is a lonely land because of its immensity, but **it lacks nothing for those who enjoy Nature in her full grandeur.** The colors of the skies, of the hills, the rocks, the birds, and the flowers, are soothing to the most troubled heart. It is loneliness without despair. The whole world seems to be there, full of promise and gladness."★

[FACING PAGE, TOP] At sunrise, thousands of geese take to the skies from Davis Lake, north of Knox City.

[FACING PAGE, BOTTOM] The leading edge of a spring thunderstorm roils an expansive cloud of dust north of Benjamin.

[RIGHT] An old farm shed near Canyon reflects the forces of age and weather. Wyman Meinzer reports that someone righted the shed recently.





[ABOVE] Rocks, sparse grass, and scrubby brush distinguish an area of Knox County called “the Knoco Badlands.”

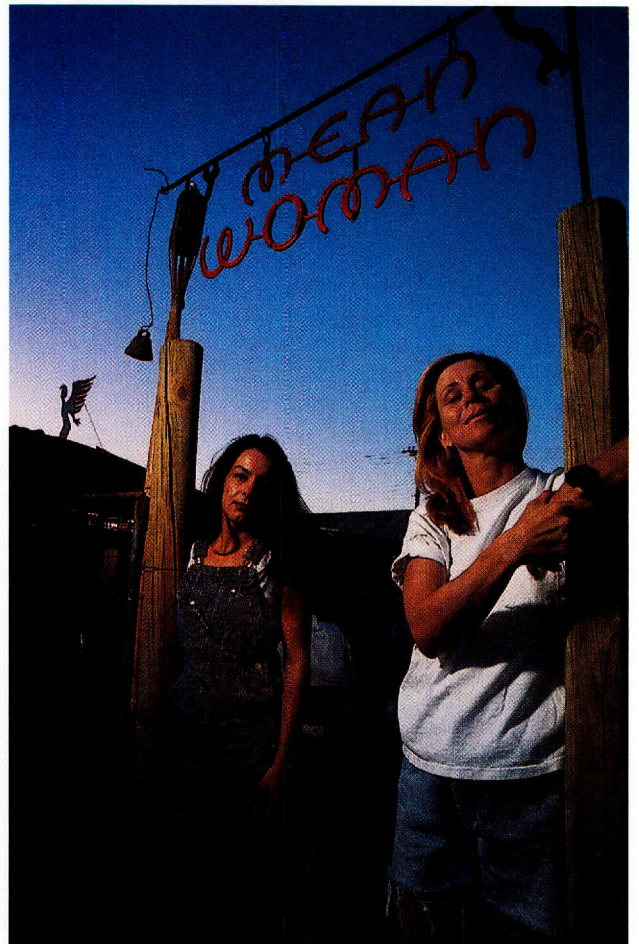
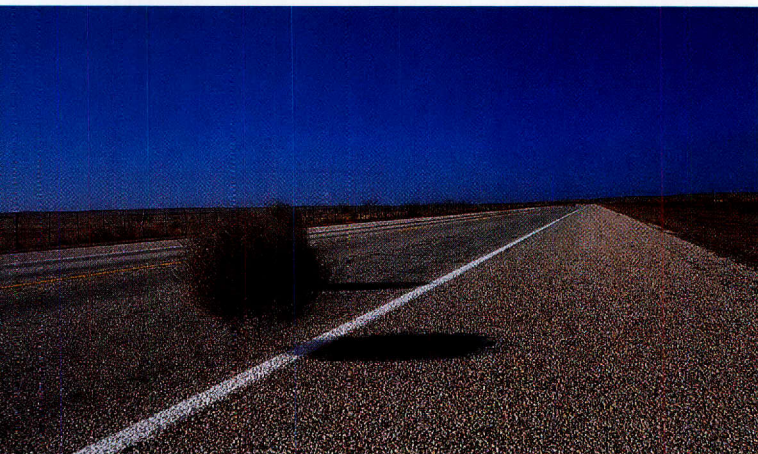
[LEFT] A cowboy leaves the only phone booth in Benjamin, perhaps after calling to check on his next job.

[FACING PAGE, RIGHT] An unimpeded West Texas breeze carries a tumbleweed across US 82. It’s not uncommon to see a collection of tumbleweeds piled along a fence.



As the sun trails down, a cowhand herds horses toward the Wildcat Pens on the Pitchfork Ranch in King County, in preparation for spring branding.

Michelle Denham (left) and Miz Ayn own and operate the Mean Woman Grill, on Texas 114 in Levelland. They say they're nice if the customers are . . .





[LEFT] Autumn's handiwork leaves a thicket of chinaberry trees, near US 82 in Knox County, stripped of leaves.

[BELOW] Two turkey toms go chest-to-chest during a late winter snowstorm.

[FACING PAGE] Sandstone formations in Tule Canyon near Silverton jut into a starry sky. Wyman captured this image with a time exposure (hence the star "trails") and by "painting" the formations with a spotlight.



[ABOVE] A giant radio microphone urges travelers near Colorado City to tune in to AM station 1320.

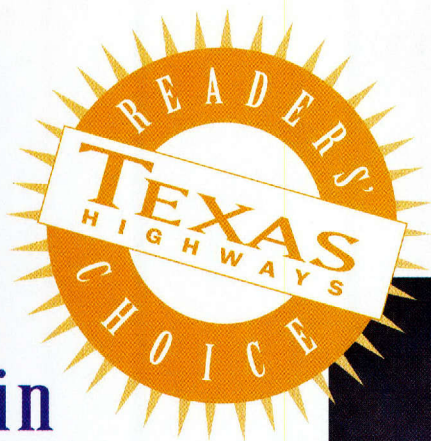
[RIGHT] Jake Propps, a Knox County cowboy, died when his truck fell on him in May 1996. His friends erected a simple marker along Texas 6 near the accident site.



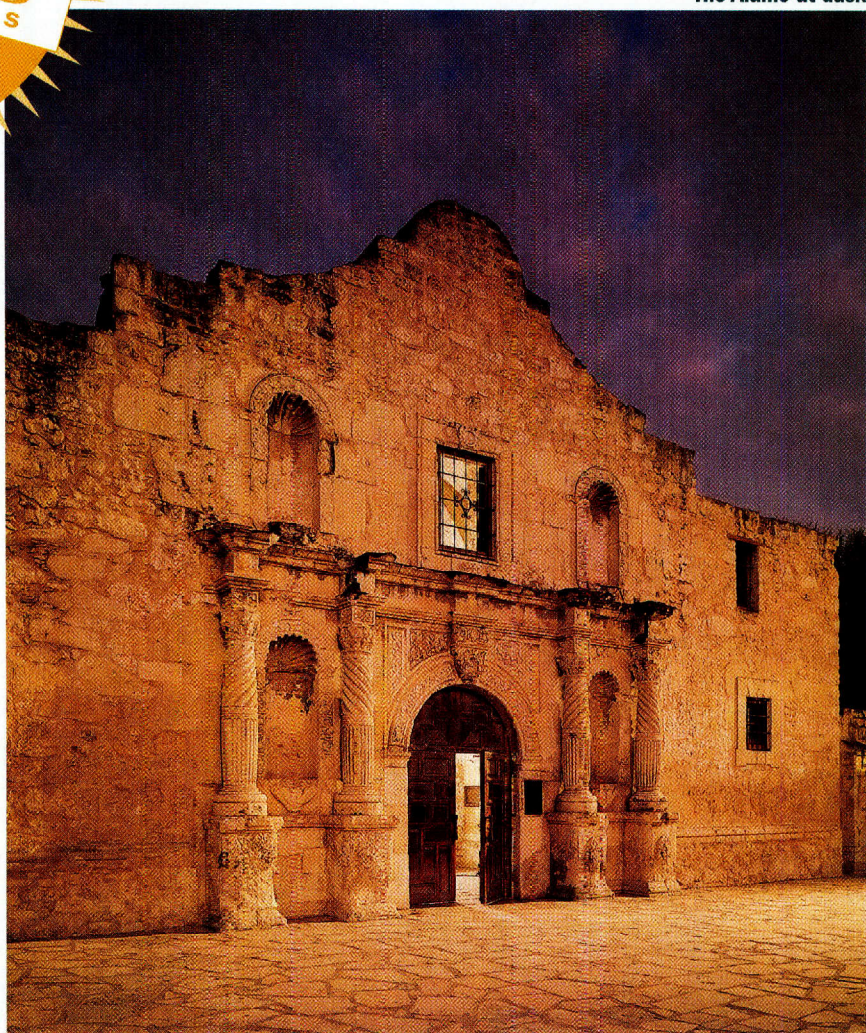
Photojournalist WYMAN MEINZER of Benjamin has traipsed the Texas plains for more than 20 years, capturing images of people, places, and natural beauty. His new book, *Texas Sky*, is now available in bookstores.



Tops in Texas



The Alamo at dusk



J. GRIFPS SMITH

WHAT DO YOU, our readers, think is the Best of Texas? Here are your answers, revealed at last!

One thing remains clear: You love **San Antonio!** That vibrant city won hands down in several categories, and had at least one listing—and sometimes two or more—in 14 of the following 19 categories. With so much to entice folks, little wonder that the Alamo City scores high on both state and national lists of favorite cities to visit. Be that as it may, this poll makes something else perfectly clear: Every corner of Texas offers something of interest.

We conducted our last readers' poll in 1991. This time around, we added a few new questions (for example, Texas' Most Romantic Place, which we'll divulge in February, to spark up Valentine's Day). As you'll notice, answers may overlap, especially where some respondents were very specific and others less so.

Our hats are off to each and every one of you who took the time to vote, whether or not your favorites carried the day. Since our job is to tell you about the Best of Texas, we truly appreciate knowing which offerings of the great Lone Star State you love the most. Enjoy! —Ann Gallaway

TOP TOURIST ATTRACTION

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 The Alamo
<i>(almost 1/3 of all respondents)</i> 2 San Antonio 3 Six Flags, Arlington 4 River Walk, San Antonio 5 Big Bend 6 Johnson Space Center, Clear Lake 7 Sea World, San Antonio 8 Austin 9 Schlitterbahn, New Braunfels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 The Coast 11 TEXAS musical, Canyon 12 Tie: Hill Country
<i>Tie: South Padre Island</i> 13 Galveston 14 Fiesta Texas, San Antonio 15 Corpus Christi 16 Wildflowers 17 Dallas Cowboys 18 Tie: New Braunfels
<i>Tie: State Fair, Dallas</i> |
|---|--|



Christmas along the Paseo del Rio, San Antonio

© RICHARD REYNOLDS

© RICHARD REYNOLDS



Sunrise from above Queen Isabella Causeway, South Padre Island

FAVORITE VACATION DESTINATION

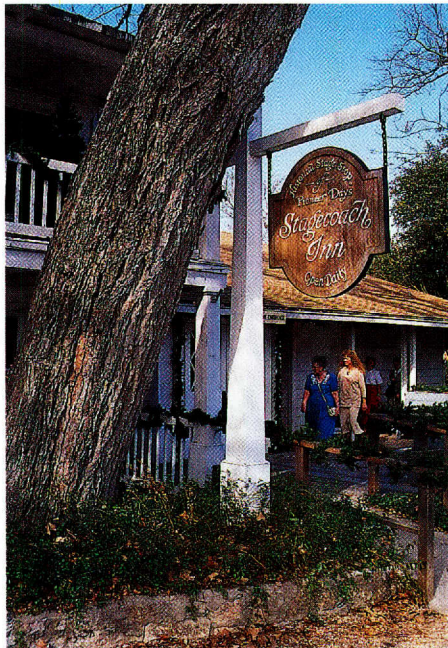
- 1 San Antonio**
- 2 Big Bend**
- 3 Hill Country**
- 4 South Padre Island**
- 5 Galveston**
- 6 Corpus Christi**
- 7 Port Aransas**
- 8 Fredericksburg**
- 9 New Braunfels**
- 10 Padre Island** (*If combined with 4th choice, Padre would move to 3rd place.*)



State Fair, Dallas

BEST ANNUAL FESTIVAL OR EVENT

- 1 **State Fair, Dallas**
- 2 Fiesta San Antonio
- 3 Wursthfest, New Braunfels
- 4 Texas Folklife Festival, San Antonio
- 5 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo
- 6 *Tie:* Dickens on The Strand, Galveston
Tie: Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo
Tie: TEXAS musical, Canyon
- 7 Texas Renaissance Festival, Magnolia
- 8 Mardi Gras, Galveston
- 9 Tyler Rose Festival
- 10 Houston International Festival



Stagecoach Inn, Salado

BEST B&B OR HISTORIC INN

- 1 **Stagecoach Inn, Salado**
- 2 Fredericksburg
(B&B/inn unspecified)
- 3 Gage Hotel, Marathon
- 4 Excelsior House, Jefferson
- 5 *Tie:* Indian Lodge, Davis Mountains State Park
Tie: Menger Hotel, San Antonio
- 6 *Tie:* Jefferson
(B&B/inn unspecified)
Tie: Landmark Inn, Castroville
- 7 Limpia Hotel, Fort Davis
- 8 Salado *(B&B/inn unspecified)*
- 9 Prince Solms Inn, New Braunfels
- 10 *Tie:* Gruene Homestead Inn
Tie: Gruene Mansion Inn
(both in New Braunfels)



