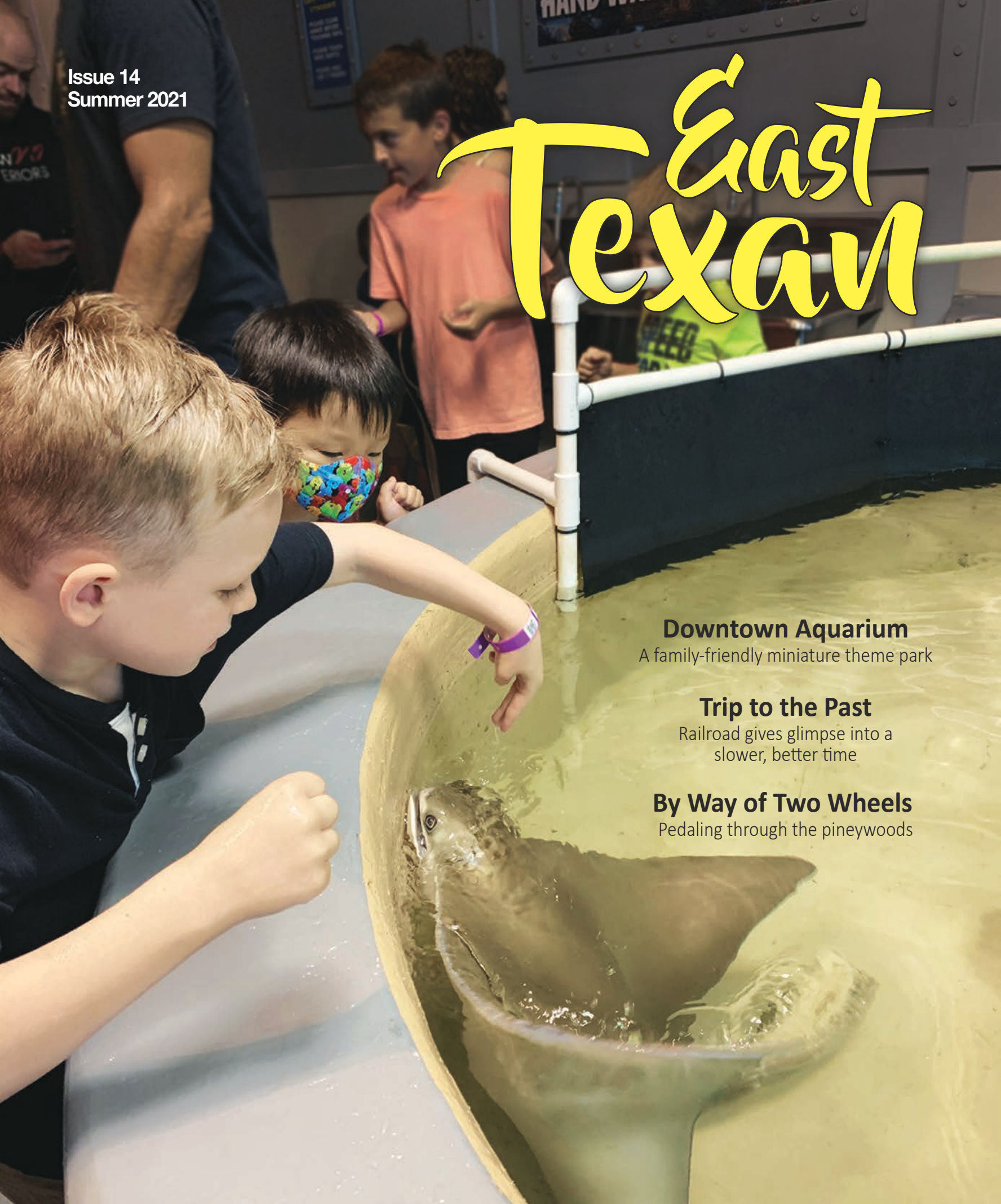


Issue 14
Summer 2021

East Texan



Downtown Aquarium

A family-friendly miniature theme park

Trip to the Past

Railroad gives glimpse into a slower, better time

By Way of Two Wheels

Pedaling through the pineywoods



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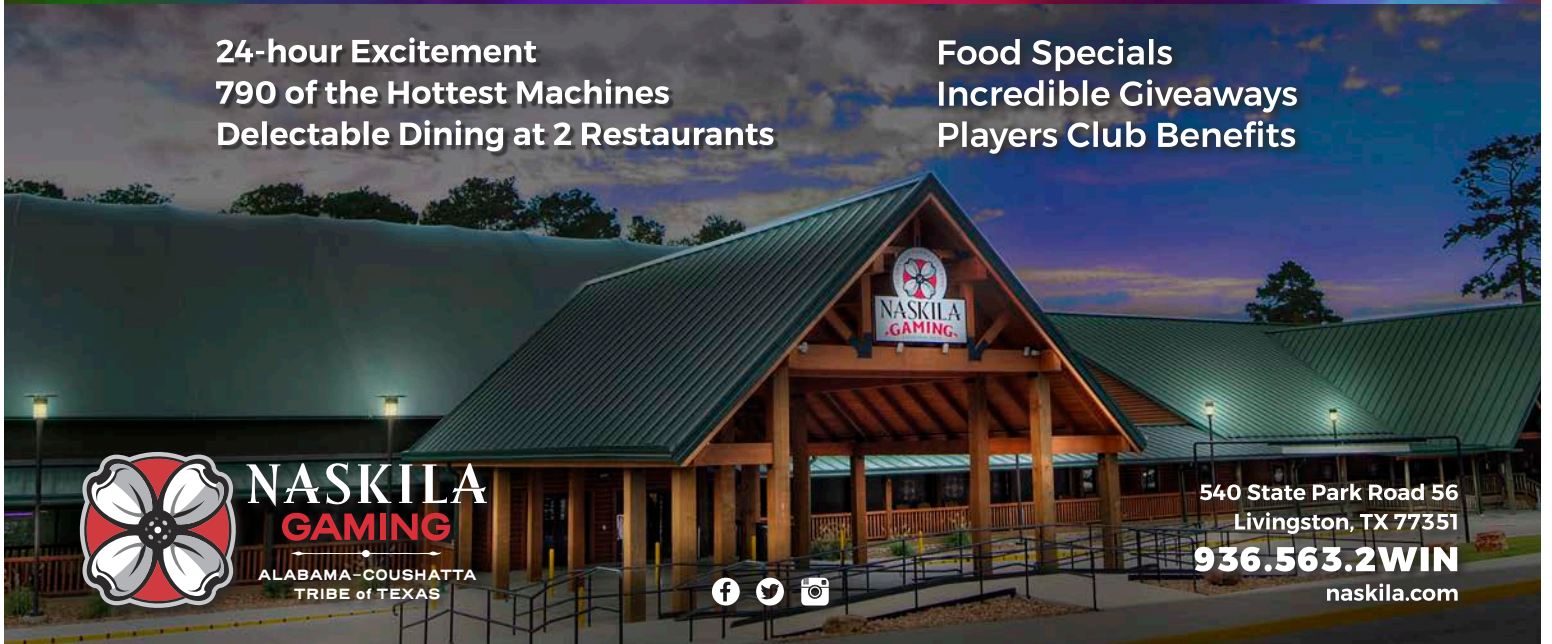
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FROM THE EDITOR

I have some exciting news to share, we were informed at the 2021 Texas Press Association annual awards ceremony held on June 16 in Denton, the East Texan magazine received “2019-2020 Best Magazine -semi-weekly division.” This has been such an awesome honor.

We are grateful to be able to continue publishing through the pandemic. The design team of Amy Holzworth and Amanda Barker continue to make the magazine look stunning. The sales team led by Jeff Fatheree keeps us in business. Our publisher Kelli Barnes is a driving force behind the East Texan and Polk County Publishing Company with her visioning of a prosperous company. We are proud of how far we have come and excited that the magazine is making it through the pandemic.

Embracing travel opportunities once again, we share In this issue destinations to visit, restaurants to dine, and a dash of humor. We also highlight features on a few musicians with incredible stories to tell.

Thank you to our readers for making our East Texan a part of your life.

~ Debbie Dickerson
East Texan editor



On The Cover



Abel Bruce of Hudson follows the two-finger rule while interacting with the stingrays at Houston's Downtown Aquarium exhibit. Photo by Kelli Barnes. See full story on page 6.

Meet the staff

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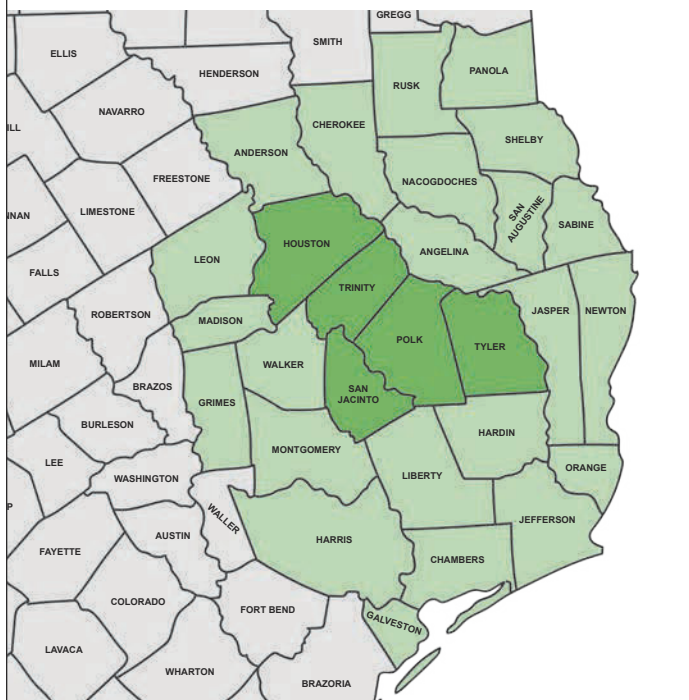


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Downtown Aquarium

A family-friendly miniature theme park



Story and photos by Kelli Barnes

It is hard to imagine anything in Houston being considered “miniature,” but compared to Disney World, for example, the Houston Aquarium is quaint and affordable. And, from the eyes of a child, it is just as magical.

The first impression is very downtown Houston-like, with a parking facility located directly under I-45. Plan to spend \$10 to park all day at 410 Bagby Street. Then, the fun begins.

Paved streets lead you to the 100-foot Diving Bell Ferris Wheel and a great view of downtown Houston. Other rides include an Aquatic Carousel, the Lighthouse 65-foot Dive, Frog Hopper, and the Aqua Wheel rides. Carnival-style games and food are available in this area, along with a splash pad and plenty of shaded seating.

Children of all ages can enjoy the Aquatic Carousel.





An adventure in itself is the Shark Voyage on the C.P. Huntington train. The train ride, like everything else, is family-friendly and drives directly into a tunnel with a 200,000-gallon tank for passengers to see amazing sharks swimming above and beside along the route.

Inside the aquarium, there is a gift shop and the opportunity to pet and feed live stingrays. Other adventure exhibits include the White Tigers of the Maharaja's Temple, Discovery Zone, Underwater Rig, Sunken Temple, Rainforest, Shipwreck, and Texas Bayou.

The adventure is not just for kids. There is a full-service restaurant and upscale bar at the aquarium, perfect for special events and date nights.

