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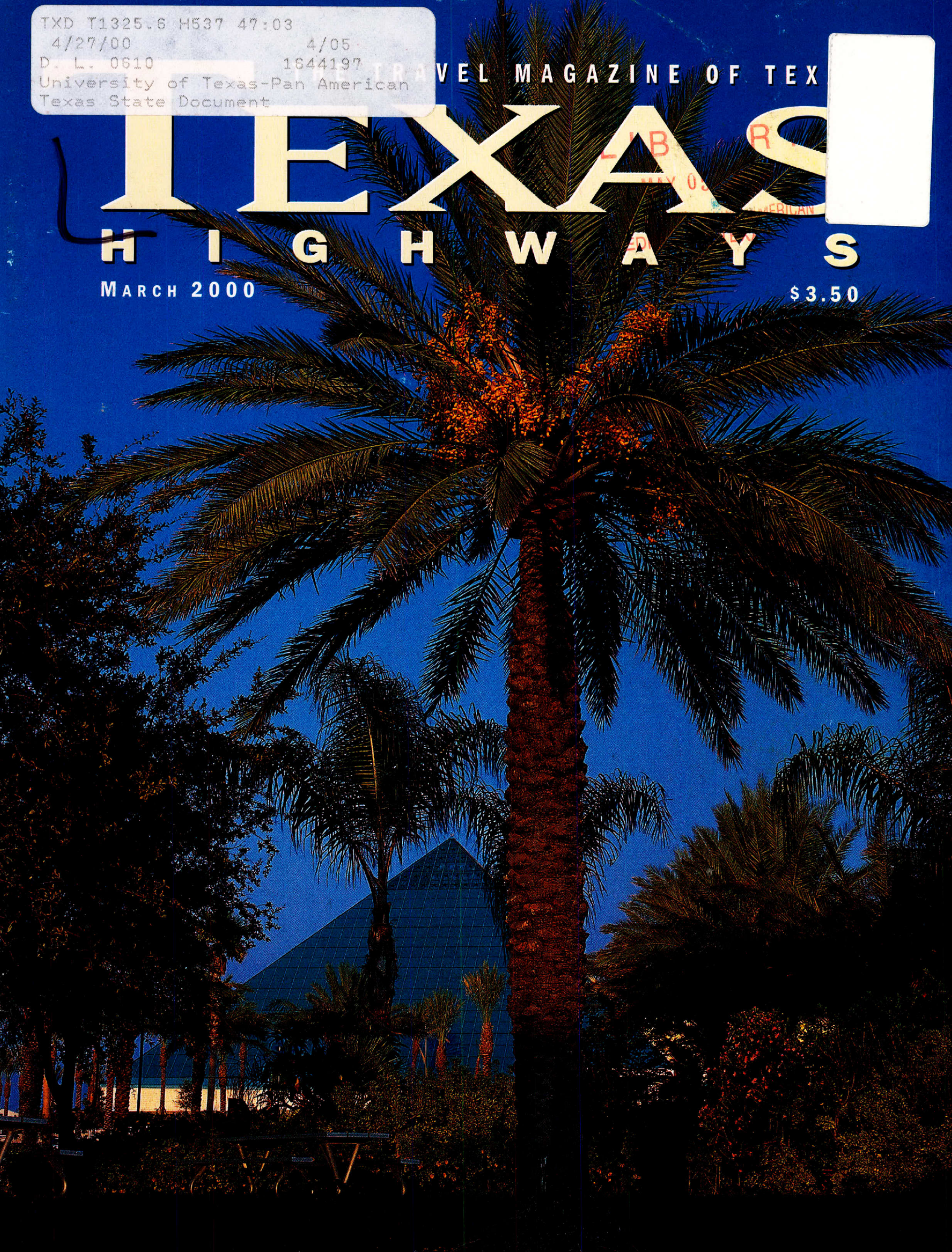
TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

TEXAS

HIGHWAYS

MARCH 2000

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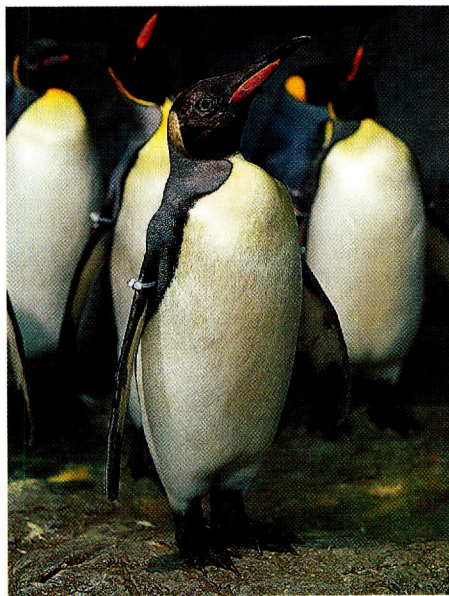
Our cover this month includes one of the pyramids at Galveston's **Moody Gardens**, which began in the mid-1980s as a rehabilitation riding center for people with head injuries. Tyler photojournalist **Randy Mallory's** story concentrates on Moody Gardens as a recreational facility that combines education and amusement. Randy points out that the pyramids provide financial support for the world-renowned Hope Therapy program, which includes animal and horticultural therapy, and education and employment for the physically and emotionally disabled.

Galveston photographer **Robert John Mihovil**, who shot the image of penguins on page 8 for the Moody Gardens story, found out just how curious these creatures are. The birds nudged, pecked, and nipped at Robert's ankles and backside as he photographed them from inside their glass enclosure. Apparently, penguins in the wild exhibit similar behavior.

As Jeffrey Masson writes in his bestseller *The Emperor's Embrace*, penguins fascinate humans because of their resemblance to us: "They walk upright, the way we do, and, like us, they are notoriously curious creatures. Penguins in the wild walk right up to people, touch them, and look as if they were preparing to study them."

Many penguin experts speculate that because the birds evolved south of the equator, they had never experienced land predators like the polar bear. This makes them fearless. Bernard Stonehouse, the world's leading authority on penguins, has written that the birds think a human is a penguin who is somehow "different, less predictable, occasionally violent, but tolerable company when he sits still and minds his own business."

Some of the spectators at Moody Gardens' Aquarium Pyramid surely ponder the similarities and differences between humans and penguins as they gaze through the windows of the icy Antarctic exhibit where the birds gather and swim about. Both sets of creatures no doubt notice that we all stand upright, travel in groups, and appear to gab incessantly....



© ROBERT MIHOVIL

Galveston's Moody Gardens encourages visitors and penguins to size each other up.

This issue also tells us about two lodgings with distinctive flavor. **Pamela Casteel's** story on the **Stacia Leigh** introduces a popular bed-and-breakfast that hosts visitors aboard a historic vessel moored at Galveston's Pier 22. Up the road in Houston, **La Colombe d'Or** takes care of visitors with a combination of art, elegance, and fine dining.

Steve Zimmerman, the hotel's owner, informs me that since **Elaine Acker** submitted her story on "the world's smallest luxury hotel," he has opened the **Court of the Colombe** across the street. The new facility includes nine full townhouse apartments with all the amenities of a residential hotel. "We have aimed this at people interested in longer stays," Steve says....

And finally, a note on our late friend and contributor **Bess Whitehead Scott**, who recently was named one of the 100 women who most influenced Texas history in the 20th Century. The Women's Chamber of Commerce of Texas honored Bess for her pioneering achievements in journalism over the course of the century....

Jack Lowry

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

THE TRAVEL MAGAZINE OF TEXAS

MARCH 2000

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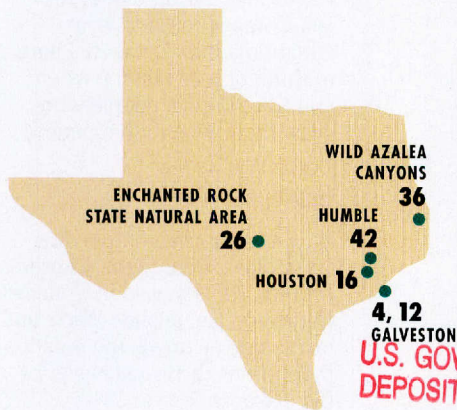
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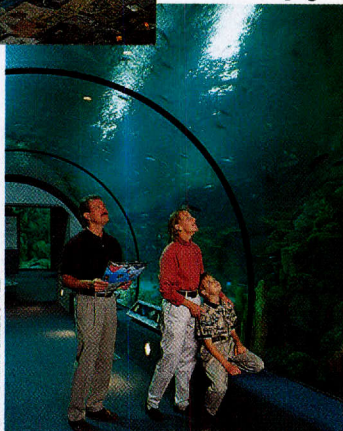
Sites in This Issue



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page 4



© ROBERT MIHOVIL

A journey to the center of the sea enchants visitors to Moody Gardens' new, 12-story Aquarium Pyramid.

ABOUT OUR COVERS

FRONT—At Moody Gardens, a date palm makes a bold statement against a cloudless Galveston sky. For more on this spectacular site, turn to page 24. *Photo* © Randy Mallory

BACK—Sunlight peeking through a clearing in the Wild Azalea Canyons of Newton County showcases a jumble of Piedmont azalea blooms. To learn more about this Big Thicket floral extravaganza, turn to page 36. *Photo* © Richard Reynolds

FEATURES

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THE PYRAMIDS OF MOODY GARDENS *by Randy Mallory*

Have a lark, or linger and learn at Galveston's Moody Gardens. With three glass-encased environments to choose from—the Rainforest Pyramid, the Discovery Pyramid, and the Aquarium Pyramid—the only problem is deciding which one to explore first

12

THE STACIA LEIGH B&B *by Pamela Casteel*

If you like to indulge in history as well as luxury, consider spending a night or two aboard this floating B&B in Galveston. Once owned by Mussolini, the refurbished 1906 vessel has seen her share of intrigue

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LA COLOMBE D'OR *by G. Elaine Acker*

Its decor modeled after that of its namesake on the French Riviera, this handsome Houston hotel offers exquisite meals and lodgings with Old World flavor. The building's pedigree dates to the early Twenties, when it was known simply as the Fondren mansion

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STAR SIGHTINGS: FIVE-POINTED IMAGES FROM AROUND THE STATE

Introduction by Michael A. Murphy

Star-studded images abound in Texas. Take a gander at the array we found, and then start your own collection. Go ahead...let the stars get in your eyes

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THE HILL COUNTRY'S ROCK OF AGES *by Janet R. Edwards*

Enchanted Rock has been rocking visitors' worlds for centuries. Today, this Central Texas shrine rates high on the must-see list of most Texans and Texan-wannabees

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WILD AZALEA CANYONS *by Diane Morey Sitton*

Acres of azaleas beautify Newton County each spring, and Mother Nature takes care of the show. The annual spectacle covers some 200 acres of the Big Thicket

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MERCER ARBORETUM & BOTANIC GARDENS *by Diane Morey Sitton*

Whether you're interested in botany, butterflies, or just plain communing with nature, you'll find sights to soothe your soul at this Harris County treasure. Mercer features outstanding collections of irises, amaryllis, and daylilies, and endangered plants as well

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To Bay or Not To Bay

In the January story on lighthouses on pages 29 and 33, you refer to the "Matagorda Bay Causeway." I lived in Calhoun County 25 years, and [the causeway crosses] Lavaca Bay, not Matagorda Bay.

EMORY K. DAMSTROM
Dallas

Ed. Note: *You're right, Mr. Damstrom. Thanks for enlightening us.*

Cibolo-k

In January Letters, a reader complained bitterly about your story on Cibolo Creek Ranch [November issue]. This person indicated that *Texas Highways* was out of place to cover the resort because it is expensive. Please don't let his narrow-minded whining stop you from informing readers of all of the exciting places the state has to offer.

CHRISTOPHER AMOS
Aledo, via email

The Lure of the Lights

The January cover is absolutely beautiful, and the feature on lighthouses is great! I commend Laurence Parent for his excellent photographs and Patricia Parent for her well-written story.

However, I must take exception to one statement. On page 26, she suggests that Texas' eight remaining lighthouses represent "a greater variety of lighthouse types than [in] any other state." Michigan once had nearly 150 lighthouses on its 3,200 miles of shoreline. Today, 116 of them remain, more than [in] any other state. You say that Texas has brick masonry, cast iron, screw pile, and caisson styles of lighthouses. Michigan has all of the above, except screw pile, but we also have local stone construction, steel skeleton, wood frame, a floating "lightship," and one built entirely of marble, on Belle Isle near Detroit.

MICHAEL HUGGINS
Monroe, Michigan

In October, we went all along the Texas coast searching for lighthouses. We found some;

others we could not get to, but we vowed to go back. I love lighthouses and have visited more than 100 in the United States and Canada and have taken hundreds of pictures. I also collect miniature lighthouses and now have more than 100. I hope the Parents' article will create more lighthouse-lovers and motivate more people to try to save the lighthouses we still have in Texas and elsewhere.

JOYCE ABBOTT
Dripping Springs,
via email

Our local newspaper here in Harlingen, *The Valley Morning Star*, is publishing a series of articles about Harlingen and the Rio Grande Valley and its development over the last 100 years. It included a photo of the Port Isabel Lighthouse [see above] taken sometime in the 1920s. It provides a historical perspective of the lighthouse and particularly of Don Chencho, then 118 years old, who had helped to build it in 1852.

ALEX R. MARTINEZ
Harlingen

Riders of the Storm

Minnie Florea's story in the January issue brought back memories. I was 11 months old the day the 1915 storm hit Galveston. We lived in Texas City, just across the bay. Our home was more than a mile from the water. About 11 o'clock that night, my father stepped off our back porch chest deep in saltwater [while] leading the family to the Thomas-Nunns' two-story home, on the street behind us.

LEWIS B. SINK, via email

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



Don Chencho - Over 118 years Old - And The Lighthouse He Helped Build in 1852 - Port Isabel, Texas - c. 1920

Said to be more than 118 years old at the time of this photo in the 1920s, Don Chencho sits in front of the Port Isabel Lighthouse, which he had helped build in 1852.

Days of Goodnight

While reading the January issue, I was struck by how only a generation separates us from the days of the Texas frontier. Your story on Charles Goodnight and the accompanying reminiscences of Ila McDonald Barker brought back memories my mother, Madge Brady Carter, told of her childhood in the Panhandle. Born in 1912 in Claude, 15 miles northwest of the town of Goodnight, my mother had a photo taken when she and other schoolchildren were invited to the Goodnight ranch to watch the buffalo hunt. She remembered meeting Mr. Goodnight, whom local residents ranked right up there with President Wilson in terms of greatness. The story also reminded me of seeing the barn in Wise County where my grandmother

Carter hid during one of the last Comanche raids from Oklahoma into Texas. It's hard to think of it as history when you have known people who were there when it happened.

JAMES W. CARTER
Bryan, via email

My great-grandfather was Elijah Goodnight, Charlie's brother. He is buried in Concord Cemetery, just outside Waco, and on his gravestone is the notation that he was the last survivor of the Mexican War in 1848.

SHIRLEY GOODNIGHT
Waco

My granddad Jasper (Jep) Terry and two cousins, all from the Alba-Mineola area, worked on Colonel [Charles] Goodnight's ranch in Donley County in the late 1880s.

ALTON TERRY
Mesquite

True Tex-patriots

My daughter and son-in-law moved to Israel with our grandchildren, so we gave them *Texas Highways* to make them homesick. They planted bluebonnets and placed a cement armadillo in their flower bed. They also fly the Texas flag on March 2.

MARVIN AND SHIRLEY RICH
Houston, via email

I really enjoyed the March 1999 article on Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park and would like to add some information on my grandfather Dr. W.G. McAlexander, who died in 1995. Before his death, he was very active in keeping our history alive with reenactments at the park every year during the Texas Independence Day celebrations. His wife, Barbara, my older brother Mike, and I participated, too. My grandfather did reenactments at the San Jacinto Monument's celebrations, as well. He was avid in his Texas history teachings and made me very proud to be born and raised in the Lone Star State.

PA. WALTON
Livingston, via email

Golly, Ms. Mollie

Mollie Evelyn Moore Davis won acclaim as a poet, journalist, novelist, and playwright in the last quarter of the 19th Century. She wrote novels, dozens of poems, a children's book, short stories, several plays, and a history of Texas, as well as magazine and newspaper articles. Many of her works had Texas settings.

Born in 1844 in Benton County, Alabama, Mollie moved to Texas with her family in 1855. As a girl, she lived in Central Texas, Galveston, and Tyler. Her career as a writer began at age 16 with the publication of some poems in the Tyler newspaper, an event that gained her a local reputation as an accomplished versifier. In 1867, E.H. Cushing, owner of the *Houston Telegraph*, published her first book, *Minding the Gap and Other Poems*.

In 1874, Mollie married newspaperman Thomas E. Davis in Galveston. Six years later, the couple moved to New Orleans, where Mr. Davis joined the *Picayune* (Mollie herself would become editor in 1889). At the couple's home in the French Quarter, Mollie created the equivalent of a French *salon*, welcoming literary and social figures of the day, including Kate Chopin, Booth Tarkington, General Robert E. Lee, and Julia

Ward Howe. She did not publish anything further until 1888.

In 1888, Mollie Davis' first novel, *In War Times at La Rose Blanche*, appeared. From then until her death in New Orleans in 1909, she wrote prolifically, gaining an ever wider following among readers across the nation.

—Cindi Myers, *Superior, Colorado*

Georgia Suite

New Mexico may claim her, but it was in Texas that Georgia O'Keeffe first developed her innovative style. Her Texas drawings—exhibited without her knowledge in New York by her mentor and future husband, famed photographer Alfred Stieglitz—were the first to ignite public interest in her work. Texas was, she later stated, her spiritual home.

Writing to her friend and college classmate Anita Pollitzer in 1912, Georgia said, "Texas had always been a faraway dream. It had always seemed to me that the West must be wonderful. There was no place I knew of that I would rather go, so when I had a chance to teach there, off I went."

It was during her two years in Amarillo (1912-1914)—hiking the hills and taking long walks on the cow trails

that led down into nearby Palo Duro Canyon—that she first drew inspiration from the vastness of the Panhandle and the natural phenomena she encountered. She reveled in the limitless horizon, the clouds, the storms, stars, sunsets, and dusty hills and imbued her works with her own sense of intractable freedom and independence. She would often explain in later years that her works captured not only what she saw, but also how she felt about it.

After two years of teaching and studying on the East Coast, O'Keeffe returned to Texas in 1916 as the head of the Art Department at West Texas State Normal College in Canyon. Her *Canyon Suite* works reflect her year and a half there.

In 1918, when she fell victim to the flu that was ravaging the country, she took a leave of absence and moved to Waring, near San Antonio, for a few months to recuperate at the home of a friend, Leah Harris. Although few of O'Keeffe's biographers have covered this period of her life, the move provided the artist with renewed inspiration. As her health permitted, she spent hours absorbing the colors and shapes of San Antonio's ethnic markets. Examples of works influenced by her visits to San Antonio include the

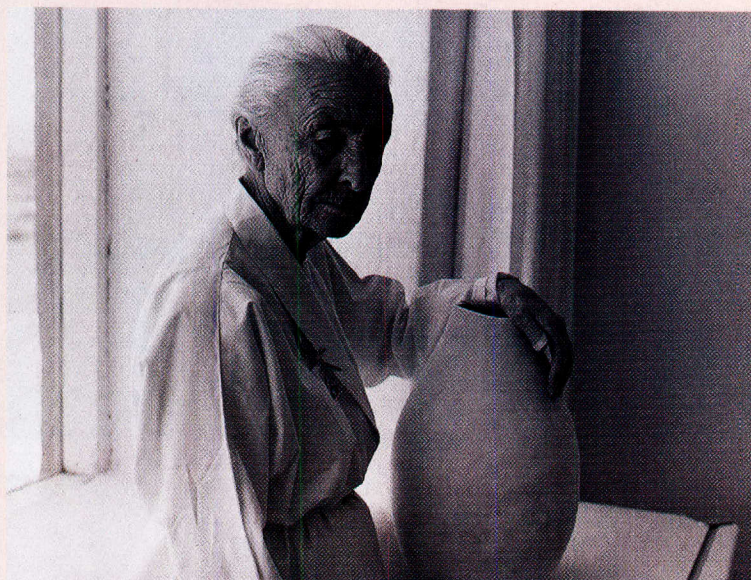
Portrait W series, a few nudes, and such works as *Bowl of Fruit*, *Tree with Green Shade*, and *Figure in Black* (all from 1918). Other images from 1918, such as *Woman with Blue Shawl* and *Window, Red and Blue Sill*, also reveal a connection with San Antonio. All present a powerful yet little-known aspect of O'Keeffe's work.

—Dee Jacques Moynihan, *San Antonio*

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986), in 1916 in Canyon (left), and in 1976 in New Mexico.



COURTESY GEORGIA O'KEEFFE FOUNDATION



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On Galveston Island, discover the marvels of land, sea, and sky at...



© CONNIE THOMPSON



© RANDY LEALORY

The Pyramids of

M O O D

By Randy Mallory

YOU gaze from a diver's perspective at a glistening school of rainbow runners in the Aquarium Pyramid. Then—wow!—a sand tiger shark glides by directly overhead.

You peek through a curtain of roots hanging curiously from tall ficus trees in the Rainforest Pyramid. Then—swish!—a saffron finch flits by in a blur of brilliant yellow.

You delicately move the hand-controller of the docking simulator in the Discovery Pyramid. Then—hurrah!—the space shuttle successfully connects with the international space station...and you feel like a virtual astronaut.

Inside the three pyramids of Moody Gardens in Galveston, a fascinating world (no, make that universe) of sights, sounds, and surprises awaits at every turn.

Some visitors—particularly parents with excited youngsters—frolic through the exhibits as if on a lark. They come away with fond memories of waddling penguins, hatching

butterflies, and Martian landscapes. Slower-paced visitors linger and learn. They study the pyramids' flora and fauna and go hands-on at interactive space exhibits. They come away with a keener awareness about the nature of land, sea, and sky.

Both visitor styles—the tortoise and the hare—can reach the same finish line, says Moody Gardens' executive director, John Zendt. "It's all about education. We believe every visit to Moody Gardens can teach about nature and how to conserve and protect the environment. There's no place else in Texas to get this kind of experience."

As you leave the mainland via the arching Interstate 45 causeway and descend onto Galveston Island, look to your right for Moody Gardens. It's hard to miss. The glass pyramids—the clear Rainforest Pyramid, the blue Aquarium Pyramid, and the mauve Discovery Pyramid—shimmer at water's edge like giant gemstones waiting to be found.

[LEFT] A blooming hibiscus outside the Rainforest Pyramid at Moody Gardens gives the merest hint of the stunning array of tropical plants to be found inside. [BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT] A green iguana warily eyes the photographer. Several varieties of palms, including this Zahedi date palm, add "fringe benefits" to the Gardens' grounds. The startling color of a red ibis brilliantly punctuates the rainforest's greens. A blue morpho butterfly takes a brief respite from its daily flutterings.



Y G A R D E N S



“IT’S *all about education. We believe every visit to Moody the environment. There’s no place else in Texas to get*

© RANDY MALLORY



Touch-tanks in the Aquarium Pyramid hold the likes of starfish, sea urchins, horseshoe crabs, and eels—all irresistible to visitors.