© CAROLYN BROWN

MICHAEL A. MURPHY



Main Street, Fredericksburg

FRIENDLIEST TOWN OR CITY

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 San Antonio | 6 Lubbock |
| 2 Fredericksburg (<i>one vote less than San Antonio</i>) | 7 Houston |
| 3 Fort Worth | 8 College Station |
| 4 New Braunfels | 9 Amarillo |
| 5 Austin | 10 San Angelo |



Sunrise over the Hill Country, in western Bandera County

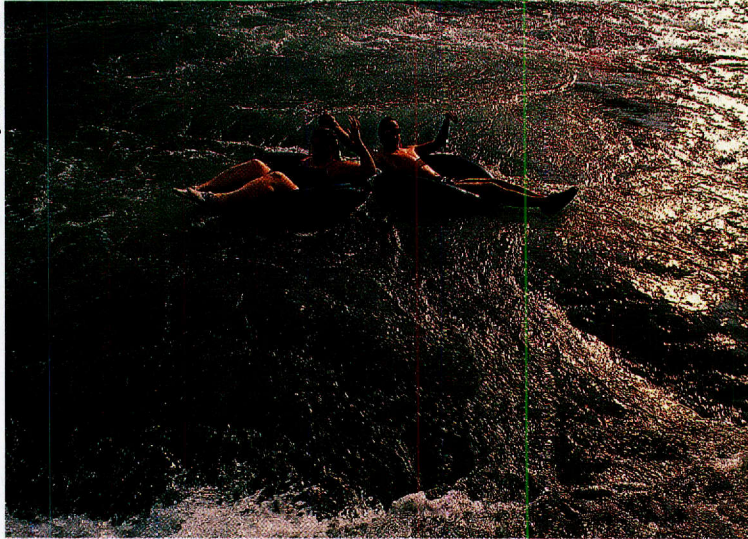
MOST MEMORABLE SCENIC DRIVE

- 1 Camino del Rio, FM 170 (River Road)**
- 2 Hill Country
- 3 Davis Mountains Scenic Loop
- 4 Big Bend
- 5 Leakey-Utopia-Vanderpool area
- 6 Devil's Backbone, FM 32, Comal County
- 7 Willow City Loop, Gillespie County
- 8 River Road, New Braunfels
- 9 Palo Duro Canyon
- 10 Fredericksburg area



MICHAEL A. MURPHY

The Rio Grande, viewed from Big Hill (FM 170, far right)



Guadalupe River, near New Braunfels

BEST CHEAP TOURIST THRILL

- 1 Floating the Frio and Guadalupe rivers**
- 2** Walking the beach, beachcombing
- 3** San Antonio River Walk
- 4** Six Flags (*location unspecified*)
- 5** Riding the Bolivar-Galveston ferry
- 6** Hill Country wildflowers
- 7** Palo Duro Canyon and *TEXAS* musical
- 8** *Tie:* Galveston (beach, seawall, The Strand)
Tie: Hiking Enchanted Rock
Tie: Padre Island
- 9** Big Bend National Park
- 10** *Tie:* Bat-watching in Austin
Tie: Canton Trade Days

Wish we could include your whole wonderful list here. Also garnering “cheap thrill” votes: West Texas sunsets, looking for the Marfa Lights, surfing on an air mattress in the Gulf, traveling Texas backroads, and border shopping. As much as you like San Antonio, you like small-town Texas, too: You voted for small-town “junking,” walking through small towns and visiting with locals, and attending small-town cattle auctions. Culinary creativity included “buying a coke in the domino parlor on the northwest corner of Hallettsville’s town square,” “drinking two beers in Luckenbach,” and “eating a tuna and purple onion sandwich on German bread at a roadside park.” (Add a small bag of Fritos, and I’m at that park beside you!)

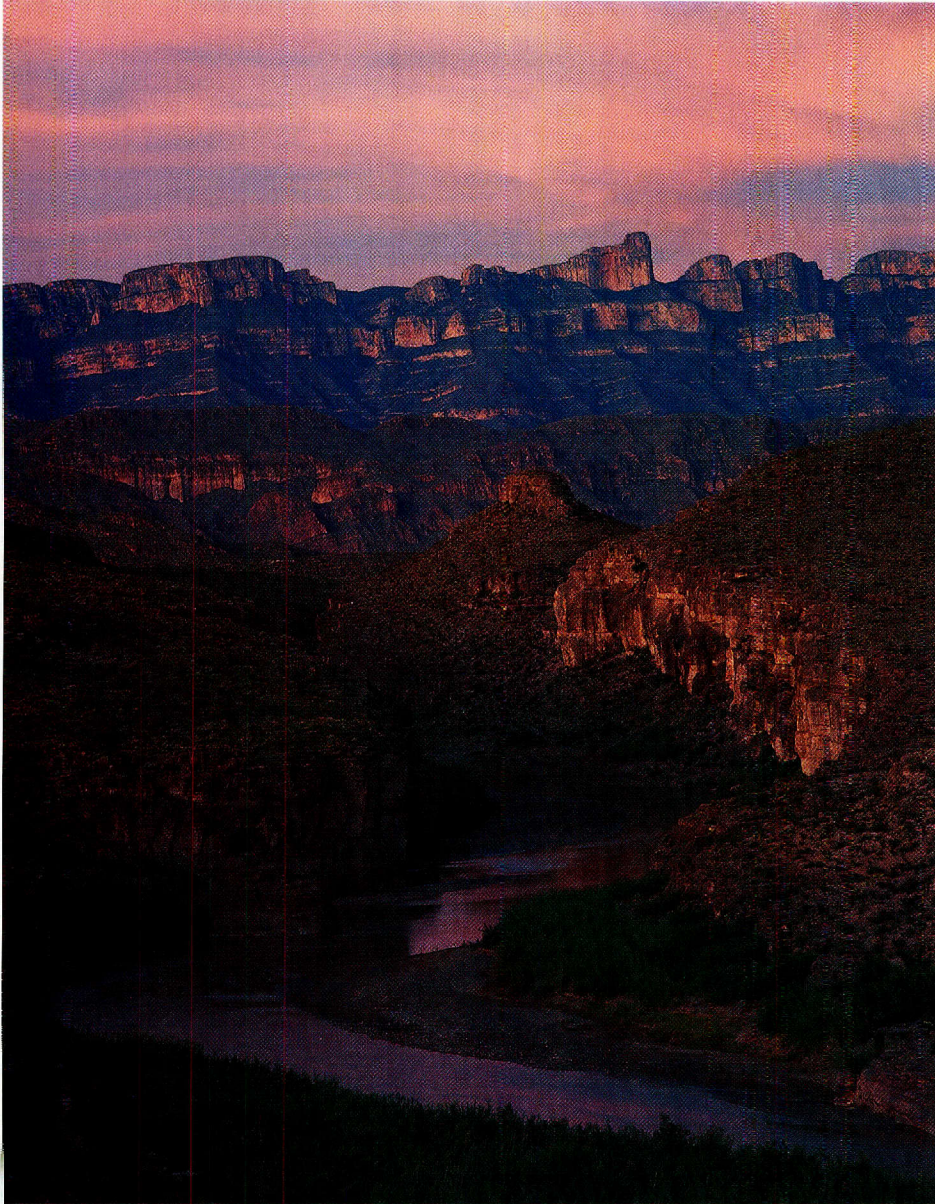
BEST RESTAURANT

- 1 Galdo’s, Galveston**
- 2** The Mansion on Turtle Creek, Dallas
- 3** Stagecoach Inn, Salado
- 4** King’s Inn, Riviera
- 5** County Line (*location unspecified*)
- 6** Pappadeaux (*location unspecified*)
- 7** Cattleman’s Steakhouse, Fabens
- 8** *Tie:* Luby’s Cafeteria (*location unspecified*)
Tie: Underwood’s Cafeteria, Brownwood and Waco (*location unspecified*)
- 9** *Tie:* Mi Tierra, San Antonio
Tie: Taste of Texas, Houston
- 10** *Tie:* Big Texan Steak Ranch, Amarillo
Tie: Gristmill River Restaurant and Bar, Gruene
Tie: Joe T. Garcia’s, Fort Worth
Tie: Old San Francisco Steak House (*location unspecified*)
Tie: Pappasito’s (*location unspecified*)



Head chef Gary Gegan at Galdo’s, Galveston

Sierra del Carmen, Coahuila, Mexico, viewed from above the Rio Grande



© LAURENCE PARENT

BEST PLACE TO WALK OR HIKE

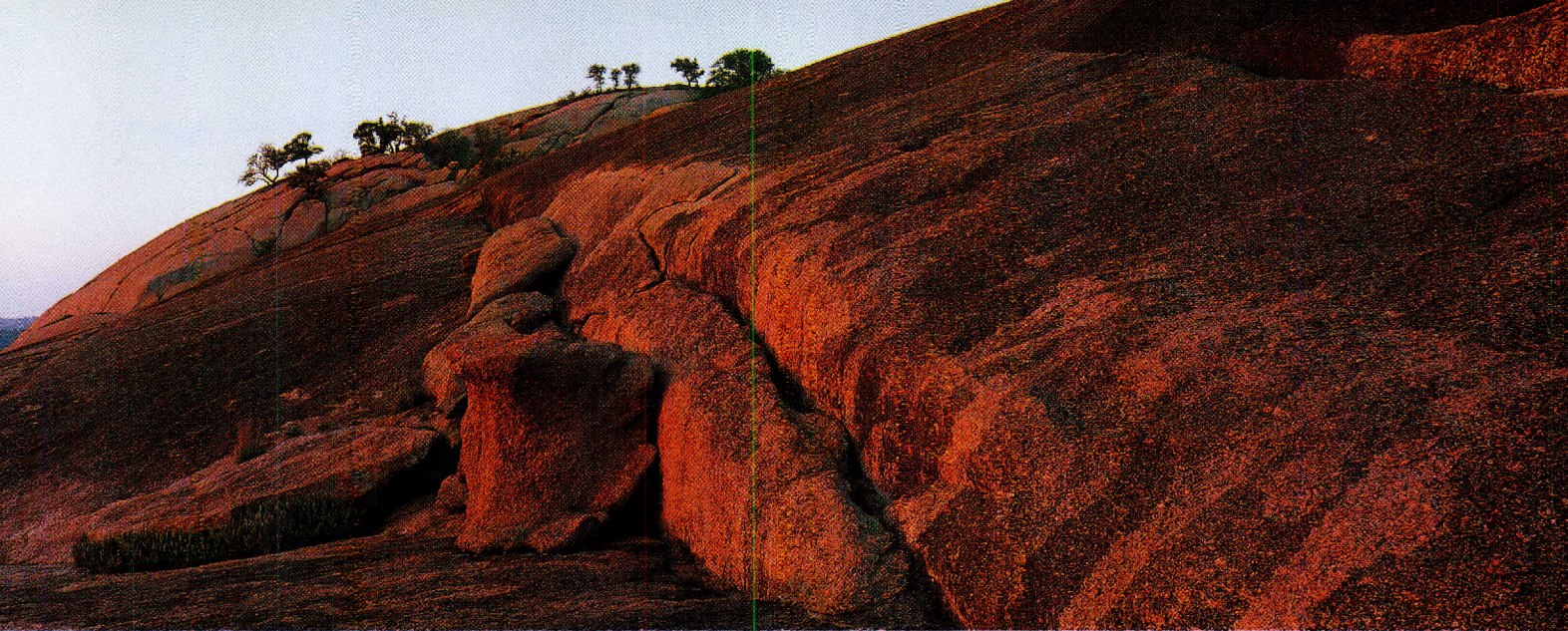
- 1 **Big Bend**
- 2 River Walk, San Antonio
- 3 Enchanted Rock
- 4 Lost Maples State Natural Area
- 5 Town Lake trails, Austin
- 6 Guadalupe Mountains, McKittrick Canyon
- 7 Palo Duro Canyon
- (If next three were combined, "beaches" would move to 6th place.)*
- 8 Padre Island
- 9 The beach
- 10 South Padre Island beaches



Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, Gillespie County



Barton Springs, Austin



© JEREMY WOODHOUSE

Palo Duro Canyon



© WYMAN MEINZER

BEST SPOT FOR SWIMMING

- 1 Barton Springs, Austin**
- 2** Balmorhea State Park
- 3** *Tie:* Guadalupe River
Tie: South Padre Island
- 4** Padre Island
- 5** Frio River, near Concan and Leakey
- 6** Schlitterbahn, New Braunfels
- 7** Galveston beach
(If next two were combined, New Braunfels would move to 3rd place.)
- 8** *Tie:* Landa Park, New Braunfels
Tie: New Braunfels
- 9** Frio River at Garner State Park
- 10** Blue Hole, Wimberley