An All-Day Adventure Pass is available, which includes the aquarium exhibit, Stingray Reef, and all rides, including the train. Prices are \$22.99 for adults and \$21.99 for children under 42 inches. Children age two and under are free. Customers can also buy tickets for individual attractions, but the package deal is by far the best option. Military personnel and veterans receive \$2 off the all-day pass with a valid ID card. ■

Left: Clown fish and other aquatic animals swim for patrons to enjoy while eating a meal at the dine-in restaurant and bar located inside the Aquarium.



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TRIP to the PAST

Railroad gives glimpse into a slower, better time

Story and photos by Tony Farkas

"Good morning, America. How are you? Don't you know me? I'm your native son ..." ~Arlo Guthrie, "City of New Orleans"

There's a place here in East Texas that will give you the ride of a lifetime, and not in an amusement park way.

It will take you across the area — from Palestine to Rusk and back, or vice versa — winding through the Piney Woods at the pace of mosey.

Taking a ride on the rollicking Texas State Railroad is a treasure from days gone by, a 25 mph jaunt that evokes the thrill of adventure, spurring the imagination to being a pioneer of the West, moving through the majesty of the land in search of the future.

The motion of the cars is restful, the views from each area, especially the open car, is both spectacular and serene, and everything is comfortable, made certain by an attentive and well-trained staff.

It's a 4-hour trip there and back, but it seems like longer, and at the same time, not quite long enough.

Texas State Railroad, the official railroad of Texas, uses old-timey steam engines and the occasional diesel engine to wind its way through its 50-mile trip. There are two depots to leave from, with parks, shops and food at each end.

According to the railroad's website, there are numerous historical areas on the 25-mile route, some of which are:

- I.D. Fairchild State Forest
- Maydelle, which sports the Maydelle Turntable, which rotates engines using compressed air.
- Neches River Bridge

The railcars are early-1900s vintage cars, and each has a specific function: an open car for full outdoor ambience; an observation car with a raised dome; a dining car; and presidential and first-class cars, providing extra comfort and service. It even sports a 1900s era oven and iceboxes.

Nora Lutz and family of Tomball enjoy the observation car on the Texas State Railroad.



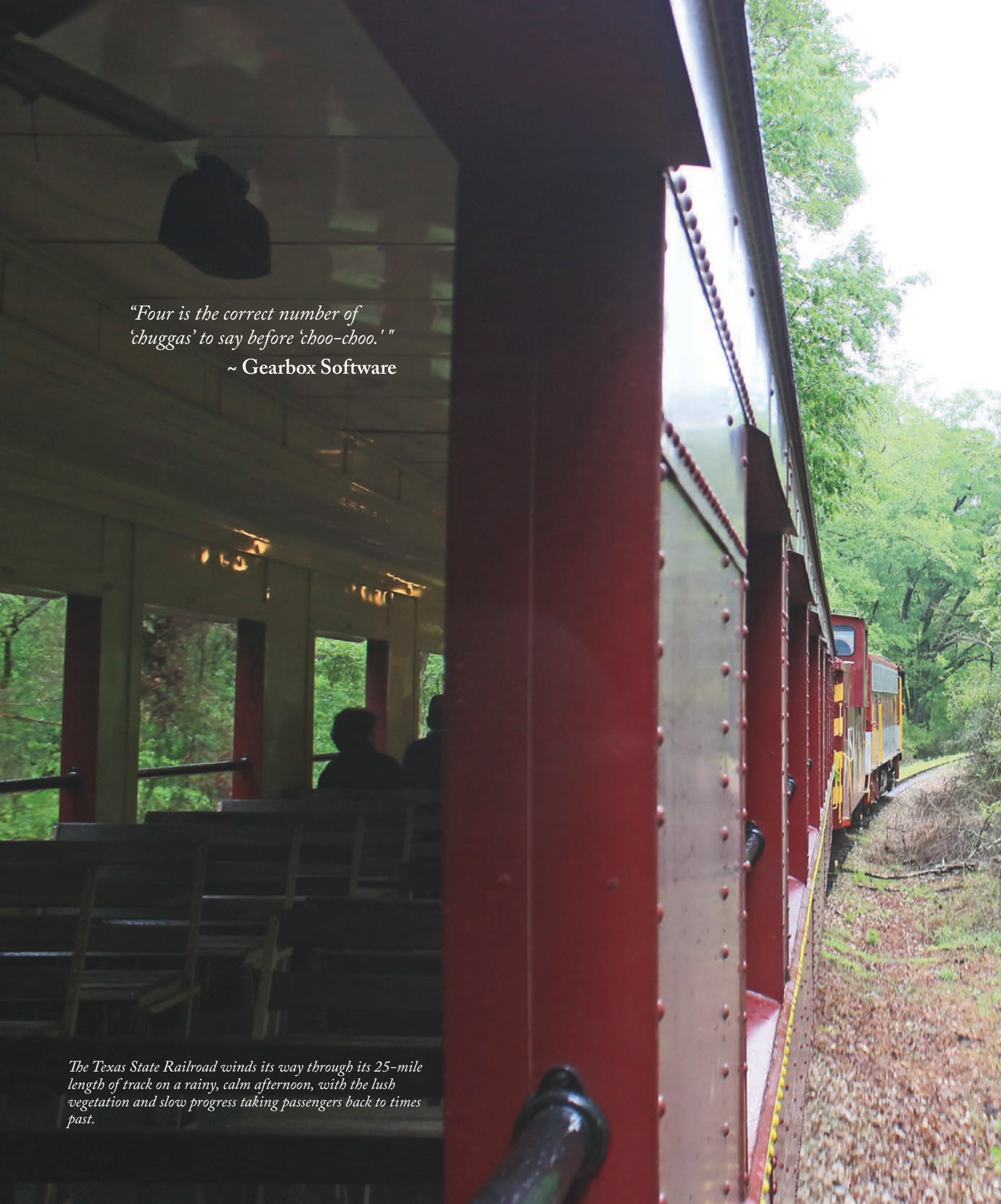
FEATURE

Palestine to Rusk

"When I was a boy in the days of the train, I'd sit by the tracks on a long summer day, and I'd wave at the brakeman, and he'd wave back at me, while the thunderclouds rolled ..."

~ Jim Croce "Railroad Song"





*"Four is the correct number of
'chuggas' to say before 'choo-choo.'"*

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The Texas State Railroad winds its way through its 25-mile length of track on a rainy, calm afternoon, with the lush vegetation and slow progress taking passengers back to times past.



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(Left) Kelli Barnes watches the world go by after lunch on the Texas State Railroad.

(Right) Joyce Jones, a 19-year veteran of serving on the Texas State Railroad, prepares to serve tasty beverages to passengers in the Presidential Car.

“Heading for the station with a pack on my back, tired of transportation in the back of a hack. I love to hear the rhythm of the clickety clack and hear the lonesome whistle, see the smoke from the stack ...” ~Asleep at the Wheel, “Choo Choo Ch’Boogie”

More than just a train ride, which by itself is a memory of a lifetime, there’s camping, fishing, nature trails and even a water playground.

Events featuring wine runs, beer runs, and pumpkin runs during the Halloween season are available, and for Christmas, the Polar Express, which boasts live music in every car, lights galore and readings by the train staff of the novel, “The Polar Express.”

Rates for daily runs range from \$25 to \$700 (for the whole caboose), depending on your tastes, and can be purchased online.

More information can be found at texasstaterailroad.net, calling 855-632-7729 or emailing tsrrinfo@jag-transport.com. ■



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TUNNEL TRAVEL

Story and photos by
Kelli Barnes and Amy Holzworth

Surprise! There are six miles of tunnels covering 95 city blocks, 20 feet below the skyscrapers in downtown Houston. The 168,600 employees working downtown can beat the heat, rain, and traffic each weekday by going underground. The offices covering 51 million square feet of space have been somewhat abandoned due to COVID 19.*

Anyone can descend to enjoy a brisk walk in a climate-controlled, safe environment. The atmosphere is a cross between a large airport and a large hospital. It is open 6 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. during the five weekdays. Access to the tunnels is available by



IN DOWNTOWN HOUSTON

traveling downtown via Metro transportation to two major entrance points — Wells Fargo Plaza and McKinney Garage on Main. Metered parking on the street is available for \$3, and there are open parking lots and parking garages available. Several stairs and escalators provide channels down into the tunnels in various spots downtown. For close parking to a tunnel entrance, use McKinney Place garage and plan to spend between \$8 for an hour or up to \$20 for the day. There are parking coupons for \$3 off available in some places. The Wells Fargo parking garage is cost-prohibitive for most visitors and is used primarily for banking customers and employees based on the pricing.

The best time to visit would be 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. when most

shops and restaurants are guaranteed to be open for business. Some establishments are shut down before and after the lunch rush. Those hours would be best for walking and enjoying the tunnels.

A wide variety of food choices from chain restaurants to individually owned, specialty-food eateries are available. Here are a few locally owned recommendations:

- Star Chef Dumpling: pan seared or steamed pork, chicken or veggie-filled options
- Simit & Poacha Bakery: has amazing Tiramisu and Polka pastry to name just two
- Amilles Coffee Shop: for an espresso or lavender and honey latte. They also have traditional coffee favorites.



When thinking of shopping options, imagine places one would go during a lunch hour in addition to food: dry cleaners, barber shops and shoe shining, hair and nail spas, chiropractors, print shops, pharmacies, convenience stores, jewelry repair, and even doctor and dentist offices. The COVID shutdown is coming to an end, and businesses are opening again to service the thousands of employees returning to the office.

The hustle and bustle felt in the tunnels is infectious. Texans have so many special things to see and do, and this is a good one. The history of this particular attraction starts in the early 1930s.

Ross Sterling, who also served as the 31st governor of Texas, wanted to build a tunnel under the city to connect two downtown movie theaters. He was inspired by the tunnels under the Rockefeller Center in New York City.

Will Horwitz later connected three of his vaudeville and movie theaters to save on air conditioning. In the construction boom beginning in the 1950s and continuing through the 1970s, more buildings went up and their owners linked tunnels to the previous passageways.

Expansion in the area continues with additional buildings and tunnels in the planning stages.* When visiting, the tunnels are random with no particular rhyme or reason. Color-coded maps are located throughout and prove both useful and necessary.

Downtown Houston has a new motto: “The coffee is brewed. The taps are tapped and the grill ignited. The doors are open and the tables set. We are moving forward, but we need you to join us.” ■

**statistics and historical facts from: 365thingsinhouston.com*

The tunnels in downtown Houston were started in the 1930's and have been added to over the years. Since each tunnel was individually built and paid for by different business owners in different decades, you will see hints of the time period in the structures and décor choices. (Above) Signage lines the checkerboard hallway in this tunnel, marking the different business services available. (Left) Think “The Jetson’s” when enjoying the art lined hall in this tunnel area.