The three pyramids prove the most sparkling of a host of Moody Gardens attractions, which represent an investment by the Moody Foundation of Galveston of some \$300 million. Other attractions include a six-story IMAX 3D Theater, a rollicking IMAX Ridefilm Theater, Palm Beach (replete with fresh-water lagoons and a yellow submarine for kids), and *The Colonel* paddlewheeler, which offers a relaxed ride on Offatts Bayou. There’s also a 303-room luxury hotel, the 60,000-square-foot Galveston Island Convention Center, 25 acres of lush semi-tropical gardens, a walking/biking track, volleyball courts, and picnic areas. All in all, Moody Gardens’ 242 acres have become one of the state’s premier convention and vacation

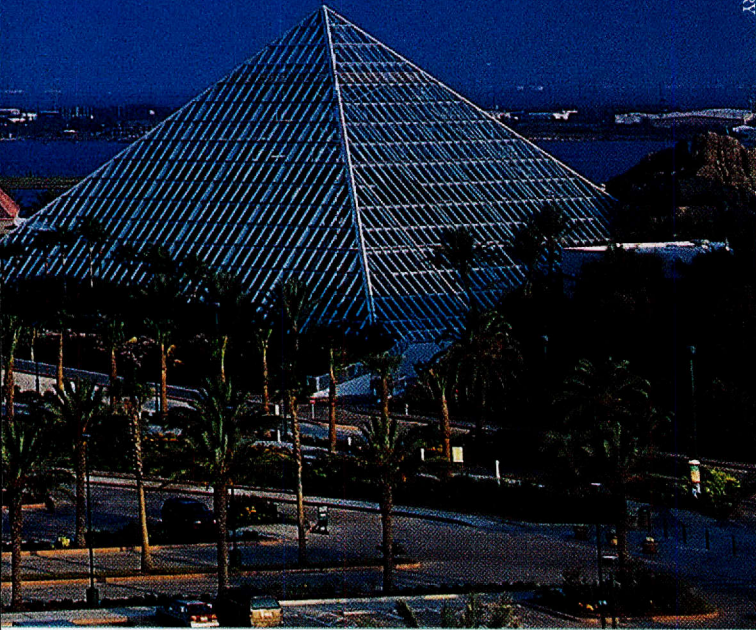
destinations, attracting more than 1.6 million visitors annually.

And, appropriately, it all began with hope. In the early 1980s, the son of local philanthropist Robert L. Moody sustained a head injury in a car accident. Animal-assisted therapy sparked his recovery, which, in turn, spurred the Moody family to create Hope Therapy, a rehabilitation program, in 1984 to help others. Internationally recognized today, Hope Therapy offers rehabilitative horseback riding (hippotherapy) and horticulture therapy for disabled and injured clients. Other ventures, such as the pyramids, provide financial support for Hope Therapy.

FOLLOW THE TUNA

THE largest and newest Moody Gardens venture—the 12-story Aquarium Pyramid—opened last summer to showcase a whopping 1.5 million gallons’ worth of watery wonders. One of the world’s largest aquariums, it engulfs visitors with more than 10,000 marine animals (260 species) in four exhibits, each from a different realm: the North Pacific, the South Pacific’s Great Barrier Reef and Coral Sea, the South Atlantic (edge of the Antarctic), and the warm Caribbean. The sea creatures came to Galveston from various zoos’ breeding programs, from local field collecting, and, mostly, from licensed tropical fish collectors.

[RIGHT] Who’s watching whom? It’s as much fun to communicate with the divers as it is to watch the fish being fed.



The jewel-like pyramids of Moody Gardens overlook Offatts Bayou, which opens onto West Bay.

To see all the animals, follow the tuna—that is, tuna-shaped signs that direct you to the exhibits. Walkways wind downward (and upward) around the four main exhibits, which run as deep as 20 feet, allowing you to see above and below the water's surface. Clear, seven-inch-thick acrylic walls offer the vivid experience of observing underwater life from the fishes' perspective.

In the North Pacific exhibit, playful fur and harbor seals dive from a rocky shore, and a kelp forest sways in briny seawater kept at 50 to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. A tank here harbors a tide pool with brightly colored sea anemones and sea urchins. The neighboring South Pacific exhibit showcases a colorful coral reef inhabited by more than 120 species.

Not surprisingly, the rocky shores, the kelp, and the coral—dead ringers for the real thing—are artificial, explains Aquarium Pyramid director Doug Kemper. "The aquarium environment necessitates man-made materials, such as

Gardens can teach about nature and how to conserve and protect this kind of experience."

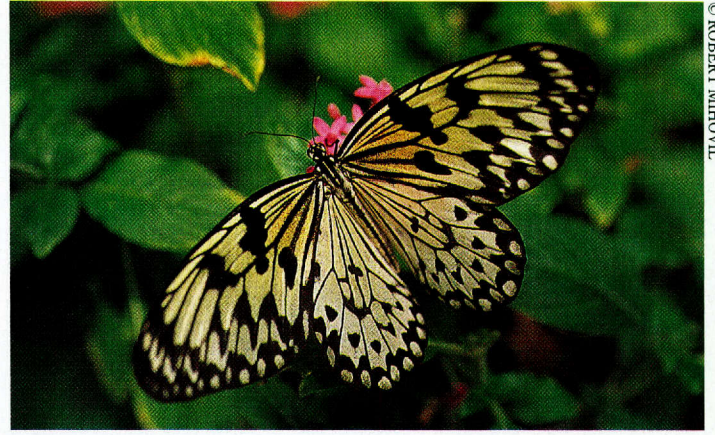


cement, vinyl, and polyurethane,” Doug says. “For example, without strong sunlight, as you find in nature, it’s nearly impossible to grow and maintain live coral and kelp in water deeper than three or four feet.”

Details of aquarium design hardly matter to visitors streaming through an underwater tunnel into the dome of the massive Caribbean exhibit. There, surrounded by seawater except for where they stand, people watch spellbound as 4,000 fish swim in all directions. Some of the fish—such as blue runners and Bermuda chubs—run in schools, just as they do in the ocean. Others—such as snappers, eels, and sea bass—seem forever on the lurch for food. The exhibit’s sand tiger and brown sharks (the largest is seven feet long) easily lord it over the others.

The crowd’s interest surges when volunteer scuba divers splash into the tank for the regularly scheduled feedings. A communications system allows divers to educate onlookers about the species being fed.

Dotted throughout the pyramid, 29 smaller exhibits, called jewel tanks, highlight exotics such as seahorses, jel-



© ROBERT MHOVIL

A white tree nymph butterfly numbers among the hundreds of butterflies released weekly in the Rainforest Pyramid, where visitors can view them emerging from their cocoons.

lyfish (swimming hypnotically under black light), and angelfish. In one area, three touch-tanks provide a feel—literally—of starfish, crabs, sea urchins, and cow nose and southern rays.

The hands-down stars, however, of the Aquarium Pyramid are its king and rockhopper penguins. They waddle around the icy South Atlantic exhibit and swim in waters hovering at 50 degrees. “Penguin power,” Doug Kemper calls it. “People love these magnificent creatures that walk upright like little tuxedo-clad citizens,” says Doug.

In fact, the penguins are native Texans! In 1998, aquarium staff traveled to South Georgia, an island in the Antarctic, to collect penguin eggs by permission of the British and Falkland Islands governments. The eggs, incubated and hatched on Galveston Island, yielded penguins now approaching two years of age. “They may begin breeding soon,” adds Doug, “so we’re putting pebbles in the exhibit, which they will use for nests.”

BUTTERFLIES, UNFOLD!

NEXT door, newborns of another species take flight inside the 10-story Rainforest Pyramid. This Texas-size terrarium houses a full acre of rainforest, complete with thousands of plants (including primitive palms, broad-leafed ferns, and twisting vines)—plus exotic tropical fish, birds, and butterflies. General curator Pat Sharkey says the butterfly breeding program remains a high-flying attraction.

Each week, butterfly farms in Costa Rica, the Philippines, and Malaysia ship butterfly pupae to Moody Gardens. Mounted in a hatching hut near the pyramid’s center, the pupae metamorphose



© ROBERT MHOVIL

Amusingly awkward on the ice, penguins transform into graceful, waterborne rockets once they slip into the briny deep. Believe it or not, these birds are Texans, hatched here from eggs gathered in the Antarctic.

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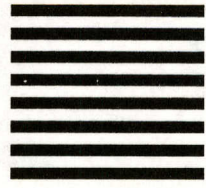
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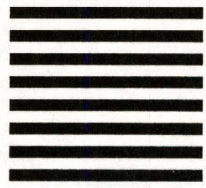
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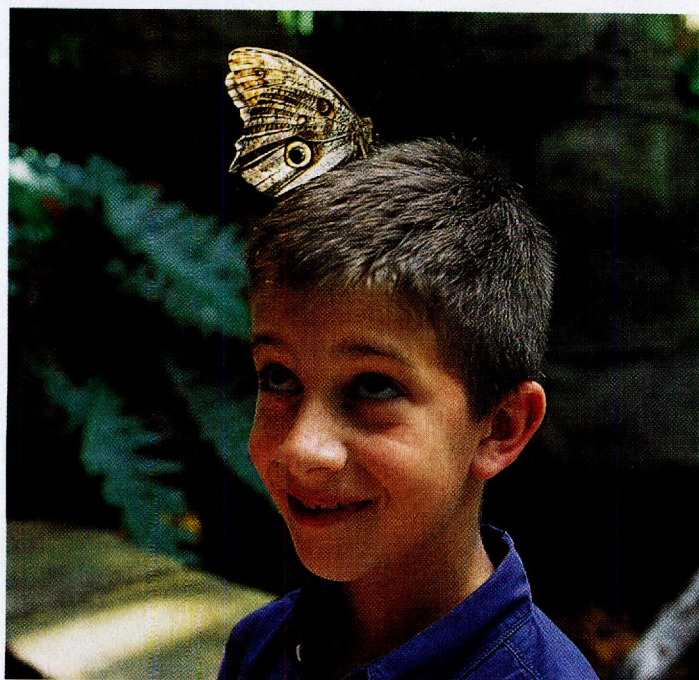
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[ABOVE] The waddling and squawking shenanigans of these beautiful tropical American macaws never fail to draw a crowd.



© JANICE RUBIN

What delights a child more than the attentions of a harmless wild creature? Here, boy and butterfly bond briefly.

into tropical butterflies after 10 days or so...right before visitors' eyes. People watch in awe twice daily as naturalists release newly emerged butterflies. It's a chance for visitors to ask questions and learn about the 30 to 45 butterfly species here, which include the blue morpho, scarlet Mormon, zebra longwing, and Gulf fritillary.

Nature-lovers also seem awed by the pyramid's colony of 56 Egyptian fruit bats, housed behind glass in a 300-square-foot bat cave. So that visitors can observe these nocturnal creatures in action, staff biologists create a "reverse light cycle," using dim light by day and bright light by night. With their days and nights switched, the bats fly about, feed on fruit, and groom themselves during times when visitors can observe their habits.

The rainforest has evolved considerably since it opened in 1993, says horticulture manager Gary Outenreath. The upper canopy (comprised of the highest trees in the forest) now soars 60 feet high, nearly to the pyramid's growth limit of 85 feet. Perhaps most conspicuously, a single curtain ivy plant has



The Jackson family of Corpus Christi (Bill, Tammy, and kids, Megan, Blake, and Jeremy) try their skills at the Discovery Pyramid's Space Station Simulators.

grown to the pyramid's highest reaches over the past seven years, and has branched out prolifically across the canopy. This Brazilian relative of the grape sends down extremely long, skinny aerial roots, which hang across the pyramid like mysterious curtains. No wonder the 1,500 plant species here flourish: Computers create a seasonless climate of 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit and at least 75 percent humidity, and the horticulturists make sure the plants have everything else they need.

Gary Outenreath has been amazed, in fact, at the success of their biological control plan. "We can't spray chemicals to control damaging insects and diseases, because they would kill our butterflies and fish," he explains. "So, for instance, we use diatomaceous earth to control snails and slugs, and parasites and predatory insects to control a wide variety of damaging insects. We've created a natural balance that's healthy."

EXTRATERRESTRIAL SIGHTS

IN 1997, Moody Gardens set its educational sights on the stars. That's when it opened the Discovery Museum (within the Discovery Pyramid) in collaboration with NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston. Its aim? To help visitors fathom the realities of space exploration... and to learn about extraterrestrial resources along the way.

To that end, Moody Gardens engaged 100 NASA scientists and engineers to design challenging exhibits that entertain as well as educate, says Discovery Pyramid manager Douglas Goforth. Forty of the 50 exhibits here are interactive, he notes.

At the docking trainer, visitors control the same computer

simulation used by astronauts to practice docking the U.S. space shuttle with the Russian space station Mir. At mission-control workstations, guests use computer touchscreens to navigate through key space-shuttle operations. And in the big-screen Shuttle Theater, they watch live coverage of space-shuttle missions (and, once it's underway, construction of the International Space Station) via real-time satellite uplinks to NASA-TV.

A walk-in replica of the International Space Station's habitation module shows how residents will bathe, sleep, and eat in space. A plant growth chamber actually produces edible vegetation in a closed environment, the same as on the

space station. And by lying down inside a half-size mockup of the X-38 lifeboat, visitors sense how crew members might return home in case of an emergency aboard the space station.

One of the newest Discovery exhibits, *Destination: Mars*, features a working model of a Mars habitat. Through a large

Besides the Pyramids, Moody Gardens' many offerings include a swim at Palm Beach (below), a cruise on *The Colonel* paddlewheeler, and a delicious meal in the Visitor Center's Garden Restaurant.



Moody Gardens Pyramids

picture window, would-be astronauts survey a simulated Martian landscape. Using a tele-robotics video system, they guide a rover craft across the rocky terrain, collecting rock and soil samples. At the Surface Science Station, they examine actual Mars rocks in a NASA glovebox. (A glovebox is a containment area used by astronauts to protect space samples from human contamination.) They also measure reflected light with a spectrometer, check their own vital signs, and plan surface operations on a Mars map table.

But how will astronauts get to Mars? A Discovery exhibit points to a speedy new way: via the Franklin Chang-Diaz VAS-MIR rocket. This proposed design—tried successfully in a laboratory vacuum—turns hydrogen into hot plasma and uses a magnetic field as an engine for producing maximum thrust. Scientists think it can shorten a one-way trip to Mars from the 224 days necessary with traditional chemical rockets to 160 days.

Kids who want to sleep on “Mars” can sign up for “Starry, Starry, Night” or the Mars Mission Camps. These programs let elementary through high school students stay overnight in the Discovery Museum to learn more about space life and to com-

The Pyramids of Moody Gardens provide a year-round adventure in learning about land, sea, and sky.

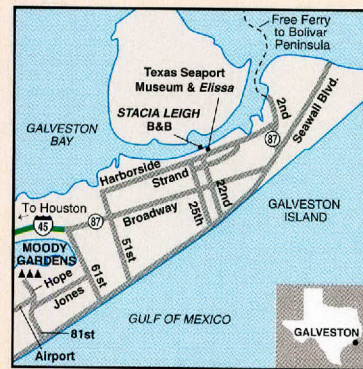
From Houston, take Interstate 45 south to Galveston. On the island, take the 61st St. exit, turn right on 61st, and proceed to Seawall Blvd. Turn right on Seawall, go to 81st St., and turn right. Go to Hope Blvd., turn left, and follow the signs to Moody Gardens.

Winter hours (Labor Day to Memorial Day): Sun-Thu 10-6, Fri-Sat 10-8. Summer hours: Sun-Thu 10-7, Fri-Sat 10-9. Closed Christmas Day. Wheelchair accessible. For information on ticket prices, attractions, group

discounts, annual memberships, educational programs, Hope Therapy, the Moody Gardens Hotel, or the Galveston Island Convention Center, write to One Hope Blvd., Galveston 77554; 800/582-4673. Web site: www.moodygardens.com.

The IMAX 3D Theater currently features *Encounter in the Third Dimension* (about filmmaking); *T-Rex: Back to the Cretaceous* (ends Mar. 3); *Galapagos*; and *Siegfried & Roy* (begins Mar. 4). The IMAX

Ridefilm Theater, a motion-simulation ride, currently features *Dolphins: The Ride, ReBoot: The Ride*, and *ReBoot II: Journey Into Chaos*.



© ROBERT MIHOVIL

plete fun projects, such as “making” their own constellations or creating and launching their own rockets.

Moody Gardens offers learn-and-do sleepovers at the other two pyramids as well, says education curator Kelly Drinnen. The Aquarium Pyramid’s “Night on the Reef” lets kids study how marine animals adapt to changing conditions. Participants in the Rainforest Pyramid’s “Creatures of the Night” explore the rainforest by flashlight in search of sleeping wildlife.

Night or day, young or old—exploring the pyramids of Moody Gardens becomes an adventure in learning. For most people, the experience also poses crucial questions about planet Earth and beyond. One minute, you’re surrounded by natural delights. The next, you’re wondering how Earth’s environment will fare in the new millennium.

“There are many issues we as a society need to address, and one important place you can learn about them is here at Moody Gardens,” says Doug Kemper. “We hope the beauty of this place will stimulate thought and appreciation for nature, and that it will have an impact when environmental decisions have to be made.”

At the Aquarium Pyramid’s exit, a quote from Senegalese conservationist Bab Dioum puts the mission another way: “In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, we will understand only what we’re taught.” ★

RANDY MALLORY of Tyler first wrote about Moody Gardens’ Rainforest Pyramid for *Texas Highways* in 1993, the year it opened. He has enjoyed watching the entire project grow in the years since then.

Secure in her berth at Pier 22,
GALVESTON's floating B&B offers
guests an exhilarating experience.

MUSSOLINI SLEPT HERE

THE

Stacia

BUT NEVER LIKE THIS

Pat and Bonnie Hicks had a hankering to get into the bed-and-breakfast business—if the inn could be “portable.”

“So, what are we going to do,” joked Bonnie, “haul a double-wide trailer around?”

“No,” replied Pat, “but how about a vintage yacht?”

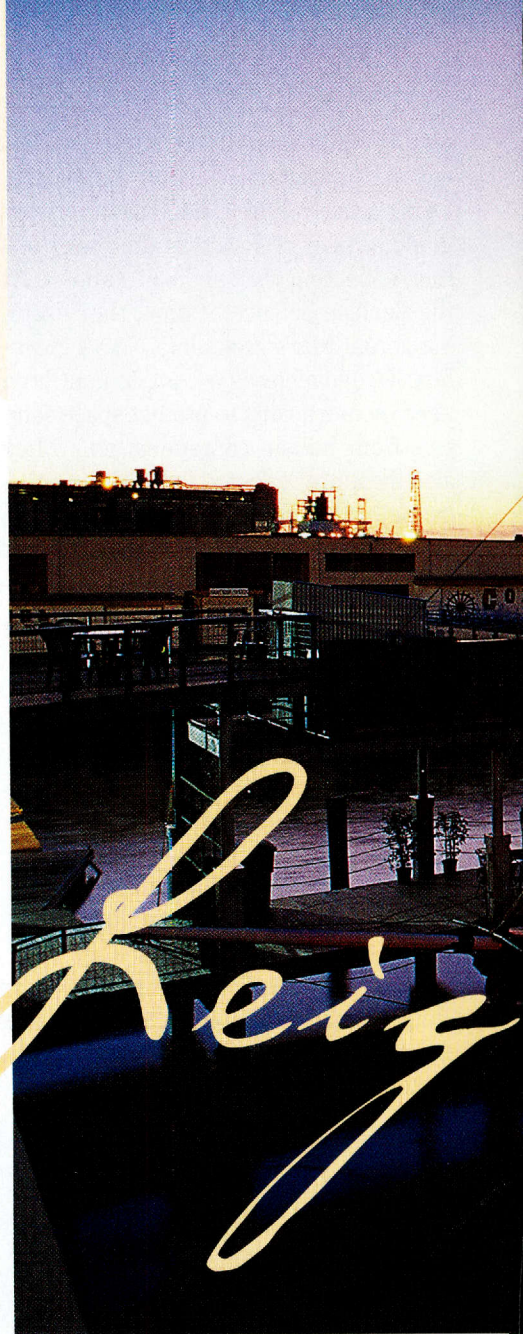
That singular thought fueled the Hicks’ “adventure of a lifetime.”

Pat Hicks never imagined that his five-year, frustrating hunt for a historic vessel would result in his finding the classic *Chryseis*, owned during World War II by Fascist Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

Though the *Chryseis* looked more like a renovation nightmare when Pat discovered her in 1998 near Daytona Beach, Florida, he gazed beyond barnacles and layers of rust to envision the first “floating inn” on the Texas coast. The seaworthy question: Could the 92-year-old, 120-

foot schooner make her way to Galveston Island? Rot had ravaged her decks, but most of her riveted, soft-iron hull remained intact. The twin Ford-Lehman diesel engines still had life in them, and some of her sails were sturdy enough to hoist. Her two masts, of Oregon pine, stood as sound as the day they were first set in Le Havre, France, in 1906. The original ship’s wheel, the windlass for raising the anchor, and the binnacle, which cradles the compass—all operational. Hicks believed the *Chryseis* could make the voyage.

Built in 1906 for Louis Renault, proprietor of the largest auto manufacturing company in France, the *Chryseis*—named for the daughter of Apollo’s priest—was designed to compete on the high seas. Renault, an amateur ocean racer, was a devotee of the America’s Cup and other races. To participate even as a spectator, his yacht had to be sleek and fast, so



Renault hired American naval architect Nathanael “Captain Nat” Herreshoff, the foremost yacht designer of the day.

For the next few decades, Renault sailed the *Chryseis* alongside competitors in some of the world’s greatest sea races. In 1937, he sold the *Chryseis* to Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Ciano had become a key player in the Fascist regime when he married Mussolini’s daughter, Edda. Ciano rose rapidly through the ranks and came to be regarded as his father-in-law’s likely successor. But his political ascendancy proved short-lived: After helping force Mussolini’s resignation in 1943,

BY PAMELA CASTEEL • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT MIHOVIL



B & B



Ciano was captured in 1944 by pro-Mussolini partisans, charged with treason, and executed. Mussolini, still a political force, confiscated the *Chryseis*. Following Italy's crushing defeat in 1945, military members of the Italian Resistance assassinated Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci. The *Chryseis*, with rebels at her helm, smuggled small arms for a time.

[ABOVE] Guests on the *Stacia Leigh B&B*—housed on a yacht once owned by Benito Mussolini—enjoy a lodging experience unparalleled in Texas.

[LEFT] The Omar Bradley suite features a 180-degree view of Galveston Bay via 22 windows.



From the deck of the *Stacia Leigh*, guests can admire the glorious 1877 sailing ship *Elissa* (in background), berthed nearby. Bonnie and Pat Hicks, who run the B&B with their daughter *Stacia Leigh*, enjoy sharing the *Stacia Leigh*'s history with the many interesting people they meet.

After the war, the schooner became the property of a man named Jean F. Speglio, who took her back to France. Sketchy records show that Speglio later sailed the *Chryseis* to the Caribbean, where idleness and neglect took their toll on the vessel.

Hollywood filmmakers made use of the *Chryseis* in the 1960s and 1970s. The boat appeared in such movies as *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Count of Monte Cristo*, and *Seven Cities of Atlantis* (also known as *Warlords of Atlantis*).

What followed her stint in the movies is vague, but it's clear the *Chryseis* needed more than cosmetics and the right camera angle in order to sail again. In the early 1980s, U.S. Merchant Marine Captain Richard Sands bought the vessel in hopes of restoring her at Key Biscayne, Florida, but the cost proved prohibitive. In 1991, retired Navy Commander Forrest Ames, the next owner, was similarly defeated by renovation prices. Then 85 years old, the *Chryseis* saga seemed destined for an unhappy ending.

Then, along came Pat Hicks, who, with several enthusiastic private investors, vowed to revive the *Chryseis*. Pat won't reveal what he paid for the relic, saying only that he "stole the boat" on Saint Patrick's Day in 1998—his lucky, 51st birthday.

Before the voyage to Texas, Pat and his nephews, 15-year-old Josh Hicks and 16-year-old Steven Tanner, spent about a week covering decayed decking with plywood to pre-

vent the schooner from sinking if she took on water. Pat, admitting he's not a sailor, hired two Gulf Coast captains to navigate the boat to Galveston.

Eager to earn their sea legs on such a venerable vessel, the crew of the *Chryseis* motored out from Ponce de Leon Inlet, south of Daytona Beach, on June 27, 1998. As they headed to Panama City, Josh honed his charting skills as navigator, while Steven served as deckhand.