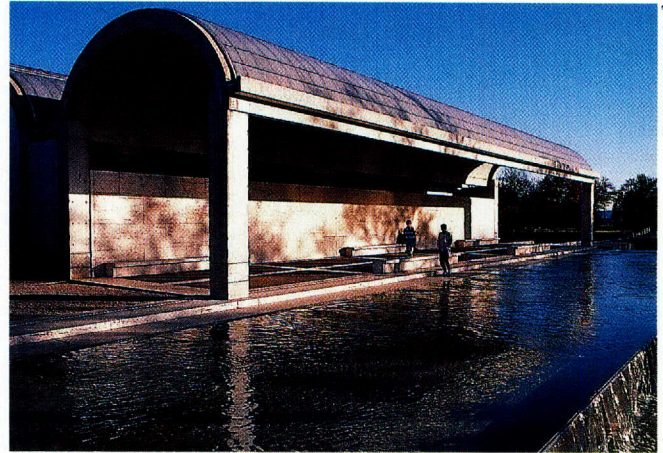
I. GRIFFIS SMITH

MOST UNUSUAL SIGHT OR SITE

- 1 Enchanted Rock**
- 2** Cadillac Ranch, Amarillo
- 3** *Tie:* Marfa Lights
Tie: Palo Duro Canyon
- 4** Big Bend
- 5** Sam Houston statue, Huntsville
- 6** Dinosaur tracks, Glen Rose
- 7** *Tie:* Bats at Congress Ave. Bridge, Austin
Tie: Caverns of Sonora
- 8** McNahans Sandhills
- 9** Stonehenge, west of Hunt
- 10** Natural Bridge Caverns, west of New Braunfels

BEST MUSEUM

- 1 **Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth**
- 2 Witte Museum, San Antonio
- 3 Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon
- 4 Houston Museum of Natural Science
- 5 Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio
- 6 Fort Worth Museum of Science and History
- 7 Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth
- 8 Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, Waco
- 9 Dallas Museum of Art
- 10 Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

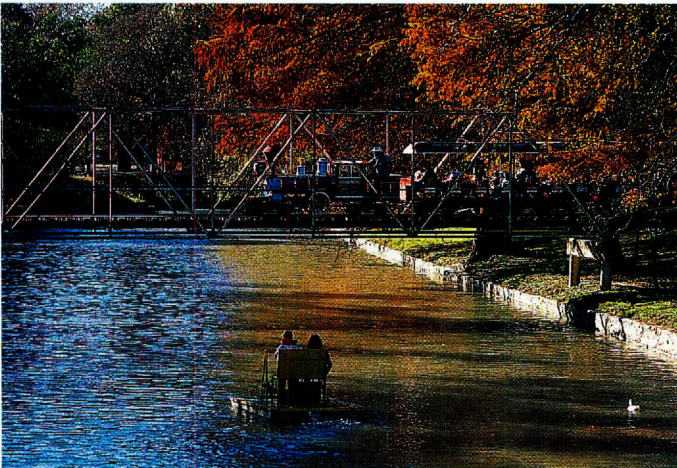
J. GRIFFIS SMITH

BEST PLACE FOR A FAMILY REUNION

1 San Antonio

(If next two were combined, New Braunfels would move to top spot.)

- 2 New Braunfels
- 3 Landa Park, New Braunfels
- 4 Any state park
- 5 Galveston
- 6 Austin
- 7 Salado
- 8 Fredericksburg
- 9 Bastrop State Park
- 10 Hill Country



The San Antonio River, Brackenridge Park, San Antonio

© LAURENCE PARENT

BEST TOWN SQUARE

- 1 **Granbury**
- 2 New Braunfels
- 3 Waxahachie
- 4 Georgetown
- 5 Fredericksburg
- 6 Marshall, especially at Christmas
- 7 Garland
- 8 Mason
- 9 Weatherford
- 10 San Antonio



Town square, Granbury

© DAVID SAMIS



Bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush near Brenham, Washington County

J. GRIFFIS SMITH

BEST PLACE TO VIEW WILDFLOWERS

- 1 Brenham area, Washington County**
- 2 Hill Country**
- 3 Llano area, Llano County**
- 4 Fredericksburg area, Gillespie County**
- 5 Willow City Loop, Gillespie County**
- 6 Austin**
- 7 Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Austin**
- 8 Any highway**
- 9 Mason, Mason County**
- 10 Ennis**



© RICHARD RENNOIDS

Bluebonnets, pepper grass, and Indian paintbrush, Llano County



Rio Grande Village, Big Bend National Park

BEST CAMPING SPOT

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Big Bend National Park | 7 Bastrop State Park |
| 2 Garner State Park | 8 Tyler State Park |
| 3 Palo Duro Canyon | 9 <i>Tie:</i> Lake Texoma
<i>Tie:</i> Leakey-Concan area |
| 4 Inks Lake State Park | 10 Lost Maples State Park |
| 5 Guadalupe River State Park | |
| 6 Davis Mountains State Park | |

BEST ZOO

(Top two together received more than half the votes.)

- 1** San Antonio
- 2** Fort Worth
- 3** Gladys Porter, Brownsville
- 4** Houston
- 5** Dallas



Tiger enclosure, Fort Worth Zoo

BEST HISTORIC SITE OR BUILDING

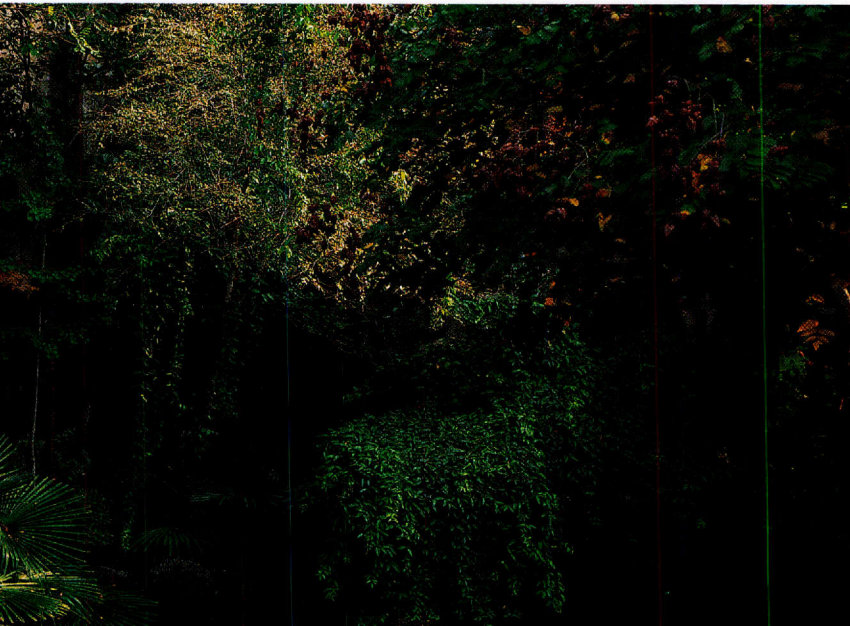
- 1** **The Alamo** *(almost 7 to 1 over 2nd choice)*
- 2** State Capitol
- 3** San Jacinto Monument
- 4** Fort Davis
- 5** *Tie:* Presidio La Bahía, Goliad
Tie: San Antonio Missions
- 6** Washington-on-the-Brazos
- 7** The Sixth Floor Museum, Dallas
- 8** Mission San José, San Antonio
- 9** Fort Worth Stockyards
- 10** Fredericksburg's Main Street



San Jacinto Monument at dusk

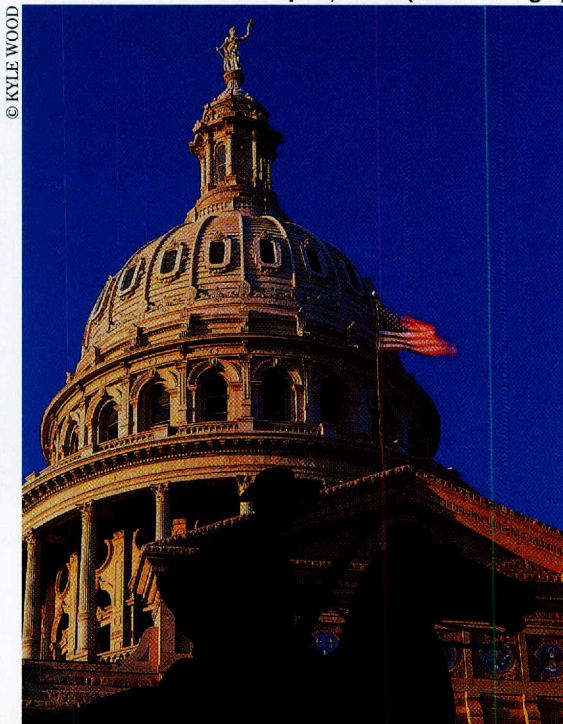
MOST BEAUTIFUL BUILDING

- 1 State Capitol**
(almost 10 to 1 over 2nd choice)
- 2** The Alamo
- 3** Bishop's Palace, Galveston
- 4** Ellis County Courthouse,
Waxahachie
- 5** *Tie:* Morton H. Meyerson
Symphony Center, Dallas
Tie: Reunion Tower, Dallas
- 6** Transco Tower, Houston
- 7** *Tie:* Mission San José,
San Antonio
Tie: San Jacinto Monument
- 8** Bass Performance Hall,
Fort Worth
- 9** *Tie:* Kimbell Art Museum,
Fort Worth
Tie: Tarrant County Court-
house, Fort Worth
- 10** The Ballpark in Arlington



© JEREMY WOODHOUSE

Texas State Capitol, Austin (below and right)



© KYLE WOOD

© JEREMY WOODHOUSE



In San Marcos, Christmas Starts with Sights & Sounds

By Lori Moffatt • Photographs by Kevin Stillman

Few holidays engender such vibrant memories as Christmastime. And for most people, it's not the picture-perfect, Martha Stewart-inspired images that bring nostalgic smiles year after year.

I grew up in Oklahoma, where the season often brought snow (or, at least, sleet), throngs of off-key carolers at our doorstep, and aromatic pines that quickly dropped their needles into our shag carpeting. My younger brother and I fashioned tree-toppers and lopsided ornaments from cardboard and silver glitter, and on Christmas morning, we awakened to bleary-eyed folks sporting mussed hair and mischievous grins as they pointed out the Santa-size footprints in the fireplace.

When I was a kid, Christmastime wasn't slick. Perhaps that's why I like San Marcos' annual holiday fete, the charming Sights & Sounds of Christmas (December 3-5 this year), so much.

Don't get me wrong—the storybook setting truly dazzles. Hundreds of thousands of tiny white lights gleam from trees and bridges and reflect in the waters of the San Marcos River. A



San Marcos-area schoolchildren evoke the holiday spirit as they perform during the community's Sights & Sounds of Christmas. The 50-foot tree of lights casts quite a glow and provides a dazzling swirl when encountered from below.



Calliope music and gaily decorated carousel horses beckon young revelers to go for a spin during the Sights & Sounds of Christmas.

50-foot tree of lights illuminates the festival's south end, and a gilded, mirrored carousel—complete with calliope and fancifully painted horses—anchors the north side. If Old Man Winter delivers an arctic blast, as he did last year, you'll even see revelers bundled up in parkas and mittens. Yes, it's very nearly picture-perfect.

The spirit, however, is that of a giant block party—one where everyone attends in comfy shoes, with kids in tow. Because so much goes on here—Santa's arrival by fire truck, barrel-train rides for kids, juggling acts, dance lessons, choir and dance performances, "sock skating," bobbing for apples, crafts demonstrations, and more—you never know what will tickle your fancy. Perhaps you'll witness teenagers flirting as they serve cups of hot cocoa, a winsome kid-and-puppy team marching in the pet parade, or an elderly couple walking hand-in-hand past an illuminated gazebo, and you'll know all is right with the world.

"This is something that the whole town does together," says longtime San Marcos resident Jo Wiegand. "I like to visit with people I haven't seen in a while, look at all the arts and crafts, and listen to the kids sing—that's always cute." Jo and her husband, Buddy (they met on a blind date as students at Southwest Texas some 50 years ago), have attended Sights & Sounds with assorted friends and family members since it began on the courthouse square in 1987. "It's grown since then," she says, "but it hasn't lost its small-town feel. I think the key is that everybody participates."

Jo's friend Ann Primer gestures toward her grandson, seven-year-old Cody Jackson, who nods excitedly. "Have you seen the donkey yet?" he asks. "That's Sedge—my donkey got chosen to be the Christmas donkey!"

Sedge the Christmas Donkey numbers among the dozens of sheep, llamas, camels, and donkeys that you can admire, pet, and pose with for a photo. Most of the critters congregate in the area designated as Old Bethlehem. Here, volunteers demonstrate how to make items like candles, necklaces, and wooden boats.

Fourteen-year-old Nicole McClusky of nearby Wimberley has volunteered in the Old Bethlehem area for two years. Among other jobs, she helps take care of the animals and shows folks how to make bread from barley flour. "I like leading the sheep around like a shepherd," she says. "A lot of people talk to you when you're leading a sheep around."

Indeed, there are a lot of people to talk to. Last year's event drew 30,000 people over three nights. They come to watch the *Posadas* procession reenact Mary and Joseph's search for lodging on Christmas Eve, to listen to holiday songs sung from the hearts of schoolkids, to sample candy apples and turkey legs, to string old-fashioned garlands of cranberries and popcorn, to stroll through the glittering lights, to shop for made-in-Texas gifts, to swap stories...but mostly to inaugurate a promising season that celebrates life, love, family, and friends.★

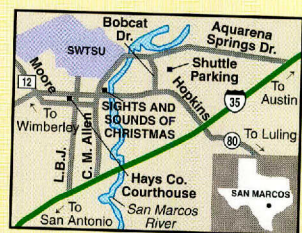
Associate editor LORI MOFFATT first attended Sights & Sounds in 1995. She encourages all kids-at-heart to twirl beneath the huge tree of lights.