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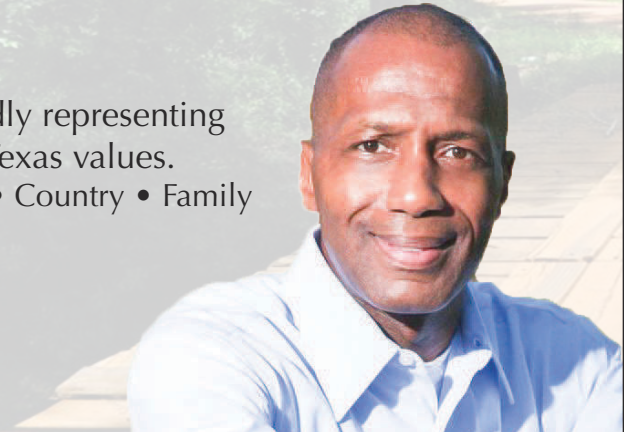
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Back by the Bushel



Nacogdoches

Story, photos, and illustrations by Emily Kubisch-Sabrsula

Known throughout the year for its shades of purple plaid and vibrant green pines, every second week of June, the oldest town in Texas gives weight to juicy hues of blue, while cobblestone streets host hoards of craft vendors and food trucks during the state's biggest (and only) state-sanctioned Blueberry Festival.

Starting in 1989 at the ripe hands of Nacogdoches residents Leon and Patsy Hallman, the couple, along with several community leaders, planned the inaugural Blueberry Festival in Downtown Nacogdoches. Initially established as a way to help promote the then-emerging East Texas crop, the yearly event has since grown to highlight all things blue in Nacogdoches. Blossoming from the first one-day festival, businesses and residents from all over Nacogdoches and East Texas join in on a growing number of events that make up an almost weeks' worth of activities sure to please anyone's palate. Residents and visitors gather across the historic town to enjoy staples like The Blueberry Bluegrass Concert in the Park, Millard's Crossing's Blueberry Jam Week of Events, the resident wine & beer scene (who create seasonal libations for the festival), and food trucks who have no problem finding patrons to serve blueberry specialties to after a day of sun and shopping.

In previous years, event-goers could expect blueberry pancakes in the square, concerts at the civic center, fun runs through historic trails, and even pet & recipe contests. Those looking to escape the brick streets in exchange for greener farms were able to catch a shuttle to local blueberry patches to pick berries by the

pound. Preceded by the decades of success the admission-free festival had enjoyed, seeing the 2020 festivities follow the way many other local fairs and rodeos did wasn't easy for anyone to hear- especially those who depend on the festival yearly.

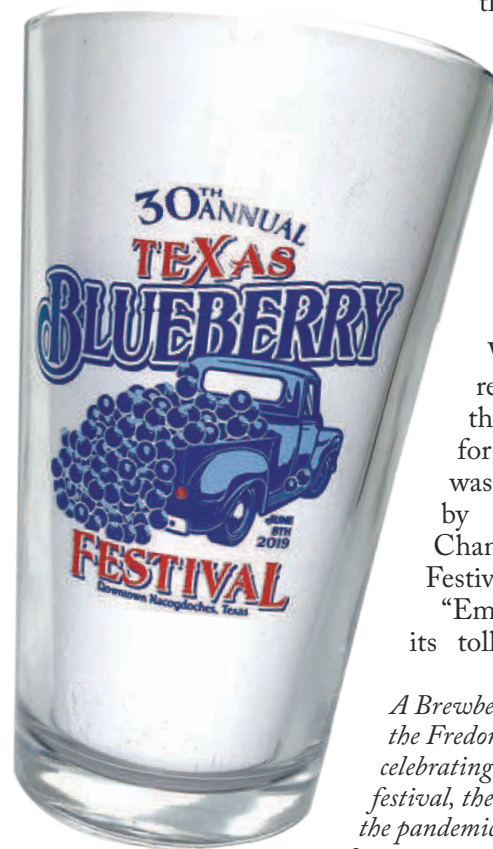
Every part of the city was hit hard, from tourism-driven local merchants to the city's own chambers & partners. Executive Director of the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau, Sherry Morgan, reflected on receiving the news that the Texas Blueberry Festival for the first time in its history wasn't going to happen- a call made by several entities including the Chamber Board of Directors and the Festival's Title Sponsor, Tipton Ford.

"Emotionally, the cancellation took its toll as yet one more restriction that made the pandemic all-too personal." Morgan reflected in a socially distant email chat. Eager to

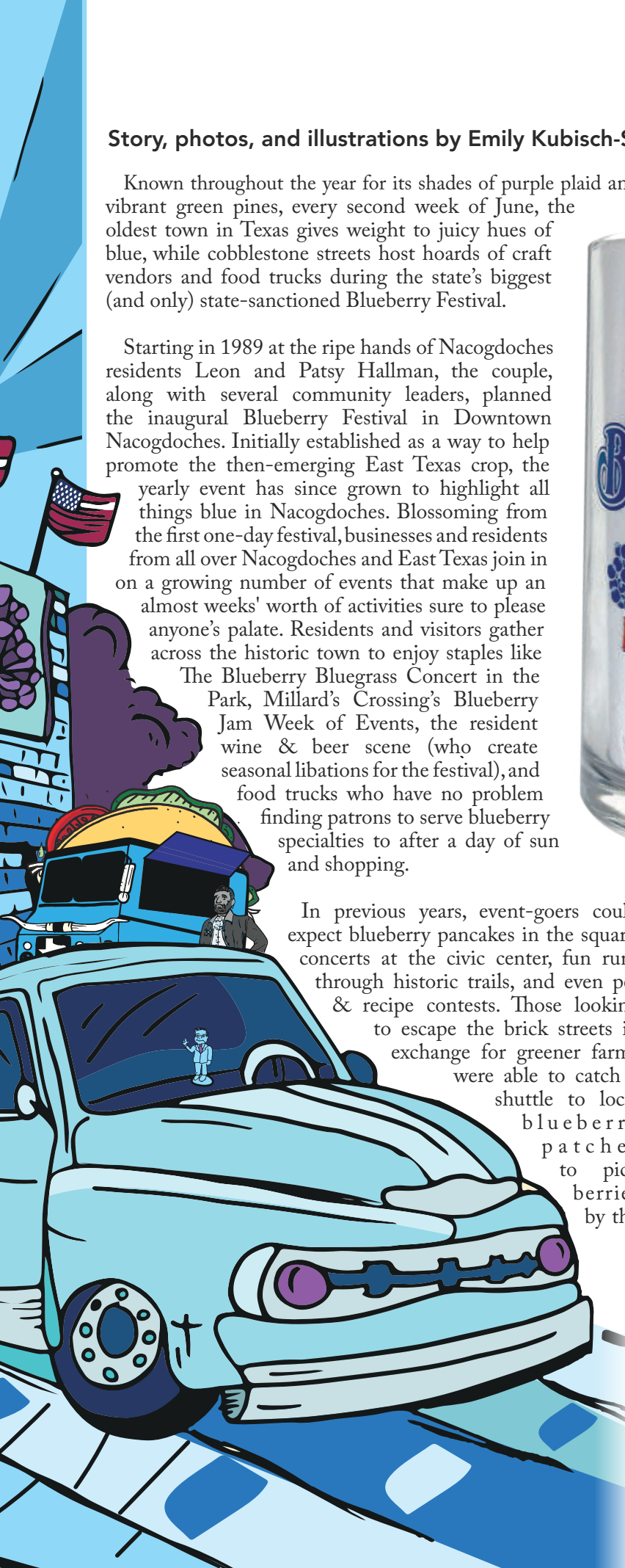
bury last year in the ground and reap the benefits of this year's nourishing though, Morgan remained optimistic in the months leading up to the event, encouraging everyone to come out and support the Downtown scene and its vendors through the VisitNac social media pages.

With vaccination rates in Texas going up, by the time the second Saturday in June rolled around, festival-goers saw plenty of familiar sights of pre-pandemic times, starting with The Running of the Blueberries Fun Run which spilled into the sounds and smells of downtown vendors, ranging from baked goods & barbecue to local organizations looking for potential new members. Local musicians and representatives from Caddo and Alabama-Coushatta Tribes alike walked the streets answering questions on how to support them. With most ready to resume 2019 habits, some Covid remnants still slipped into the 2021 festivities, with a few choosing to brave the Texas summer in masks, and others being mindful to keep as much distance as possible. Attendees from in-town to out-of-state who were not vaccinated had the option to receive the shot at the festival, courtesy of the City of Nacogdoches and the Fire Department.

Leaving their homes by the bushel, there was no shortage of festival-goers to sample berry-flavored wines, pies, and other themed goods from the almost 250 vendors present. Past years



A Brewberry Glass from the Fredonia Brewery celebrating the 2019 festival, the last one before the pandemic put a hold on the 2020 event.



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Blueberries beginning to ripen at the experimental blueberry patch at the Native Plant Center.

have attracted close to 20,000 visitors, and although the event aimed for slightly smaller numbers this year, similar numbers of blueberry enthusiasts and new berry-lovers alike were ready to swap protective masks and hand sanitizer for vaccines and sunscreen to experience the sweet fruit in many forms.

Blueberry farms in the region are nothing new, given that Nacogdoches is the largest supplier of the berry in the state as well as the Blueberry Capitol of Texas. The bushes, which grow both cultivated and wild throughout the region, love the acidic soil that pine trees also frequent. Wild varieties grow in the shade amongst yaupon, beauty berry, and the canes of wild blackberries, naturally mulched by the pines, but usually find preference with birds and rodents rather than humans.

According to *The Texas Blueberry Industry—History, Trends, and Cultural Strategies*, a paper authored by Stephen F. Austin State University professors Dr. David Creech and Dr. Leon Young, experimental crops began in the mid-60s when Texas A&M professors sought to test if Eastern United States varieties of the plant would do well in the acidic pine soils. Through trial and error, testing different water

sources, varieties, and fertilization techniques, the crops were doing better than expected by the 70s. Blueberry farms soon began popping up in the area with the help of standards for healthy plants set by SFASU—work it continues to this day with the help of an experimental patch.

Director of the SFA Gardens and local blueberry expert, Dr. David Creech, has been working with the crop longer than the festival has called Nacogdoches its home. Growing alongside the hundreds of native species he looks over at the SFA Native Plant Center is an experimental blueberry patch ripe for the picking, with close to 70 varieties being grown. This year's freeze, however devastating around the state, also served as a lesson in blueberry hardiness.

While the pandemic was able to cancel last year's events, the February freeze this year threatened to do the same. "Most of the early ripening blueberries in East Texas were damaged as they were close to flowering when the Valentine's hard freeze event occurred. The mid season and late varieties appeared to have come through in fine shape."

Like most Texans in the month of February, early blooms on plants took a hit and hurt crops, but their Lonestar resiliency shown through when East Texas needed it most, producing a healthy crop in time for this year's festival.

"To be honest, I'm a bit surprised that blueberries were able to make it through the record low events. Survival depended on the variety and how dormant the



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Tipton's iconic blue Ford has quickly become synonymous with the Texas Blueberry Festival.



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variety was. Early flowering varieties suffered and there were a number of them at first bud swell. The -3 degree event killed any buds at first swell. The later flowering varieties were still in dormancy and emerged unscathed.” remarked Creech.

While the area around the Experimental Blueberry Patch is fenced off to keep deer and hogs away, visitors can walk around the perimeter to find gates to enter to pick and sample their own blueberries- just be mindful to leave some for the next curious connoisseur. ■



Blueberries of every size and shade can be picked from the close to 70 varieties of blueberry bushes at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center.