When they departed from Panama City, marine reports advised of a three-to four-foot chop. Surprisingly, recalls Pat, "We suddenly found ourselves in 12-foot seas. We took a terrible pounding. The whole bow became buried under water, then rose so high you couldn't see anything but sky." Steven became so violently ill that his uncle returned him to Panama City before resuming the 2,300-mile, 22-day trip to Texas.

Finally berthed in Texas, the *Chryseis* spent several months dry-docked in Orange while workers in a local shipyard sandblasted and repainted her hull. The lengthy restoration of the decks and interior quarters would take place at her berth in Galveston harbor.

"Astonishing" aptly describes the *Chryseis*' transformation. Given that "nothing is square, nothing is straight, and the boat is always moving," Pat notes that every board had to be custom cut. All soles (floors) were removed and replaced with long-leaf yellow pine. Window frames (170 of them) and the paneling for the cabins and the dining and salon areas were all made from red oak to match the

wood in the original wheelhouse. With the addition of an upper deck, the *Chryseis* now has 11 staterooms on three decks.

The revitalized schooner was re-christened the "*Stacia Leigh Bed & Breakfast*" in honor of Pat and Bonnie Hicks' 22-year-old daughter, *Stacia Leigh*, whom you'll likely meet if you visit.

Eight months of painstaking work by true craftspeople dazzles visitors from stem to stern—glowing, rich-red oak, glistening yellow pine, sparkling Italian tile in private baths, several of which have custom-fitted Jacuzzis. Made-to-order king and queen mattresses rest on raised platforms that allow guests to lie in bed while beholding the panorama of Galveston's colorful ship channel, be it day or night.

Honeymooners and other romantics often reserve the Truman suite, a natural-light-infused cabin that boasts a mariner's treasure called a "doghouse." The dome-shaped, Burma-teak doghouse, originally used to shelter the stairs from the main to the lower deck, was moved from mid-ship to the bow and adapted for use in the Hicks' floating B&B. Today, guests staying in the Truman suite can enjoy the doghouse's skylight effect.

The Truman suite may be the most unusual of the *Chryseis*' accommodations, but all 11 rooms have special charms. In homage to the yacht's first owner, one stateroom bears Renault's name. Others recognize such significant World War II figures as Churchill, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Patton, Rommel, MacArthur, Bradley, and Nimitz, the U.S. Pacific

The *Stacia Leigh*

Fleet commander from Fredericksburg. Mussolini's original cabin, which bears his name, is located amidships on the lower deck. All of the rooms have portholes, but those in Mussolini's quarters were welded shut during the war for *il Duce's* protection.

Secure in her berth at Pier 22, the *Chryseis* no longer cruises the sea, but the water rolls beneath her and laps at her sides, gently swaying her on swells from passing shrimp boats and massive ships navigating the channel. Pat likes to tell the story of a guest who, initially at least, wanted to leave the moment he stepped onto the vessel.

"This fellow decided he couldn't take the rocking," says Pat. "I offered to get him a room somewhere else, but he steadied himself and said he would give it a try. The next morning, he showed up with a big old grin and said he had felt like a baby being rocked to sleep in a cradle."

Guests awake from restful slumber to the aroma of freshly baked croissants, Danish rolls, and a medley of muffins from Maddie's Bakery on the Seawall. Seasonal fruits garnish homemade egg casseroles or omelets, prepared by Bonnie Hicks. Seated in the oval dining salon with its expanse of handsomely restored windows, guests often reflect on the seascape and the long and varied career of this yacht.

At night, Galveston's waterfront district glows in neon hues reflected in

The "*Stacia Leigh* Bed and Breakfast aboard the *Chryseis*" is berthed at Pier 22, at the heart of Galveston's vibrant waterfront on Harborside Dr. Dockside parking is available. The eclectic Strand Historic District is a short walk away. Trolleys, tour trains, and horse-drawn carriages are available for tours of the city and trips to the beach. (For a locator map, see the Moody Gardens When...Where... How, page 11.)

The *Stacia Leigh* is anchored near the 1877 Tall Ship, *Elissa*, and the *Seagull II*. The latter offers dolphin-watching tours and excursions along Galveston's harbor. A variety of shops, restaurants, and fish markets stretch along the waterfront from Pier 19 to Pier 22. Nearby attractions include the Texas Seaport Museum, the *Ocean Star* Offshore Energy Center, the Galveston Railroad Museum, the Galveston County Historical Museum, and the Mardi Gras Museum. The Pier 21

Theater features *The Great Storm*, a documentary chronicling Galveston's—and the nation's—most devastating natural disaster, in 1900.

Entry to the *Stacia Leigh's* pier is protected by a security gate. Ample dockside decks provide a panoramic view of the ship channel (and a chance to see it all while sitting in a hot tub). Room rates: \$125-\$150; reservations required. Large parties are welcome; however, for safety reasons, no more than 40 guests are allowed on board at a time. No children under 15, no pets, and no smoking on board. One suite on the main deck is accessible to wheelchairs. Breakfast is served on board, and room service is available from the neighboring Fisherman's Wharf restaurant.

To make reservations, or to learn more, write to the *Stacia Leigh* Bed & Breakfast, 1517 Postoffice St., Galveston 77550; 409/750-8858. Web site: www.stacia-leigh.com.

rolling waves and salty spray. Just next door at Pier 21, Texas' 1877 Tall Ship, *Elissa*, shows off her three-masted elegance. For a richly exhilarating experience, you can stargaze in a hot tub on the *Chryseis* pier. The dozens of nearby restaurants offer sustenance of all varieties, and some will even deliver food right to the pier. While safety regulations allow no more than 40 people aboard the vessel itself, two dockside decks provide plenty of room for large parties.

A glance through the inn's guest book reveals happy customers: "a real jewel on the water"; "glad you brought back a great piece of history"; "a beautiful experience"; "beds are extremely comfortable, slept like a log"; and "no phones, no TV—what a fantastic place for our anniversary; we actually talked."

Initially, Pat purchased a television for each stateroom, but comments from guests led him to return all but one. Housed in the library, that TV is no competition for the Hicks' excellent collection of books on ships and World War II. Also worth perusing is a rare collection of Dickens novels and a 1939 issue of *Life* magazine that featured Mussolini on the cover. Mussolini's restored flip-top desk commands a space here, too.

Writing for the *Orange Leader* in 1998, reporter Joe McDaniel mused, "If the ship could talk, what tales it could tell." These days, the *Chryseis* indeed seems able to speak for herself. Polished and pampered, she seems to say that her engrossing history is surpassed only by the Hicks family's hospitality. ★

Freelance writer PAMELA CASTEEL is a native Californian who has been "willingly stuck on Galveston Island for more than two decades."

Galveston photographer ROBERT MIHOVIL shot last month's pictures of Mardi Gras! Galveston, as well as some of the images of Moody Gardens in this issue.



The Truman suite, on the lower deck in the bow of the boat, is illuminated by sunlight and moonlight alike, thanks to the "doghouse" installed over the bed (an exterior shot of the doghouse appears on the opposite page).



La Colombe d'Or serves contemporary French cuisine in an elegant setting inspired by the restaurant's Old World namesake in Saint-Paul de Vence, on the French Riviera. Both establishments display distinctive works of art.

*La
Colombe
d'Or*

Texas

Hospitality

with

French Flair

By G. Elaine Acker • Photographs by Rocky Kneten

In 1979, a successful young attorney and professor named Stephen Zimmerman traded his business suits for khakis and loafers, renovated a run-down mansion, and opened Houston's La Colombe d'Or Restaurant and Hotel. In creating the European-style chateau, Zimmerman indulged his passions for fine art, antiques, and French cuisine—passions now shared by hundreds of his loyal guests. Today, La Colombe d'Or stands as a Texas Historic Landmark, and it has gained renown as the "Smallest Luxury Hotel in the World."

Situated near Houston's Museum District, La Colombe d'Or (the Golden Dove) exudes the same Old World charm that Zimmerman experienced when visiting the hotel's namesake in Saint-Paul de Vence, in the hills above Nice. French painter Paul Roux established the original La Colombe d'Or in the 1920s and opened its doors to fledgling artists who often exchanged their paintings for food and a room. "When you go there now," says Zimmerman, "all the paintings of the then-unknown artists hang on the walls: Picasso, Chagall, Modigliani, Braque."

In Houston's La Colombe d'Or, Zimmerman has re-created the artistic atmosphere. The Penthouse Suite covers the third floor, and five suites on the second floor bear the

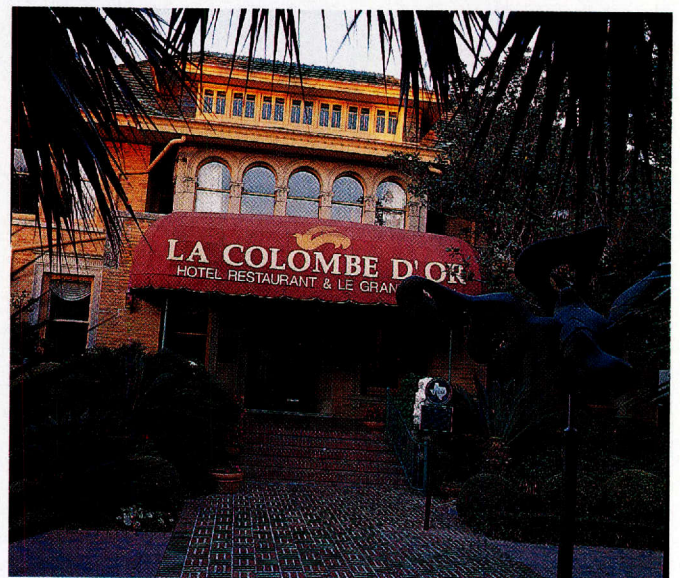


Graceful table settings in the main dining room provide the backdrop for the artful dining experience to come.

names of Impressionist painters: Monet, Cézanne, Renoir, Degas, and Van Gogh. In each room, Oriental rugs stretch across the polished, hardwood floors, and several rooms are furnished with Victorian-era antiques. Each room has a large, private bath stocked with milled soaps and thick bathrobes, as well as a private dining area for entertaining guests or enjoying intimate dinners.

Throughout the mansion hang pieces from Zimmerman's own extensive art collection, which includes original oils by Dali, Kandinsky, and Marquet, as well as works by Texas artists Dorothy Hood, Lucas Johnson, and Earl Staley. Zimmerman does not restrict his purchases of art and antiques to a specific period or

The entrance to the hotel and restaurant exudes Mediterranean luxury in a 1920s structure now designated a Texas Historic Landmark.



style. Rather, he browses the auctions, he says, for “anything that tickles me.” “I’m real eclectic,” says Zimmerman. “Everything I choose has a certain softness, a certain feel to it.”

The resulting sense of unpretentious elegance befits a mansion with a history of grandeur. In the early 1920s, oil baron Walter Fondren, cofounder of the Humble Oil Company (now ExxonMobil), built his immense mansion on Houston’s outskirts to celebrate his success in the oil business. With the help of architect Alfred C. Finn, who also designed area hotels, hospitals, theaters, office buildings, and landmarks like the San Jacinto Monument, Fondren created a spectacular, 21-room, 12,000-square-foot home on Montrose Boulevard.

When Stephen Zimmerman discovered the mansion two decades ago, it had served as a Red Cross office for visiting nurses for 30 years. Acoustical tiles lined the ceilings, linoleum covered the floors, and thick white paint concealed all traces of the mansion’s former elegance. But Zimmerman envisioned it as a European *auberge*, or inn, like the ones he had come to love during his frequent vacations in France. Also, he lived in Houston in a home designed by Finn, so “I knew what architectural treasures I had in my house,” says Zimmerman. “I didn’t know if the mansion could be saved, but before I tore it down, I wanted to see what was hidden underneath.”

After Zimmerman bought the house, workers removed the

La Colombe d’Or

(the Golden Dove)

exudes the same Old

World charm that

Zimmerman experi-

enced when visiting

the hotel’s namesake

in Saint-Paul de

Vence, in the hills

above Nice.

acoustical tiles, then uncovered elaborate, molded ceilings and a domed music room—echoes of the roaring 1920s. Beneath layers of linoleum lay hardwood parquet floors. Under the white paint, panes of antique glass appeared and once again allowed sunlight to illuminate the rooms. “What I really wanted to do was to restore the mansion,” says Zimmerman. “We went completely back to basics and tried not to destroy in any way the character of the old house. When people come here, they expect to find the old charm.”

During the renovation, the music room and adjacent porches became an intimate, four-room restaurant with views to the gardens outside. Across the lobby from the restaurant is a cozy bar, paneled in dark wood and furnished with New Orleans pub tables. In the next room, the Fondren library, guests can enjoy an after-dinner brandy while relaxing in wing-backed chairs beside the tiled fireplace.

“We offer an experience in dining,” says Zimmerman. “Your table is yours for the entire

evening. If you come an hour early, your table is there. If you come an hour late, your table is there. If you want to sit there for four hours, nobody will look at you like you have to leave.”

La Colombe d’Or’s restaurant serves French cuisine, but Zimmerman is quick to add that the word “French” can be misunderstood. Rather than a traditional menu, he says, “Our menu will always reflect what’s going on in France now,



Stephen Zimmerman (left) converted the 21,000-square-foot Fondren mansion on Montrose Boulevard into a hotel and restaurant in 1979. The Cézanne Suite (right) features a large painting of the Creation by Texas artist Earl Staley.

La Colombe d'Or and Houston's Museum District

La Colombe d'Or is at 3410 Montrose Blvd. in Houston. Hotel rates: \$195-\$295; \$575 for the penthouse; 17% occupancy tax added. Suites are not wheelchair accessible. Main-course items range from \$20-\$30. Call 713/524-7999 for reservations and information, or visit the Web site: www.lacolombedorhouston.com.

La Colombe d'Or's private art collection inspires many visitors to explore Houston's nearby **Museum District**. Guests who head south along Montrose will discover priceless collections of art objects, paintings, and sculpture from around the world.

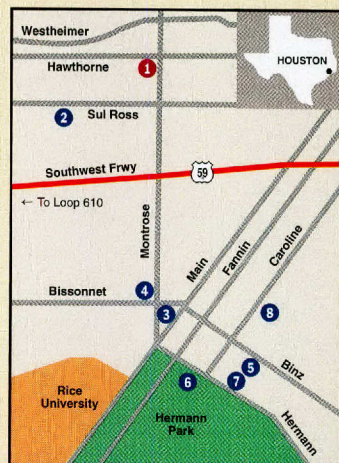
The Menil Collection, 1515 Sul Ross, displays the acquisitions of John and Dominique de Menil, including Byzantine and medieval art, tribal art, and 20th-Century art and antiquities. Call 713/525-9400. Web site: www.menil.org.

The **Museum of Fine Arts, Houston**, 1001 Bissonnet, declared by some as the city's finest collection of art objects, paintings, and sculpture, displays works from Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as well as Renaissance art from Italy and Spain. Call 713/284-8250. Web site: www.mfah.org.

The **Contemporary Arts Museum**, 5216 Montrose Blvd., offers 9 exhibitions yearly, all emphasizing the works of contemporary artists. Call 713/284-8250. Web site: www.camh.org.

The **Children's Museum of Houston**, 1500 Binz, designed for children up to 14 years of age, offers hands-on exhibits that introduce children to the arts. Call 713/522-1138. Web site: www.cmhouston.org.

For those who seek art in nature, the **Houston Museum of Natural Science**, 1 Hermann Circle



- 1 La Colombe d'Or
- 2 Menil Collection
- 3 Museum of Fine Arts
- 4 Contemporary Arts Museum
- 5 Children's Museum
- 6 Museum of Natural Science
- 7 Museum of Health & Medical Science
- 8 Holocaust Museum

Dr. in Hermann Park, features natural history and science exhibits. Also on the museum grounds are the Burke Baker Planetarium, the Cockrell Butterfly Center, and the Wortham IMAX theater. Call 713/639-4629. Web site: www.hmns.org.

The **Museum of Health & Medical Science**, 1515 Hermann Dr., dramatizes the marvels of the human body and informs visitors about health issues through larger-than-life models, audio and video kiosks, and hands-on displays. Call 713/521-1515. Web site: www.mhms.org.

Holocaust Museum Houston, 5401 Caroline, documents the horrors of the Nazi massacre of 6 million Jews through a chronological series of exhibits, a memorial room, a memorial sculpture garden, and a film featuring interviews of Houston-area Holocaust survivors. Call 713/942-8000. Web site: www.hmh.org.



Diners may linger over their meals as long as they wish. Whether you arrive early or late, your table is yours for the evening.

which is cuisine that's *spontanée raffinée*—spontaneous, yet refined." For Zimmerman, "spontaneous" means "fresh." La Colombe d'Or's only freezer is an ice-cream freezer, so all ingredients are either available locally, in season, or can be flown in daily.

Chef Tom Troung, who trained extensively in France and

the United States, shares the latest delectables from French kitchens with guests who rave about the *Carre d'agneau au jus simple*—a rack of lamb seasoned with black pepper, rosemary, and thyme. The extensive selection of dinner and port wines (some cating to 1800) complements the meals, and the only reason to hurry is to sample one of the decadent desserts waiting at the end of the evening. Chocolate-lovers savor the *Marquis Parfumé au Grand Marnier*, described as "not quite a cake, and not quite a mousse," topped with orange-flavored cognac sauce and served with pistachio ice cream.

For those longing to experience the flavor of the original La Colombe d'Or firsthand, Zimmerman offers what he fondly refers to as his "Seventh Suite," a villa located only one block from the Roux family's La Colombe d'Or in Saint-Paul de Vence, France. In the spirit of extraordinary service, Zimmerman arranges tours of the area's great kitchens and museums, and shares with his guests his inspiration and passion for both incarnations of La Colombe d'Or.

In Houston, celebrity guests of the restaurant and hotel have included Walter Cronkite, Madonna, and Bishop Desmond Tutu, but just as often Zimmerman welcomes homesick Europeans, executives seeking refuge from stressful business travels, and romantic couples celebrating a honeymoon or an anniversary. For all of these people, La Colombe d'Or becomes a special place.

"I did this, not with the intent to make money," says Zimmerman, "but to do something I could really enjoy. I'm not a professional restaurateur, so I viewed this as a patron myself and listened to people. People will tell you what they like and what they don't like. We may not be for everybody, but we sure have a loyal following." ★

G. ELAINE ACKER, a frequent contributor to *Texas Parks and Wildlife*, covers travel destinations from her bases in Austin and the Davis Mountains.

Photographer ROCKY KNETEN of Houston has contributed to *Rolling Stone*, *Texas Monthly*, and other publications.



STAR SIGHTINGS

Five ★ Pointed Images

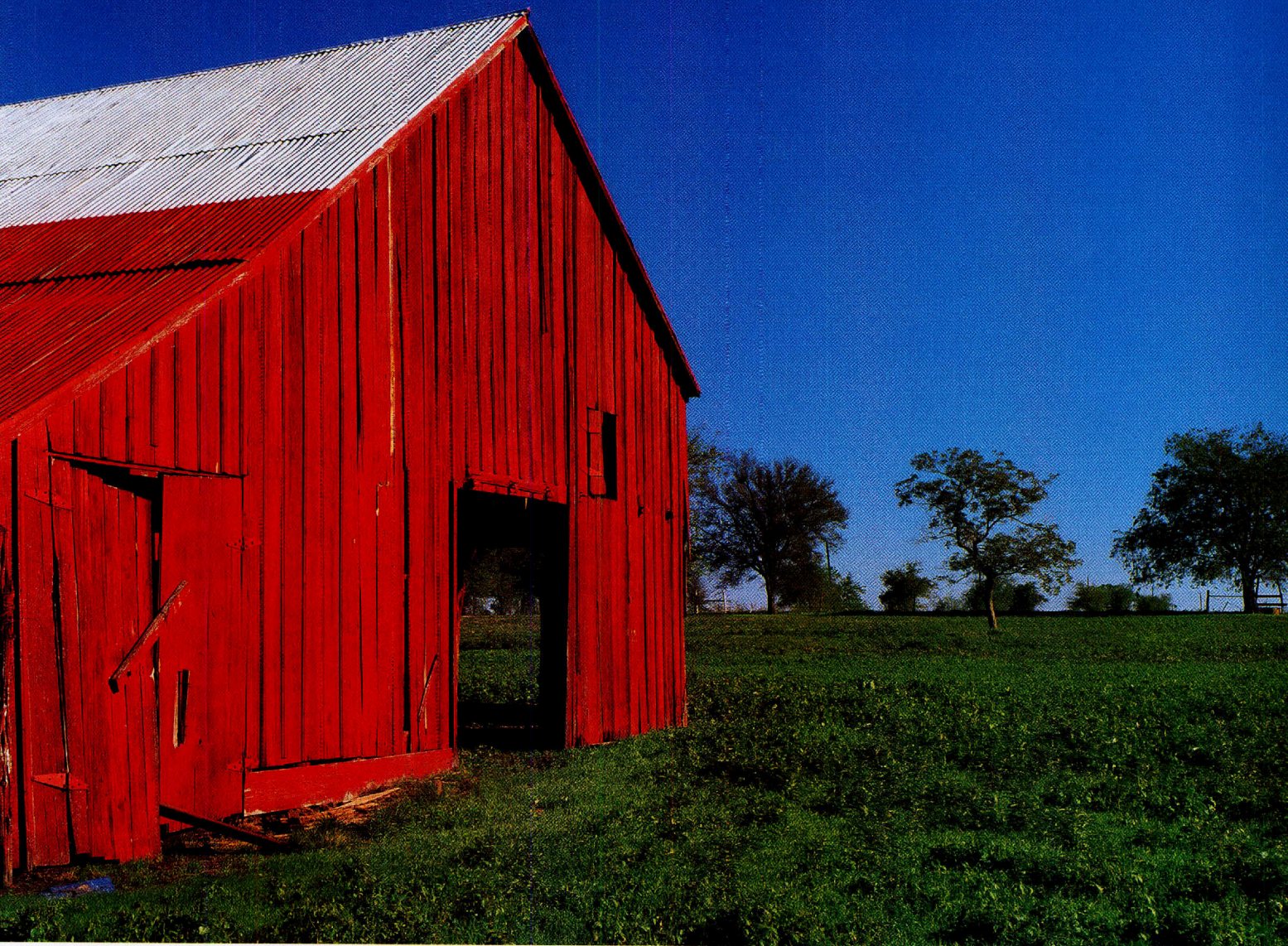
The Lone Star.

A simple phrase that evokes strong emotions in Texans. That single star, in its unmistakable way, symbolizes the essence of Texas. Most commonly seen on the state flag, the Lone Star nevertheless permeates every aspect of life in these parts.

Inspired by nature, and first catapulting into prominence here when Sarah Dodson and Joanna Troutman incorporated it into flags for the fledgling Republic of Texas, the Lone Star has come to symbolize hope, freedom, and the Texas mystique.

Ever vigilant in their love of the state, Texans have embraced the star as much more than an icon for the state flag—no fewer than 10 Texas towns have borne the Lone Star name. The moniker has also made its

A barn near Eddy proudly proclaims the owner's Lone Star enthusiasm for all to see.



© JEREMY WOODHOUSE

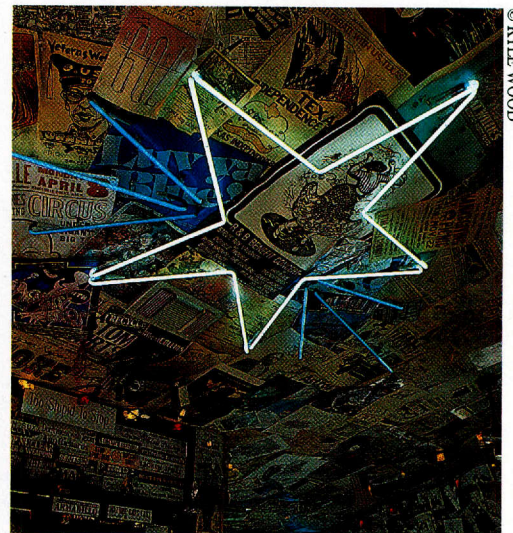
from Around the State

way into book and movie titles, business names, and even products, including a well-known lager.