Staff photographer KEVIN STILLMAN attended last year's festival with his son, Cody, who enjoyed visiting with Santa and his llamas.

WHEN...WHERE...HOW

Christmas in San Marcos

San Marcos' 12th annual Sights & Sounds of Christmas festival (this year's theme is "River of Lights") takes place Dec. 3-5 on the banks of the San Marcos River, at Hopkins and C.M. Allen Parkway. From Interstate 35, take exit 206 (Aquarena Springs Dr.), and drive west. Very little parking is available on streets near the festival site, so it's recommended to park at Strahan Coliseum and ride a free shuttle to the festival. Shuttles run each evening from 5-10:30 and are wheelchair accessible.



General admission to the festival is free, though some attractions charge small fees. Carousel rides, for example, cost \$1.50, and photos with Santa cost \$4 (\$3 if you bring a can of food for the local food bank).

On Fri. and Sat. evening from 6-9, you can also take a shuttle to San Marcos' historic residential districts and tour 7 festively decorated homes. Sponsored by the Heritage Association of San Marcos, the Holiday Home Tour includes a stop for wassail and cookies. Buy tour tickets (\$5) at the festival Souvenir Booth.

For a schedule of events (Santa will arrive Thu., the candlelight *Posadas* procession is on Fri., and the pet parade takes place on Sat., for example), write to the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce, Box 2310, San Marcos 78667; 512/393-5900 or 888/200-5620. Visit the festival Web site at www.sights-n-sounds.org.

In lawless South Texas in the 1870s, a dashing young man
established a cattle-rustling empire

KING

O F T H E R O A D

A TEXAS RANGER ONCE DESCRIBED LEGENDARY FRONTIERSMAN John King Fisher as “the most perfect specimen of a frontier dandy and desperado I ever met.” He is certainly the most colorful ancestor I can claim. My great-great-grandfather stood six feet tall and weighed 185 pounds. Reports say he dressed nattily: the finest linen shirts, a white sombrero, and, according to two different accounts by Texas Rangers, tiger-skin chaps. He sported an ivory-handled Colt .45 revolver, which hung conspicuously from a hip. Fisher’s prowess with firearms was legendary. *The Encyclopedia of American Crime* claims he once fired shots at a bald man simply because he wanted to see if the bullets would bounce off a hairless head. Though that incident thankfully never took place, plenty of others did.

BY AMANDA GARDNER • ILLUSTRATION BY JIMMY LONGACRE



This is King
Fisher's Road
Take the Other One

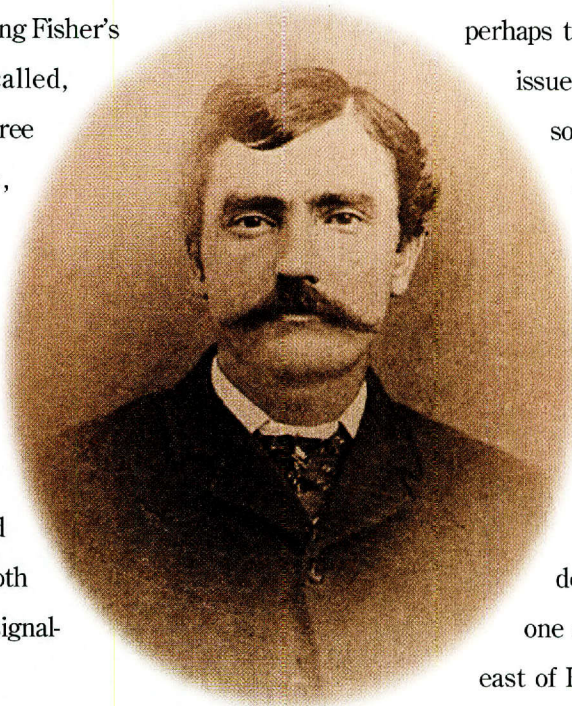
J. Longacker
© '05

King Fisher's neighbors—descendants of whom speak highly of him to this day—took the view that his roughhousing ways kept things safer for the area's law-abiding ranchers. Nevertheless, he was operating outside of the law, and the law wanted his hide.

DURING THE 1870s, King Fisher's Territory, as it was called, spanned portions of three counties—Dimmit, Maverick, and Zavala—in the lawless Nueces Strip region of South Texas. King appropriated a local road for himself, at one point putting up a sign that read “This is King Fisher's Road. Take the Other One.” My grandmother Maurine Kellogg Gardner and my uncle Pat Henry Gardner have both argued that King Fisher was simply signaling that this was not a through road.

Whatever the case, people obeyed the sign, and apparently for good reason. Family lore has it that King Fisher had killed 21 men by the time he died, in his early thirties. The truth puts the number closer to six, says Larry Shaver, a historian who has recently written a biography of the gunfighter titled *This Is King Fisher's Road*.

BORN in Collin County in 1853 or 1854, “The King” had his first run-in with the law at age 16, when he was convicted of breaking into a storehouse. With a good lawyer and a legal technicality to his advantage, he served only three months of a two-year sentence in Huntsville. The case came before the Texas Supreme Court, and Governor Edmund Davis,



perhaps taking pity on him because of his age, issued a full pardon in January 1871. King was soon afterward charged on two counts of horse theft in Williamson County, but he was never convicted. Nevertheless, the direction of his life for the next decade had been set in motion.

By 1873, King had headed south to the Nueces Strip, and, in no time, started his own successful cattle-rustling operation. His ranch on Penedencia Creek (comprising according to one account 250,000 acres), some 35 miles east of Eagle Pass, soon gained notoriety as a gathering point for renegades of all kinds. King himself became the most infamous of all.

The circumstances surrounding some of the killings are unclear, says Larry Shaver. Take, for instance, the three Mexican men King shot. Some historians claim the men were trying to steal King's cattle, others say it was horses, still others say King gunned the men down in cold blood. King killed another man, an Anglo named William Dunovan, in the brush near his ranch after Dunovan accused Fisher of taking his cattle. In yet another incident, King shot a man, Corporal George Washington, a Seminole-Negro Indian scout, in what seems to have been a drunken dispute over who was to pay a bar tab.

Drunkenness seems to have been a common state for

[ABOVE] Handsome, reckless, and charming, John King Fisher cut a wide, cattle-rustling swath across South Texas' Nueces Strip. Texas Ranger Captain Leander McNelly, whose troops cleaned up the area in the 1870s, remarked, “I am willing to take a good many chances, but I certainly would not live on a stock ranch west of the Nueces River.... I think the risk is too great. My position in command of a company of troops I do not consider half so hazardous as that of those living on ranches.”

PHOTO COURTESY AMANDA GARDNER

COURTESY AMANDA GARDNER

King Fisher married Sarah Vivian, called Sally, in the spring of 1876. Marriage and children seem to have sobered King considerably. He gave up his outlaw ways and became the deputy sheriff of Uvalde County.



Fisher during his outlaw days. Periodically, when feeling no pain, he would leave his ranch, go into Eagle Pass, and shoot up the town. Fortunately for Fisher, the residents of South Texas refused to testify against “the King of the Nueces Strip.”

According to Larry Shaver, King and his rowdy friends were not particular about whose stray cattle they rounded up, yet they apparently exercised some care not to abuse neighbors’ property. Since Mexican bandits, as well as Comanches and other Indian bands, regularly invaded the area, King Fisher’s neighbors—descendants of whom speak highly of him to this day—took the view that his roughhousing ways kept things safer for the law-abiding ranchers. The handsome young man made friends easily, and reporters who interviewed him found him a remarkable person with a wonderful sense of humor. Nevertheless, he was operating outside of the law, and the law wanted his hide.

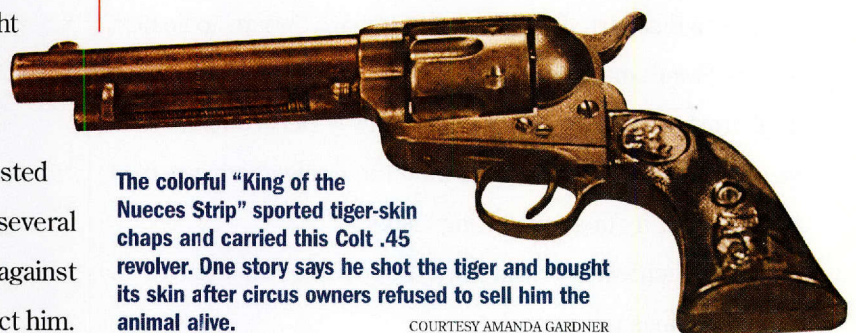
The legendary Captain Leander H. McNelly was the first Texas Ranger to arrest King Fisher. (Historian T.H. Fehrenbach points out that McNelly was “empowered to kill any rustler caught north of the [Rio Grande], and to take no prisoners.”) Later, Rangers under Captain Lee Hall, who took over for McNelly when the latter’s tuberculosis worsened, arrested King a half-dozen times on various charges, including several for horse theft. Some 16 indictments were returned against Fisher, but judges and juries repeatedly refused to convict him.

The Rangers need not have feared. By 1881, faced with mounting legal debts and perhaps sobered by the births of two daughters (he had married Miss Sarah Vivian, the daughter of a neighboring rancher, on April 6, 1876), King Fisher had given up his alcoholic binges and begun to change his ways. In 1883, with his record essentially cleared, he was appointed deputy sheriff of Uvalde County. During the last few years of his life, he killed only one man, a robber. Most likely, no other criminal cared to cross his path.

ON March 11, 1884, King, by then making plans to run for sheriff, traveled from Uvalde to Austin to investigate a

new law that made fence-cutting a felony (barbed wire had been patented a decade earlier). In Austin, he ran into Ben Thompson, an old friend from his gunslinging days. Thompson, in spite of his notoriety as an outlaw, had served as marshal of Austin, but had left office a few years earlier after killing Jack Harris, co-owner of the Vaudeville Variety Theatre in San Antonio.

No one knows for sure why Thompson, accompanied by King Fisher, returned to the theater that March night. Some accounts say Ben had two tickets to the variety show there. Others say that King, a good friend of the theater’s remaining owner, hoped to bring about a reconciliation between his two friends. Whatever the reason, King and Ben took the train to San Antonio and ended up at the Variety Theatre, on Soledad Street at the Main Plaza.



The colorful “King of the Nueces Strip” sported tiger-skin chaps and carried this Colt .45 revolver. One story says he shot the tiger and bought its skin after circus owners refused to sell him the animal alive.

COURTESY AMANDA GARDNER



King Fisher lived hard and died young. Though his gravestone in Uvalde gives his birth year as 1856, he was probably born in 1853, says biographer Larry Shaver.

At about 11 p.m., as the two men made their way toward the stairs to descend to the saloon area, they were killed in a blaze of gunfire. According to the autopsy report, Thompson's body carried eight slugs. No autopsy was performed on Fisher, but the secretary for the coroner's jury, who saw the bodies just after the shooting, counted 13 wounds on the body. Especially because of Thompson's notoriety, the incident created a sensation and occupied an estimated "10,000 columns" of newspaper space. Some reports claimed Thompson was ambushed out of revenge for killing Jack Harris. By that accounting, my great-great-grandfather just proved unlucky—in the wrong place at the wrong time.

King Fisher's body, accompanied by a lawman who had arrested the young man years earlier (but by now a family friend), was taken to Uvalde and buried in Pioneer Cemetery. After King's wife, Sarah, died in 1946, his body was supposed to have been disinterred and moved to Carrizo Springs to lie next to hers. Sometime in the 1950s, however, my Uncle Pat received a call from an official of the Texas Highway Department, apologizing that in the process of moving the Uvalde highway, they had accidentally unearthed King Fisher.

"That's impossible," said Pat. "King Fisher was moved to Carrizo Springs years ago."

"You're wrong," the highway department official responded, "because he's here, and his moustache is still in place." The people who were supposed to have moved King Fisher decades earlier hadn't been able to locate the grave.

FEW people, including my family, know what to make of King Fisher's two careers as outlaw and lawman. Larry Shaver believes the paradox can be explained in part by seeing him as a child who grew up with little supervision: King's mother died when he was an infant; the family moved frequently; his father was away during his boyhood fighting in the Civil War. Whatever the truth, the story has become the stuff of legend, and the legend has become larger than life.

For years after King's death, stories about his escapades as a border renegade circulated. Each time, the eldest of his three daughters responded with strong rebuttals based on memories of his sober years.

The body of my great-great-grandfather lies in Uvalde's Pioneer Cemetery to this day. According to one, probably apocryphal, story, for years the mother of one of his victims visited the grave site on the anniversary of her son's death, lit a bonfire, and danced around it. ★

AMANDA GARDNER, a freelance writer who lives in Hoboken, New Jersey, is related to King Fisher on her paternal grandmother's side.

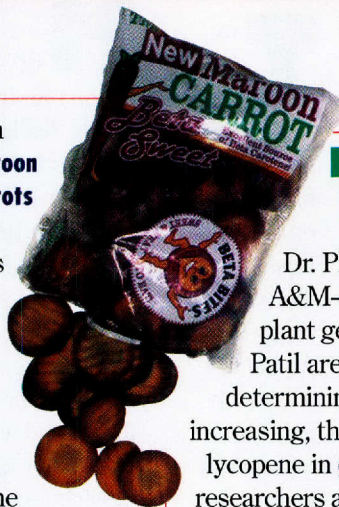
Freelance artist JIMMY LONGACRE lives near Dripping Springs, in the Hill Country west of Austin. To see more of his work, visit his Web site, www.adwizards.com/longacre.