While the roads were lined with local craft vendors, musicians played to excited crowds from the historic buildings during Millard's Crossing's Blueberry Jam.



(Above) The Nacogdoches County Democratic Party attempts to paint the town even more blue by talking with interested festival-goers, and encouraging others to register to vote.



(Left) Local artists talk to tourists about their work, with several prepared with blueberry-inspired pieces for sale.



Several stages hosting live music could be found at the festival, from downtown, to surrounding parks, offering weary walkers a chance to sit and relax.

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RECIPE

Honey, Lime and Ginger Melon

This can serve as a summer salad or a light dessert. If there are any leftovers, put the juice and melon in a blender and add a little vodka, gin or rum for a refreshing summer cocktail.

By Barbara White
Photo by Amy Holzworth

- 1 firm cantaloupe melon
- 1 firm honeydew melon
- Juice of 2 fresh limes (3-4 tbsp)
- 1 tbsp finely grated lime zest
- 1-2 tbsp freshly grated ginger (to taste - fresh ginger packs a punch!)
- 1/4 cup honey

Use a melon ball scoop to make bite-size balls, or simply cut into bite-size cubes, and mix in large bowl.

Whisk together the lime juice, lime zest, grated ginger and honey.

Pour lime juice mixture over melon balls and gently toss to coat.

Cover and refrigerate about four hours, giving it a gentle stir occasionally.

To serve, spoon into attractive serving containers and top with fresh mint leaves or any garnish you choose.



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NACOGDOCHES COUNTY:

- ③ **NACCA Valley Vineyards**
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- ④ **Red House Winery**
108 E. Pilar St. | Nacogdoches

ANGELINA COUNTY:

- ⑤ **Restoration Bistro**
210 S. First St. | Lufkin

ANDERSON COUNTY:

- ⑥ **Granny Muffins Wines**
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HENDERSON COUNTY:


- ⑦ **Green Goat Winery**
11384 FM 279 | Chandler

SMITH COUNTY:

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- ⑨ **M-6 Winery**
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- ⑩ **Kiepersol Winery**
21558-B Merlot Ln. | Tyler
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Three Generations of Barbecue

A Stringer's family tradition



Story by Caleb Fortenberry

It may come as a surprise to the residents of Lufkin that Stringer's Lufkin Bar-B-Q has been at the same location since 1950, but not only is it in the same location, it's in the same family.

Third generation owner, Paul Stringer says that he wants the traditions to continue, not only for his family, but for the visitors as well.

The restaurant was originally owned for two years by Eugene Gann. From humble beginnings, the barbeque building was a, "12x20 lean-to building," said Stringer and the street in front of it was a dirt road, which is now the bustling South Chestnut Street.

"My grandmother started buying it in 1952 ... She had to get a job because she spent too much on Christmas, and as a result, she liked the work and she bought the restaurant," said Stringer.

Among the memories of the long-known restaurant was the smoke that would fill the busy Chestnut/Timberland intersection and dining areas. At the time of smoke plumes, the Stringers used a single smoke pit named "Old Smokey."

"Since I've started running the restaurant, we tore down the two youngest of the pits and made room for computer-controlled smokers," said Paul.

Paul, being an electronic technician prior to taking over, designed the smokers and electronics involved himself.

"Used to, the whole intersection would fill up with smoke." In

2018, the new pits were equipped with smoke stacks which helped steer the smoke out of the streets and dining areas.

Oddly, the lack of smoke in the streets had left some Lufkin residents skeptical of the restaurant's barbecue. Some customers had even questioned the Stringers' barbecuing integrity, asking if they still cook their own food. The Stringers still use hickory Paul assured, with the only change being made by the addition of pellets instead of just logs. Paul explained, "We still cook all of our barbecue. We prepare all our own sides, right here in the house. We make our own rolls. We make our own fried pies and we make a better product because of it."

Items such as the barbecue sauce have not changed either over the 70 years they've been in business. According to Paul, the family still uses the same recipe. Their barbecue sauce has a vinegar base and has been around since his grandfather "Buck" made it on his back porch. Every 10 days, Paul, Robin, and their daughter Jasmine make roughly 180 gallons of the sauce, which goes into their beans and chipped beef.

Robin, Paul's wife and co-owner, has been with Paul since 1991. During their high school years, the two worked at the restaurant together while Paul was a cook and over a spring break, they were married. After college, Paul went on to work for Consolidated Communications for 15 years, then for the restaurant another 10 years. In 2014, Paul and Robin began buying the business.

"We have a commercial kitchen ... we have to have a lot of space

to store all these ingredients,” Robin expounded, “We go through about 1,200 pounds of brisket a week and about 900 pounds of ribs a week.”

She explained the typical day in the kitchen. Ricky, the current cook, gets to the restaurant around 7 a.m. to get the meat on the pits, with the rest of the crew showing up at 8 a.m. to accomplish various tasks. Some cut the cabbage and prepare the coleslaw, while a team of two or three prepare the rolls. One other crew member delicately prepares the fried pies. Paul and Robin, are there too, often running through the kitchen to fix various foods, sides, or maintenance issues. “The rolls are pretty labor intensive,” said Robin. Several items on the menu are time-consuming. The brisket takes 18 hours to cook fully.

Not only is their food about as authentic as a restaurant could hope for it to be, their dining environment is also something out of history. Along the walls; trinkets, toys, fashionable headwear, and numerous antiques can be found either sitting on a shelf or behind a glass container.

Some of the collectables are even from the marketing campaigns of the past generations when phone numbers were five digits. “I like finding old things from a long time ago, we have an ash tray with the phone number only having

four digits,” said Paul.

The building itself is in a way an antique, however there have been several renovations over the years. The aspen walls were added in 1995. Sometime after, new booths, tables, and chairs were added. Beams constructed from trees are erect throughout the building and are believed to be a part of the original structure.

It appears that the Stringer family believes that tradition is a foundation, and seems to be a large part of their success. “This business is more than a place for us to earn a living, it really has become a family tradition,” said Robin, “We love our customers, we love our employees. We love being here in this town.”

Paul added, “We’ve been here 70 years ... We would love for you to make a tradition out of our barbeque.”

Paul and Robin have also acquired the property behind the restaurant known as the old Beam’s Motel. “We own the whole corner now!” said Robin, “We have plans to demo the building and make room for future plans ... to be announced.”

Stringer’s Lufkin Bar-B-Q is located at 203 S. Chestnut Street in Lufkin. They can be reached at www.lufkinbbq.com or by calling 936-634-4744. ■

[Left] Original barbecue sauce bottles produced by Pershing “Buck” Stringer from their back porch. Photo by Caleb Fortenberry.

[Right from top to bottom] The original Stringer’s Lufkin Bar-B-Q Building. Paul’s grandpa, Pershing “Buck” Stringer and Paul’s dad, Paul Stringer I. Queen “Queenie” Easter Stringer (left), Paul’s grandmother, first generation owner that started the restaurant. Paul and Brenda Stringer (2nd generation owners). They owned the restaurant 31 years. Second generation owner, Paul Stringer I (Paul’s dad), holding a sign. Robin and Paul Stringer, third generation owners of Stringer’s Lufkin Bar-B-Q. Photo by Caleb Fortenberry.

[Below] Stringer’s Lufkin Bar-B-Q remodeled building. Photo by Caleb Fortenberry.



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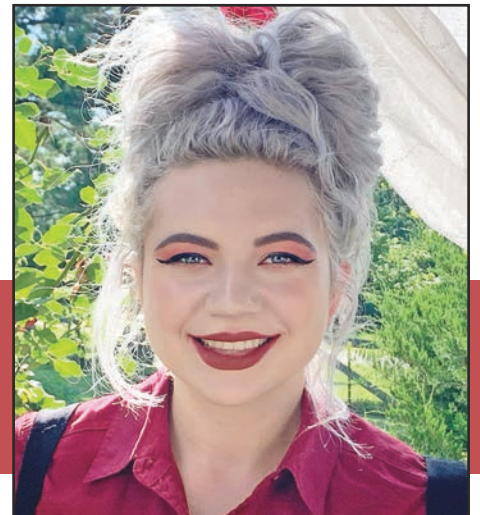
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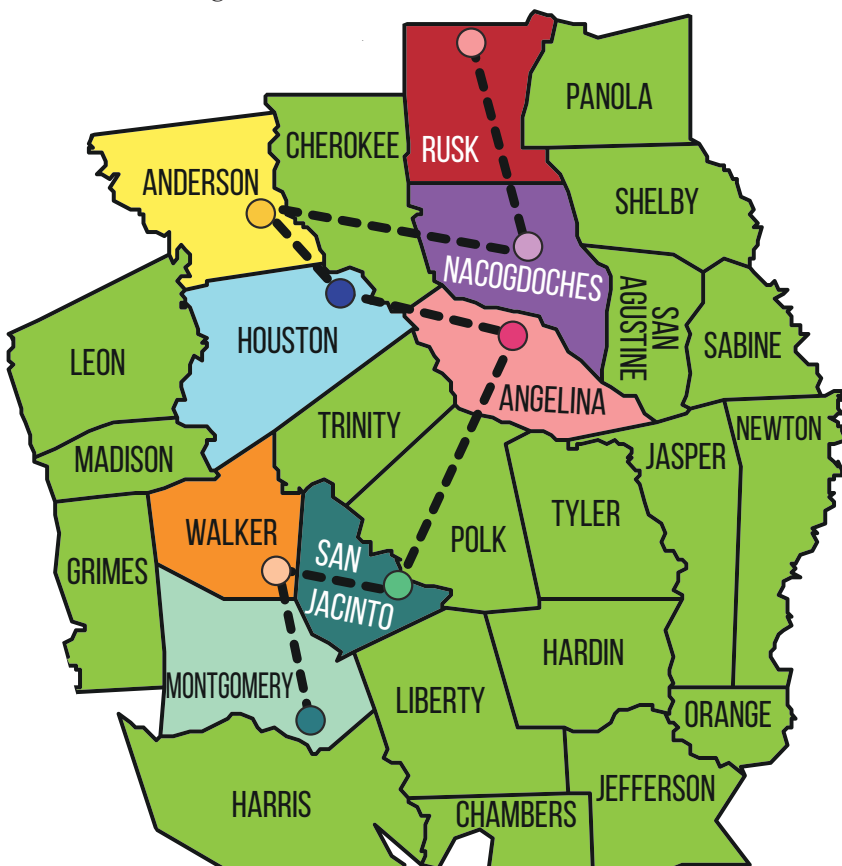
Story, photos, and illustrations by Emily Kubisch-Sabrsula

With no shortage of ways to explore the piney-nooks of East Texas, from rides down shaded forest roads to secluded hikes, sometimes a more middle-of-the-road approach is needed to enjoy the woods properly. Motors are great from getting from point A to Point B quickly, but for those looking for a slower pace with a bit of excitement, grab a pair of handlebars and air up your tires for a bike ride through East Texas.

Below the tall pines, red clay roads give way to smaller human-sized trails for human-powered wheels to ride through sandy bottoms and over tree roots. But before biking through East Texas, beginners and experts alike should take note of the unique terrain the pineywoods pose. East Texas' soils range from silty sands to hard clays that get slippery with the coastal rainfalls, and with so many creeks running through the region, riders should be mindful of wet bottomlands that can quickly house flash floodwaters.