Given the rich history of this famous symbol, last year we asked our photographers to keep an eye out for distinctive uses of stars, in nature and man-made, and to send us their best images showcasing the popular emblem.

Our mailboxes soon began filling with photographs of five-pointed figures, and we've whittled the numbers down to this distinctive collection of star shots. We hope you savor the next few pages, and that they inspire you to make your own Lone Star star sightings. What better way to celebrate the anniversary of Texas independence?

—MICHAEL A. MURPHY



© KYLE WOOD

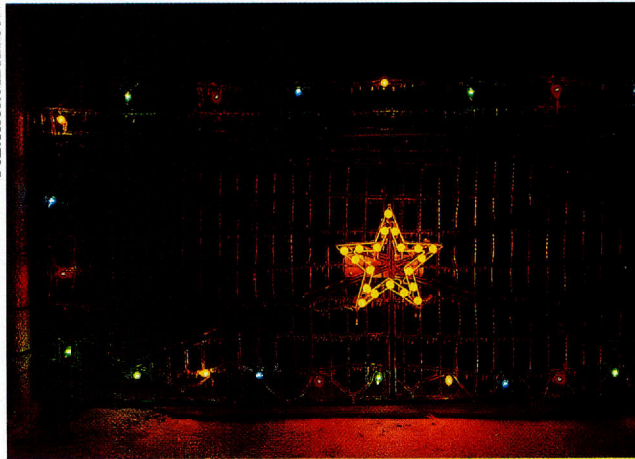
Artistically designed neon makes its point against a background of pop culture in Austin's Texticali Grille.



A medley of seashells and starfish decorate a beach at Mustang Island State Park.



A faded feed sign adorns a building in Buffalo.

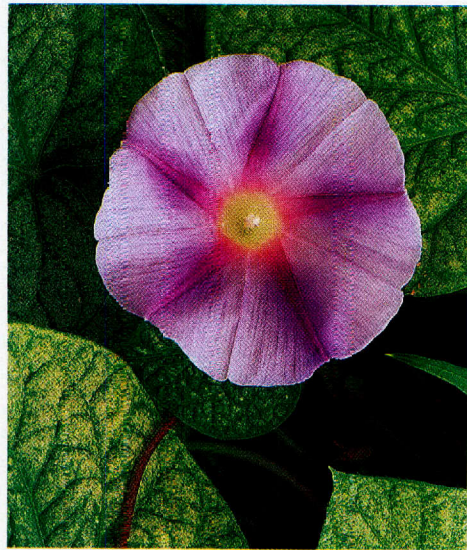


An ice-coated ranch gate near Wichita Falls shines invitingly for passersby.



© JEFFREY HARTMAN

A weathered Texaco star still bedecks a metal tank near McCook.



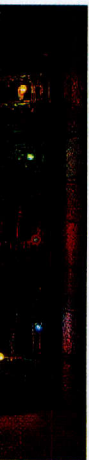
© RUSTY VATES

A coastal morning glory coyly reveals its patriotic side.



© RICHARD REYNOLDS

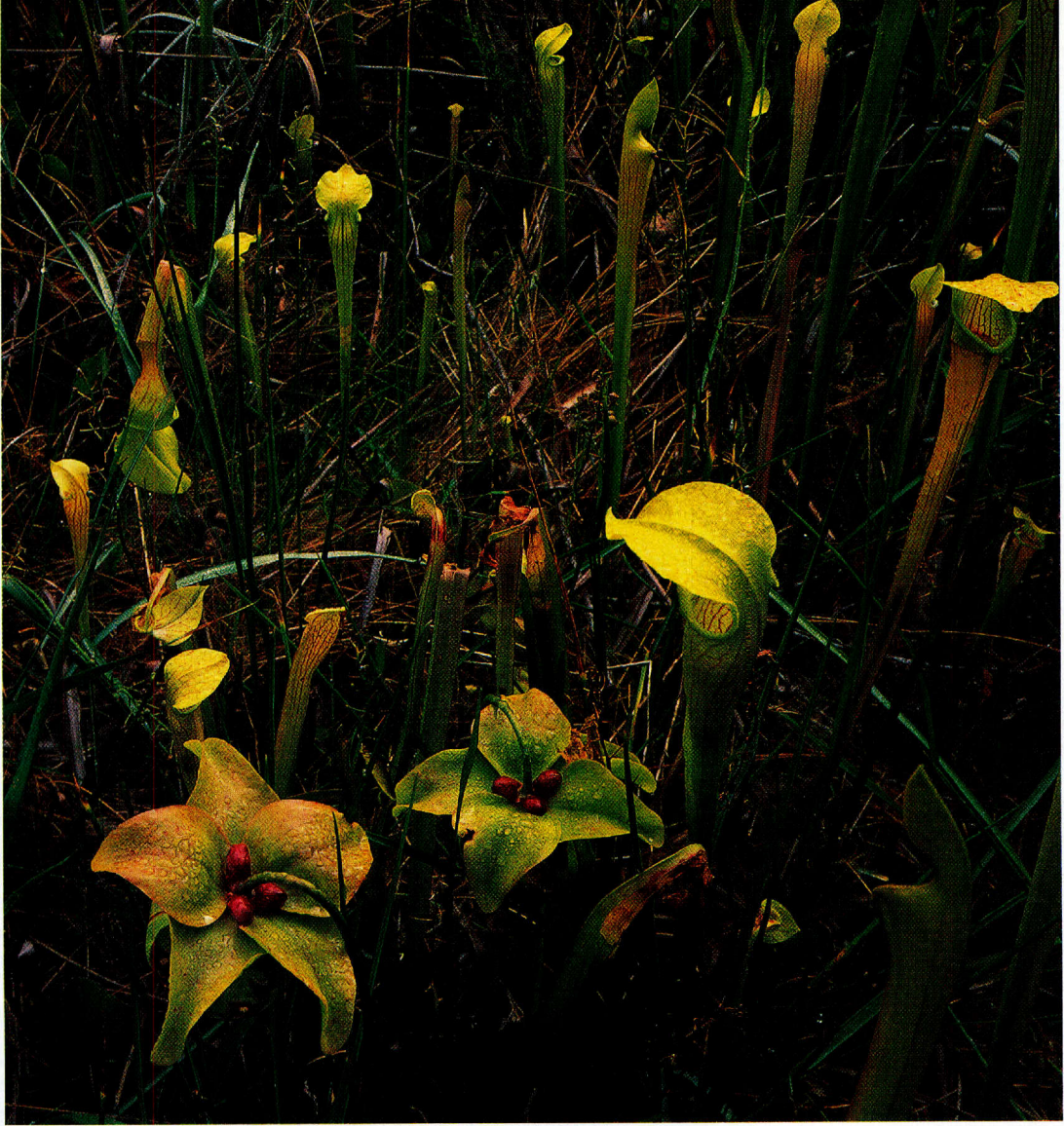
Phlox, like these in Burret County, unfold their petals into a star.



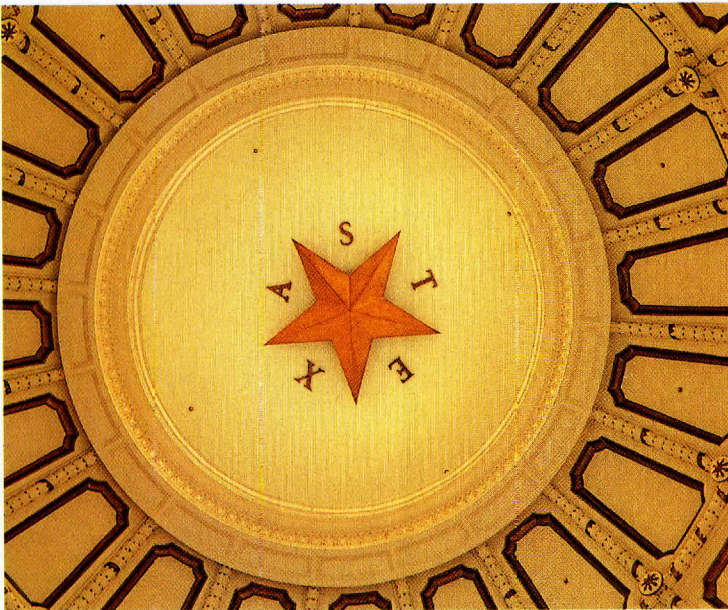
© ARTHUR MEYERSON



A cowboy basks in the sunshine cascading over the former Texas theater in Marfa.



The flowers of pitcher plants, photographed in the Big Thicket, droop downward, revealing natural stars.



The Goddess of Liberty on top of the State Capitol dome bears a star, as does the rotunda dome beneath her.



A vibrant hibiscus exudes star power in a Waxahachie garden.



© MIKE GOODSPEED

Stars on the marquee enliven the entry to the Texas theater in Hillsboro.



© ARTHUR MEYERSON

Cowboy boots proclaim the wearer's beverage of choice.



© KYLE WOOD

Diners at Threadgill's in South Austin can lift their gazes to the unusual neon starburst on the ceiling.



© RICHARD REVNOLDS

Nature's etched star on the sand dollar no doubt inspired many man-made stars.



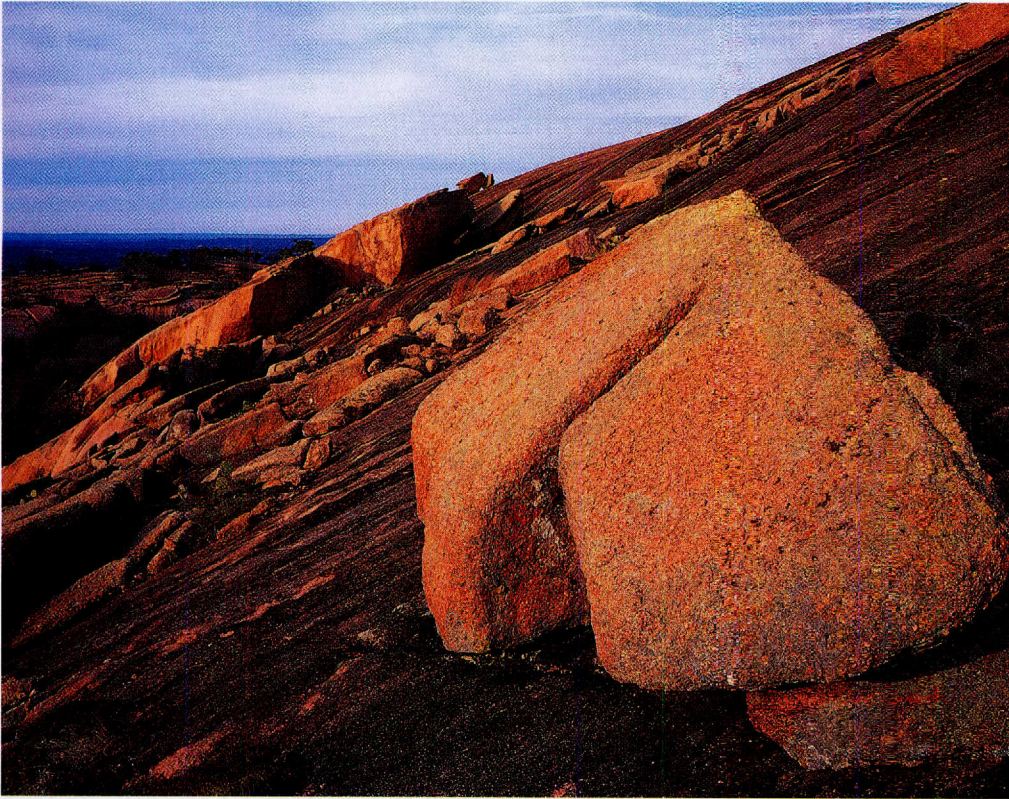
© ARTHUR MEYERSON

Saddle-makers sometimes embellish the day-to-day tools of cowboys with star handiwork.

ENCHANTED ROCK
STATE NATURAL AREA

THE HILL
COUNTRY'S

ROCK
of AGES



Texas' largest rock mountain exposes exfoliating granite.

BY

JANET R. EDWARDS

A ghostly breeze whispers to the bald expanse of a giant, granite dome. Sparkling like a thousand tiny mirrors in the sun, the surface of the big rock, though mostly barren, seems to blush with a glow of inner life.

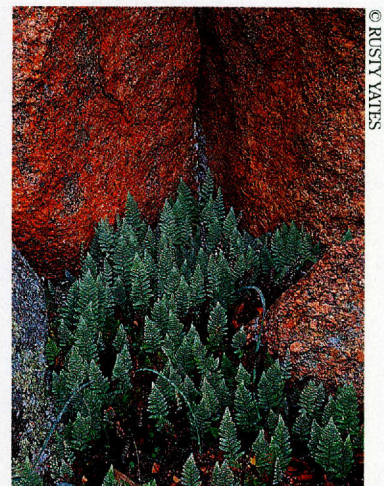
Rock wrens flit above massive boulders, which cling to the mountain's margins and lie in a tumble at its base, some sculpted by erosion into strange, ethereal figures. The tangled roots of gnarled live oaks snake between deep rock crevices, while delicate ferns and wildflowers emerge from tiny fissures in the stone.

This is ever-radiant Enchanted Rock, a noble promontory rising high above the Hill Country between Llano and Fredericksburg. A supreme specimen of Texas pink granite, this hemisphere is the state's largest mountain made of a single rock, and it is among the oldest exposed rocks in North America.

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area—purchased from private owners in 1977 by The Texas Nature Conservancy and sold to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department the following year—actually boasts more than one granite formation. These domes of various sizes attract more than 300,000 visitors each year.

[FACING PAGE] Boulders from another planet? Not so. It's a striking abstract of stone, sunlight, shadow, and sky at Enchanted Rock.

[OVERLEAF] Splendid panoramas just like this await your arrival at the Hill Country's granite dome, sweet dome.



Delicate ferns flourish among cracks and crevices of the rock's surface.





The formation of Enchanted Rock and the surrounding Llano Uplift began more than a billion years ago. Under tremendous internal pressures in those years of its prehistory, the earth experienced a hiccup that released a huge pocket of magma. The molten mass, slowly searing its way through rock layers as it rose toward the surface, cooled so gradually that its constituent minerals crystallized, eventually yielding granite comprised of salmon-pink feldspar, translucent quartz, and black mica.

In and around Enchanted Rock, winter rains often set the stage for spectacular spring wildflowers. With adequate moisture, vibrant coreopsis, prickly pear, claret-cup cactus, and lace cactus blanket the area, which also harbors meandering creek beds and quiet ponds. Even in the drier, upland stretches of the park, orange, yellow, black, and ivory lichens stencil the slabs of exfoliated rock and eroded hoodoos with extraordinary color and texture year round.

Such vivid scenery, easy to get to via well-marked trails, holds special appeal for day hikers, picnickers, birdwatchers, geology buffs, campers, backpackers, photographers, and rock climbers. Those who seek a physical challenge won't be disappointed; they can simply aim for the top.

Folks willing to climb the 425-foot incline to the summit of Enchanted Rock's highest dome during April and May discover panoramic vistas of cardinal-red Indian blankets and indigo blue-bonnets, interspersed with ribbons of live oak, Texas hickory, and mesquite. In autumn, the view is equally stunning, with hues of burnished gold, crimson red, and sage green accenting the gently rolling hills and valleys that stretch to the far horizon.

Many first-time visitors report an unexpected rapport with the big rock, a sensation that may explain not only its enormous popularity today, but also its evocative name, its long history of human habitation, and its sacredness to Native Americans.

Archeologists have identified dozens of Archaic-Indian sites in and around Enchanted Rock, some of which may date

back 10,000 years. During that period, groups of hunter-gatherers roamed Central Texas collecting plants and stalking deer, birds, and fish. These Native Americans left behind tools, such as notched dart points, which they used to tip short spears.

Around the year 900, during the Late Prehistoric period, these Indians continued a hunter-gatherer way of life, but improved it with the bow and arrow, harvesting bison and other big game when they could. Shards of pottery uncovered in the Enchanted Rock area, probably from vessels used for storing food, also date from this period.

Though valued for its reliable, clear springs and peerless view of the surrounding countryside, Enchanted Rock—according to popular legend—was far more than a good place to find food for early human inhabitants. These people worshipped here; for them, the big boulder harbored invisible spirits and supernatural powers. These beliefs were perhaps fueled by the rock's moan-like sighs and strange, unexpected sparkles of light.

Such groans and grumbles may have issued from the sun-warmed granite slabs as they shrank slightly in the cool of evening. The sparkles were perhaps reflections of the sun's or moon's rays in the granite's vernal pools or its embedded crystals. Logical explanations aside, Enchanted Rock is a place of magic, a place that inspires genuine reverence, a place where Nature is easy to love.

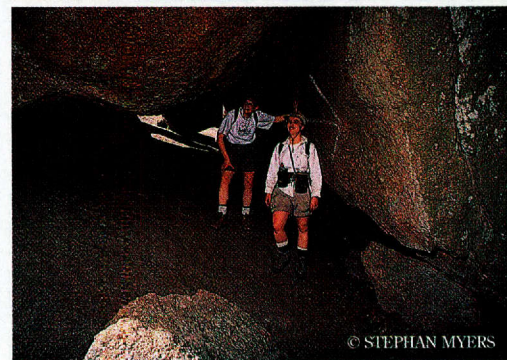
Despite man's presence in the region over the centuries, this regal dome remains a masterpiece of natural craftsmanship. Prominent and impressive as it is, surrounded by five smaller granite



© STEPHAN MYERS



© CLARK CRENSHAW



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[TOP] A roadrunner snacks on a lizard.

[CENTER, ABOVE] Spiderwort adds color to the park's landscape.

[ABOVE] Kaleigh Muzzafar of Irving and Loraye Talaasen of Dallas explore the labyrinth of Enchanted Rock Cave, on the northern edge of the rock's summit.

[FACING PAGE, TOP] Moss Lake, on the north side of Enchanted Rock, offers several primitive campsites along its margins.

[RIGHT] Vernal pools are depressions in the granite rock that catch rainwater. As they fill with eroded granite gravel, they become home to a succession of plant communities that eventually climax with wildflowers and grasses.

[FAR RIGHT] A picturesque stream descends over the rock's jumbled slopes.

© STEPHAN MYERS



Logical explanations aside, **E**nchanted **R**ock is a **p**lace of **m**agic, a place that inspires **g**enuine **r**eference, a place where **N**ature is **e**asy to **l**ove.



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© LANCE VARNELL



Sandy Creek meanders along the southern flanks of the famous pink granite dome.

features named Freshman Mountain, Little Rock, Buzzard's Roost, Flag Pole, and Turkey Peak, Enchanted Rock is still a mere freckle on the face of a giant, convex granite intrusion called a batholith. This mammoth geologic monument, which covers about 100 square miles, originally formed from molten rock some seven miles underground.

For many visitors, the park's most fascinating granite formations are the curved exfoliation sheets and broken slabs of stone that seem to peel away from Enchanted Rock like the leaves of a dehydrated artichoke. As these brittle, often gargantuan rocks (some weighing many tons) slide ever so slowly toward

the base of the dome, pressure exerted on the convex granite bedrock underneath is relieved, causing a slight expansion and, eventually, more fracturing and sloughing off.

Despite this shedding of layers, the big rock remains the second-largest exfoliation dome in the United States (only Stone Mountain, in Georgia, is more massive). Pamphlets and trail guides, available at park headquarters, will help you find and interpret many other samplings of the park's curious geological formations: rock doughnuts, intrusion dikes, xenoliths, tent blisters, tors (piles of corestones), tafoni (honeycomb weathering), rills, and rock pedestals.

One of the area's most celebrated features, Enchanted Rock Cave, lies on the northern edge of the dome's apex. Consisting of huge blocks balanced against each other, the cave developed in a process similar to that which formed the park's smaller tent blisters—slabs of rock that have touched and tilted upward, forming a makeshift pyramid.

Thick, nearly vertical sheets of exfoliation, seen on Enchanted Rock's northwest face and at other locations throughout the park, provide excellent foot- and finger-holds for rock climbers, whose expertise and experience help them select routes of varying difficulty and danger.

"The granite at Enchanted Rock is made for climbing—the feldspar's big crystals are comparable to crags in northern Colorado," says Josh Norris, owner of Blooming Onion Mountain Guides of Austin. "You'll find no better granite for hundreds of miles in any direction. It's a great place to challenge yourself, but it's also an ideal place to teach rock climbing."

If you plan to pursue this physically demanding, exhilarating activity here, be sure to bring proper climbing gear, heed the rock-climbing regulations available at park headquarters, and keep a close eye on the weather.

To reach Enchanted Rock's main dome from park headquarters, you drive a road that meanders through rolling grassland dotted with mesquites and live oaks. At the Sandy Creek crossing, the clear water sparkles over a stream bed of pink, coarse-grained gravel called grus (sandy granite fragments of quartz and feldspar crystals, broken into chunks by erosion).

Park just beyond the creek, where you'll see visitors heading upslope to a wooden gazebo. This is the trailhead for the climb to the top of Enchanted Rock's main dome. At the gazebo, look for the historical marker that commemorates Captain John Coffee "Jack" Hays,

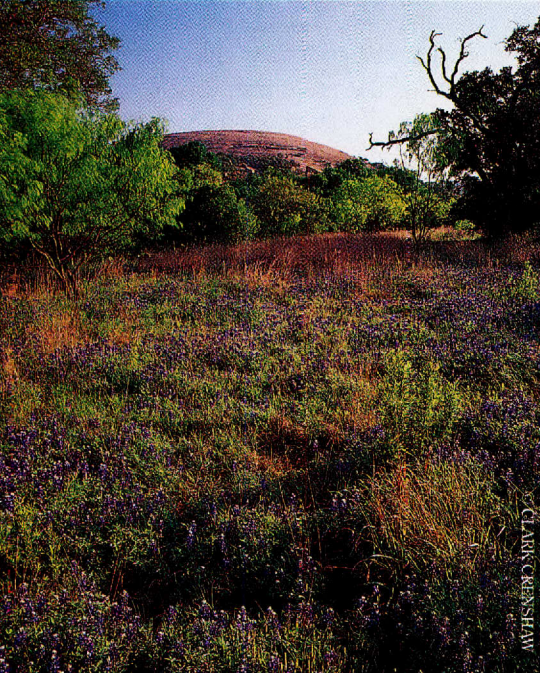
[FACING PAGE, TOP] Wind, water, and time have sculpted these hoodoo-like granite formations.

[RIGHT] Come spring, bluebonnets thrive in and around the park, which sits in two wildflower-rich counties, Llano and Gillespie.

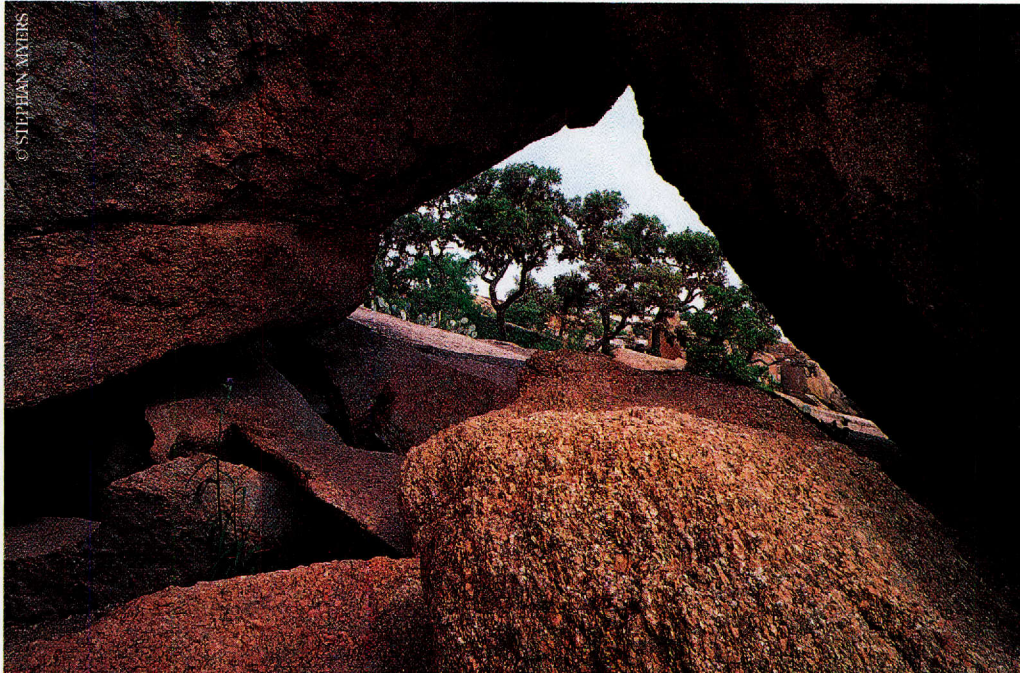
[FAR RIGHT] A triangular window rock formation frames a stand of live oaks.