FURTHER READING

Several books help flesh out King Fisher's story and provide background on the complexities of South Texas' wild and woolly Nueces Strip (the land between the Nueces and Rio Grande rivers) during the 1870s and 1880s. Look in your local library for *King Fisher: His Life and Times* (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1966) by O. Clark Fisher (a cousin of King Fisher and a U.S. Congressman for many years) and Jeff C. Dykes. O.C. Fisher also wrote *The Texas Heritage of the Fishers and the Clarks* (Anson Jones Press, 1963). Also see *Taming the Nueces Strip: The Story of McNelly's Rangers* by George Durham, with a Foreword by Walter Prescott Webb (Univ. of Texas Press, 1962). For information on *This Is King Fisher's Road* by Larry Shaver, write to Larry at 3146 Lugar Lane, Fincastle, Virginia 24090.

CARROT TOP?

When maroon carrots began appearing in grocery stores around Texas at the beginning of 1998, folks thought it was an Aggie New Year's joke. Several years ago, the Texas A&M Vegetable Improvement Center began developing maroon carrots as a novelty for Aggie gardeners. But center director Dr. Frederick Pike and center researchers discovered that maroon carrots are higher in cancer-preventing beta carotene and anthocyanins than your God-given orange variety. Quantities of the Aggie carrots were limited this year, but look for a bigger selection in January 1999.



MEDICINAL FRUIT?

The aforementioned Dr. Pike and Texas A&M-Kingsville plant geneticist Bhimu Patil are working on determining, and possibly increasing, the amount of lycopene in **grapefruit**. The researchers announced early this year that Texas Rio Red grapefruit contains undetermined amounts of the chemical compound that is believed to help reduce the risk of cancers of the breast, cervix, colon, and prostate. Grapefruit also contains other cancer-preventive compounds, such as flavinoids, liminoids, and pectin, in addition to lycopene, which some studies have also linked to reducing the risk of heart attacks.

WHITE SHAMAN

Dr. William W. Newcomb Jr., author of the classics *The Rock Art of Texas Indians* and *The Indians of Texas*, received the Rock Art Foundation's prestigious White Shaman Award on February 25. Newcomb's books and research have opened the worlds of Lower Pecos River Rock Art and of Texas Indians to the world as a whole.



CARROT PHOTO (TOP): RENAY BOWLES, AUSTIN-AMERICAN STATESMAN; ABOVE PHOTO: MICHAEL A. MURPHY

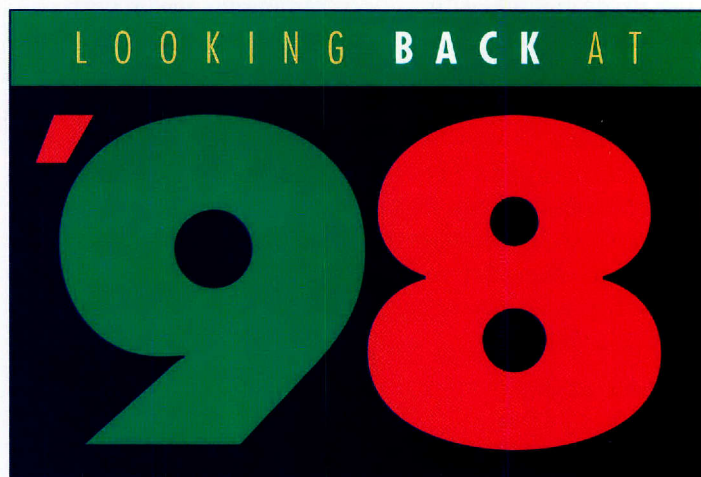
LADY BIRD'S LEGACY

The National Wildflower Research Center in Austin became the **Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center** (shown below, left) in March. The name change was long overdue. Not only was the former first lady instrumental

demonstration gardens, a research library, a cafe, and a gift shop.

TEXAS PRIMITIVE

Fannie Lou Spelce, who achieved fame late in life as a primitive painter, died at age 89 on



in getting the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 passed, she has been a tireless champion of the environment for most of her life, and she founded the world-renowned wildflower center in 1982. The center, at 4801 La Crosse Avenue in south Austin, is a year-round attraction that features

April 11 at her Austin home. She had taken up painting just 30 years earlier, but soon achieved national acclaim. Fannie Lou's art graced the December 1977 issue of *Texas Highways*. The cheer and bright color of a simpler, small-town existence permeated her work, such as *Quilting Bee*, below.



COURTESY: NEAL SPELCE

ONE FOOT IN THE BAYOU

Clarance “**Gatemouth**” **Brown** (right) opened his new club in Dallas’ Deep Ellum district in April. The Texas music legend slides effortlessly across musical genres like bayou-blues, calypso, jazz, bluegrass, country, swing, and zydeco on fiddles, mandolins, pianos, drums, and with his inimitable voice. “Gate,” whom Alligator Records classifies under “American and World Music—Texas Style,” has influenced guitarists from Albert Collins to Frank Zappa to Eric Clapton. It’s fitting that Gatemouth Brown’s One Foot in the Bayou Club could open during his lifetime.

A TUNA THIRD ON THE FOURTH

Joe Sears and Jaston Williams opened the third installment of their popular **Tuna, Texas**, series in April at Galveston’s Grand 1894 Opera House. *Red, White, and Tuna*, set at the Tuna High School reunion on the Fourth of July, brings back the ever-popular Aunt Pearl of *Greater Tuna* and *A Tuna Christmas* fame. Joining her are Vera Carp, who has been rewriting the lyrics to popular church hymns, and Stanley Bumiller, who left the West Texas community to pursue an artistic career in New Mexico, where he spray-paints road kill.

GREAT HALL

On May 1, the curtain went up on the 183,000-square-foot **Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass**



Performance Hall in Fort Worth. The hall, called “the last great hall built in the 20th Century,” houses the ballet, opera, symphony, theater, the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, and the Cliburn Concert Series. Since it opened, audiences at the \$67 million hall have heard the diverse musical strains of Beethoven and the Blind Boys of Alabama, flutist James Galway and mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves, not to mention Charlie Pride and Puccini. Architect David Schwartz borrowed elements from the great concert halls of Barcelona, London, Paris, Vienna, and New York’s Carnegie Hall to give Bass Hall a classical 19th-Century design with an eye to the multiple sound requirements of the 21st Century.

GRASS-ROOTS TEX-MEX

In May, Fort Worth’s renowned **Joe T. Garcia’s** was recognized by New York’s James Beard Foundation as one of eight regional eateries to be hailed among the “best grass-roots restaurants” in America. The award honors locally-owned-and-operated, casual landmark restaurants. *¡Salud y buen provecho!*

INDOT

A RARE SPECIMEN

Two public buildings are named for him: one on the Sul Ross State University campus in Alpine, the

other, the Barton Warnock Environmental Center in Lajitas, which serves as the visitor center to Big Bend Ranch State Natural Area. Anyone who appreciates the land and plants of the Big Bend, Davis Mountains, and Guadalupe Mountains owes the crusty botanist a debt.

Dr. Barton Warnock wrote books about the wildflowers of all three areas. On June 9, on a road north of Alpine, he suffered a heart attack behind the wheel of his car. “He died with his boots on, looking at the Davis Mountains,” his cousin Kirby Warnock wrote in the *Big Bend Quarterly*. “I can’t think of a better way to go.”

PHYSICS OF BASEBALL

How high should a domed stadium be so a fly ball doesn’t hit its ceiling? **Dr. Gerald Phillips**, who died at his Austin home in June, determined that it was 208 feet when he served as a consultant for the Astrodome’s construction in the early 1960s. Phillips, a Plainview native who became a Rice University physics professor and advisor to the University of Texas physics department, made his calculations in the days before Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa were belting record numbers of balls out of parks around the country. But the physicist must have been right: When was the last time a baseball grazed the crown of Houston’s Astrodome?

MUSICIANS BOTH

Former Texas Playboys **Eldon Shamblin** and **Bobby McBay** died within a week of each other in August. Rhythm guitarist Shamblin, who died August 5

COURTESY GREATER TUNA CORPORATION



Joe Sears and Jaston Williams, a.k.a. Aunt Pearl Burras and Vera Carp, opened *Red, White, and Tuna* in April.

at age 82, helped Bob Wills meld Western music with jazz, Dixieland, and Big Band swing in the 1930s and 1940s. After Wills died in 1975, Eldon joined steel guitarist Leon McAuliffe and the Original Texas Playboys; he later worked with Merle Haggard and the Playboys II. Bobby McBay, who spent most of his musical career with Bob Wills' Texas Playboys, died August 9 at age 60. Bobby started playing at Dallas nightclubs with six older brothers when he was 11. In his twenties, he joined Wills' band, and, after the bandleader died, he, too, joined the Original Texas Playboys.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Hank Kuehne, an SMU senior, won the U.S. Amateur Championship in golf on August 30. His older brother Trip, who was defeated by Tiger Woods in the 1994 amateur championship, served as Hank's caddie during his successful rounds. Hank and Trip's sister Kelli won the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship in 1995 and 1996.

COMETS SOAR AGAIN

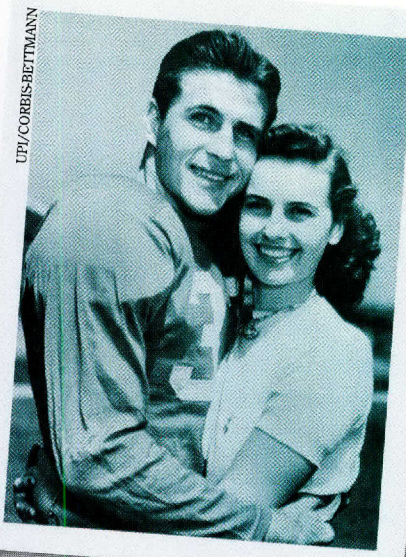
The **Houston Comets**, once again led by two-time league MVP Cynthia Cooper, superstars Sheryl Swoopes and Tina Thompson, and two-time Coach of the Year Van Chancellor, defeated the Phoenix Mercury 80-71 on September 1 to repeat as Women's National Basketball Association champions.

A LIFE OF GIVING

Amarillo philanthropist **Sybil Harrington**, whose generosity touched millions throughout the United States, died September 17. Over the years, she and her husband, the late Don Harrington, distributed more than \$100 million to Panhandle-area causes, including medical institutions, museums, libraries, universities, the Don Harrington Discovery Center, the Amarillo Symphony, the musical drama *TEXAS*, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, and the Harrington House on South Polk Street in Amarillo. Mrs. Harrington was also the single largest donor to the Metropolitan Opera in New York; she bequeathed Impressionist paintings to the Phoenix Art Museum; she funded medical centers in Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Northwestern University Medical School. In short, her generosity lives on, from the Texas Panhandle, west to southern California, and east to the Sybil B. Harrington Auditorium at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

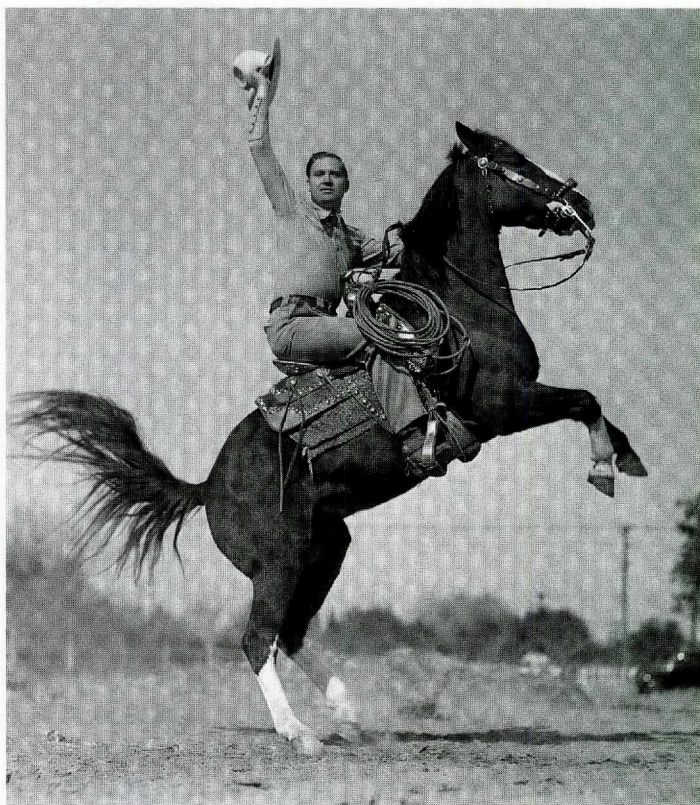
THRILL OF VICTORY

On September 26, **Prairie View A&M University** did the unthinkable: They won a football game. The team broke its NCAA-record nine-year losing streak with a 14-12 squeaker over Oklahoma's Langston University, the team



Former SMU running back Doak Walker, who died in September, is pictured with the Cotton Bowl Queen of 1949, Norma Peterson, who became his first wife.

that handed Prairie View the first of its 80 consecutive losses. Football players and fans alike experienced something they had never known:



Gene Autry, one of the great Western film stars of the 1930s and '40s, died in October. An accomplished horseman, he appears in 1938 on his favorite mount, Champion.

a celebration of Prairie View's football success.