Hefty roots sent off by pines and hardwoods seek to trip bikers who stand on their pedals, while rocks sometimes get kicked up by fast-moving tires. Riders should always take care to wear a properly fitting helmet and take a first aid kit for themselves and their wheels with them.

Don't be timid when it comes to letting others know you're in the area- indicate things like your upcoming direction or that you're approaching when in thick areas of vegetation through visual and audible cues- do both if possible to be mindful of those with impairments.



Bighead Creek Trail - Kilgore

Running alongside and crossing over several local creeks, including Bighead Creek, this trail features 3.5 miles of volunteer-built bike courses that sit right outside the city, making it easy to forget there's any concrete even around. Man-made dirt mounds dot the trails between trees and switchbacks exist for more experienced riders. The trail maintainers are constantly adding new features, so while short, it's sure to challenge anyone any time of year. Riders can access the bike trail by hopping on the 4.8 mile paved Creekside Trail at one of several trailheads in the area.

FEE: Free, Day Use Only

Things to know: Popular with dog walkers

SFA Recreational Trail Nacogdoches

Walk through the Gayla Mize Gardens and over a wooden bridge crossing Lanana Creek into the pine-lined SFA Recreational Bike Trails. Stretching around seven miles, the connected trails that make up the system takes advantage of the town's elevation changes and has something for every level of difficulty- including some wooden ramps hidden around the trails. Like all of East Texas, bikers should be extra cautious about pine trees big and small while taking fast speeds, especially while biking alongside the creeks. Keep a close eye on the trails for the occasional protected Timber Rattlesnake or sunbathing box turtle, as well as runners and hikers who also make use of the trails. Bikers who want to explore more of the town's historic streets can access the 6 mile Lanana Creek Trails by taking a quick detour across University Street and through the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden.

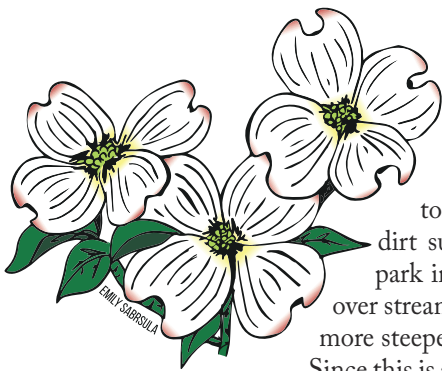
Fee: Free, Day Use Only

Things to know: Port-a-potties are occasionally present at the trailhead but this is not always the case. The town's bike shop, Mile's Bike Shop, is located less than a mile from the gardens.



A portion of the Nacogdoches trails system that runs through Stephen F. Austin State University's Native Plant Center.

Davey Dogwood Park - Palestine



Named as much for the park's benefactor as it is for the flower popular within the boundaries, this city park sits outside of old town Palestine and caters to outdoor seekers of all types. Bikers can expect to find 5 miles of paved and 8 miles of dirt surfaces to cruise around the 250-acre park in. Small wooden bridges connect land over streams, while tree roots and rocks help hold more steeper trails together.

Since this is a city park, pedestrians and dogs can be found sharing the trails, but park benches for post-ride picnics are also abundant.

Fee: Free, Day Use Only

Things to know: There are no bathrooms

Mission Tejas State Park - Grapeland

Just as the creeks in the park continue to carve out steep ridges, Mission Tejas State Park is quietly carving out a reputation for some quick and exciting rides through the pines. With several of its trails



The dam at Mission Tejas State Park leads into elevated switchbacks that take riders by most of the park's features.

servicing hike and bike traffic, riders are sure to get a good view of the northern half of the Davy Crockett National Forest with just under 10 miles of flat and inclined trails. The historic buildings throughout the park provide perfect places to rest, with maps and more available inside the visitors' center. Bathrooms, water bottle refill stations, and day-use areas can also be easily found, and camping is available for those looking to make a week out of hitting the East Texas trails.

Fee: \$3 daily or free with a Texas State Parks Pass

Things to know: With any trails that may encounter vehicle traffic, keeping lights, especially blinking lights, on bikes can help increase rider visibility for themselves, but also approaching traffic.

Kit McConico Park - Lufkin

Moving further south into Lufkin is Kit McConico city park, which humbly hides a 5.5 mile trail system right outside of the loop. The trail, made up of its own loops and segments, is maintained by the local bike club and is designed to be easy enough for anyone in the community to enjoy. It's a quick way to explore the fungus, flora, and fauna that call the pineywoods home while en route to other parts of the region.

Fee: Free, Day Use Only

Things to know: Restrooms are available at the trailhead.

Double Lake Recreation Area Bike Trails - Coldspring

Running through the Sam Houston National Forest, Double Lake Recreation Area (DLRA) Bike Trails start at the appropriately named Double Lake Recreation Area and connect some 21 miles of the National Forest's best bike-only trails that are a favorite among local Houston area bike clubs and solo-riders alike. The trails do get hit hard by coastal rains, especially during hurricane season, but public showers by the swimming hole at DLRA offer a cool-off and clean-down for muddy bikers. With the coastal weather, bikers can expect to hear plenty of birds above and see patches of colorful fungus and flowers in the warmer months, and views of post-prescribed burns in the spring. Trailheads can be found along Forest Service Road 210A near the Double Lake Lodge.

Fee: \$7 day use

Things to know: Bikers should be mindful of the \$400 fee for bringing bikes on the Lonestar Hiking Trail.



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Huntsville State Park Huntsville

Huntsville State Park offers almost 15 miles of bike trails in the park, with all trails serving both bikers and hikers, so be wary of slower foot traffic while riding down the sand and clay dips that define some of the trails. Expect a long ride wherever you go, with the largest loop circling the entire perimeter of the park. Large shady pines help keep riders cool, even in the Texas sun, and benches are scattered about the trails to help remind adventure seekers that even they need a break.

The park borders the national forest boundaries, as some trails feed into the national forest so riders should take care to have the appropriate passes. Both the park and national forest participate in hunting season to varying degrees so recreationists should take extra caution in the fall especially to avoid hunting areas and wear brightly colored clothing.

FEE: \$5 daily or free with a Texas State Parks Pass

Things to know: There are also several trails adjacent to the park in the national forest, including the Lonestar Hiking Trail, which prohibits bike use.



George Mitchell Nature Preserve

Just down I-45 in Montgomery County, the George Mitchell Nature Preserve in The Woodlands makes for a challenge closer to the city. The bi-directional loop, which will put you at a cool three miles from start to finish, is a good excuse to visit the more populated neck of the woods. Since the park aims to include native species, riders should keep an eye out for migrating birds and small mammals that frequent the area, as well as swarms of mosquitoes that call the coastal humidity their home.

FEE: Free, Day Use Only

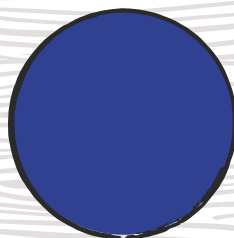
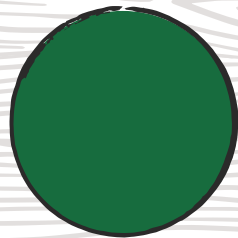
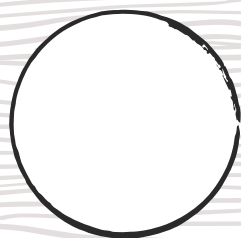
Things to know: This trail is popular with dog walkers

Armed with tips and starter locations for a ride around the woods, those ready to become stewards of the trails just need to pick up a map and a water bottle (stickers from your favorite ride spot optional), and lay down fresh track in the sand and clay. Remember to always observe individual park rules (to avoid having future rules named after yourself), and always follow universal means of respect, from Right of Way to Leave No Trace. ■

quick guide to

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Markers can vary slightly from trail to trail, but most generally follow this set of universally colored and shaped indicators.



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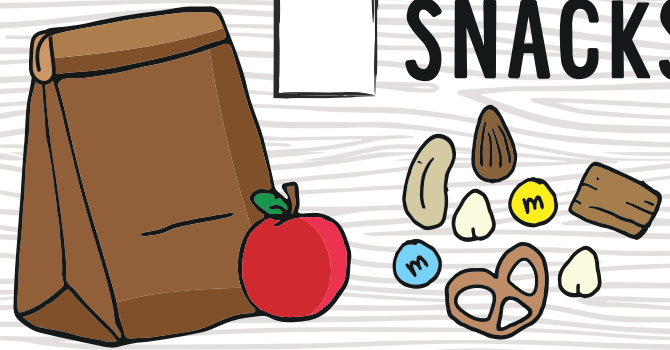
BEFORE *you* GO

Before leaving on a bike ride, make sure you have everything you need!

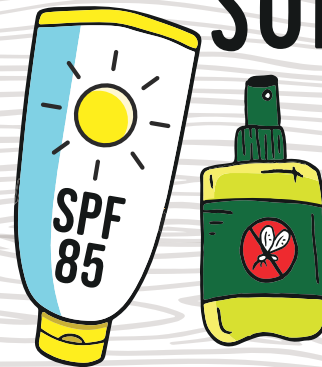
MOUNTAIN BIKE



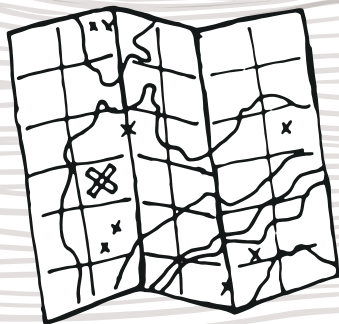
SNACKS



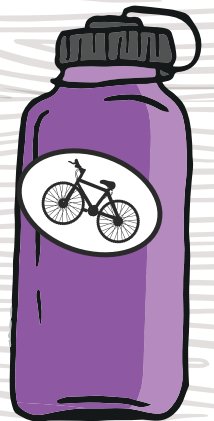
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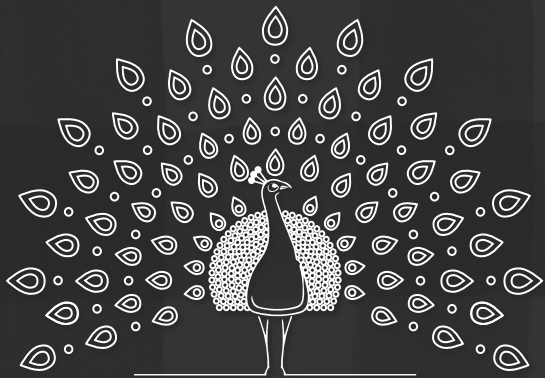
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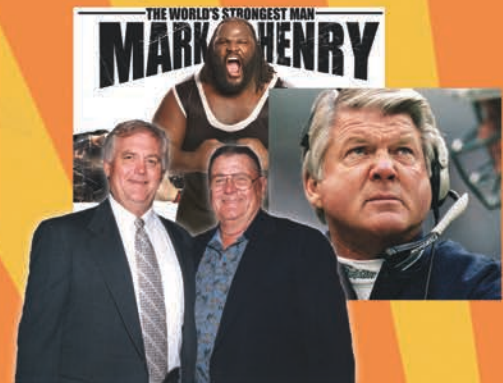
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SMALL TOWN BITES





That's how you'll feel after eating at Ranch Hand Cafe in Cleveland and Hwy. 77 Cafe in Rosebud

Story by Emily Banks Wooten

A couple of years ago after finishing up an appointment my daughter had in Cleveland, it was just about lunchtime and I wanted to get something to eat before we headed home. I asked the receptionist at the front desk what she would recommend to someone from out of town who wanted a good lunch. She asked what we liked and I said, "Anything but fast food."