From atop **Enchanted Rock**, you may **shed** the **tarnish** of **everyday existence**; foibles, **fears**, and **frustrations** can be **polished clean** by sun, wind, and **rock**.



© CLARA CROENSTADT



© STEPHAN MYERS



Sky and earth merge in heavenly fashion.

a surveyor who joined the Texas Rangers in 1840 and escaped from a band of Comanches by spurring his horse to the top of Enchanted Rock. According to Hays' report of the incident, the Indians would not follow him to the summit, a behavior some have interpreted as Comanche reverence for the dome.

Allow at least 50 minutes for your journey to the summit (and the same amount of time for the descent). Keep in mind that no shelters, drinking water, benches, or other facilities exist beyond the trailhead. Decked with hat, sunscreen, comfortable clothes, nonslip shoes or boots, and a backpack or fanny pack equipped with snacks and water, you're ready to go. From now until you return, you may shed the tarnish of

everyday existence; foibles, fears, and frustrations can be polished clean by sun, wind, and rock.

Not far beyond the trailhead, you'll traverse a delightful mix of granite in its various forms: gentle knolls, giant blocks, and weathered, jointed bedrock seen as piles of brick-like stones. Rock pedestals (also called mushroom rocks), boulders whose moist micosections and bases eroded more quickly than their drier top sections, also appear, several balanced on what appears to be a mere sliver of granite.

An astonishing variety of plants flourishes all around, reaching for light from their tenuous footholds in cracks, crevices, and around the bases of shaded boulders. Slow-growing, hardy lichens

(ancient organisms that consist of a symbiotic blend of fungi and algae) grow right on top of ancient rock, scalloped in shades of orange, green, and black.

In spring, vivid bracts of bluebonnets emerge from gravel beds and low-lying fissures in moist areas. Magenta blooms of lace cactus, lemon-yellow coreopsis, orange-yellow prickly pear, and the rare basin bellflower also add color to scattered outcrops of pink granite, accented by emerald islands of mosses and ferns.

As you climb the last 100 feet, watch for the oval-shaped depressions, called weathering pits, that pock the final ascent. These pits, which continually erode, catch rainwater. When this happens, spores of algae may float in, germinate, and thrive in what has now become a vernal pool. Zooplankton, tiny organisms that feed on the algae, soon follow.

If the vernal pools dry up, the decomposing bodies of these organisms add humus (organic material) to the dirt that collects in the pit and eventually create a habitat for simple plants such as liverworts, mosses, and rock quillwort. Over time, a succession of other plants may arrive, such as yellow stonecrop, sedges, and water pygmy-weed. If enough soil accumulates, assorted wildflowers and grasses like little bluestem can grow.

Since you've now climbed nearly 500 feet, take time to soak up a spectacle that can unhinge the jaw of even the most phlegmatic pedestrian. To the south lies the summit trail you've just conquered, as well as park headquarters. In the same direction four miles farther on, you'll see the pale-colored limestone of the Edwards Plateau, and about 18 miles beyond that, the town of Fredericksburg.

Turkey Peak rises nearby in a more easterly direction, while at the summit's northeastern edge, you'll find Freshman Mountain (in the foreground). Just beyond, to the northeast, lie Buzzard's Roost and Flag Pole, favorite destinations of day hikers and backpackers, who may want to spend one or more starlit evenings in nearby Buzzard's Roost Primitive Campground. The Loop Trail, a four-mile footpath

Enchanted Rock

Enchanted Rock State Natural Area is 18 miles north of Fredericksburg on Ranch Road 965. You can also get there by traveling south from Llano on Texas 16 for 14 miles, then turning west on RR 965. Admission: \$5 per day ages 13-65, free age 12 and younger. There are several admission options for those older than 65. So popular is this pristine outdoor destination that once the park reaches full capacity, the gates close until 5 p.m. (when they usually reopen). Open daily year round, the park accommodates day visitors from 8 a.m. to around 9 p.m.; it closes to the public (except overnight campers) by 10 p.m.

On weekdays during winter months, the park closes to the public for hunting regulated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. To confirm dates of closing or to learn more about the park, write to Park Supt., Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, 16710 Ranch Rd. 965, Fredericksburg 78624; 915/247-3903 or 800/792-1112. *During peak times, call ahead to confirm park access.* Web site: www.tpwd.state.tx.us/park/enchantd/enchantd.htm.

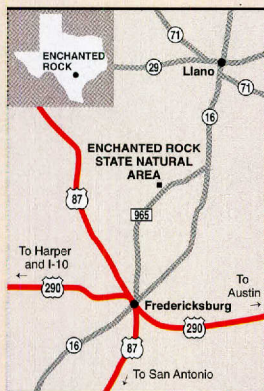
Wear sturdy, comfortable clothing, hiking shoes with nonslip soles, and sun protection. Because this park has been set aside as a natural area, visitors are asked to minimize human impact. Bring

drinking water and snacks, and carry out whatever you bring in. Walk only on the rock or on designated trails. Mountain bikes are not permitted. Pets must be kept on a leash (6-ft. maximum length) at all times, particularly near the dome's delicate vernal pools.

Overnight campers can choose from 46 tent sites (with pads, grills, and access to shower-equipped restrooms) near the parking area (\$9 per night). Sixty primitive, non-vehicular campsites cost \$7 per night. Composting toilets are available in primitive camping areas. *To reserve campsites, call 512/389-8900 well in advance, especially for visits during spring and fall.*

Fires are permitted only at the tent sites within campfire rings or grills. Bring your own firewood (or buy wood, if available, at park headquarters). No wood gathering is allowed in the park. No buses, RV's, trailers, or vehicles longer than 20 feet may drive over Sandy Creek's small bridge, which leads to the camping area.

Day-use amenities include a playground, restrooms, and picnic



© KYLE GRAPHERS

tables (near the parking area). An open-air pavilion near Sandy Creek (with picnic tables, restroom, and barbecue pit) provides an excellent site for large gatherings. Be sure to reserve the pavilion in advance.

Before setting out on a rock-climbing adventure,

register with park headquarters, where you'll find a list of rock-climbing regulations to ensure safety. Use of pitons or any other bolting apparatus is not permitted, except as designated by the Central Texas Climbing Committee. (For information about the CTCC, call Michael Lewis at 210/887-7190.) Because of the inherent and significant hazards of this sport, do not attempt to rock climb without proper instruction and safety gear.

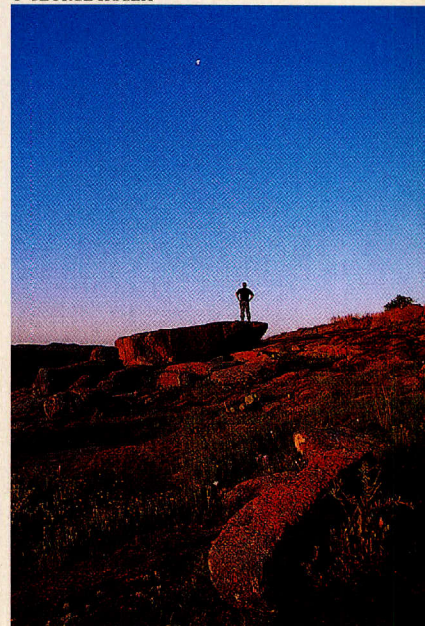
For a birdwatching checklist, complete set of guidelines, park and hiking-trail maps, and other information, write to or call park headquarters (address and phone number listed above).

Books

Check your library or local bookstore for the following books: *The Dome Driver's Manual* (Big

Fun Publications, 1989) offers a description and rating of the park's rock-climbing routes; *Enchanted Rock State Natural Area: A Guide to the Landforms* by James F. Peterson (Terra Cognita Press, 1988); *On Your Way Up: A Trail Guide to the Top of Enchanted Rock* by John Williams (Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept., 1994); and *Roadside Geology of Texas* by Darwin Spearing (Mountain Press Publishing, 1991).

© GEORGE HOSEK



An Enchanted Rock hiker enjoys a combination moonset and sunrise.



A claret cup cactus blooms to perfection in April.

skirting flower-strewn grasslands and the bed of oak-shaded Sandy Creek, carries you to this campground, then leads

north, west, and south, finally circling back around Enchanted Rock.

Don't miss Little Rock, the granite promontory that rises southwest of the main dome's summit; it's a close second in size to Enchanted Rock. Glistening to the northwest lies a stock pond called Moss Lake, a cool companion to Moss Lake Primitive Campground. Walnut Springs, a creek usually hidden beneath lush vegetation as it arrows along near Walnut Springs Primitive Campground, leads the way due west.

Many visitors like to make the trip to the summit during daylight's final hour.

This is a time when the rock glows like a firepit of orange embers scattered along the rim of the sky's azure bowl. When the day pulls the shawl of dusk around her shoulders, visitors scurry down the slope, circles of battery-powered light flashing at their feet and the wind whistling in their ears. But they'll be back, soon enough. For Enchanted Rock's mystical allure, once sampled, won't be forgotten, not this day, and not for a lifetime. ★

JAN EDWARDS wrote last month's Big Thicket feature "Preserving the Mystery."



Wild Azalea C

SPRINGTIME IS SHOWTIME FOR ACRES OF AZALEAS



© GALENDO REYNOLDS

anyons

IN NEWTON COUNTY

By Diane Morey Sitton · Photographs by Stephan Myers



In a remote ravine in the northeastern corner of the Big Thicket, a wondrous spectacle occurs in March. As *Rhododendron canescens* awakens from winter, first one, then another, then thousands of blooms unfurl in a filigree of pink and white.

The breathtaking concentration of wild azaleas that beautifies Newton County's Wild Azalea Canyons is the largest known in Texas and one of the largest in the South. But the nature-lovers, flower-lovers, and families who come to explore this pocket of paradise aren't counting.

Instead, they revel in the fragrance emitted by the frilly flowers, an aroma so sweet that some pioneers called the plant wild honeysuckle. Often, as many as 16 blossoms crowd a single flower cluster. Close inspection reveals the inspiration for another nickname, "hoary azalea": Fuzzy white hairs cover the leaves and flowers of these eight-foot-tall shrubs.

But Wild Azalea Canyons have other offerings, too. As visitors stroll the crisscrossing paths, they marvel at the towering longleaf pine trees that pierce the canopy of oak, hickory, beech, and magnolia. They thrill at the scamperings of fox squirrels and other woodland creatures. Birdwatchers, especially, enjoy the songs and flutterings of summer tanagers, hooded warblers, red-headed woodpeckers, and other winged favorites.

"Newton County's bird list contains more than 220 resident and migratory species," says Buddy Hollis, a self-taught naturalist who compiled the impressive roster. "Most of them visit the canyons sometime during the year." The rich diversity of birds helped earn Wild Azalea Canyons a spot on the Big Thicket Loop of The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

Informative programs on birds and other nature topics—as well as self-guided tours of the canyons—number among the diversions at Wild Azalea Days (March 24-26, 2000), an annual event that celebrates the area's natural beauty. The fun starts on Friday afternoon with a plant and craft sale sponsored by the Newton Garden Club, a photography exhibit, a flower show featuring wild azaleas, and a buffet, all at the Iris and Anne Howard Civic Center, near Newton's historic courthouse square. On Saturday at Newton's public library, Buddy Hollis and Texas Parks and Wildlife rangers present slide shows on area birds, wildflowers, and wildlife. That same day, shoppers can mingle among displays of the nature books, T-shirts, and handcrafted

birdhouses available year round at the Newton County Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center. Barbecue fills the bill for browsers and buyers who have worked up an appetite.

Most flower-fanciers pick up a Wild Azalea Canyons flier at the Visitor Center before heading to the site, which lies about 13 miles northeast of town. The flier (available throughout azalea season) includes a road map, a trail map, and a history of the canyons. Hilly terrain, winding curves, and nearly two miles of gravel road through pine forests whet the appetite for the discoveries ahead.

At the canyons' precipice, volunteer greeters hand out bird lists and trail maps and offer tips on where to find the showiest blooms. A peek over the edge of the ravine provides the first glimpse of the canyons' namesake flowers.

"The name Wild Azalea Canyons stuck in the 1970s when Temple-Inland Forest Products Corporation [then Temple EasTex] set aside the 200-acre tract as a natural wilderness," says Robert Wilson, the forester who oversees the canyons and Temple-Inland's other distinctive sites. Trails weave through some 50 acres where the wild azaleas are most spectacular.

Like most of their domesticized cousins, wild azaleas bloom once a year, in spring. "Generally, the flowers look best from mid-March through early April," says Visitor Center director Susan Karpel. Old-timers agree, adding that the moisture-loving Piedmont azaleas nurtured by the canyons' acidic soil put on their most flamboyant display "when spring comes in warm and stays warm" and when rainfall is abundant. When those conditions prevail, single bloom clusters can stretch to five inches across.

Although most visitors come here to bask in the woodland bouquet, some folks are drawn by the mystique of "canyons"—unexpected in terrain that typically lies flat or rolls with gentle swells.

"Sometime between five and 25 million years ago, a ridge formed that extends from East Texas into Louisiana," explains Ed O'Brien, a local soil scientist who studies such formations. "Geologists refer to it as a 'regional uplift.' The canyons are part of a series of finger ridges carved in the uplift's sediment

[PREVIOUS PAGES AND ABOVE] Acres of lacy wild azaleas beautify Newton County's Wild Azalea Canyons from mid-March through early April. With their sprawling stamens, single bloom clusters on the showy shrubs can measure up to five inches across.

[FACING PAGE] Young longleaf pines begin their upward journey through the branching limbs of wild azaleas.





Also known as Piedmont azalea, hoary azalea, and wild honeysuckle, the shrub's frilly flowers proliferate when spring is warm and wet. Only nature knows what this year holds.

by water making its way to the Sabine River." The Sabine lies just one mile east of Wild Azalea Canyons.

Standing at the trailhead, eyeing the sloping descent, it's easy to marvel at such wonders of nature. But most hikers, eager to examine the flowers close up, take another look at the trail map (available year round in the registration box in the parking lot), grab the nylon rope that accompanies the first 80 feet of path, and begin their quest. "Regulars" know that sturdy shoes and a walking stick will help them negotiate patches of iron-ore gravel and slippery mats of pine needles encountered on the trails. (The self-guided trek takes one to three hours round-trip.)

As the path slowly descends, the understory of holly, yaupon, wax myrtle, silver bells, and American beautyberry,

not to mention the hundreds of wild azalea shrubs, carries an increasingly thick drape of longleaf pine needles. Some needles measure 15 inches long from their pointed tips to the sheath that bears them in bundles of three.

In the late 1800s, longleaf pines dominated this region. "From 1880 through the 1930s, the lumber industry was the lifeline of Newton County," says Dr. Durward Trotti, a retired 93-year-old dentist who lives on land where his grandfather once farmed. "By the 1930s, the massive stands of longleaf pine were gone." According to foresters, the trees, also called "long straw" pines, that dazzle today's tourists in Wild Azalea Canyons reseeded naturally and are about 70 years old. Most of the trees tower 70 feet or more.

In the presence of such giants in this enchanting place, even small discoveries prove impressive. In early spring, flowering dogwoods unfold graceful white blooms at the tips of their willowy branches. Carolina jessamine weaves garlands of yellow through the underbrush. In moist niches, bird's-foot violet, Texas' largest native flowering violet, keeps company with cinnamon fern and colorful mushrooms.

In the clearings, color takes to the air: spicebush, tiger, zebra, and black swallowtail butterflies, as well as other jewel-toned species. Ruby-throated hummingbirds appear in late March to share the sunny sites.

Deep in the canyons, attention shifts to sounds. At dusk, barred owls break the silence. To woods-walkers, their song seems to ask, "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you, too?" Astute listeners sometimes hear the rapping of a pileated woodpecker as it drums on a hollow tree, or the flute-like trill of a wood thrush. "To some birdwatchers, the song of the wood thrush sounds prettier than that of the nightingale," says Buddy Hollis.

But in a place of such exceptional beauty, impressive diversity of species, unusual topography, and beguiling serenity, comparing the rhapsodies of nature's creatures is like comparing oranges to apples. Here, it's the moment that counts... and the memories.

"I first explored the canyons in 1932," says Dr. Trotti. "The wild azaleas were a sight to see. You could smell their sweetness from the top of the bluff. Once you smell that earthy, intoxicating fragrance, you never forget it." ★

DIANE MOREY SITTON of Colmesneil says she's wild about the frilliness and fragrance of wild azaleas.

STEPHAN MYERS provided photographs for last month's stories on the Big Thicket National Preserve and Big Thicket folk remedies.

Wild Azalea Canyons

The **Wild Azalea Canyons** are about 13 miles northeast of Newton, seat of Newton County. From the intersection of US 190 and Texas 87 in Newton, take Texas 87 north 4.4 miles to FM 1414, then go east 6.7 miles. Just past the sign for Stringtown community, look for an unpaved road and a Wild Azalea Canyons sign. Follow the road east 1.8 miles to the parking lot at the canyons' precipice.

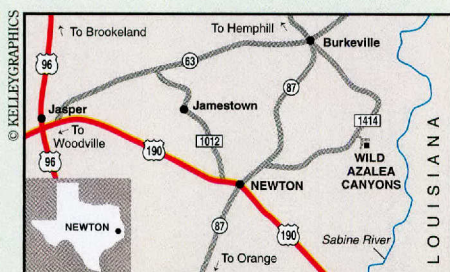
Generally, the wild azaleas peak from mid-March through early April. Plan to spend 1 to 3 hours on the trails. Numbers on the trail map correspond to markers at intersections. Wear sturdy shoes, and carry a walking stick, as sections of the path are steep and slippery. Bring bottled water. No restrooms at the canyons.

Wild Azalea Canyons are owned by Temple-Inland Forest Products Corp. The Newton Co. Chamber of Commerce helps to promote and maintain them. Hours: Daily dawn to dusk. Admission: Free. Not wheelchair accessible.

For a map to the canyons, a trail map, a bird checklist, or information on guided tours of the canyons and other area attractions, visit the **Newton Co. Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center**, on the northeast side of Newton's courthouse square. Hours: Tue-Fri 10-5. Write to Box 66, Newton 75966; 409/379-5527.

Wild Azalea Days

Newton's **Wild Azalea Days** (Mar. 24-26, 2000) include a plant and craft sale, flower show, and photography exhibit on Fri 4:30-7 and Sat 9:30-2, at the Howard Civic Center, 105 Court St.; nature slide shows (Sat at 10, 11:30, and 1 at the Newton County Public Library, in the Civic Center); and a reasonably priced barbecue (Sat 11-2 at the Visitor Center). Admission to all activities is free. A complimentary buffet (courtesy of the Newton Garden Club) accompanies the flower show on Fri. On Sat. and Sun. from 10-5 at the canyons, volunteers will hand out trail maps, *The Birds*



of *Newton County* checklists, and drinking water. (Volunteers with information and water will also be at the canyons on Mar. 18-19 from 10-5.) Portable restrooms are on site for these two weekends only.

Area Attractions

The **Newton County Historical Center** (in the Howard Civic Center) houses more than 1,000 artifacts that reflect the county's 154-year history. Highlights include a leather trunk (ca. 1849), a sewing machine used to make Confederate uniforms, and one of Newton's first telephone switchboards. The **Newton County Historical Commission's** offices, genealogical library, and archives share the building. Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30-4:30. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 1383, Newton 75966; 409/379-2109.

A free brochure, *Main Street Newton*, available at the C of C, describes 35 points of historical interest on a **self-guided tour** near Newton's courthouse square.

Caney Creek Nature Park, a popular spot for birdwatchers one block east of the courthouse square, offers creekside picnic areas. **Pete Hughes Memorial Park**, 2 blocks northeast of the square, features a playground and picnic facilities.

Wild azalea plants are available at **Pickle's Garden Center**, 345 Curtis St. in Jasper. To reach Pickle's, take US 190 west from Newton 15 miles, then drive 0.2 miles north on US 96 to Curtis. Hours: Mon-Fri 7:30-5:15, Sat 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Plants in 3-gallon containers cost \$14.95 plus tax. Call 409/384-2681 to check on availability. **Jasper's annual Azalea Trail** (Mar. 6-26, 2000) is a self-guided driving route that winds past showy residential landscapes filled with azaleas, wisterias,

dogwoods, and other spring bloomers. The **Azalea Trail Arts and Crafts Festival** (Mar. 25, 2000, 9-5, on the Jasper Co. courthouse square) features arts and crafts, food, and entertainment. For a map, trail dates, and other information, write to the Jasper Chamber of Commerce, 246 E. Milam, Jasper 75951; 409/384-2762.

Some 24 miles north of Newton is the **Champion Canyon Rim Woodland Trail**. Because it wraps 0.9 miles around a bird-rich ravine, it, like Wild Azalea Canyons, is featured on the Big Thicket Loop of The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. Species prevalent in late spring include Louisiana waterthrushes, blue-gray gnatcatchers, yellow-throated vireos, and black-and-white warblers. Markers identify various tree species and points of interest, including a gun emplacement used by Fort Polk trainees during WWII. The site is owned by Champion International corporation. The trail

is one of 16 Woodland Trails promoted by the Texas Forestry Assn. (TFA). From Newton, take Texas 87 north 24 miles (you'll go through Burkeville). To get a copy of a free TFA brochure titled *The Woodland Trails*, write to the Texas Forestry Assn., Box 1488, Lufkin 75902-1488; 409/632-TREE (8733). Web site: www.texasforestry.org.


Camping

Artesian Springs, on FM 2626 midway between Texas 87 and US 190, offers RV hookups, tent sites, cabins, a group pavilion, nature trails, stocked fishing lakes, boat rentals, a game room, and an artesian-fed lake with a deck, diving board, and water volleyball court. Write to Rt. 1, Box 670-12, Newton 75966; 409/379-8826.

Whispering Creek RV Park offers 4 motel rooms, RV hookups, nature trails, and guided nature tours. From Newton, go 3 miles east on US 190. Write to Box 1699, Newton 75966; 409/379-8400 or 877/379-8400.



Bird's-foot violets add a purply splash to the canyons' woodland setting.



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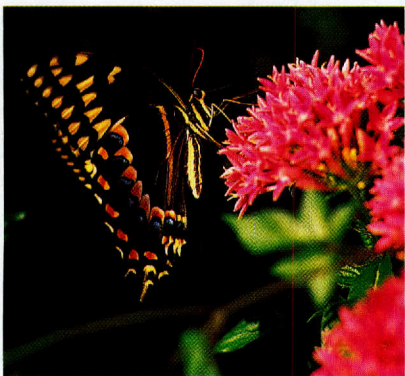


Botanic Gardens

BY DIANE MOREY SITTON

PHOTOGRAPHS

BY GEORGE HOSEK



© KATHY ADAMS CLARK

[ABOVE] A palamedes swallowtail, one of many butterfly species at Mercer, alights on a colorful pentas blossom.