ALL-AMERICAN

Doak Walker, the great SMU running back, Heisman Trophy winner, and Detroit Lions star, died September 27 at age 71. The Dallas native had been paralyzed in a skiing accident January 30. Doak Walker touched a lot of people, including University of Texas running back Ricky Williams. Doak Walker was known not only for his athletic abilities, but even more for his self-deprecating humor, love of the outdoors, and congeniality.

SHOPPING ON-LINE

The **Texas Highways** Web site added an on-line shopping cart on October 1. Now, customers

can place orders for subscriptions, calendars, note cards, historical maps, and prints, and pay with a credit card through a secure, encrypted ordering system. Stay tuned: We plan to add new products in the near future.

RHYTHM OF THE SADDLE

Singing cowboy **Gene Autry** died on October 2, three days after he celebrated his 91st birthday. Autry was born on a small farm in Tioga, Texas; learned to ride horses, play the guitar, and sing as a child; and was “discovered” by Will Rogers at the age of 17. Autry went on to Hollywood fame during the heyday of Westerns and starred in films between 1934



DAVID PELLERIN, CORPUS CHRISTI CALLER-TIMES

and 1976. He recorded songs like “Back in the Saddle Again,” “Tumbling Tumbleweeds,” and his all-time biggest hit, “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” Later, Autry became fabulously wealthy as a broadcasting tycoon, oil baron, hotel mogul, and the original owner of the California (now Anaheim) Angels baseball franchise. When asked in 1992 what he considered his proudest accomplishment, Autry said, “I’ve always maintained a



SHE GOT FAME

Jody Conradt, the University of Texas women’s athletic director and the winningest coach in women’s college basketball NCAA Division I, was inducted into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame on October 2. Conradt, who just began her 23rd season at UT,

good association with all the people that I’ve worked with.”

SLOW AND STEADY...

Federal researchers say that 1998 was the most successful year

ever for **sea turtle releases** at Padre Island National Seashore. Kemp’s ridleys, the most endangered sea turtles in the world, are slowly being re-

stored to the Gulf of Mexico through the efforts of marine specialists in Texas and Mexico. In 1998, about 1,300 sea turtles, including 801 Kemp’s ridleys, were hatched and released at the national seashore. Because of the high rate of attrition, which scientists blame on sharks, shrimp nets, poachers, and trash, only one percent of the Kemp’s ridleys are expected to reach their reproductive age—in 10 to 15 years.

has been one of women’s basketball’s leading ambassadors, and has amassed a staggering 709 wins during her years as a coach at Sam Houston State, UT-Arlington, and UT-Austin. Hook ‘em, Jody!

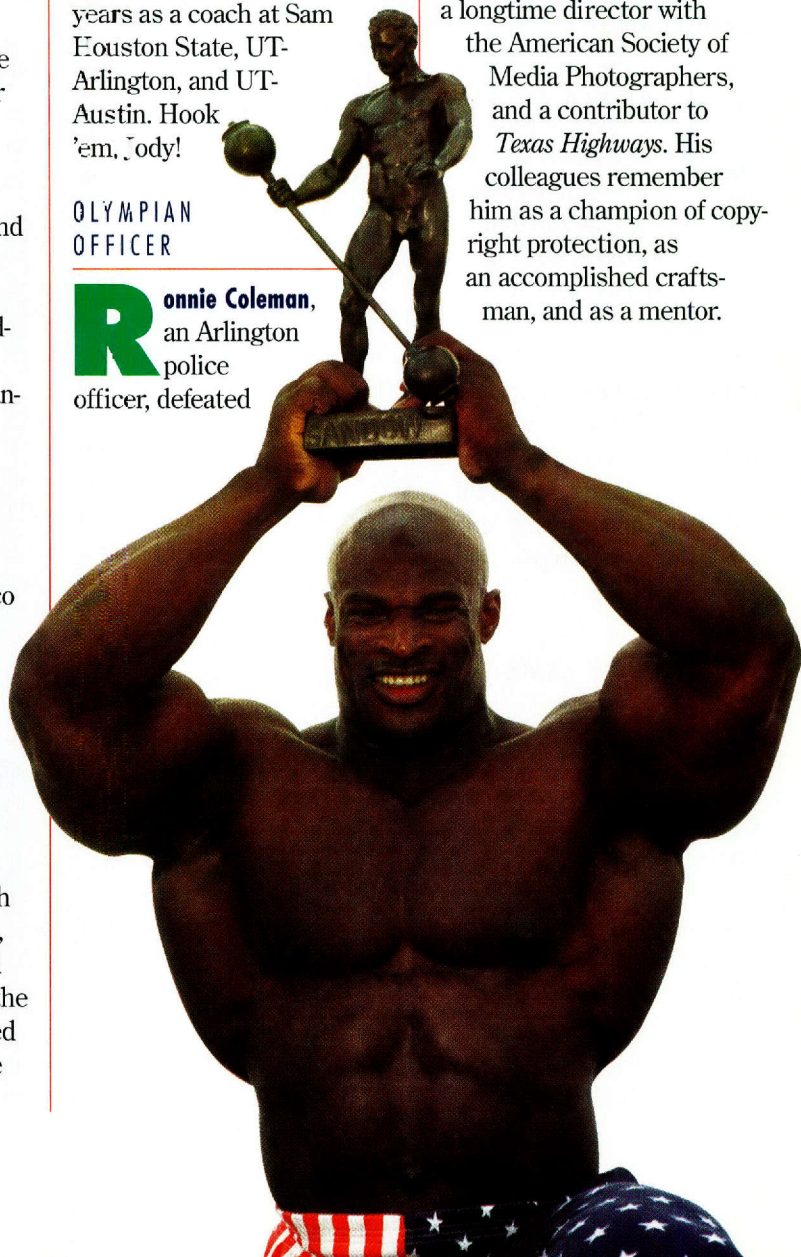
OLYMPIAN OFFICER

Ronnie Coleman, an Arlington police officer, defeated

22 of the world’s top muscle men in October to win the Mr. Olympia title. He maintains his incredible 270-pound, one-percent-body-fat frame on a 4,000-calorie-per-day diet.

MEMORABLE IMAGES

Texas lost one of its foremost photographers October 10. **Reagan Bradshaw**, whose work appeared in books, magazines, and art exhibitions, was flying in an ultralight near Austin when the aircraft crashed. Reagan had been a photography editor for *Texas Parks & Wildlife*, a longtime director with the American Society of Media Photographers, and a contributor to *Texas Highways*. His colleagues remember him as a champion of copyright protection, as an accomplished craftsman, and as a mentor.



January 1999						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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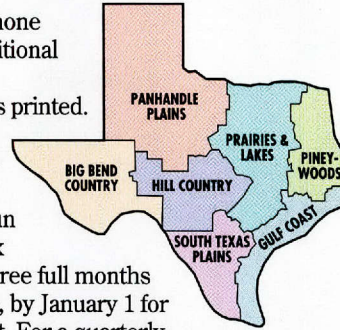
In Fun Forecast, we provide events and telephone numbers for next month, so that you'll have additional time to plan your outings.

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 January 1 for April 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, or fax 512/486-5944.

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.



19 FORT WORTH Renee Fleming, Soprano 817/738-6536	23 WHITWRIGHT Opry 903/364-2539
LOCKHART Country Music Jamboree 512/376-3430 or 474-0882	24 DALLAS <i>Forever Plaid</i> 214/692-0203
WACO <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> 254/752-9797 or 800/701-2787	GRANBURY The Tin Roof Tango 817/573-9191 or 800/950-2212
21 BEDFORD <i>Pictures at an Exhibition</i> 817/952-2290	WACO Symphony Chamber Music Series 254/754-0851
GATESVILLE Taste of Gatesville 254/865-8050	25 DALLAS <i>Through the Eyes of a Friend</i> 214/739-2737
22 DALLAS Jack Hardy in Concert 214/363-0044	LOCKHART Opry 512/601-2154
22-23 DALLAS A Dallas Dance Gathering 214/871-8967	25-29 CORSICANA Warehouse Living Arts Center Performances 903/872-5411
The Dallas Morning News Swimming & Diving Classic 214/768-2883	28-31 PLANO Craft Show 903/786-2883 or 800/783-4526
9 STEPHENVILLE Erath Co Jr Livestock Show 254/965-5313	28-Feb 14 GARLAND <i>Social Security</i> 972/205-2790 or 214/349-1331
9-10 BRENNHAM Antiques Show 409/863-3695 or 888/273-6426	29 DALLAS Heidi Muller in Concert 214/363-0044
9-10, 20-21 SEGUIN High School Rodeo 800/580-7322	GARLAND Symphony 972/205-2790
11-24 DALLAS USA Kidfilm Festival 214/821-NEWS	29-30 BEDFORD <i>Sleeping Beauty</i> 817/861-2287
12 YOAKUM Country Music USA 512/293-2309	23 DALLAS John Gorka in Concert 214/363-0044
12-27 DALLAS <i>The Gin Game</i> 972/298-1217	BRENNHAM Broadway Extravaganza 409/830-8358 or 888/273-6426
13 PLANO Martin Luther King Jr Celebration 972/578-7122	IRVING Bluegrass Show 972/475-8565
	DALLAS The Manhattan Transfer 214/692-0203
	29-31 DALLAS <i>La Bohème</i> 214/443-1000

Panhandle Plains

1 WICHITA FALLS (began Dec 4) Fantasy of Lights 940/689-4352
1-3 ABILENE (began Dec 1) Winter Wonderland 915/673-4587
1-3, 29-31 POST Old Mill Trade Days 806/495-3529
2 SILVERTON Caprock Jamboree 806/823-2524
3-13 ABILENE Cutting Horse Spectacular 915/677-4376
7-9, 14-16, 22-23 ABILENE <i>Cliffhanger</i> 915/673-6271
8-9 WINTERS Jr Livestock Show 915/754-5210
9 ABILENE West Texas Rehab Center Telethon 915/793-8474

9 CLARENDON Saints' Roost Jamboree 806/874-2421
9-10 PAMPA Top O'Texas Livestock Show 806/665-5946
WICHITA FALLS Team Roping 806/358-7787
10 ABILENE Russian Choral Music 915/673-4587
12-13 WICHITA FALLS Royal Lipizzaner Stallions 940/716-5500
12, 26 AMARILLO Young Astronauts Club 806/355-9548
14 ABILENE Artwalk 915/677-8389
15-16 LUBBOCK Symphony 806/762-1688
PAMPA Gray Co Livestock Show 806/665-5946
WICHITA FALLS Monster Trucks 817/683-4742

16 ABILENE Royal Lipizzaner Stallions 915/677-4376
ARCHER CITY Late Night Lazy Boy Supper Club 940/514-2505
22 BRECKENRIDGE Chili & Barbecue Cookoff 254/559-2301
22-24 LUBBOCK <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> 806/770-2000
23-24 WICHITA FALLS Arts & Crafts Show 972/772-3816
27-30 DUMAS Moore Co 4-H Livestock Show 806/935-2593
JACKSBORO Jack Co Youth Fair 940/567-2132
28 ABILENE <i>Me and My Girl</i> 915/677-1161

28-31 ARCHER CITY <i>Dial "M" for Murder</i> 940/574-2505
29-31 ABILENE World of Wheels 915/676-6211
30 ABILENE Philharmonic 915/677-6710 or 800/460-0610
WICHITA FALLS Pancake Festival 940/766-8133
Prairies and Lakes
1 DALLAS Southwestern Bell Cotton Bowl 214/638-2695
1-2 DALLAS (began Dec 1) Fair Park Holiday Lights 214/761-9422
WACO (began Dec 30) Rodeo 254/776-1660
1-3 BELTON (began Dec 1) Nature in Lights 254/287-8303 or 939-3551

1-3 FORT WORTH (began Dec 1) Earth 2U, Exploring Geography 817/255-9300
(began Dec 4) <i>The Sho-Nuf Blues</i> 817/338-4411
1-4 GRAND PRAIRIE (began Dec 5) Winter Wonderland 972/237-8112
1-3, 28-31 CANTON Trade Days 903/567-6556 or 567-2991
1-31 DALLAS (began Dec 1) Holiday at the Arboretum 214/327-4901
1-Feb 7 DALLAS <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> 214/522-8499
2, 9, 16, 23, 30 STEPHENVILLE Cross Timbers Country Opry 254/965-4132
8 PLANO Hereules/ Xena/Star Trek Convention 818/409-0960

8 SOUTHLAKE Carlo Pezzimenti, Classical Guitar 817/481-0454
8, 10, 13, 16 DALLAS <i>Das Rheingold</i> 214/443-1000
9 STEPHENVILLE Erath Co Jr Livestock Show 254/965-5313
9-10 BRENNHAM Antiques Show 409/863-3695 or 888/273-6426
9-10, 20-21 SEGUIN High School Rodeo 800/580-7322
11-24 DALLAS USA Kidfilm Festival 214/821-NEWS
12 YOAKUM Country Music USA 512/293-2309
12-27 DALLAS <i>The Gin Game</i> 972/298-1217
13 PLANO Martin Luther King Jr Celebration 972/578-7122