She proceeded to tell me about a place called Ranch Hand Cafe and

gave me directions. "It's not much to look at, but they serve good, home cooked food and big portions. You won't leave hungry."

That sounded perfect so we headed over. We drove a bit and finally found it. It's not difficult to find, it just seems further out than it really is. We enjoyed reading the multitude of folksy, homespun signs that peppered the walls as we waited to be seated.

The six-page menu was a bit overwhelming at first. If you can't find something on it to strike your fancy, then either you're not hungry or you're just too picky. She immediately found something

Veterans' Wall of Honor at Hwy. 77 Cafe.



that appealed to her - "Cheese Fries," which was a plate of French fries topped with melted blended cheeses and crumbled bacon. I opted for the day's lunch special which was a small chicken fried steak topped with cream gravy and Texas toast with a choice of two sides. I selected green beans and mashed potatoes with cream gravy. I was certainly glad I'd ordered the small. It was so big it still took up most of the plate. I can't imagine how big a large one must be. We left happy, full and content and I couldn't wait to tell my husband about the place and bring him back on a future visit.

On our next trip to Ranch Hand, I once again ordered the lunch special which happened to be King Ranch chicken that day. I enjoyed it immensely with green beans and buttered corn. The next time we were there I ordered the Buffalo chicken sandwich- a hand-battered chicken breast tossed with buffalo sauce with lettuce, tomatoes, pepper jack cheese and mayo on a sweet sourdough bun. That thing was a beast, it was so huge. It was absolutely wonderful, but take my advice - you'll want a knife and fork to finish it and lots of extra napkins.

Most recently, my husband and I went over one Saturday afternoon just to get away for a little bit. I ordered the small fried catfish platter which consisted of three hand-battered fillets served with hush puppies and two sides. I selected cole slaw and fried okra. It was all great. The fillets were so big that I ended up taking one home in a box and enjoying it for breakfast the next morning. My husband ordered the Santa Fe grilled chicken which was a fresh grilled chicken breast in a Santa Fe marinade, topped with pepper jack cheese, diced tomatoes and avocado, Texas toast and two sides. He picked sweet potato fries and a side salad. The chicken was moist and tender but he would have enjoyed it more with a little less of the Santa Fe sauce. The sauce had a smokey chipotle flavor that was a little heavy and basically overwhelmed some of the other flavors of the dish.

We always enjoy our meals at Ranch Hand and continue to be amused by its rustic country kitsch.

A number of years ago during a visit to my brother and sister-in-law's ranch in Robinson, south of Waco on Hwy. 77, they introduced us to Hwy. 77 Cafe in Rosebud and we've been fans ever since. It was a sight to see as we walked in. Literally hundreds of photographs of veterans line the walls. It doesn't take long to see why the cafe's catchphrase is "Where Everyday is Veteran's Day."

The cafe's founder, Martha Westerman, hung a few military pictures of her relatives when she built the cafe in 2001. It wasn't too long before customers started bringing in their own pictures to adorn the walls.

"As you look around the cafe today, you can see our country's history dating from the Civil War up to current conflicts around the world. We have been honored since 2009 to carry on this tradition that Martha started," Sue Sturrock said. Sue and her husband Bill are the present owners. At last count, there are photos of 592 service men and women on the walls of the cafe. Each photo has a number in the corner that corresponds to a master list with the person's identity, as well as their branch and years of service.

Hwy. 77 quickly became a favorite, not only for the quality of the food but for the homeyness and charm as well, and we always try to get a meal there when we're in the area. We've



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been going there for so long - way before I started writing about food - that while I can't necessarily remember everything I've eaten there, I know for a fact that I've always left happy, full and content.

We were there the day after Christmas and I enjoyed a catfish plate with hush puppies and two sides - black-eyed peas and German coleslaw - and it was all excellent. My husband and our daughter both enjoyed a steak finger basket.

That trip was especially memorable as we were traveling in both vehicles and Hubby accidentally locked the keys in his truck. Sue went out of her way to try to help us, loaning us tools and making some phone calls looking for help. Of course, being the day after Christmas, no one was to be found. It was her cook, Bubba, who subsequently suggested an old buddy of his from high school. I don't know if Steven was a locksmith or just had a penchant for picking locks, but \$60 and two hours later, we were on our way home.

We returned to the cafe at the end of spring break after another fun week spent with family. The only thing I remember from that visit was the magnificent cup of jalapeno sweet potato soup I tried that day and couldn't wait to replicate upon returning home. That soup was so darn good I would have mainlined it if I could have. And the funny thing about that? Sue said they'd omitted the bacon, an otherwise standard ingredient, in observance of Lent. Wow. If it was that good without the bacon, I can't imagine having it with it.

And, while I've never tried it myself because I always order an unsweet iced tea, my nephews swear by the goodness of the homemade strawberry lemonade served there.

Another thing that's always fascinated me about Hwy. 77 Cafe is the number of people from far away who have dined there. On the way to the restrooms is a big map of the state of Texas filled with pushpins marking the towns from which the various diners reside. Also tacked onto the map are two lists - a list of the 50 states and a list of countries. The cafe has fed people from every state in the union except for Delaware.

And the list of countries is mindblowing. Thirty-four foreign countries are represented, including Russia, India, Kenya, Norway, Lithuania, Hong Kong, Nigeria and South Korea, just to name a few.

How is it that all of these people from all over the world have heard about Hwy. 77 Cafe?!! What do you attribute it to?

Sue laughed when I asked her that question.

"I'd like to think it's the cafe, but you just never know who's going down Hwy. 77," she said. ■





Huntington Historical Museum

Story by Pam Hooten,
Member of the
Huntington Historical Society

The Huntington Heritage Museum began as a pipe dream of the members of the Huntington Historical Society. As membership grew, we focused on genealogy and family histories as well as preserving of the stories and treasures of our community. The Society was formed in 2006, having its meetings at the McMullen Memorial Library before making its home at the Huntington Housing Authority. Displays of photos, documents, maps and soon other treasures began to fill the walls...a need for a permanent home was obvious. The dog trot house that was so common in East Texas seemed to be a perfect place for a museum.

Located in Centennial Park, the Huntington Heritage Museum began with many volunteers and donations. Volunteers from the Huntington Housing Authority set the foundation, J Mitchell Ventures donated a framing crew and the roof was completed by Bud Weathers Roofing. Beverly and James Lovett donated lumber for finishing the first room of the dog trot. Herbert and Dena Powers (REI of Lufkin) donated the wood for the other room inside the Museum. The electrical work was done by Dwayne Turner. Countless hours of hard work were donated by Debbie and Clark Bewley in all kinds of labor. The members of the Huntington Business Owners Association donated funds for the materials to build the Museum. Huntington, like other



small towns, has a lot of community spirit and folks work together for all projects.

Now home to most of our treasures, the Museum is open to the public every Saturday 10 am to 2 pm. Visitors can trace their roots as family histories and genealogies are available for their use. Each room has displays of different eras and areas of interest. Huntington and its surrounding communities are exhibited, stores, cotton

gins, sawmills, railroads, and what life was like back in the day, 1900 to the present. Private tours are available by appointment. For more information, please call Pam Hooten at 936-635-3306.

The Huntington Historical Society is planning to expand the Museum with a barnlike structure to house antique wagons, tractors, farm equipment, and other items like a sugar cane press.

The Society is working with family members and other groups to replace the gravestone for the first sheriff of Angelina County, George Thomas Wharton Collins. Sheriff Collins' monument was destroyed by a storm. A new marker will be set this summer and a formal dedication ceremony will be held at that time. If you would like formation regarding this project, please call Pam Hooten at the number listed above.

The Huntington Historical Society has meetings the first Tuesday of each month at 6 pm at the Huntington Housing Authority, 210 East Walnut, Huntington. If you have an interest in local history or genealogy, please come and join in. ■

PEOPLE

THE REAL FOLK BLUES

East Texas troubadour Country Willie Edwards is the real deal



Story by Chris Edwards

It was written that the late, great Texas troubadour Ernest Tubb was either the “personification of honky-tonk music” or the “personification of everything great about country music.”

Had he been alive in the same period of time when Tubb could still sing for us, the same things might have been said and written about Country Willie Edwards.

Edwards’ nickname is no mere nom de disque (and stage) but a signifier of something that’s real. Though the name Country Willie Edwards is well-known to many music lovers within the East Texas region, there’s nothing that’s affected in the man’s music or his appearance.

Edwards is, as Kris Kristofferson once sang about Johnny Cash, a “walking contradiction,” at least in terms of his musicality and onstage presence. A tall, sturdy-looking figure, given to black cowboy duds and well-worn felt chapeaus, Edwards is commanding onstage without saying much at all, outside his lyrics. He is a man of a different era, yet comfortable in the 21st century milieu, as well. His singing voice easily fills a room, but offstage, he is quiet, soft spoken and one of the friendliest musicians around.

Instead of telling stories and/or jokes between songs, or acting rowdy onstage, Edwards simply lets his music tell the tales. Every once in a while, when dispatching a rare cover song, he might meekly intone of the song’s origin, in a way that’s barely even audible, but once he opens his mouth to sing, his voice is not only heard but felt.

Whatever the “it” factor is that makes for star power, “it” is something Edwards possesses. Onstage, that charisma and the power of his songs and performances is something that has endeared him to many audiences. One reviewer, Kevin Curtin, in the Austin Chronicle, wrote that Edwards “transformed into the coupling rod on a locomotive via his right arm, which strummed with unrelenting momentum.”

The power of Country Willie Edwards’ music is two-fold: first of all, there is that voice, which might remind some listeners of prime Johnny Cash, at first, but it is uniquely Edwards, and then there are those songs.

Edwards has bushels of them, too. In an age where

mass-market “country music” is written by committees and dictated by focus groups, Edwards has singlehandedly crafted a catalog of songs that are refreshing and new, but sound as though they’ve always been around.

Edwards’ subject matter is varied, too. Instead of churning out song-after-song about ice cold beer and pickup trucks, like many so-called modern songwriters, he is fond of telling stories in his songs, and like any great country singer/songwriter, he has several songs that parlay a fascination with trains and railroad history. He has also written songs about cotton farmers, shootouts, lots of tunes about the rambling way of life, basement meth cooks and even zombies.

With the latest batch of Country Willie Edwards original tunes on wax, in the form of the 14-song album *Midnight Cowboy*, Edwards is hoping to bring that refreshingly real sound to as many thirsty ears as possible. He recorded the album in Nacogdoches at Encore Studio, accompanied only by his longtime drummer/percussionist Thomas Oliver, and with Encore’s studio whiz Heath Perritt behind the mixing board.

On the album, Edwards’ deep, bass-baritone vocals and acoustic guitar mastery along with Oliver’s solid musicianship blend as one unit and fill an astonishing amount of space for just two musicians.