[TOP] The Daylily Garden features some 600 cultivars of daylilies, including many evergreen varieties.

On warm, sun-splashed days, it's common for 90-year-old Margaret Anderson to grab her binoculars, don her floppy-brimmed hat, and head for the Color Garden at Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, 22 miles north of downtown Houston. It's not the richly hued blooms that lure Margaret to the spot; it's the iridescent glints and colorful flutterings of Gulf fritillary, pearl crescent, painted lady, and other exquisite butterflies.

"Sunny days bring out the most species," says Margaret. And she should know. So far, she has observed 57 species of butterflies in this garden, including an elusive beauty called a red-spotted purple.

But butterfly-watching is only one diversion that draws visitors to this splendid Harris County garden. Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens boasts 18 theme gardens surrounded by more than 200 acres of Piney Woods habitat, making it the Gulf Coast's largest showcase of native and cultivated plants. Each year, more than



250,000 nature-lovers come to stroll the paths, photograph the flowers, examine endangered plant species, observe birds and wildlife, jog woodland trails, attend classes, and enjoy staff- or docent-guided garden walks.

This month, more than 6,000 people will flock to March Mart (March 24-25, 2000), an annual offering of nearly 1,000 unusual and hard-to-find species and cultivars of plants, many grown from cuttings and seeds harvested at this horticultural haven.

“Thelma and Charles Mercer’s 14-acre woodland garden, which they began in the 1940s, is the cornerstone of Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens,” says the festival’s chairwoman, Gudrun Opperman. “Harris County obtained the site from the Mercers in 1974 and added additional acreage over the years.” (A bond referendum in the early 1980s funded the addition of nearly 200 acres.)

“We foster plants that thrive in Houston’s humid climate, but that aren’t common fare at local nurseries,” adds Gudrun. The array includes a sage prized for its yellow blooms (*Salvia madriensis*), an heirloom plant with amaryllis-like flowers (*Rhodophiala bifida*), and a special dark-stemmed Brazilian plume flower (*Justicia carnea* ‘Thelma’s Pink’) that comes from Thelma’s original garden.

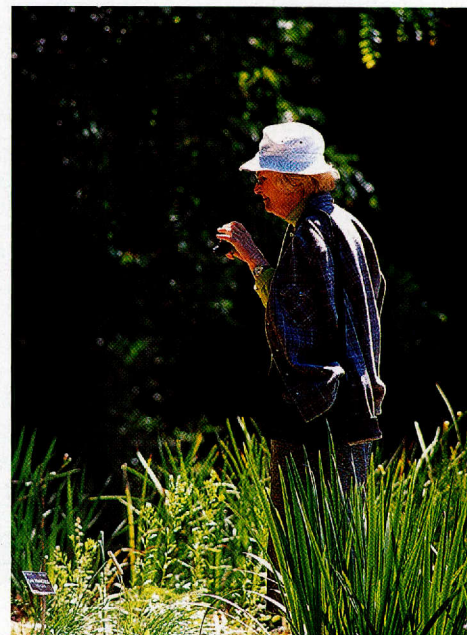
To learn about the pink-blooming Brazilian plume flower and other plants featured at the sale, gardeners and others often attend an informative slide show known as the March Mart Preview (March 18, 2000). The *March Mart Plant Catalog* (available at the Preview and at March Mart) contains descriptions and growing requirements of nearly every species at the sale.

For folks touring the gardens any time of the year, the best place to begin is the Visitor Center, just inside the gate. Pick up a map, then step outside to the heady fragrances and captivating textures of more than 100 varieties of herbs, including rosemary, scented geraniums, and cardoon, an edible plant with spiny gray leaves.

In spring, larkspurs, delphiniums, and snapdragons decorate the Color Garden, next on the path. In summer, the hues—as well as the butterfly activity—intensify around the star-clusters, bachelor buttons, lantana, and purslane.

Delicate winged creatures also favor the nectar-rich blossoms of *Cuphea* and

Pick up a map at the Visitor Center, then step outside to the heady fragrances and captivating textures of more than 100 varieties of herbs.



Nature-lovers find plenty to savor in Mercer’s varied landscape. Above, a photographer in the Geophyte Garden waits for the right moment to capture an elusive image.

[OPENING PHOTO SPREAD] The brick walkway leading from the Visitor Center welcomes visitors with massive display beds and vibrant color schemes. Thelma and Charles Mercer, who began the garden in the 1940s, dreamed of sharing their private oasis with the community. The site still reflects many of Thelma’s gardening preferences.



According to legend, the European *Iris pseudacorus*, which you'll find at the Lily Pond, was used to pattern the fleur-de-lis, the emblem of French kings.

Anisacanthus in the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden, which lies in the Perennial Tiers, an area just past the gazebo. The sweeping curve of stairstepped beds also includes a display featuring heirloom species of jonquils, mullein, coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, and old roses. "Pioneers grew these varieties before the turn of the 20th Century," says horticulturist Greg Harmison.

Nearby, 14 species of threatened plants occupy the Endangered Species Garden, a collaborative project between Mercer and the Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) at Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis. "Three quarters of the plants in the nation that face extinction are native to just five states. Texas is one of them," says botanist Cara Murray. As a participant in CPC's 29-garden network, Mercer maintains a seed bank and nurtures species like prairie dawn (*Hymenoxys texana*), a federally endangered sunflower that thrives in sandy mounds described by botanists as "prairie bald spots."

"The only known populations of prairie dawn are in Harris and Fort Bend coun-



ties,” says Cara. “Until living plants were discovered near metropolitan Houston in 1981, dried specimens collected in the 1890s were the only tangible evidence of prairie dawn’s existence. For years, scientists thought it was extinct. Now, we [Mercer staff] have thousands of seeds.”

Just past the Endangered Species Garden, the Daylily Garden beckons summer visitors with the vibrant hues of 600 registered varieties, including ‘Plum Ruffles,’ a daylily that has stunning, nine-inch, mauve blooms. Across from the Daylily Garden, a woodland path leads visitors to the Lily Pond.

In April, about 400 species and hybrids of Louisiana iris delight flower-lovers with blooms in colors ranging from creamy ivory to deep purple. The European *Iris pseudacorus*, a plant growing at the pond’s edge, catches the eye with yellow blooms. According to legend, this flower was used to pattern the fleur-de-lis (“lily flower”), the emblem of French kings. In the same tranquil setting, *Crinum* lilies pique the imagination with sweet fragrance. Some strollers describe the aroma as “lemon cake mix”; it reminds others of chocolate.

Back on the main trail, bridges fringed with calla lilies, maidenhair fern, and Japanese

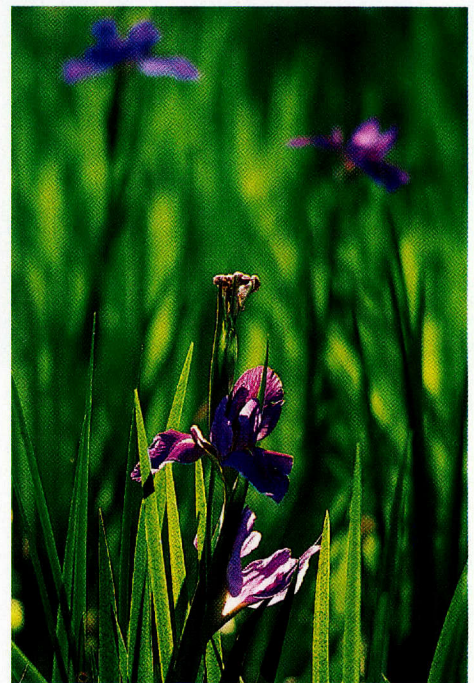
maples in the Shade Garden attract brides and their photographers. In March, “picture-perfect” describes the Azalea Berms ahead, steep, flower-studded slopes punctuated with overlooks, footpaths, and towering pine trees.

Farther along the trail, the canopy opens to reveal a tropical paradise filled with frangipani, croton, bromeliad, and other exotic species. Visitors often pause to inspect the fuchsia fruits of dwarf pink banana (*Musa velutina*) and the exotic, red-and-yellow pendulous blooms of lobster claw (*Heliconia rostrata*).

Last spring, devil’s tongue (*Amorphophallus rivieri*) created a sensation—and a stench—when it shot up its first bloom in 13 years, a four-foot-tall, mottled brown stalk wrapped in a reddish-brown bract. Observers described the flower’s smell as “rotten meat,” or worse. “It’s the foul odor,” says assistant director Linda Gay, “that lures turquoise bottle flies into the inflorescence to pollinate its tiny blooms.”

In the adjoining Ginger Garden, summer coaxes distinctively shaped flowers from yellow dancing lady (*Globba schomburgkii*), white butterfly ginger

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[FACING PAGE, LEFT] Surrounded by water lilies and other aquatic species, the Tea House at the Lily Pond provides a quiet place to rest and reflect.

[TOP] Individual specimens like this rose of China hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosasinensis* ‘Mrs. Jimmy Spangler’) compete for attention in Mercer’s ever-changing palette.

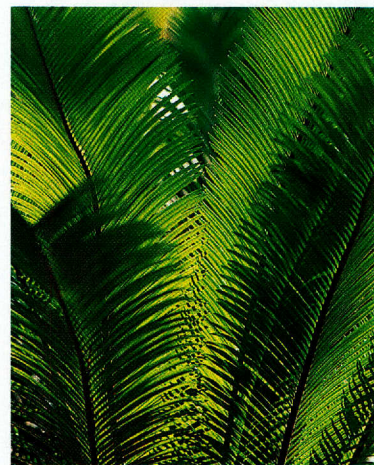
[ABOVE] The William D. Lee Iris Garden along the north shore of the Lily Pond features some 400 species and hybrids of Louisiana iris.



(*Hedychium coronarium*), giant plume ginger (*Curcuma elata*), and about 150 other species. During demonstrations, Beth Galiano, an ardent Mercer volunteer, sometimes squeezes *Zingiber zerumbet*'s red, cone-like bloom to collect the gelatinous "shampoo" used by some South Pacific islanders.

Focus shifts to native plants and trees in the heavily wooded Arboretum, separated from the formal gardens and Visitor Center by Aldine Westfield Road. Visitors reach the Arboretum from a path near the Tropical Garden or from the entrance drive off Aldine Westfield Road.

Hikers, joggers, and birdwatchers start showing up on the woodland trail at eight o'clock in the morning, when the park opens. More than three miles of looping paths, connecting five distinct habitats near the banks of Cypress Creek, invite quick jaunts or leisurely excursions.



The fronds of sago palms (*Cycas revoluta*) provide dramatic backdrops for Mercer's myriad blooms and foliage.

At the east end of the trail, Southern magnolia, loblolly pine, and yaupon holly create a dense thicket populated by birds and wildlife. "Look for pileated woodpeckers here," says Dr. Pat Duncan, Mercer's director. "You can't miss their loud drumming or their immense size." The impressive black-and-white bird, with a prominent red crest, flaunts a 20-inch wingspan.

Farther ahead, an overlook by the Oxbow Pond provides a scenic spot to observe the sweeping buttresses and knobby knees of bald cypress. Cypress Creek, the waterway that marks the northern boundary of Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens, takes its name from these graceful trees.

From the boardwalk that spans the Hickory Bog ahead, children enjoy spotting turtles and tadpoles, as well as lizard tail, an aquatic plant with white bloom spikes. Drier terrain characterizes the Post Oak Uplands and the Hawthorn Loop; both are near the picnic area at the west end of the trail. In spring, white blooms float like clouds on parsley hawthorn, abundant in these habitats.

Springtime visitors also savor the bluebonnets, Mexican hats, winecups, and other wildflowers that enliven the picnic area and Arboretum meadows. The display draws flower-fanciers, who frequently return to learn about wildflowers or other nature topics via Mercer's educational programs. Besides tours of the formal



[TOP] If you love wildflowers, it doesn't get any better than this. *Lupinus texensis* abounds in the Native Plant Garden. "This is what bluebonnets look like when they get plenty of water," says director Dr. Pat Duncan.

[ABOVE] Large, voluptuous amaryllis dot several of Mercer's gardens, including the Geophyte Garden, which features plants with bulbs, corms, and rhizomes.

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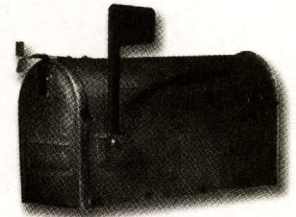
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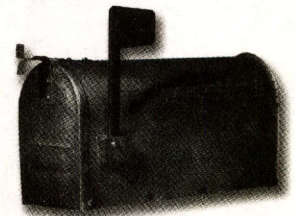
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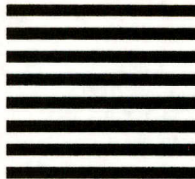
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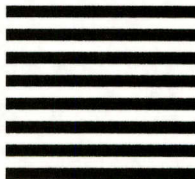
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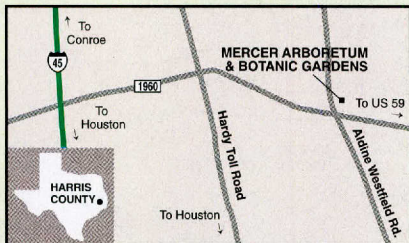
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Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is at 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., north of Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport. Driving north from Houston on Interstate 45, exit at FM 1960, and turn east. At Aldine Westfield Rd., turn left. At the second traffic light (1.25 miles), turn right to the Visitor Center and display gardens (the East Side), or left to the Arboretum and picnic area (the West Side). Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens shares a common entrance with the Baldwin Boettcher Branch Library.

Besides 18 theme gardens, the East Side features a hedge maze, a butterfly hatchery, and a gift shop. West Side amenities include more than 3 miles of maintained paths through wooded terrain, a picnic area with barbecue grills, a pavilion and an outdoor classroom (reservations required), restrooms, water fountains, and a canoe launch on Cypress Creek. On the West Side, you can jog, bicycle, and walk leashed pets.

Grounds hours: Daily 8-5 fall and winter (until DST begins); Mon-Sat 8-7, Sun 10-7 spring and summer (until CST begins). Admission: Free. Maps available at the Visitor Center. Wheelchair accessible. (Wheelchairs and golf



cars are available by reservation for patrons with special needs.)

The gift shop, located in the Visitor Center, sells jewelry, T-shirts, garden accessories, and gardening and nature books. *The Gingers of Mercer* by Beth and August Galiano sells for \$6 and contains information on ginger species in the garden. Proceeds from gift-shop sales help support Mercer's plant collections and programs. Gift shop hours: Tue-Fri 9:30-2:30, Sat 9:30-4:30, Sun noon-5.

Events

Events include the **26th Annual March Mart** (Mar. 24-25, 2000, from 8-4), sponsored by volunteers of the Mercer Partnership of Friends, a nonprofit support organization. The sale features annuals, perennials, gingers, Louisiana iris, herbs, native plants, trees and shrubs, vines, old roses, daylilies, and tropical plants. Shoppers receive a packet of free seeds with purchase. Bring your own wagon or other plant-carrying cart, park

on the West Side, and ride the shuttle. **March Mart Preview** (Mar. 18, 2000, 10-noon at the Visitor Center) is a free slide show that provides information on some of the outstanding plants offered at March Mart.

The *March Mart Plant Catalog*, a 70-page reference, contains descriptions and growing requirements of the selections at March Mart. The catalog is available for a \$2 donation at March Mart Preview and March Mart.

Other events include a monthly, 2-hour, staff-guided tour, each with a seasonal focus. Volunteer docents conduct other tours by reservation only on weekdays. Mercer also celebrates Earth Day (Apr. 22, 2000) and Arbor Day in late Jan. with special activities such as tree-planting demonstrations and seedling giveaways. In summer, the focus is on gingers, with a plant sale, lecture, and garden tour (July 15, 2000).

To schedule group tours, to obtain information on becoming a volunteer, or to receive brochures on workshops and classes, write to 22306 Aldine Westfield Rd., Humble 77338; 281/443-8731 (fax 281/209-9767). Email: mercer@cp4.co.harris.tx.us.

Nearby Sites

At **Jesse H. Jones Park and Nature Center**, in Humble, 5 miles

of nature trails meander through cypress bogs and wildflower meadows. Offerings also include picnic sites with barbecue grills and a pavilion that can be reserved. Hours: Daily 8-7 Mar-Oct, daily 8-6 Nov and Feb, and daily 8-5 Dec-Jan. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. The **Redbud Hill Pioneer Homestead**, a replica of an 1830s East Texas homestead, also lies on the grounds. It includes a log house, barn, smokehouse, corncrib, fruit cellar, and outhouse. The homestead's facilities also include a replica of an Akokisa Indian village, complete with huts, a council lodge, and a *chickee* (an open-air platform used as a summer dwelling). The homestead hosts two festivals, Texas Heritage Day (Mar. 4, 2000) and Pioneer Day (Nov. 4, 2000). Homestead hours: Wed 10-4, Sat 1-4. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. For information about the homestead and the park as a whole, write to Park Supt., 20634 Kenswick Dr., Humble 77338; 281/446-8588.

Resources

For information on endangered plants and 29 national sites where they can be seen, write to the Center for Plant Conservation, Box 299, Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, MO 63166-0299; 314/577-9450. Web site: www.mobot.org/CPC.

gardens (offered at least once a month), this year's schedule lists classes on water gardening, plant propagation, heirloom species, and landscaping with native plants. Children can participate in Saturday programs and summer classes.

In a setting abundant with wildflowers and butterflies, where endangered plants thrive and exotic species brandish pink fruit and chocolate-scented blooms, it's easy to be smitten by horticultural wonders.

"At Mercer," says Pat Duncan, "we're all about connecting people with plants." ★

Colmesneil writer DIANE MOREY SITTON also wrote the story on Wild Azalea Canyons that begins on page 36.

Houston outdoor and nature photographer GEORGE HOSEK captured the gorgeous shot of the Bolivar Point Lighthouse that graced our January cover.



The sight and sound of running water helps soften the intense heat of Houston summers. Emily Eisterhold (left) and Kacie Broussard enjoy playing in one of several fountains on the grounds.

Fun Forecast

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

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

Sometimes dates change after the magazine is printed.

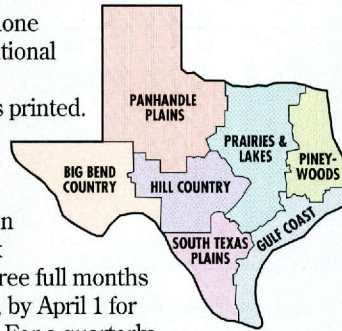
Before you drive miles to an event, confirm the date by calling the number listed next to the festivity or by contacting the local chamber of

commerce. If you wish to submit an event for Fun

Forecast, please send the information to Fun Forecast, *Texas Highways*, Box 141009, Austin 78714-1009; fax 512/486-5879. Submit information at least three full months before the first of the month in which the event will take place (for example, by April 1 for July 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.



1, 8, 15, 22, 29 STEPHENVILLE Cross Timbers Country Opry 254/965-4132	5-8 SHELBY Antique Show 281/373-9977
1-30 BRENHAM (began Mar 1) Bluebonnet Trails/ Wildflower Tours 409/836-3695 or 888/273-6426	6-9 SEGUIN <i>The Misanthrope</i> 800/580-7322
CUERO DeWitt Co Wildflower Month 361/275-9942	6-23 DALLAS Primavera Galleria 972/702-7100
ENNIS Bluebonnet Trails 972/878-4748 or 888/366-4748	6, 27 DENTON UNT Wind Symphony 940/369-7802 or 565-2930
1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	7 DALLAS 25th Annual Northwood Woman's Club Homes Tour 972/380-5244
1-2, 28-30 CANTON Old Mill Marketplace 903/567-5445	RICHARDSON Peter Frankel, Classical Pianist 972/889-2982
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	7-9 CANTON Classic Motorcycle Rally 817/589-2867
1-2, 28-30 GLEN ROSE Arabian Horse Pro-Am 254/898-9055 (began Mar 30) Bluegrass Jamboree 254/897-3081	CLEBURNE Antique Alley 817/645-7591
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	DALLAS Deep Ellum Art Festival 214/748-4332
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	DENISON Texoma Lakfest Regatta 903/465-1551
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	EAGLE LAKE Attwater Prairie Chicken Festival 979/541-4629
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	FORT WORTH Fort Worth Dallas Ballet 800/654-9545
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	ROUND TOP Arts & Crafts Square Fair 409/249-3803
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	4-16 DALLAS <i>Cabaret</i> 214/691-7200
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	7-Oct 8 MESQUITE Mesquite Championship Rodeo 972/285-8777
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	8 COLUMBUS Dinner Theater 979/732-2917 or 877/444-7339
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	5 DENTON Folk Dance Festival 940/898-2086
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	WACO <i>Morning, Noon and Night</i> 800/701-2787
1-2, 28-30 WASHINGTON April Folk Weekends 409/878-2461	1-23 GRANBURY (began Mar 31) <i>The Odd Couple</i> 817/573-9191 or 572-9881