13-16 GATESVILLE Coryell Co Youth Fair 254/865-5658 or 865-5765
14-15 SEGUIN Guadalupe Co Youth Livestock Show 800/580-7322
14-23 CORSICANA <i>Shirley Valentine</i> 903/872-5421
15-17 NAVASOTA Trade Days 409/825-8490
15-Feb 6 FORT WORTH <i>Medea</i> 817/784-9378
16 SMITHVILLE Opry Night 512/237-2313
16-17 PLANO Train Show 817/249-4965
ROUND TOP Piano/Vocal Concert 409/249-3129
17 HALLETTSVILLE State Championship Domino Tournament 512/798-2662

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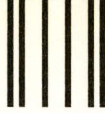
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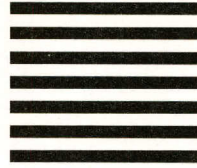
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29-Feb 7
DALLAS
 Boat Show
 214/714-0177

29-Feb 28
FORT WORTH
Killingsworth
 817/938-4411

30
DALLAS
 Dino Dash/
 Discovery Fest
 214/428-5555

IRVING
 Evening of Mozart
 972/580-1566

31
GRANBURY
 Broadway Revue
 817/573-9191

Pineywoods

1-4
TYLER
 (began Dec 1)
 Santa Land
 903/882-1518

8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30

LIBERTY
 Opry on the Square
 409/336-1079 or
 800/248-8918

15-17
NACOGDOCHES
 Trade Days
 409/564-2150

17
MARSHALL
Radio Days
 903/935-4484

18
JEFFERSON
 Martin Luther
 King Jr
 Parade
 903/665-2672

21
NACOGDOCHES
 SFA
 Clarinet & Horn
 Concert
 409/468-6407

23
CONROE
 Banu Gibson &
 New Orleans
 Hot Jazz
 409/441-2787

29
NACOGDOCHES
Big
 409/468-6407

30
JEFFERSON
 Mardi Gras Ball
 903/665-2672

TEXARKANA
Me and My Girl
 903/792-4992

Gulf Coast

1-10
GALVESTON
 (began Dec 19)
 Moody Gardens
 Holiday Ice
 Skating Rink
 800/582-4673

1-23
HOUSTON
 (began Dec 31)
Angel Street
 713/661-9505

2-4
HOUSTON
 Symphony Pops
 Broadway Hits
 713/227-ARTS or
 800/828-ARTS

8-9
GALVESTON
Smoky Joe's Cafe
 Musical Revue
 409/763-7173

8-17
HOUSTON
 International
 Boat, Sport, &
 Travel Show
 713/526-6361

9
RIO HONDO
 Texas Air Museum
 Fly-In
 956/748-2112

VICTORIA
 An Evening with
 Larry Gatlin
 512/576-4500

9-10
CORPUS CHRISTI
 Arts & Crafts Show
 512/767-9333

HARLINGEN
 Arts & Crafts Show
 956/428-1243

9-11
HOUSTON
 Symphony
 Fantastique
 713/224-7575

9, 13-16
ROBSTOWN
 Nueces Co
 Jr Livestock Show
 512/387-5395
 or 387-3933

10
HARLINGEN
 Valley All-Stars
 Big Band
 Jazz Concert
 956/412-PLAY

13
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
 Health Fair
 956/761-4412

Taste of the Island
 956/761-4412

15
ORANGE
Fiddler on the Roof
 409/886-5535

15-16
ROCKPORT
 Up With People
 512/729-5519

15-17
BAYTOWN
 Chili & Barbecue
 Cookoff
 281/422-8359

16
BAY CITY
 Market Day
 409/245-8333

CORPUS CHRISTI
 Vikki Carr
 with Symphony
 Orchestra
 512/883-6683

GALVESTON
Fiddler on the Roof
 409/763-7173

PORT ARTHUR
 Janis Joplin
 Birthday Bash
 409/985-5583

16-17
HARLINGEN
 Winter Texan
 Polkafest
 956/399-5800 or
 800/399-5127

16-18, 22-24
HOUSTON
 Symphony
 713/224-7575

17
HOUSTON
 Methodist
 Health Care
 Houston Marathon
 713/957-3453

19
ORANGE
Treasure Island
 409/886-5535

SAN BENITO
 Winter Texan
 Reception
 956/399-5321

20
HARLINGEN
 Rio Grande Valley
 International
 Music Festival
 956/440-1744

21-24, 29-31
HARLINGEN
A Streetcar Named Desire
 956/412-PLAY

22
HARLINGEN
 South Texas
 Chorale
 Pops Concert
 956/425-6643

22
ORANGE
 Dorsey Big Band
 Tribute
 409/886-5535

22-24
TEXAS CITY
 Trade Days
 409/949-9273

23
BEAUMONT
 Best of
 the Classics
 409/835-7100

VICTORIA
 Tommy Dorsey
 Orchestra
 512/572-ARTS

23-24
GALVESTON
 Musical Revue
 409/763-7173

27
CORPUS CHRISTI
 River City
 Brass Band
 512/980-1949

28
BEAUMONT
 Saint Louis
 Brass Quintet
 409/838-3435

29
CORPUS CHRISTI
 Symphony
 512/883-6683

29-31
BEAUMONT
 Lawn, Home, &
 Garden Expo
 409/745-2121

HOUSTON
A Little Night Music
 713/546-0246 or
 800/346-4462

30
GALVESTON
Madama Butterfly
 409/763-7173

31
ORANGE
Madama Butterfly
 409/886-5535

South Texas Plains

1-3
SAN ANTONIO
 Big Band Five
 210/554-1010

2
SAN ANTONIO
 Los Pastores
 210/224-6163

2-3, 16-17, 23-24
SAN ANTONIO
 Team Roping
 210/698-3300

5
THREE RIVERS
 Brush Country
 Jamboree
 512/449-1349
 or 786-3334

9
BIGFOOT
 Market Trail Day
 830/665-5054

14-16
MCALLEN
 Antique
 Farm Equipment
 Show
 956/686-8976

MERCEDES
 All-Valley RV Show
 956/428-6434

15-16
MCALLEN
 Rio Grande Valley
 Woodcarvers Show
 956/581-2448

16-17
SAN ANTONIO
 Barrel Racing
 210/698-3300

20
PHARR
 Winter Texan
 Appreciation Day
 956/787-1481

21-23
EAGLE PASS
 Maverick Co
 Jr Livestock Show
 830/773-3450

21-24
MISSION
 Texas Citrus Fiesta
 956/585-9724

23
EAGLE PASS
 San Antonio
 Symphony
 830/773-8540

30
SAN ANTONIO
 Music of Scotland
 Dinner & Dance
 210/492-0113

Hill Country

1
AUSTIN
 Red Eye Regatta
 512/244-9768

BOERNE
 (began Nov 26)
 Follow-the-Star
 Christmas
 Drive-Through
 830/249-8000

1
FREDERICKSBURG
 Guided Night Walk
 830/651-6536

JOHNSON CITY
 (began Nov 27)
 Lights Spectacular
 Hill Country Style
 830/868-7684

NEW BRAUNFELS
 (began Nov 13)
 Holiday
 River of Lights
 830/608-2100

TAYLOR
 (began Nov 24)
 Christmas Lights
 at Heritage Square
 512/365-8485

1-3
MARBLE FALLS
 (began Nov 20)
 Walkway of Lights
 830/693-4449

2-3, 23-24
AUSTIN
 City-Wide
 Garage Sale
 512/441-2828 or
 888/441-7133

8
GEORGETOWN
 Pop Goes the Jazz
 512/869-7469

8, 10, 16-17
AUSTIN
Salome
 512/472-5992 or
 800/316-7372

9
GEORGETOWN
 Opry
 512/869-7469

9-10
BURNET
 Highland Lakes
 Bald Eagle Tour
 281/445-1187

13-16
BANDERA
 Bandera Co
 Jr Livestock Show
 830/796-7755

15-16
FREDERICKSBURG
 4H/FFA
 Livestock Show
 830/997-9564

LLANO
 Llano Co
 Jr Livestock Show
 915/247-5354

16
DEVINE
Hank the Cowdog
 830/665-4310

16-17
FREDERICKSBURG
 Gem & Mineral
 Show
 830/997-1955
 or 669-2639

20-23
KERRVILLE
 Hill Country
 Jr Livestock Show
 830/257-6568

21
KERRVILLE
 Chamber Music
 Performance
 830/895-2591

21-24, 28-31
GEORGETOWN
The Lion in Winter
 512/869-7469

22
AUSTIN
 Colorado Quartet
 with
 Manuel Barrueco
 512/471-1444 or
 800/687-6010

22-23
BURNET
 Sam Bass
 Treasure
 Hunt/
 Mystery Game
 512/756-4680

23
AUSTIN
 Ethnic Fair
 512/232-3113

23
AUSTIN
 Milton Berle
 512/472-5470

24
AUSTIN
 Fred Garbo's
 Inflatable Theatre
 Company
 512/472-5470

NEW BRAUNFELS
 Dinner with
 the Arts
 830/625-4824

26
AUSTIN
 Hot Mouth
 Performance
 Ensemble
 512/472-5470

29-30
AUSTIN
 Philadanco
 512/471-1444 or
 800/687-6010

Symphony
 512/476-6064

29-31
WIMBERLEY
 Jazz Festival
 512/847-3909

Big Bend Country

1-9
ODESSA
 SandHills
 Stock Show
 & Rodeo
 915/366-3951 or
 800/472-BULL

3-4
FORT STOCKTON
 Pecos Co
 Pecan Show
 915/336-2541

8-9
EL PASO
Rumpelstiltskin
 915/541-4481

8-9
FORT STOCKTON
 Pecos Co
 Livestock Show
 915/336-6662

14
MIDLAND
 Family Night at
 the Petroleum
 Museum
 915/683-4403

14-16
PECOS
 Reeves Co
 Jr Livestock Show
 915/445-2406

15-16
ODESSA
 Bull Riding
 915/366-3541

16
EL PASO
 Tomas Kubinek,
 Magician, Acrobat,
 & Clown
 915/541-4481

17
ODESSA
 String Quartet
 915/563-0921

18
EL PASO
 Tribute to
 Dr Martin Luther
 King Jr
 915/566-2407

28
EL PASO
 Ballet
 Folklórico
 915/755-4658

29-30
EL PASO
 Symphony
 Chorale
 915/532-3776

ODESSA
The Night Hank Williams Died
 915/362-2329

Travel Texas Highways on the Web.

<http://www.texashighways.com>

1998 Texas Highways Index

Volume 45, Numbers 1 through 12

Compiled by Jill Lawless and Rosemary Williams

Stories published in 1998 are listed by subject and location. The month of issue and page number follow the subject of each article. Limited numbers of magazines are available at \$3.50 per copy. Write to Box 149233, Austin 78714-9233, or call 512/416-3492 or 800/839-4997.

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Winter Wonderland

Each December, in the small Milam County town of Rockdale, the residents of Francine Street carry on a much-anticipated Christmas tradition. After a flurry of nonstop decorating, the street's merrymakers kick back as their maze of candy cane-lined yards, glittering trees and arches, and twinkling holiday dioramas draws throngs of wide-eyed admirers. It's like a winter wonderland—or Las Vegas, depending on your perspective.

A bit of neighborly competition got things rolling in 1991. Vying to win the title of Rockdale's best-decorated house, neighbors Duane Urban and Randy and Margaret Farr strung strand after strand of glittering lights, erected plywood manger and comic-strip scenes, and otherwise let their imaginations run amok. The contest soon forgotten, the two families decided to join efforts and involve the entire block. Now 24 houses strong, the display grows grander each year.

Francine Street residents turn their lights on around December 3 or 4, and leave them up through January 7 or so. The light show begins at dusk each night. On weeknights, the show ends at 11, but on weekends, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day, the lights stay on until midnight. For more details, call 512/446-2030.

Art From the Heart

American folk art, whether you call it "outsider art," "self-taught art," or give it another moniker, has received long-due respect in recent years. In Texas, at least two galleries now showcase it (Austin's Yard Dog Folk Art and Waxahachie's Webb Gallery), and a recent traveling exhibit (*Spirited Journeys*), which focused on Texas' self-taught artists, drew crowds to museums in Austin, Dallas, Tyler, and Houston. Say what you

THE ARNETT COLLECTION



More than 250 examples of American folk art appear jointly at the Amon Carter Museum and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth through January 24. This is Purvis Young's *Locked Up Their Minds*, painted on plywood in 1972.

will—that this "self-taught art" is charming, disturbing, beautifully complex, or confoundedly amateurish—it's nevertheless guaranteed to open your eyes to new perspectives.

Now, in a national traveling exhibit curated by the Museum of American Folk Art in New York, more than 250 examples of the genre will be on view in Fort Worth. Through January 24 at the Amon Carter Museum and the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, *Self-Taught Artists of the 20th Century: An American Anthology* presents pieces by such artists as Grandma Moses, the Reverend Howard Finster, Sister Gertrude Morgan, and others. This is the exhibit's only Texas stop.

The Amon Carter Museum, at 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd. (76107), opens Tue-Sat 10-5, Sun noon-5. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Call 817/738-1933, or visit the museum's Web site at www.cartermuseum.org.

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, at 1309 Montgomery St. (76107), opens Tue-Fri 10-5, Sat 11-5, Sun noon-5. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Call 817/738-9215, or visit the museum's Web site at www.mamfw.org.