For Edwards, creating a new album is a need to leave something for listeners on down the road as much as it is to get his songs out into the world. “It’s just getting it on tape just like it is, so future generations can listen to it,” he said.

Throughout his career Edwards has also recorded many albums in a variety of locations, from make-shift apartment studios to live, onstage recordings. The discography of Country Willie Edwards ranges from obscure, CD-R titles sold only at shows like *The Oracles of Battery Acid* to slightly easier-to-find fare like 2004’s *Relayed*, which was produced by Nacogdoches musical stalwarts Grady Truchelut and Heath Rogers and released on the short-lived *Hot-house* label.

Getting music on record, no matter where or how it is recorded, is the same process for Edwards, and one that comes about in a true, organic fashion. “We drive up, get out, go in and record, then go get some

food. We go with the songs we want to do in the time we have, no plans,” he said.

Unlike many earlier entries in his discography, *Midnight Cowboy* is available worldwide, on all of the usual digital music purchase places, as well as all of the places where music can be streamed. Copies of it can also be found at Edwards’ live shows.

Edwards’ vocals, which are tuneful and resonant, are at the forefront on the record, and cover the frequencies a bassist would typically occupy. Occasionally Edwards and Oliver are accompanied by standup bassist Denis O’Donnell for live shows.

Recording the album in the fashion that it went down was a no-brainer for Edwards. Utilizing the two-piece format “is how me and Thomas play at every show. Wanted it to sound exactly like we sound,” said Edwards.

O’Donnell, whom the pair of musicians met while playing shows in Austin at clubs like the Hole in the Wall and the White Horse (which O’Donnell co-owns) said it is a lot of fun playing with Edwards.

Oliver said he has enjoyed working with Edwards through the years. “Working with Willie is amazing,” he said. “He is a master of his own craft. He takes the simplest things in life and turns them into folk classics. It is just a treasure, for me, to be a part of the rhythm to help Willie deliver his final product.”

Alongside his unforgettable stage presence, Edwards has also gained a cult level of interest in the Texas songwriters’ community for his large repertoire of original compositions. Some of them, such as “Marfa Lights,” “Rollin’ Down the Highway” and “Dallas in the Night” are standards at his shows and inspire singalongs with those in the know. To the uninitiated, they are liable to be singing along (and tapping toes) well before the performance’s end.

The new record is a whole slate of songs sure to become crowd pleasers. Songs such as “When I’ve Finally Gone Crazy” and “Down by the Railroad Tracks” seem to transport the listener to a roadhouse on the outskirts of town, circa 1955, but at the same time, there’s still a modern edge in some of the lyrics.

Although Edwards does not perform many covers, the ones he does do are tastefully chosen, and represent his lifelong studies in country music. He’ll work in an old Hank Williams gospel number or something like Kris Kristofferson’s “Jesus Was a Capricorn” (an early crowd-pleaser in his repertoire) and those covers fit in seamlessly with his bottomless barrel of originals.

Since his collegiate days, he has played live steadily, and he became a favorite in the Nacogdoches area, typically mes-

merizing audiences as a solo acoustic act. Edwards was a favorite at Nac gatherings like the legendary Ten Acre Jam festivals and is a favorite at the long-running monthly music showcase Pine Knot.

He has also played in bluegrass bands, like the Nacogdoches favorite the Remains, and even led the punk band Country Willie and the Cosmic Debris, which showcased a more rock-based influence, and allowed Edwards’ songwriting to branch out to include lyrics that worked in his fascination with extraterrestrial matters, as well as B-movie type imagery about zombies. Other rock-based outfits like The Rusted Record Machine and Moonhammer also showcased the rock-n-roll side of Edwards’ musicality.

Edwards also starred in a film, *Rainbows End*, which was directed by Eric Hueber, a filmmaker and musician, who played drums in the Cosmic Debris band. The film documented an ill-fated west coast tour undertaken by the band and featured a cast of other real-life characters associated with the band, including the late East Texas mystic Audrey Dean Leighton.

Be it onscreen or onstage, Edwards has an undeniable charisma apparent to anyone who encounters him. In a series of YouTube videos from just over a decade ago, Edwards can be seen performing some of his zombie songs before a large collegiate audience at the University of Georgia, and the gaggle of college kids’ fascination with Edwards and his beguiling ballads about the undead is apparent from viewing.

Nacogdoches-based author/musician Tim Bryant, who owns the downtown bookstore the Bosslight, recalls one of Edwards’ first appearances playing music in Texas’ oldest town, as it was at Bryant’s old establishment, the Out of the Way Café and Music Hall. Onstage, even at an age when he was barely out of high school, Edwards was still intriguing and commanding, and Bryant knew even back then that he was “the real deal.”

Music has been a constant in Edwards’ life, as have the backroads and ghost towns of the region, all of which has lent flavor to his songwriting.

Edwards grew up in the tiny Cherokee County community of Sardis, where he returned to establish roots in recent years. A farmer by trade, Edwards has been playing music from a young age, when he led hymns in church and played the East Texas opry circuit as a teenager.

He has made his mark in different areas, including Austin, where he resided for a while and became a cult sensation. Eventually, the call of home was too strong to ignore, and since settling down in East Texas, his music has been reinvigorated, and starting a family has had something to do with that.

While last year made live music an impossible proposition, but simultaneously allowed a lot of bands and artists to get to creating in the downtime, Edwards said he did not think much about music all that much, except as a listener.

“I spent time with my beautiful wife Jenny and my new beautiful daughter Edie Jo,” he said. “I did not worry about music too much, just listened to it.”

Becoming a father has even affected how Edwards writes new songs. He said he is now focused on writing songs for little Edie Jo to do in the future.

Time will tell if Edwards’ musical bona-fides have passed on to the next generation, but as far as his own undertakings go, he’s taking it as it comes. The gigs are popping back up after a fallow year, and there are new folks to convert to the magic of Country Willie Edwards. A recent show at Crockett’s legendary Camp Street Café left the small listening room’s audience beyond impressed, including one local patron who was overheard commenting that she wasn’t even a fan of country music, but loved what Edwards did onstage.

In the near future, Edwards said he’s hoping to play some festivals and more shows in cities like Galveston and in the San Marcos area.

As far as songwriting goes, it is a Herculean task to get any songwriter to pick a single favorite song they’ve written, and for Edwards, he said his favorite is “the song I haven’t written yet.”

Despite all of Edwards’ onstage power and the response he regularly attains from audiences, he remains a humble country boy. “He is so humble, and so talented,” Oliver said. “Just a great dude!”

Midnight Cowboy is available for purchase from Country Willie Edwards’ website: countrywillieedwards.com or on his Bandcamp site, located at: <https://countrywillieedwards.bandcamp.com>.

The latest album is available through his website, www.countrywillieedwards.com and will be available at the show.

• *East Texas-based writer Chris Edwards, who wrote this piece, is no relation to its subject matter, except to those whom he wishes to impress. ■*





SUMMERTIME

Story by Barbara White

He was young, about my age, and very tall. His long brown hair was pulled into a ponytail. His jeans and untucked sleeveless work shirt were stained with the soil in which the object he was holding was likely born.

“Do you see it?” he asked.

I did not.

He held it a little higher, closer to the flickering florescent light, and turned it slightly in hopes the change in angle would help me see what he saw.

I leaned in, squinted and called on my imagination for help.

“Doesn’t it look just like Mick Jagger?” he asked excitedly.

It did not. It looked like an oddly-shaped bell pepper, because that is what it was.

The pepper was short and squatty, with a large indentation on one

side. Turned, as it was now, to display its profile, I guess one could envision the indentation as a mouth and the areas immediate above and below as a nose and a chin. If I had to give that vegetable a face, and name that face, I might have guessed Winston Churchill or maybe Alfred Hitchcock. Mick Jagger? No way.

But I didn’t want to argue. “We’ll see what other people think,” I said. He looked relieved.

I raised the camera that had been dangling from a strap around my neck and snapped a photo as he held the rock star bell pepper close to his cheek like a warm puppy.

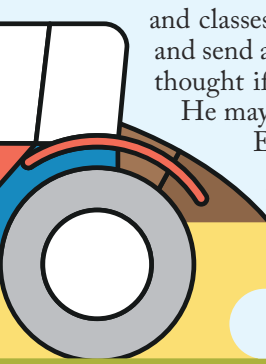
It was my first newspaper job, at a little community weekly start-up that would not survive long enough to celebrate its first birthday. And, unbeknownst to me, I had just taken the first of what would be many “weird veggie” photos. Those photos would be part of my summers for decades to come.

Our little paper had only been in business for two weeks and we



did not get many visitors to our tiny office. Most of those who dropped by, like the proud owner of the Mick Jagger bell pepper, had been politely turned away from the larger daily newspaper down the street. Ever since that newspaper had won some major awards for investigative reporting, it seemed its staff did not have much time to devote to the little happenings in their own backyard.

That, the publisher of our ill-fated little weekly believed, would be our ticket to success. We would cater to the people that the “big” paper no longer had time for. Been brushed off by the people down the street? Come to us! Send us your tired, your poor, your clubs and classes, your huddled radishes yearning to breathe free. Oh, and send a few advertisers our way, too. Our optimistic publisher thought if enough local people liked us, advertisers might also. He may have had it backwards.



Either way, the young man with the Mick Jagger bell pepper, who could best be described as a hippie farmer, received a warm welcome, even though I suspect was growing more than bell peppers on his little piece of earth. I also suspect his acreage didn't amount to much; real farmers don't wear sandals. That was fine; he and his pepper were given a prominent place in the next edition. The words under the photo explained that the grower thought the pepper looked like Jagger and asked for the opinions of others. We received no feedback.

As the summer progressed, we began to attract more traditional growers and I started looking forward to their visits. Most were extremely nice people. Whoever came up with the expression “down to earth” had farmers and gardeners in mind. They would only seek publicity if they thought what they grew was the biggest, the best, or the strangest-looking thing they had ever encountered in the garden. When I later moved on to a larger newspaper, the weird fruits and vegetables followed.

There were carrots with outgrowths flashing “thumbs up” signs, strawberries that looked like butterflies, an abundance of squash that looked like ducks, red onions that, when cut in half, displayed the spitting image of Edvard Munch's “The Scream.” Don't even get me started on the potatoes. Many, especially the watermelons, were

just big, real big. All were ready for their close-up and I was happy to oblige.

I never felt I had violated journalistic ethics if I accepted a small gift of produce from someone whose weird veggie I had photographed. I had asked for nothing in return. There was no quid pro quo, your honor.

Yes, I may or may not have mentioned that I love homegrown tomatoes. And, yes, I might have said that I do not have a garden and looked unusually sad when saying so, if I said it.

The way I see it, by early July many producers are actively seeking consumers. They have more fruits and vegetables than they know what to do with.

Backyard gardeners who long for fresh tomatoes during winter, when the ones in the store taste like sawdust, put enough plants in the ground come spring to provide for their immediate family, a few more for canning and yet a few more to share with friends and neighbors. They forget from year to year that their friends and neighbors have done the same thing.

By Independence Day, they are just trying to get rid of the darned things. Grocery bags full of tomatoes show up in office break rooms throughout East Texas with anonymous Post-It notes saying, “Help yourself!” Paper sacks of tomatoes show up on porches, delivered before dawn from a car that had coasted up to the house in neutral with its headlights turned off.