Panhandle Plains

1
PAMPA
St Vincent DePaul
Arts & Crafts Show
806/665-5665

SAN ANGELO
Symphony
915/658-5877

WICHITA FALLS
Jr League
Attic Affair
940/720-3428

1-2
AMARILLO
Collectors' Choice
Show
806/359-3045
or 352-0334

BIG SPRING
Arts &
Crafts Show
915/263-7690

1-4
LUBBOCK
(began Mar 30)
ABC Rodeo
806/770-2000
or 793-5800

1, 6-8
WICHITA FALLS
(began Mar 30)
*Everything's
Relative*
940/322-5000

1, 8
EASTLAND
Southwest
Indian
Artifacts
Show
254/629-2549

1, 14-15
ABILENE
(began Mar 30)
All the Way Home
915/674-2739

1-2, 28-30
POST
(began Mar 31)
Old Mill
Trade Days
806/495-3529

7-8
DIMMITT
Quilt Festival
806/647-5585

7-9
LUBBOCK
Annie
806/770-2000

8
EASTLAND
Polo on the Prairie
254/629-2332

Second Saturday
Trade Days
254/629-3200

JACKSBORO
Jack Co Jamboree
940/567-3506

PAMPA
Heart Gala
806/665-0356

WICHITA FALLS
Nashville Mandolin
Ensemble
940/692-2255

8-9
STANTON
Old Sorehead
Trade Days
915/756-2006

WICHITA FALLS
Hunting & Fishing
Expo
940/569-3925

10
WICHITA FALLS
Annie
800/714-5331

12-16
WICHITA FALLS
Educating Rita
940/397-4393

14
VERNON
Zion Lutheran
Church Barbecue
940/552-7164

14-15
ABILENE
Celebrate Abilene/
Railroad Festival
915/676-3775
or 673-4587

CLAUDE
The Kid Show
806/226-5409

SAN ANGELO
Texas Wine
& Brew Festival
915/653-6793
or 653-1206

14-16
LUBBOCK
Arts Festival
806/744-2787

15
ALBANY
Rediscover Albany
Family Day
915/762-2525

BIG SPRING
Health Fair
915/268-4960
or 263-7641

Master the Mountain
5-K, 10-K, & Walk
915/263-4931
or 263-1211

15
SPUR
Downtown
Trade Day
806/271-3363

15-16
MINERAL WELLS
Palo Pinto Co
Sheriff's Posse
Ranch Rodeo
940/328-1201

WICHITA FALLS
Arts & Crafts Show
940/691-2738

20-21
SWEETWATER
AJRA Rodeo
915/235-5488

22
ABILENE
March of Dimes
Walk America
915/692-7057

BALLINGER
Easter Egg Hunt
915/365-2333
or 365-5611

22-23
JACKSBORO
Trade Days
940/567-2602

27-28
ABILENE
*Whose
Life Is It
Anyway?*
915/673-7082

28-29
WICHITA FALLS
*The Sunshine
Boys*
940/392-5000

28-30
ANDREWS
Art Show
915/523-6034
or 523-4126

LUBBOCK
Franklin Graham
West Texas 2000
Festival
806/793-0888

SAN ANGELO
Railfair
915/658-3120
or 653-1206

29
ABILENE
Philharmonic
915/677-6710 or
800/460-0610

CLAUDE
Frank Sinatra
Tribute
806/226-2451

MINERAL WELLS
Bluebonnet Arts
Festival
940/328-0022

SAN ANGELO
Pops Concert
915/653-1206

TURKEY
Bob Wills Day
806/423-1033

29-30
BALLINGER
Texas State
Festival of
Ethnic Cultures
915/365-2333
or 365-5611

CISCO
Folklife Festival
254/442-2537

WICHITA FALLS
Spring Fling
940/692-0923

30
VERNON
Cinco de Mayo
940/552-9116

**Prairies
and Lakes**

1
BELLVILLE
Market Day
on the Square
409/865-3407

DECATUR
(began Mar 27)
Wise Co Youth Fair
940/627-3341

HICO
Billy the Kid Day
800/361-HICO

KILLEEN
Jazz Concert
254/634-6626

LULING
Classic Car Show
830/875-3214

Roughneck
Chili & Barbecue
Cookoff
830/875-3214

WEATHERFORD
Martha Middleton
Piano/Vocal
Concert
817/341-8687

1-2
DALLAS
(began Mar 29)
Disney on Ice
214/939-2800

(began Mar 29)
New Car Show
214/939-2700

1-2
FORT WORTH
(began Mar 31)
Symphony
817/665-6000

GLEN ROSE
Arabian Horse
Pro-Am
254/898-9055

(began Mar 30)
Bluegrass
Jamboree
254/897-3081

GONZALES
American Legion
Jamboree
830/672-6532

PALESTINE
(began Mar 31)
Dogwood Trails
Festival
903/723-3014 or
800/659-3484

WACO
Quilt Show
800/321-9226

1-3
FORT WORTH
(began Mar 30)
NASCAR
Winston Cup
Auto Racing
817/215-8500

4-8
ROUND TOP
Marburger Farm
Antique Show
800/947-5799

4-16
DALLAS
Cabaret
214/691-7200

1-16
DALLAS
(began Mar 11)
Dallas Blooms
214/327-8263

1-23
GRANBURY
(began Mar 31)
The Odd Couple
817/573-9191
or 572-9881

8 IRVING Joaquin Achucarro with the Irving Symphony 972/831-8818 LOCKHART Caldwell Co Courthouse Restoration Dedication 512/376-3367 McKINNEY Texas Chamber Music Ensemble 972/562-9276 MOULTON Market Day 361/596-7502 or 596-7632 RICHARDSON Jon Nakamatsu with the Richardson Symphony 972/234-4195	12 FORT WORTH Momix 888/597-7827 SEGUIN Texas Lutheran University Concert Band 800/580-7322 13 DENTON TWU Concert Choir Choral Dinner 940/898-2500 13-15 DENTON DanceMakers 2000 Concert 940/898-2086 13-16 FORT WORTH Davis GaiNES Concert 817/665-6000 FORT WORTH Main St Fort Worth Arts Festival 817/336-2787 or 336-ARTS GRAPEVINE Wine & Art Festival 800/457-6338 13-Jul 23 GRAND PRAIRIE Lone Star Park Thoroughbred Horse Racing 972/263-7223	14-16 ENNIS Hot Air Balloon Festival 888/366-4748 GRANBURY Great Race Texas 817/573-7223 McKINNEY Trade Days 972/562-5466 or 888/649-8499 15 BRYAN Grape Stomp 979/778-9463 Wine & Roses Festival 409/778-9463 CLEBURNE MS Walk 817/558-3824 Travel Expo 817/641-3477 FLATONIA Market Day 512/865-3920 GLEN ROSE Bike the Rim 254/897-3081 IRVING <i>Breakfast in Harlem</i> 972/252-7558 LANCASTER Easter Egg Hunt 972/227-1112 RICHARDSON Miniature Train Show 972/530-7309 SHINER Stagecoach Days 361/594-3999 Trade Fair 512/594-4343 WACO <i>Once Upon a Midnight: Confessions of Edgar Allan Poe</i> 800/701-2787 Rockin' Heart Ranch Concert & Dance 254/772-5611 WEATHERFORD Shaw-Kemp Log Cabin Village Open House 817/594-6837	15-16 SHERMAN Tour of Historic Homes 903/893-1184 TERRELL Tour of Historic Homes 972/524-6082 15, 22 RICHARDSON Wildflower Nights Concert Series 972/680-7909 15-Jun 4 WAXAHACHIE Scarborough Faire 214/938-1888 or 972/938-3247 16 SEGUIN Mid-Texas Symphony Outdoor Dinner & Concert 800/580-7322 18 DENTON UNT Lab Band 940/565-3743 19 DENTON UNT Concert Band 940/369-7802 19-23 DENTON Cole Porter Musical Revue 940/898-2020 20 GRANBURY Gospel Concert 817/572-0881 or 800/354-1670 20-May 6 ADDISON <i>Golf with Alan Shepard</i> 972/450-6220 or 888/649-8499 22 CAT SPRING VFD Barbecue 409/865-2698 CLEBURNE Johnson Co Iris Show 254/558-2283 DENTON Earth Day 2000 940/565-2694 FAIRFIELD Show of Wheels 903/389-8669 FORT WORTH Easter Celebration 817/625-9715 Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show 817/625-1025	22 GLEN ROSE Team Roping 254/897-3081 GRAND SALINE Easter Egg Hunt 903/962-7147 GREENVILLE Walk-a-Thon 903/454-4300 IRVING Easter Egg Hunt 972/721-2426 McKINNEY Easter Parade 972/562-6880 ROUND TOP Festival Hill Classical Music 409/249-3086 22-23 RICHARDSON Sports Collectors Show 972/255-9062 22-30 DALLAS Rails Across America 214/428-0101 23 MOULTON Easter Picnic 361/596-4674 or 596-7767 24 FORT WORTH Betty Buckley in Concert 888/597-7827 25 DALLAS An Evening with Robert Pinsky 214/922-1220 or 922-1219 FORT WORTH Jubilant Sykes 888/597-7827 WACO <i>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</i> 800/701-2787 27 LANCASTER Music Fest 972/227-1112 27-29 ATHENS PRCA Rodeo 903/677-0775 27-30 PLANO American Powerlifting Championships 972/253-8575 27-May 4 DALLAS USA Film Festival 214/821-6300	28 WACO Cotton Palace Pageant 254/772-2650 or 800/922-6386 WEIMAR Garden Club Flower Show 979/725-9511 28-29 ROUND TOP Eeyore's Birthday at Winedale 409/278-3530 28-30 DENTON Arts & Jazz Festival 940/565-0931 EULESS Arbor Daze 817/685-1821 FORT WORTH Symphony 817/665-6000 GRAND PRAIRIE Regatta 817/640-4200 HALLETTVILLE Fiddlers' Frolics 512/798-2311 MUENSTER Germanfest 940/759-2227 or 800/942-8037 RICHARDSON Wildflower Arts & Music Festival 972/680-7909 28-30, May 4-7 11-14, 18-21 BRENHAM <i>Quilters</i> 979/830-8358 28-May 28 GRANBURY <i>Harvey</i> 817/573-9191 or 572-0881 29 BASTROP Yesterfest 512/303-6283 CLEBURNE Springfest 817/645-2455 DALLAS Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration 214/823-7601 DENTON TWU Opera Ensemble 940/898-2086 IRVING Las Colinas Symphony 972/580-1566 NEW ULM New Ulm Festival 877/444-7339	29-30 DALLAS Celebrating Casey Jones 214/428-0101 GLEN ROSE Miniature Horse Show 254/897-3081 GONZALES Tour of Historic Homes 830/672-6532 McMAHAN Southwest Texas 100th Sacred Harp Singing 512/398-2017 or 847-3112 TEMPLE Wildflower Art Show 254/298-5415 WACO Brazos River Festival 254/753-5166 or 800/922-6386 Gem & Mineral Show 254/776-1660 30 FRYDEK Grotto Celebration 409/885-3131 GRANBURY Huntington Brass 817/279-1164 GRAND PRAIRIE Duathlon 817/355-1279 or 214/821-0909 SEGUIN Second Story Tour/Heritage Museum Event 800/580-7322 WEIMAR St Michael's Church Spring Festival 979/725-9511 Pinewoods 1 KIRBYVILLE Tombstone Trot 409/423-2648 LIBERTY Rodeo 409/298-2689 TEXARKANA The Shirlees 903/792-4992 TYLER Rambling Roses Square Dance 903/561-2002 WOODVILLE Tyler Co Dogwood Festival 409/283-2632	1-2 CONROE Quilts in Bloom 936/446-1074 MOUNT PLEASANT (began Mar 31) Farm, Home & Garden Show 903/572-8567 1, 7-8 CONROE (began Mar 31) <i>Laura</i> 936/441-2787 1-8 HUNTSVILLE (began Mar 31) Walker Co Fair 409/291-8763 1-9 TYLER (began Mar 25) Art & Bloom 903/595-1001 (began Mar 24) Azalea & Spring Flower Trail 903/592-1661 or 800/235-5712 1-16 GLADEWATER (began Mar 15) Helen Lee Estate Daffodil Gardens 903/845-5501 or 800/627-0315 1, 7-8, 14-15, 21-22, 28-29 LIBERTY (began Mar 31) Opry on the Square 409/336-1079 or 800/248-8918 1-May 1 HENDERSON East Texas Wildflower Trail 903/657-5528 2 TYLER Texas Bound 903/595-1001 4-16 CONROE Antique Fair 936/756-5828 6 TYLER <i>Peter Rabbit & Other Tales</i> 888/704-5340 8 KIRBYVILLE Country Music Show 409/423-5744 LIVINGSTON Bluegrass 409/327-3381	8 MARSHALL Fred Garbo Inflatable Theatre Co 903/935-7868 TYLER Texas Blues Festival 903/593-6905 8-9 TYLER Civic Ballet 903/596-0224 Edom Craft Fair 903/595-1001 11 CONROE Pieces of Eight Vocal Concert 936/760-2787 13-18 TYLER <i>Moon Over Buffalo</i> 903/510-2212 14 HEMPHILL Flower Show 409/579-4058 TEXARKANA The Kingston Trio 903/792-4992 14-16 HUNTSVILLE Gen Sam Houston Folklife Festival 409/294-1832 or 800/289-0389 KIRBYVILLE Magnolia Festival 409/423-5827 LIVINGSTON Trade Days 409/327-3656 or 327-8777 TYLER Tennis Tournament 903/581-7788 Trade Days 903/595-2223 15 WHITE OAK Roughneck Days Festival 903/297-7154 15-16 KILGORE Celtic Heritage Festival 903/759-9017 or 753-1269 16 MONTGOMERY Montgomery Trek 409/597-4889 17-22 TEXARKANA Strange Family Bluegrass 903/791-0342 or 792-2481
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22
GILMER Easter Egg Hunt 903/843-2413
LUFKIN Downtown Hoedown 409/633-0205
NAPLES Easter Egg Hunt 903/897-2239
OMAHA Easter Egg Hunt 903/897-5668
24-29
CLEVELAND Livestock & Dairy Days 281/592-8786
24-30
THE WOODLANDS Shell Houston Open 281/367-7999
26-29
LUFKIN Rodeo 409/634-6644
27-29
LUMBERTON Village Creek Festival 409/755-4321
28-29
HEMPHILL Sabine Co Jr Livestock Show 409/787-3529
LINDEN Wildflower Trails Festival 903/756-7774
29
CONROE Guy Clark/ Terry Allen Concert 409/756-1226 or 441-ARTS
HUNTSVILLE Herb Festival/ Children's Art Festival 409/291-7090
TYLER ArtsFest TISD 903/531-3500
29-30
MOUNT PLEASANT Quake on Town Lake 903/577-1510
30
CONROE Art on the Square Festival 936/756-1868

Gulf Coast
1
BEAUMONT Magic & Illusions of Rob Rue 409/721-6573
CORPUS CHRISTI The Concord Trio 361/855-0264
SEABROOK Clear Lake Crawfish Festival 281/488-7676
1-2
HOUSTON Japan Festival 713/863-9994
1-3
HOUSTON (began Mar 3) FotoFest 2000 713/223-5522
1, 7-10, 13-15
VICTORIA (began Mar 31) Driving Miss Daisy 361/576-6277
4
WHARTON Crescent Jamboree 979/677-3350
4, 11, 18
LAKE JACKSON Brazosport Planetarium Show 979/265-3376
6, 8
GALVESTON Johnny Mathis 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894
7-8
PORT ARANSAS Sand Sculpture Celebration 361/749-2500
7-9
CORPUS CHRISTI FolkLife Festival 361/883-0639
NASSAU BAY Partners in Space 409/762-3930
7-16
BROWNSVILLE Cotton Patch Gospel 956/542-0567
8
ALVIN Rice and Crawfest 281/331-5088 or 331-7087
GALVESTON Herb Fair 409/762-3933
WEST COLUMBIA Bluegrass Festival 979/345-3123

8-9
BROWNSVILLE La Traviata 956/544-8247
8-16
HOUSTON International Festival 713/654-8808
11
ORANGE <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar and the Very Quiet Cricket</i> 409/886-5535 or 800/828-5535
12
HOUSTON <i>The Memory of Water</i> 713/527-8243
12-16
WEST COLUMBIA San Jacinto Festival 979/345-3921 or 409/345-3127
13
HARLINGEN Annie 956/430-6690
ORANGE <i>Young King Arthur</i> 409/886-5535 or 800/828-5533
13-16
PORTLAND Windfest 512/643-2475
14
BROWNSVILLE Francisco Rocafuerta Piano Concert 956/544-8247
HOUSTON Electronics Expo 512/832-5249
14-16
HARLINGEN RioFest 956/425-2705
HUMBLE Good Oil Days 281/446-2128
MAURICEVILLE Crawfish Festival 409/745-1202
15
BAY CITY Market Day 979/245-8333
BEAUMONT Charlie Pruitt's Country Music Show 409/727-2955
CORPUS CHRISTI Festival Gala Performance 361/882-4588

15
HOUSTON Art Car Parade 713/926-6368
Bellaire Arts & Crafts Festival 713/666-1521
MISSOURI CITY Easter Festival 281/491-0800
VICTORIA Historic Homes Tour 361/576-2186
15-16
HOUSTON MS 150 Bike Tour 512/495-9901
PORT ARTHUR Trade Days 409/982-4950
TEXAS CITY Trade Days/ Easter Egg Hunt 409/949-9273
16
WHARTON Easter Egg Hunt 979/532-2600
16-30
BROWNSVILLE Student International Art Show 956/542-0941
17
BEAUMONT Lobsterfest 409/838-6587
19-24
HOUSTON World of Roses Convention 713/944-3437 or 944-3017
19-May 7
CORPUS CHRISTI Buccaneer Days 512/882-3242
20
LAKE JACKSON Easter Egg Hunt 979/297-4533
21
ORANGE Annie 409/886-5535 or 800/828-5535
SUGAR LAND Easter Egg Roll 281/491-0800
21-24
HOUSTON Coca-Cola Open Tennis Tournament 713/973-7636

22
CORPUS CHRISTI Plant & Garden Festival 361/852-2100
FREEMONT Easter Egg Hunt 979/233-6061
GALVESTON Annie 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894
LAKE JACKSON Kid Fish 281/331-8417
23
RICHMOND Victorian Easter Egg Hunt 281/342-1256
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND Easter Egg Hunt 800/767-2373
24-30
HOUSTON Shell Houston Open Golf Tournament 281/367-7999
25-30
BEAUMONT State Porcelain Artists Convention 409/842-3600 or 713/472-0072
25-May 7
BEAUMONT Neches River Festival 409/835-2546
27
BEAUMONT Lamarissimo! Cardinal Singers 409/880-8144
27-29
BROWNSVILLE Tropic of Texas Festival 956/982-7400
FREEMONT Riverfest 979/233-0651
LAKE JACKSON Migration Celebration 979/265-2505
27-May 7
WHARTON Wharton Co Youth Fair 979/677-3350
28-29
GALVESTON Southcoast Music Festival 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894
28-30
LAKE JACKSON Sylvia 979/265-7731

28-30
PORT ARTHUR Pleasure Island Music Festival 409/962-6200 or 800/235-7822
28-May 14
GALVESTON <i>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</i> 409/673-4591
29
BAY CITY Sew 'n' Show 409/244-8420 or 888/417-3585
LA PORTE Sylvan Beach Festival 281/471-1123
VICTORIA Mr Jack Daniel's Original Silver Cornet Band 361/572-2787
29-30
GALVESTON KiteFest 409/744-4121
30
ALVIN St John's Spring Festival 281/331-3751 or 393-1596
CORPUS CHRISTI <i>Ode to Joy</i> 361/883-6683
GALVESTON Symphony 409/765-1894 or 800/821-1894
LAKE JACKSON Taste of the Town 979/265-2505
South Texas Plains
1
BEEVILLE Arts & Crafts Show 361/358-1183
SAN ANTONIO <i>Anne of Green Gables</i> 210/340-4060
Symphony 210/554-1010
1-2
SAN ANTONIO La Villita Art Show 210/226-3593
1-8
SAN ANTONIO <i>Ain't Misbehavin'</i> 210/734-4646
2
CATARINA El Camino Real Festival 830/999-3345 or 999-3283

2
SAN ANTONIO Lowrider Festival 210/432-1896
4
THREE RIVERS Brush Country Music Jamboree 361/449-2636 or 786-3334
6-9
MALLEN Texas Tropics Nature Festival 956/631-8571
7-9
POTEET Strawberry Festival 830/276-3323 or 742-8144
SAN ANTONIO Highland Games & Celtic Festival 210/684-0312
7-9, 12-15
SAN ANTONIO <i>Cabaret</i> 210/736-8406
8
BIGFOOT Bigfoot Wallace's Birthday 830/665-5054 or 663-2419
GOLIAD Market Day 361/645-3563 or 800/848-8674
SAN ANTONIO Viva Botanica 210/207-3255
9
GOLIAD <i>Easter Messiah</i> 361/645-3405
10
SAN ANTONIO Winters Chamber Orchestra 210/822-2284
13
SAN ANTONIO Celebration of Children's Literature 210/826-3447
14
SAN ANTONIO Valeri Grokhovski Piano Concert 210/458-4354
14-15
SAN ANTONIO <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> 210/554-1010
15
SAN ANTONIO Easter Bunny 210/340-6627

15
SAN ANTONIO San Antonio College Book Fair 210/733-2147
THREE RIVERS Salsa Festival 361/786-4330
WESLACO Rio Grande Valley Union Festival 956/968-2102
16
SAN ANTONIO Children's Festival 210/227-4262
18
LAREDO March of Dimes Walk-a-Thon 956/791-6510
18-19
SAN ANTONIO <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar and the Very Quiet Cricket</i> 210/340-4060
18-May 27
SAN ANTONIO <i>Hank the Cowdog</i> 210/227-2751
21
SAN ANTONIO Passion Play at San Fernando Cathedral 210/227-1297
21-22
SAN ANTONIO Fiesta Pops 210/554-1010
21-Jul 4
SAN ANTONIO Retama Park Horse Racing 210/651-7000
22
GOLIAD Easter Parade/ Easter Egg Hunt 361/645-3540
SAN ANTONIO St Philip's College Culture Fest 210/531-3200
22-23
SAN ANTONIO Fiesta Arts Fair 210/224-1848
A Taste of New Orleans 210/475-9304 or 475-9887
22-30
SAN ANTONIO Fiesta San Antonio 210/227-5191 or 800/447-3372

23
SAN ANTONIO Bowie St Blues Festival 210/458-2300
Fiesta del Mercado 210/207-8600
23, 30
SAN ANTONIO Day in Old Mexico and Charreada 210/554-4575
25-28
SAN ANTONIO A Night in Old San Antonio 210/226-5188
Fiesta Mariachi Festival 210/227-4262
27
SAN ANTONIO Fiesta de Tejas 210/567-2570
27-29
SAN ANTONIO Cactus & Xerophyte Show 210/655-8959
27-30
SAN ANTONIO Fiesta San Fernando 210/227-1297
29
SAN ANTONIO Fiesta Under the Stars: An Evening at the Movies 210/458-5685
King William Fair 210/271-3247
29-30
SAN ANTONIO Festival de Animales 210/734-7184
30
GOLIAD Spring Concert 512/645-3405
LYTLE Immaculate Conception Church 100th Anniversary 830/709-3123
Hill Country
1
AUSTIN Spalding Gray 512/472-5470
HONDO Hootenanny 830/426-3438
NATALIA (began Mar 30) Bluebonnet Festival 830/665-3703 or 665-5439