Crystal Clear

Perhaps you've just visited the renovated 1908 Hays County Courthouse in San Marcos, or you've completed your Christmas shopping at the town's outlet malls and on-the-square boutiques. Or you've followed our advice and renewed your Christmas spirit at San Marcos' annual holiday festival (see story, page 36). Why not stay overnight?

San Marcos' award-winning

Crystal River Inn offers a welcome respite from ordinary hotels. Thirteen rooms in all—five in the 1883 Classic Revival main house, five in an adjacent stone bungalow built in the 1930s, and three in the 1885 building across the street that housed the city's first apartments—offer such amenities as claw-foot tubs, canopied beds, skylights, antiques or modern décor, fireplaces, and verandas.

Regular weekend rates range from \$85 to \$130 per night, including an elaborate gourmet breakfast. Be sure to ask about the inn's popular Murder Mystery Weekends (gift certificates are available), during which guests don costumes and play sleuth (or villain). Write to 326 W. Hopkins, San Marcos 78666, or call 512/396-3739 or 888/396-3739. Visit the inn's Web site at www.crystalriverinn.com.

Book 'Em, Santa

It's tamale time in Texas, and if you're an adventure of some sort, have we got a cookbook for you (or the tamale-lovers on your gift list). Penned by southwestern-cuisine pioneers Mark Miller, Stephan Pyles, and

John Sedlar, *Tamales* puts a new twist on a centuries-old idea. Well-designed and beautifully photographed, *Tamales* includes 25 dough recipes (ranging from traditional corn mixtures to versions incorporating black beans or curry), plus dozens of filling recipes that run the gamut from tried-and-true to avant-garde. You'll learn how to wrap and steam tamales of all sorts, and you'll find a brief history of what the authors call "the perfect little packages." Find *Tamales* in your bookstore (hardcover, \$25), or call Macmillan Publishing USA at 800/428-5331 for ordering information.

Another great gift idea, especially for folks interested in Texas cultural history, is *Texas Signs On: The Early Days of Radio and Television* by Greenville historian Richard Schroeder. From the beginnings of Texas' "wireless" broadcasting in 1911 to television's burgeoning popularity in the Fifties, *Texas Signs On* documents the people and events that made media history in the Lone Star State. The book's impressive index and engaging text make it a worthy addition to any library. Look for *Texas Signs On* in your bookstore (hardcover, \$29.95), or call Texas A&M University Press at 800/826-8911 for ordering information.

For dog-lovers, may we recommend the latest book by longtime *Texas Highways* contributor Larry Hodge? With a dedication that may very well make you misty-eyed, and an introduction that could have you scrambling to the



closest pet-adoption center, *The Texas Dog Lover's Companion* covers the state's pet-friendly parks, restaurants, lodgings, and other attractions suitable for your canine companions. Larry traveled the state with his two pooches, Samantha and Sport, in tow and has rated his findings on a "paw scale" (which means that the ratings are based on a dog's perspective). A cleverly written account of Larry's on-assignment adventures makes this a fun read. Find *The Texas Dog Lover's Companion* at bookstores (softcover, \$20.95), or call Foghorn Press at 800/FOGHORN for ordering information.

By the Way...

Since 1939, the **Eldorado Woolen Mill**, in the heart of West Texas' wool- and mohair-producing area, has turned raw Texas fibers into fine fabric. A Registered Texas Landmark since 1995, the mill makes such items as blankets, throws, and *ruanas* (South American-style capes), which you can buy at the retail shop. Here, you'll also find Texas-fiber products like scarves, wool-and-mohair angel pins, and table linens. A tour of the operation (\$4, \$2 age 12 and younger) reveals bales of raw wool, demonstrations of the carding and dyeing processes, a look at the different patterns and weaves made here, and up-close viewing of the company's antique machinery, some of which dates to the turn of the century....call 915/853-2541 for a catalog or tour information.

Only in Texas would a town hold a chili cookoff as part of its Christmas celebration. The **8th Annual Brookshire Christmas Festival** (Dec. 4-5) features chili galore, live entertainment, more than 150 arts and crafts booths, a silent auction, photos with Santa, the lighting of the 1910 Waller County Historical Museum, and two holiday dances....call 281/934-2465 or 375-5000.

The Galveston Historical Foundation's popular

GALVESTON HISTORICAL FOUNDATION



Dickens on The Strand celebrates its 25th year in Galveston December 5-6. Wear a Victorian costume to get in free.

December blowout, **Dickens on The Strand**, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. On December 5-6, The Strand National Historic Landmark District teems with a host of Dickensian characters and their costumed cohorts. Enjoy glittering parades with equestrian teams and historic carriages, more than 150 food and crafts vendors, sword-swallowers and other street entertainers, bagpipe bands and hand-bell choirs, and other festivities. Participants can also take part in candlelight tours of Galveston's oldest homes, as well as by-reservation-only feasts, teas, and breakfasts. Admission is free for anyone in Victorian costume....call 409/765-7834,

MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM



Bold designs, like those in Lois Mailou Jones' 1932 painting *The Ascent of Ethiopia*, characterize the art created during the Harlem Renaissance. See other examples at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, through February 14.

or check the festival's Web site at www.galvestonhistory.org.

At the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, through February 14, **Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance** showcases more than 100 paintings, sculptures, photographs, and works on paper created in New York during the 1920s. During this period, the Harlem district of New

York City exploded as a center for African-American expression. The artists of this so-called "New Negro" movement created bold, colorful works that explored their heritage and described their modern-day culture. As you walk through the show, you'll hear music and see video clips from the period....call 713/639-7300.

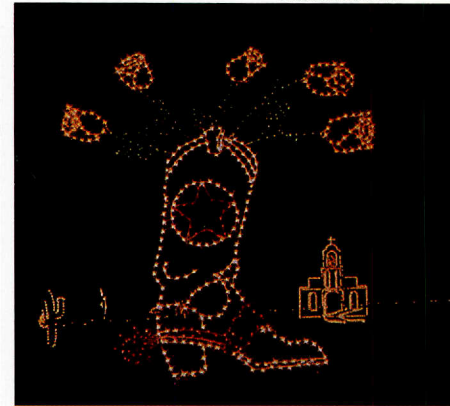
Fredericksburg and Johnson City, well-known destinations for Christmas-light seekers, anchor the annual **Hill Country Regional Lighting Tour**, held November 27-January 1. The 11 towns on the tour—Goldthwaite, Dripping Springs, Burnet, Fredericksburg, Johnson City, Llano, Marble Falls, Round Mountain, Bulverde, Mason, and Blanco—host a variety of Christmas events, including lights by the zillions, parades, home tours, holiday markets and bazaars, caroling events, and appearances by Santa....call 830/997-8515 for a map and schedule of events.

The city of New Braunfels presents the **2nd annual Holiday River of Lights** drive-through display November 13-January 1 (call to confirm dates). The trail, which wends nearly a mile through Cypress Bend Park, on the banks of the Guadalupe River, will gleam with a 52-foot-long holiday train, a 15-foot-tall teddy bear, a 50-foot tree of lights, and some 30 other glittering, larger-than-life holiday displays. Admission costs \$7 per car....call 830/608-2100.

For information on emergency road conditions in Texas, call 800/452-9292.

San Antonio's illuminated River Walk draws visitors by the thousands during the holiday season. If you trek to the Alamo City this month, especially if you bring children along, check out the three **animated holiday windows** at the Hilton Palacio del Rio (200 S. Alamo). Using paint, canvas, metal, clay, gingerbread, and other materials, artists have re-created scenes from classic kids' stories and rhymes. Visitors can pick up a book-buying guide for kids, too....call 210/207-2500.

© COLOR EXPRESS



A mile-long, drive-through holiday display in New Braunfels' Cypress Bend Park will gleam through January 1.

Holiday lights shine during the **3rd annual Lights of the Blackland** regional lighting tour, November 27-January 3. The eight towns on the tour—Elgin, Coupland, Taylor, Thrall, Thorndale, Granger, Bartlett, and Hutto—decorate their town squares with lights, keep stores open late for last-minute shopping and camaraderie, and host a slew of other Christmas activities, including parades, live Nativity scenes, and home tours....call 512/365-8485 for a brochure and a schedule of events.

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...

At **Beau's in Comanche**, we found the chicken-fried steak and the fried okra (fresh!) to be the best we've eaten on the road in a long time. The pies are great, too, especially the knock-your-socks-off lemon icebox. Beau's is strictly family style; the chef/owner is Beau Blackwell, whose mom makes the pies.

Dave and Teresa Edmonds, Claremont, California, via email
Beau's is at 134 West Central in Comanche; 915/356-2869.

I go to **Quanah** every other month to attend luncheons. We have met many times at the **Medicine Mound Depot Restaurant** [see "All This and Dinner, Too," September issue]. While in town, I always make a point to go to **The Daffodil Express**. Owner Pam Horton carries a delightful array of unusual gifts, cards, etc. She makes you feel special just for stopping by.

Ella Joe Gruhlkey, Oklaunion
The Daffodil Express ("Soda Fountain...Soup, Sandwiches, & Pizza, Unique Gifts...") is at 204 South Main in Quanah; 940/663-5320. The business is one of six in the nation recently designated a "Destination Store" (one for which folks will drive many miles to visit) at the National Main Street Convention.

SUNRISE AT SUNSET

In the 1930s and '40s, South Texans swarmed to nightclubs in the African-American community of **St. Paul Square** in

with country music and dancing—as the **Sunset Saloon**. Write to 310 South St. Mary's, Suite 1100, San Antonio 78205; 210/227-5115.

While you're in San Antonio, stop by the **Hertzberg Circus Collection & Museum** (210 West Market Street), which earlier this year added the **Las Carpas** exhibit to its permanent collection. Known as poor man's circuses, *carpas*, or Mexican tent shows, relocated to Texas during and after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). The performing families, many of whom called San Antonio home, took their shows to small towns and urban barrios throughout the Southwest. At the Hertzberg, you'll see *carpas* costumes, props, rare photographs, and a rare promotional poster. Write to 210 West Market Street, San Antonio 78205-2826; 210/207-7819.



At San Antonio's Hertzberg Circus Museum, the Las Carpas exhibit features memorabilia from old Mexican tent shows, like this circa-1942 photo of performer Pilar Garcia.

COURTESY RODOLFO GARCÍA, JR. AND THE INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES, SAN ANTONIO

San Antonio to hear the likes of Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, and Ella Fitzgerald. The grand Southern Pacific Depot there was the hub of Alamo City comings and goings, welcoming in the '30s alone such notables as Calvin Coolidge, Ty Cobb, and Judy Garland.

A new heyday has dawned on St. Paul Square, now an entertainment complex called **Sunset Station**, east of I-37 next to the Alamodome. Part of the first phase of restaurants, clubs, and shops scheduled to open soon (this month or next), the gloriously restored depot should bustle once more—this time

ARTSY ADDRESS

The Texas Commission on the Arts' new **Art on Art online calendar** (www.artonart.com) lists more than 2,500 cultural attractions and events across the state. Along with specifics on exhibits, recitals, shows, and more, browsers find sources for area information and a travel-planner section as well. Write to the commission at Box 13406, Austin 78711-3406; 512/463-5535, ext. 42331, or 800/252-9415.

PEEKS INTO THE PAST

In 1717 in present-day **San Augustine**, the Spanish established Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de los Ais Mission to protect against French invasion and to Christianize Indians. Recently opened at the site, the **Mission Dolores complex** includes a visitor center, an archival research library, and an archeological laboratory next to the

remains of the mission. Folks can also make use of walking trails, campsites, group shelters, and a 17-acre RV park. Write to the City of San Augustine, 301 South Harrison, San Augustine 75972; 409/275-2121.

Established by TxDOT in 1967 during Governor John Connally's administration, the **Texas Forts Trail** connects eight frontier forts and one Spanish presidio, all in West Central Texas. The colorful and informative new **Texas Forts Trail brochure** describes in one handy resource those nine sites and surrounding communities—from Fort Concho (in San Angelo) to Fort Richardson (in Jacksboro). To get a copy of the free brochure, pick one up at any TxDOT Travel Information Center; write to the Texas Historical Commission, Box 12276, Austin 78711-2276; or call the Abilene CVB (800/727-7704) or the San Angelo CVB (800/375-1206).

CHRISTMAS TREE

Folks at **Dallas' Hotel Crescent Court** have fashioned a 13-foot **edible Christmas tree and ornaments** using some 2,400 pounds of slivered almonds, 1,500 pounds of chocolate, 150 pounds of gingerbread, and heaps of other sweet ingredients. See the toothsome **Tannenbaum** at the hotel from December 1 through January 3. Write to 400 Crescent Court, Dallas 75201; 214/871-3200.

Down the Road

We've got big plans for January, with stories on Big Band music and the state's king-size trees. Plus, we'll bring you the buzz from turn-of-the-20th-Century Texas, trek the Comanchero Trails, and fill up a few pages with a story on old gas stations.

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

J. GRIFFIS SMITH



Texans statewide embrace the holiday season as a time to get busy and illuminate houses, yards, and whatever else they take a shine to. The owners of this house, three miles west of Chappell Hill on US 290, used more than 25,000 lights (and a couple of new circuit breakers) for last year's decorating.