1 SAN MARCOS Living History Trolley Tour 512/393-5900	7-9 AUSTIN Ballet East Dance Theatre 512/385-2838	13-May 7 INGRAM <i>The Women</i> 830/367-5122	17-22 AUSTIN Big Stinkin' International Improv & Sketch Comedy Festival 512/912-7837	28-30 LIBERTY HILL Spring Festival 512/778-5185	1-2 BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK (began Mar 30) Tour of Big Bend & Davis Mountains 972/562-5566	7 MIDLAND Jay Ungar & Molly Mason Fiddle & Guitar 915/682-1375	15 EL PASO Sierra Providence Health Network UTEF Track Invitational 915/747-5347	26 EL PASO Spring Festival of Dance 505/874-2844
SAN SABA Country Peddlers Day 915/372-5294	CANYON LAKE RV & Boat Show 830/899-7088 or 964-2223	14-16 FREDERICKSBURG Country Peddler Show 830/997-2774	18-30 AUSTIN <i>Red, White and Tuna</i> 512/472-5470	29 GOLDTHWAITE Cabrito Cookoff 915/648-3033	MIDLAND (began Mar 3) <i>Greater Tuna</i> 915/682-4111	8 MIDLAND Crystal Ball 915/694-7728	MIDLAND Rhythm & Brass 915/563-0921	28 PECOS Student Art Festival 915/445-5076
1-2 AUSTIN Capitol 10,000 Road Race 512/445-3598	8 AUSTIN Mayfield Park Gardening Symposium 512/453-7074	Herb Fest 830/997-8615	21-22 AUSTIN "A Choral Masterpiece" 512/476-6064	29-30 AUSTIN Capital City Men's Chorus 512/477-SING	(began Mar 31) Pickwick Players 915/682-4111	8-9 ODESSA Country Peddler Show 830/997-2774	ODESSA Special Olympics 915/570-6058	28-30 EL PASO Mojiganga 915/539-6311
NEW BRAUNFELS Folkfest 830/629-2943	BANDERA Horse Show 830/796-7853	15 AUSTIN Jon Nakamatsu Piano Concert 512/471-1444 or 800/687-6010	21-23 NEW BRAUNFELS Car Corral 830/620-5950	BUDA Country Fair & Cookoff 512/262-2099	ODESSA (began Mar 30) Fiesta de Arte Craft Show 915/550-2483	EL PASO Walk Through History 915/591-6006	16 EL PASO Walk Through History 915/591-6006	Pro-Musica 915/833-9400
1-2, 8-9 MARBLE FALLS Highland Arts Guild Bluebonnet Arts & Crafts Trails 830/693-7324	BURNET Airshow 512/756-2226	BLANCO Market Day 830/833-5101	22 FREDERICKSBURG Easter Fires Pageant 830/997-6523	GEORGETOWN Viking Fest 512/530-3546 or 800/439-5686	1-9 MIDLAND (began Mar 2) Arts Assn Spring Show 915/683-2882	8-9, 15-16 ODESSA <i>Conestoga</i> 915/550-5456	13-15 VAN HORN Building Bridges Art Show 915/283-2682	29 MIDLAND Hoopla 2000 915/620-8228
1-22 INGRAM Handmade Books Exhibit 830/367-5120	CASTROVILLE Market Trail Day 830/741-3841	BOERNE Antique Tractor & Engine Show 830/537-4526	JUNCTION Easter Pageant 915/446-3190	30 AUSTIN Applied Materials Human Race 512/323-1898	1-2, 14-16 LAJITAS (began Mar 31) Rio Grande Gourmet Raft Trip 210/821-5600	EL PASO World on a String Festival 915/541-4481	20-23 ALPINE Gem & Mineral Show 915/837-2326	Lindsayan String Quartet 915/563-0921
1-22 MASON Bluebonnet and Wildflower Drives 915/347-5758	DEVINE Jim Walker Flute Concert 830/665-4310	BRADY Quilt & Craft Show 915/597-2946	KERRVILLE Easter Festival 830/895-1296	Maifest 512/482-0927	2 ODESSA Lone Star Brass Quintet 915/563-0921	14-15 EL PASO Peter Orth Classical Piano 915/532-3776	21-May 8 EL PASO <i>The Nerd</i> 915/532-1317	29-30 DEL RIO George Paul Memorial Bull Riding 830/775-9595 or 775-3551
1-May 31 MASON Bluebonnet and Wildflower Drives 915/347-5758	GEORGETOWN Market Day 512/868-8675	FREDERICKSBURG Van der Stucken Music Festival 830/997-7273	MASON Easter Parade 915/347-6613	Big Bend Country	6 EL PASO Fred Garbo Inflatable Theatre Co 915/544-2022	17-19, 21-23 PRESIDIO Big Bend Ranch Trail Ride 281/486-8070 or 512/398-7627	22 MIDLAND CAF Headquarters Test Pilots & Open Cockpit Day 915/563-1000	Spring Festival 915/333-4141
2 KYLE Blooms Above the Blanco 512/262-2099 or 268-4488	8-9 AUSTIN Fine Arts Festival 512/458-8191 or 323-6280	NEW BRAUNFELS Model Train Show 830/625-2656	22-23 AUSTIN Swamp Romp & Crawfish Festival 512/441-9015	1 MIDLAND Lone Star Brass Quintet 915/563-0921	6-8, 14-15 ODESSA (began Mar 31) Bull Riding 915/567-9999	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
5-8 AUSTIN Texas Relays 512/471-3333	BOERNE Bluebonnet Festival 830/816-2176	ODESSA Easter Parade 915/347-6613	GEORGETOWN Easter Pageant 800/436-8696	2 ODESSA Lone Star Brass Quintet 915/563-0921	6 EL PASO Fred Garbo Inflatable Theatre Co 915/544-2022	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
5-16 AUSTIN <i>Love's Fire</i> 512/448-8484	RIOMEDINA Market Trail Day 210/538-2441	15-16 AUSTIN Bob Marley Festival 512/312-0435	24-29 FREDERICKSBURG Texas Woodcarvers Guild Spring Roundup 915/689-9629	ODESSA (began Mar 31) Bull Riding 915/567-9999	1 MIDLAND Lone Star Brass Quintet 915/563-0921	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
6 AUSTIN A Texas Tribute to Woody Guthrie 512/472-5470	8-9 AUSTIN Market Days 830/816-1796	BANDERA Bandera Forge Spring Fling 830/796-8153	27-29 KERRVILLE The Senior Games 830/896-4263	Monopoly Tournament 915/580-9888	2 ODESSA Lone Star Brass Quintet 915/563-0921	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
6-22 AUSTIN Hill Country Wine & Food Festival 512/329-0770	FREDERICKSBURG Barn to Yarn 830/990-4478	ROUND ROCK Quilt, Doll, & Folk Art Show 512/255-5845	27-30 BOERNE US Team Roping Championship 210/698-3300	6-8, 14-15 ODESSA <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> 915/332-1586	6 EL PASO Fred Garbo Inflatable Theatre Co 915/544-2022	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
6-May 14 AUSTIN <i>Pride's Crossing</i> 512/476-0541	11-May 19 KERRVILLE Salute to Spring 830/895-2911	SPICEWOOD Wine & Wildflower Tour 830/693-5328	28 BANDERA Twin Elm Rodeo 830/796-3628 or 888/567-3049	6-8, 14-15 ODESSA <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> 915/332-1586	6 EL PASO Fred Garbo Inflatable Theatre Co 915/544-2022	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
7-8 AUSTIN <i>Dracula</i> 512/471-1444 or 800/687-6010	12 AUSTIN Electronics Expo 512/832-5249	STONEWALL Wine & Wildflower Trail 830/644-2681 or 644-2710	28-29 CANYON LAKE Barbecue Cookoff 830/899-5485 or 800/964-2223	6-8, 14-15 ODESSA <i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i> 915/332-1586	6 EL PASO Fred Garbo Inflatable Theatre Co 915/544-2022	14-30 MIDLAND <i>Our Town</i> 915/570-4011	23 MIDLAND Joseph & Renae Joubert Concert 915/894-7701	ODESSA March of Dimes Walk America 915/570-0172
	13 KERRVILLE San Antonio Symphony 830/896-5727	16 AUSTIN <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar & the Very Quiet Cricket</i> 512/472-5470	28-30 AUSTIN <i>Cinderella</i> 512/476-2163					

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com**



Larry Butler and Carol Ann Sayle raise organic vegetables at Boggy Creek Farm in Austin. Behind them is their 150-year-old farmhouse, one of the oldest homes in the city.

What's in Season?

Organic farmer Larry Butler likes to make this comparison. "Taste a tomato in the dead of winter. It's mealy, dry, and about as flavorful as shoe leather. Now, remember those juicy, homegrown tomatoes a neighbor gave you last July. Can you tell the difference? *That's* the reason we like eating in season." Larry and his wife, Carol Ann Sayle, make eating (and farming) in season their livelihood, coaxing delicious, organic produce from the rich soil on their five-acre Boggy Creek Farm, only blocks east of downtown Austin.

For those of you interested in pursuing this culinary approach further, a careful perusal of Carol's cookbook, *Eating in Season: Recipes from Boggy Creek Farm*, is worth your while. Here, you'll find no-fuss recipes for cooking such veggies as arugula, chard, spinach, cabbage, beets, and broccoli (all cold-season crops), and summertime delights like squash, tomatoes, corn, eggplants, cucumbers, and peppers. Carol's conversational style and storytelling skills make *Eating in Season* a pleasure to read, as well as to consult in the kitchen.

Carol and Larry sell their appetizing array of produce at Boggy Creek Farm on Wednesdays (9-1) and Saturdays (9-2). Salsas and marinades, organic

chicken eggs, Pure Luck Organics goat cheese, and frozen organic meats (the latter from a friend's farm) round out the offerings. Don't forget to stroll the luscious-looking rows of goodies, say hello to the chickens, let your kids play in the sandbox, and, by all means, bring a picnic.

For more information, write to Boggy Creek Farm, 3414 Lyons Road, Austin 78702; 512/926-4650. Web site: www.boggycreekfarm.com. You can buy the cookbook (\$12.95 plus tax) at the farmstand, or Carol will ship it to you (call for total price).

Double the Treasure

Since 1924, when the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston opened its Beaux-Arts doors to the city's art fans, the museum has shone a light on hundreds of the world's cultures, historical periods, and individual talents. The only problem has been that as the museum's collections have grown, many of the works have been relegated to storage, awaiting their turn on the museum's hallowed walls.

Enter the Audrey Jones Beck Building, which opens to great fanfare on March 25. With a soaring, skylighted atrium as its centerpiece, the understated Beck Building—designed by Spanish architect Rafael Moneo—occupies an entire city block, connecting

with the main MFAH building via an underground, light-decorated walkway. The Beck more than doubles the museum's exhibition space.

The Beck Building itself will become the central repository for some of the museum's finest collections of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art (think Monet, Renoir, Seurat, and Braque), as well as for 17th- and 19th-Century European paintings. Pre-World War II American painting finds a home here, too, as do dozens of traveling exhibitions, including two you won't want to miss this spring.

Faces of Impressionism: Portraits from American Collections (Mar. 25-May 7) features some 60 works, including portraiture by such celebrated Impressionists as Claude Monet, Mary Cassatt, and Camille Pissarro. Together, these paintings demonstrate how Impressionist artists revolutionized the art of portrait painting in the 19th Century.

And speaking of portraits, hop forward a century to the 1950s and 1960s, when photographer Irving Penn, working for *Vogue* magazine and as a freelance student of travel and ethnography, captured subjects ranging from posh Parisian fashion-plates to New Guinea mud men. With more than 100 prints on display, *Irving Penn, Career in*

Photography (Mar. 25-June 4) spans Penn's 50-year career.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, at 1001 Bissonnet, opens Tue-Sun (call for hours, as they will be expanded when the Beck opens). Admission: \$5, \$2.50 ages 6-18 and age 65 and older, free age 5 and younger. Thursday admission is always free. Call 713/639-7300. Web site: www.mfah.org.

Living History

The Republic of Texas' last president, Anson Jones, built a two-story, dogtrot-style house on a quarter league of land near the Brazos River at Washington in 1845. He called his spread Barrington, after his former home in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and began to raise cotton, corn, and tobacco. After Jones' suicide in 1858, the home was sold to a series of private owners; the state bought it in 1936 and moved it four miles to Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historical Park. Now, after several years of renovation and development, the home serves as the centerpiece of the new Barrington Living History Farm, which opens March 4 as part of the park's two-day Texas Independence Day Celebration.

In addition to Jones' home, Barrington includes several replicas of buildings that you'd find on a Texas plantation, including a kitchen, smokehouse, barn, corncrib, and slave quarters. Visitors can tour the house, learn about 1850s life from costumed interpreters, and try their luck at tending livestock, carding cotton, cooking on an open fire, churning butter, and picking vegetables and herbs in the kitchen garden.

With all the goings-on at the farm, the Texas Independence Day Celebration should be especially exciting this year. As usual at this annual celebration of Texas' freedom from Mexico, visitors can take in live music, speak-



Photographer Irving Penn has covered subjects as varied as Quechuan Indians and cutting-edge fashion. *Harlequin Dress* ran in *Vogue* in 1950.

ers, museum exhibits at the Star-of-the-Republic Museum, a special ceremony commemorating the 59 signers of the Texas Declaration of Independence, and the cutting (and tasting) of a giant birthday cake.

During the festival, tours of the new Barrington Living History Farm are free. (Other times, tours cost \$4.) For more information about the farm, the festival, the museum, or the park, write to Box 305, Washington 77880, or call 409/878-2214.

By the Way...

San Felipe, where Stephen F. Austin located his first Texas colonists in 1823, also hosted three important meetings in the early 1830s, a series of meetings-of-minds that led to the Texas Declaration of Independence. On March 25, **The Colonial Texas Heritage Festival** re-creates Texas in the 1800s with demonstrations of vintage skills, hayrides, living history reenactments, arts and crafts, music, and free tours of Stephen F. Austin State Historical Park....call 409/885-3222.

At the 15th annual **Texas Storytelling Festival**, March 23-26 in Denton's Civic Center Park, the nation's top storytellers will weave tales for rapt audiences. Staged in large tents, the festival features some 20 different performances (with free shows on Thursday evening and Saturday morning), including programs designed for kids, bilingual presentations, ghost tales, and historical yarns. In between stories, fest-goers can shop in the gift store and dine on such treats as Indian fry bread, roasted corn, and pizza....call 940/387-8336. Web site: www.tejasstorytelling.com.

In Bryan, folks at the Lucky B Bison Ranch tip their hats on March 4 to the burly beast that roamed the plains for many years. The **Lucky B Bison Festival** features bison-viewing hayrides (the ranch boasts a herd of some 50 animals), chuckwagon cooking contests, live music with dancing, speakers and storytellers, farm equipment

displays, vendors selling Western-themed items, and even activities like face-painting for kids....call 409/823-1516, 260-9898, or 800/477-8292.

Model-train fanatics, take note: The Junction & East Texas Train Society (whose members call themselves the JETTS) will host its annual **Train Show** in Longview on March 4-5. Most folks can't tear



J. GRIFFIN SMITH

The Lucky B Bison Ranch in Bryan holds its first Bison Festival on March 4. You can see the ranch's 50 bison by hayride.

their attention away from the whirring trains: At least three "mod squads" (that is, model railroad teams) will erect room-size railroad dioramas, complete with mountains, villages, mills, forests, and cityscapes. But don't forget to check out the displays of train memorabilia, where you'll find everything from authentic switch lanterns, photos, and menus, to reproduction playing cards, clocks, and neckties....call 903/753-9512.

The Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth presents eight centuries of Tibetan art in the exhibit **Worlds of Transformation: Tibetan Art of Wisdom and Compassion**, through March 26. Most Tibetan art is religious in both character and function, and the 60 paintings on display, called *tangkas*, are no exception. Dating from the mid-13th to the early 20th centuries, most are painted on cotton or silk and feature vivid images of the Buddha, deities, or scenes depicting Buddhist lessons or visions of paradise....call 817/332-8451.

If you intend to seek out DeWitt County's famous wildflowers this spring, make a point to stop by the Cuero Heritage Museum. Beginning March 25 and continuing through September 4, the museum hosts **Cuero's World War II Days—A Tribute to our Veterans, Brayton Flying Field & Those Who Kept the Home Fires Burn-**

ing. Visitors can view photographs, uniforms, and personal memorabilia from Brayton Field (Cuero's civilian pilot training center), as well as a built-to-scale reproduction of the flying field and video footage of local veterans reminiscing about their World War II experiences. A dinner dance

takes place on opening night....call 361/275-2112.

On March 18 and 19, head to Winedale, a pastoral enclave near Round Top, to revel in the **Winedale Spring Festival & Annual Texas Crafts Exhibition**. Featuring 40 or so of the state's finest craftspeople—potters, weavers, furniture-makers, jewelers, glassblowers, to name a few—the festival offers plenty of activities during its two-day run. Families can picnic beneath century-old pecan trees, tour Winedale's historic cottages and buildings, visit with the artists, and watch demonstrations of crafts and skills of yesteryear. Musicians abound here, too, bringing blues, polka, Cajun, folk, and Western music to several stages....call 409/278-3530.

Holy cow! Is that a dinosaur head? A uniform from the Civil War? An anchor from a sunken ship? You bet. In what Texas treasure-hunter Keith Wills calls a "large mobile museum," the **19th Annual Texas Treasure Show 2000** brings found treasures from around the world to Abilene on March 18 and 19. Some 3,000 collectors, archeologists, and

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

treasure-hunters will display their spectacular finds, including a museum-quality, pre-Columbian artifact collection. Some treasures do make their way to museums, says Keith. Those that don't, go on the road, enlightening the thousands of visitors who flock to this event, the largest treasure show in America....call 903/843-5555.

From March 3 through April 3, **FotoFest's Eighth International Month of Photography** will transform Houston into a citywide gallery of photography from around the world. More than 100 venues will participate in this collaborative festival, including the



SHELLEY & DONALD REIBIN FOUNDATION

The Bodhisattva Maitreya is one of 60 Tibetan paintings appearing at the Kimbell Art Museum through March 26.

city's museums, galleries, universities, community organizations, and corporate art spaces. Throughout the month, lectures by artists and curators, tours of the city's architecture, and other special events shed light on the art of photography. Best of all, admission to most exhibits and events is free. During kickoff weekend, fest-goers can enjoy exhibitions and street performances in Houston's revamped downtown Theater and Historical districts....call 713/223-5522. Web site: www.fotofest.org.

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

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

READERS RECOMMEND...

I urge you to visit **Florida's Kitchen at Livingston**. This family-owned eatery serves barbecue, catfish, and other goodies. It is an unusual place cobbled together from several additions. It offers a taste of Texas no one can forget.

Sammie Hardy, via email
Florida's Kitchen is one mile south of US 190 on Farm Road 350 South; 409/967-4216.

The **West Mountain Gourd Farm**, near **Gladewater** in northeast Texas, has really grown, and it now attracts people from all over the nation. Family-owned and -operated for the past 11 years, the farm welcomes everyone to a show-room full of one-of-a-kind hand-crafted gourds. You can also look through thousands of cleaned gourds ready for do-it-yourself craft projects.

Lynn Gagna, via email
West Mountain Gourd Farm, 6 miles north of Gladewater, is on FM 726, 1.6 miles east of US 271. Write to Rt. 1, Box 853, Gilmer 75644; 903/734-5204. Web site: www.texaseast.com/westmountain/.

The **Terrace Tearoom**, tucked away at the back of the new I-10 Antique Mall between **Vidor** and **Orange** (Exit 869), is a haven of good food and relaxing atmosphere for the weary traveler. The chicken salad sandwich is wonderful, and the chocolate fudge brownie

with peppermint ice cream is beyond words!

Jerry Silmon, via fax
The Terrace Tearoom is in the Antique Mall, at 11535 I-10 East; 409/745-4999.

NOT HOF BAD!

Now, visitors to **Messina Hof Wine Cellars** near **Bryan** can luxuriate in a stay at **The Villa at Messina Hof**, an elegant 10-room bed and breakfast that opened in November. Stained-glass windows and burnished woods enrich rooms whose furnishings include gilded, wrought-iron, and brass beds and marble vanities. A European breakfast buffet awaits guests each morning.

Each room's private patio overlooks the **Messina Hof Estate**, which offers winery tours and an antique rose garden, as well as a stocked fishing lake and areas for walking, running, and biking. Rates at **The Villa at Messina Hof** range from \$140 to \$250. Call 409/778-9463, ext. 22. Web site: www.messinahof.com.

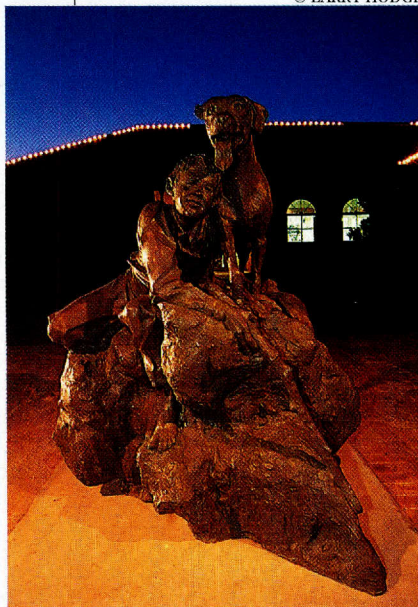
RUSSELL LEE PHOTOS ONLINE

Fans of **Russell Lee's** historic images of rural life and of Texas (see *Texas Highways*, July 1998) from the post-World War II era to the 1960s can now view 289 of the photographer's outstanding works online.

Thanks to **Southwest Texas State University's Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern & Mexican Photography**, the **Web site**, www.library.swt.edu/swwc/wg/exhibits/rlee, presents an overview of **Lee's** portfolio, as well as a biography of the artist and 77 images of **Lee** himself.

The **Wittliff Gallery of Southwestern & Mexican Photography** is on the seventh floor of the **Albert B. Alkek Library**, adjacent to the **Southwestern Writers Collection**, on the campus of **Southwest Texas State University** in **San Marcos**. Call 512/245-2313.

© LARRY HODGE



A statue of trusty Old Yeller and his master greets visitors to the Mason County M. Beven Eckert Memorial Library in Mason.

OLD YELLER IN BRONZE

Remember **Old Yeller**, the famous fictional canine created by author **Fred Gipson** of **Mason**? Noted Texas sculptor **Garland Weeks** has memorialized the heroic old hound with a five-foot-tall **bronze statue** of **Old Yeller** and his master, young **Travis Coates**. The sculpted pair now welcome visitors to the **Mason County M. Beven Eckert Memorial Library**

(on **Post Hill St.**, a block south of the square), where displays recount **Gipson's** life. Call the **Mason Chamber of Commerce** (915/347-5758) to learn more about the statue and about **Old Yeller Days**, an annual fall celebration in **Mason**.

WELCOME TO THE WARWICK

In **Houston**, the city's oldest hotel, the **Warwick**, has undergone extensive renovations, including revitalizing its guest-rooms and suites and returning the exterior to its original terracotta hue. The hotel, which celebrates its 75th anniversary on **March 1**, has also added **The Terrace on Main**, a cafe by day and a lounge by night, that offers a varied lunch menu, indoor and outdoor seating, and views of the city's **Museum District**. Through the years, the **Warwick** has hosted many dignitaries, including presidents **Lyndon Johnson**, **Richard Nixon**, **Gerald Ford**, **Jimmy Carter**, and **George Bush**. The hotel is at **5701 Main St.**; call 713/526-1991.

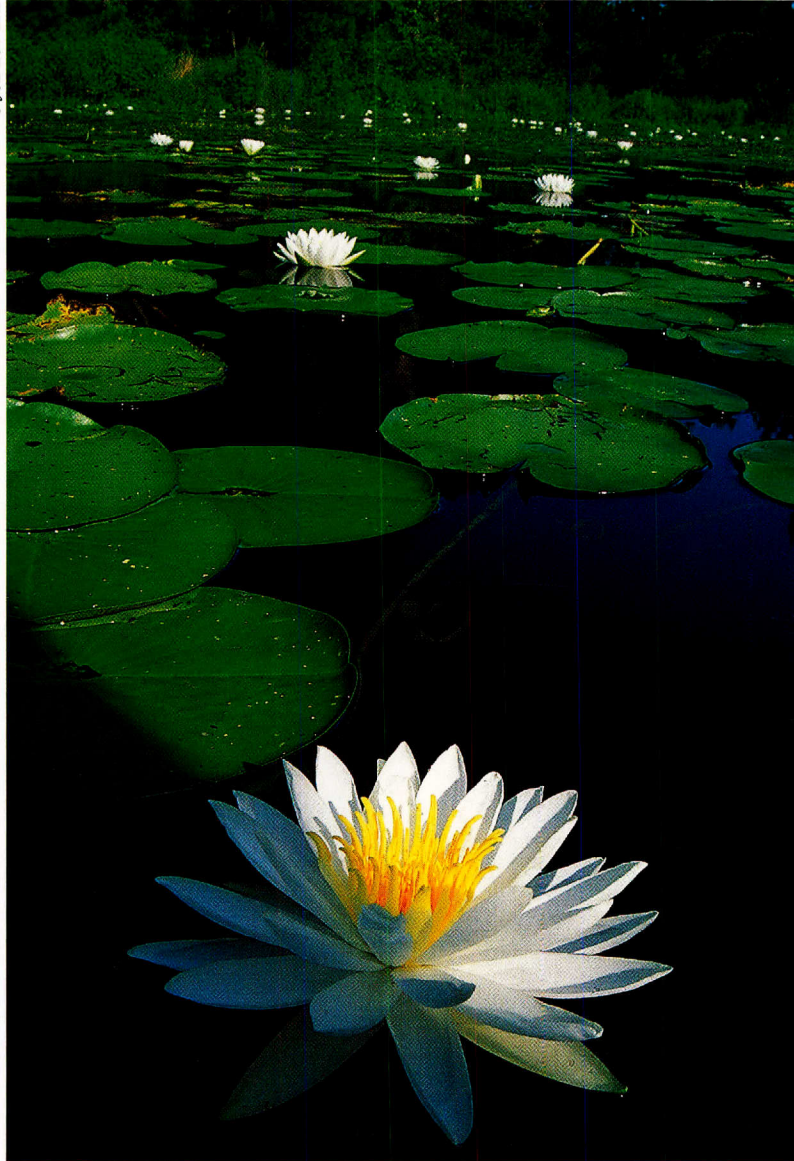
MINI MOVES

The **Museum of Miniatures** has moved to a new location, 2001 **N. Lamar St.**, in **Dallas' West End** district. The new facility is six times the size of the old one on **Routh St.** Visit the museum for a fun look at dollhouses, antique dolls, toy soldiers, scale models, and miniature books. Call 214/969-5502.

Down the Road

In **April**, flowers bloom aplenty when we tour **Chandor Gardens** in **Weatherford** and take our annual look at the wondrous world of spring wildflowers. We'll also visit **San Antonio's Southwest School of Art & Craft** and the town of **Hico**. Join us!

© JOE LOWERY



Water lilies spread their petals on a pond in the Angelina National Forest near Zavalla. The flowers open in the early morning and usually close around noon.