So, your honor, is it so terrible to deliver a small bag of produce to the kind lady who took the photo of your weird veggie, but did not have a garden because, as she may or may not have explained, she has no talent for growing things? I think not.

I can't even keep the things that others have planted alive. The previous owner of the place in which I now reside spent a small fortune on various plants and flowers. They were thriving when I moved in. A few weeks later, it was as if each plant, one by one, realized the place was under new management. One would look around and see what was happening to its fellow plants and decide to end it then and there.

Even that little start-up weekly newspaper that I tried my best to help cultivate died. One thing we did succeed in growing was the larger daily newspaper down the street. Once we started getting a little traction, the “big” paper began paying attention to the small things in their own backyard. We had stirred the soil and they flourished. They even started running weird veggie photos. ■



GRANDPARENTS KNOW EVERYTHING

they will teach if you will listen...

*“Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days, sometimes it feels like this world's gone crazy.
And Grandpa, take me back to yesterday, when the line between right and wrong didn't seem so hazy.”*
~ from the song, Grandpa (Tell Me Bout The Good Old Days). Lyrics by Jamie O'Hara.

Story by Mollie LaSalle Photos by Chris Edwards

Reader's Digest published a series of articles entitled "The Most Unforgettable Character I Have Ever Met" spanning 1939-1967. I remember enjoying these stories from the time that I was old enough to read (thankfully, my mama saved every issue of the magazine). This is my take on the most unforgettable character I have ever met.

I first met Jeremy Reagan around 2005 or 2006 in Nacogdoches. He was matriculating at Stephen F. Austin State University at the time. I was in Nacogdoches to hear my son play some tunes (I don't remember the location, but it was probably a coffee house or a popular restaurant). Jeremy was there, guitar and all, and I was instantly taken with the way they combined their talents so seamlessly. I had the opportunity to hear Jeremy sing and play those instruments (guitar and banjo) a handful more times after that, and I always had a great time.

My son has been quoted as saying, "It was in a coffeehouse on campus where I first heard a blind folk singer/songwriter named Jeremy Reagan. Reagan's melodic phrasing and gentle stage presence was enough to reel me in, but it was hearing him play Townes Van Zandt's version of the Rolling Stones' classic "Dead Flowers" that piqued my ears and interest. I looked him up in the campus phone directory and cold-called him to see if he wanted to get together, pick guitars, drink a few beers. He graciously accepted." It is a friendship that still stands, almost 15 years later.

Jeremy is a native of Lubbock and grew up in Monahans. Visually impaired at birth, he is blind in the left eye, with limited vision in the right. When he was 14, he moved to Austin to attend the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, graduating in 2002. Then he was off to Houston to attend San Jacinto North College. In 2005, he landed in Nacogdoches and SFASU, where he got a bachelors degree in history, with a minor in sociology in 2010. He spent about eight years in Germany before moving back to Texas in 2019, settling in Crosby with his aunt and uncle.

Hopefully, he will stay for a while.

Jeremy shared with me stories and recollections of growing up under the watchful eye of his grandpa, I.B. Cutbirth. I.B. was what he was called by everyone; his full name was Illie Benjamin. I.B. was born in 1912 in Hamlin, Texas, and grew up with strong work ethics and commitment to family. He was a self-taught and self-made man. Jeremy mentioned casually that "my grandpa was an entrepreneur, always looking for ways to make money." He also added that he is related to Daniel Boone. Sure enough, upon looking up his ancestors, Jeremy's great-great grandfather was named Daniel Boone Cutbirth. Jeremy shared with me that he doesn't have many recollections about his great-grandmother Selena, but he did say that she was a self-taught piano player, and was one of those ladies in the early 20th century who chewed tobacco and spit it in a spittoon.

The Dust Bowl Days of the Great Depression brought I.B. no chance for a higher education, and sharecropping was all he knew, as was his parents before him. They picked cotton and fruit, earning as much as \$1.00 to \$1.25 a day. I.B. joined the Army in 1942, where he saw action in the Pacific. He married Trixie Colvin in 1946 and they moved to Monahans. He was a plant operator for 27 years, and after retiring, he raised fishing worms and shipped them all over Texas. He opened a small engine repair shop and could fix just about anything. His love of God was unquestioned. Jeremy explained that while his grandmother was a deeply devout member of the church, his grandpa didn't go a lot, but was a lifelong member.

So, as for the title of this story, grandparents know everything, they will teach if you will listen. Jeremy said, "I listened more than I looked. Your ears become your eyes. In his way grandpa was trying to get me to be as independent as possible, traits I still work on today. He put me to work around the farm, mindful of my limitations; I was treated no differently, and he was willing to see the value of letting me be just like other kids." His grandpa's



guidance and steady hand carried Jeremy through his younger years, and helped to shape him into the adult he is today. I.B.'s main musical influence was Woody Guthrie, the talented singer/songwriter of the dust bowl days. I.B. had a knack for keeping his grandson entertained, singing Guthrie's songs, and throwing in some his own that he would make up on the spot. I.B. had a way with words and an ear for music, singing about anything or nothing at the same time. Jeremy recalled story after story about his grandpa. He told me that I.B. "could recite the alphabet backwards, it was the funniest thing." He recalled asking him around 1995 who his favorite president was; I.B.

answered "FDR." "But grandpa, FDR has been dead for 50 years" to which I.B. replied "we haven't had any good ones lately." Jeremy laughingly shared the story of a "man with compacted bowels, around the year 1915 or 1920. The doctors couldn't help him, so he told them to stand me up in my coffin for three days so I can rise up from the dead and meet Jesus."

In 2006, Jeremy wrote a song titled To My Grandparents. Some of the lyrics include "We all just sit there, turn them away, without any pay or time to stay. Isn't it funny that we don't show them the time of day and give us their whole hearts without a moment's hesitation or reparation?"

Jeremy's grandmother Trixie passed away in 1995, followed by his grandpa I.B. in 2002 at the age of 90. His obituary included this tribute: His love of family and God was unquestioned. Those who grew up with covered wagons are few in today's world. Mr. I.B. Cutbirth will be greatly missed by family and friends.

Without a doubt, his grandpa is Jeremy's main musical influence. "Folk music was a way of life during the depression, I like the idea that you didn't have to be a virtuoso guitar player, he said. My grandpa wasn't trying to impress anyone, he was just sharing what he learned. He treated everyone the same, regardless of race or ethnicity. My love of all things music started with my him." Woody Guthrie comes a close second, along with Townes Van Zandt. Jeremy shared that "Townes was a lot like my grandpa in that he had that magnetic quality that would draw you in as a listener....and how the song was going to play itself out. One of the first songs I wrote was called San Antone Freight about my grandpa's trip in 1928 looking for work. I recorded it in a friend's apartment in Nacogdoches."

I hadn't seen Jeremy in over 10 years when my son mentioned that Jeremy was coming to Woodville for one of his shows at a local restaurant. Jeremy called for an Uber and soon arrived at the restaurant. Quickly making his way in unfamiliar surroundings, he settled in for a night of music and good times. It was getting close to 11 pm when Jeremy was persuaded to play an impromptu set. Borrowing an unfamiliar guitar, he kept the rowdy crowd rocking for the better part of an hour. The tips flew at his feet, and mic stand, and when he was finished, the crowd demanded an encore, to which Jeremy happily obliged. Good times, great memories.

On his stage presence, Jeremy simply said "Since I am

visually impaired, I never think about the audience; it's almost like I could be singing at my house by myself. I want people to focus on the song, not the singer. I want the music and the song be what people remember, not me; each song is like its own person." From coffee shops to bars, Jeremy has a certain something that always seems to put everybody at ease. He shared with me that he is "working on an album, tentatively titled Keep Trying. I haven't plotted out how many songs yet, but I've written two or three of the songs, and will include some hymns that I like; basically it's a mixture of sacred and secular music, of course I will include a mixture of banjo, fiddle and guitar."

Jeremy's musical tastes these days run the gamut, from Woody Guthrie to Kacey Musgraves. He also likes Norah Brown, Tyler Childers, Sturgill Simpson and Country Willie Edwards. Mississippi John Hurt, Roger Miller, banjo player Clifton Hicks and Roy Acuff are also favorites. Jeremy mentioned his love of sea shanties, which are trending now on Tic Toc and You Tube, and basically any artists that are either "dead or not well known." He introduced me to Wild Granny Faye, a You Tube artist who had me rolling with laughter. Her best-known tunes include "Burn the Outhouse Down" and "Hang on to Your Bloomers."

When the interview with Jeremy was drawing to a close, I found myself wanting to listen to his stories about his grandpa all over again. If I had asked Jeremy who is the most unforgettable character he's ever met, I am 100% positive I would know the answer. ■

"Cause when it comes down to zero, there's nothing more than this life could ever give. And I know I'll never find another hero, not another one like him"

~from the song Hero...lyrics by Sturgill Simpson





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SHOP EAST TEXAS

♪ ♪ **Summertime, summertime, sum sum summertime, sumerti-i-i-ime** ♪ ♪

Can't you just hear it? No complaints about the heat...we have had so much wetness, sickness, social separation...but not anymore! Summertime 2021 is here and it makes me want to swim, and vacation, and shop. So let's go shopping in East Texas, ya'll. ~ Kelli Barnes



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The Very Thing





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219 W. Bluff St. | Woodville
409-331-6715
pappyshobbyshop.com

Gokey's Old Town Emporium and Creamery
1106 State Hwy. Loop 393 | Goodrich
936-365-2247

The Very Thing
1401 S. John Redditt Drive | Lufkin
936-632-2202
theverythinglufkin.com

Doretta's Lair Community Art Studio
202 S. Magnolia St. | Woodville
409-291-0765



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CHRISTMAS TREE ART
\$39.99
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BAYLOR TRAY \$20
BAYLOR PITCHER \$24
The Very Thing

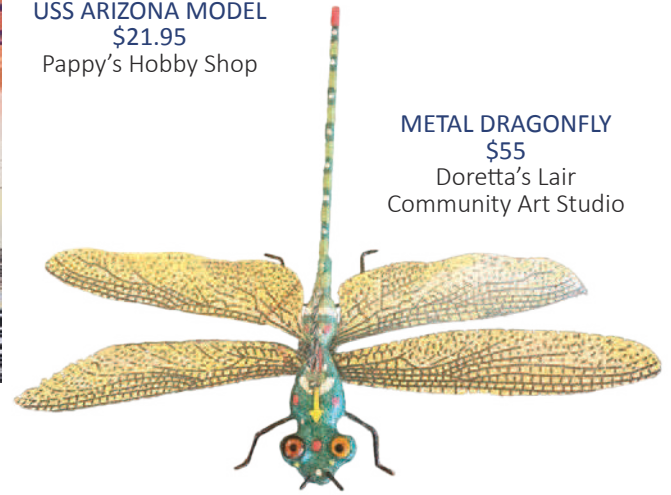




SHOP EAST TEXAS



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\$21.95
Pappy's Hobby Shop



METAL DRAGONFLY
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Community Art Studio



JON HART POD POUCH
\$15
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CIRCLE E CANDLE
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Gokey's Old Town
Emporium and Creamery



COW ACRYLIC
\$50
Doretta's Lair
Community Art Studio



A&M GOBBLETS
SET OF 4
\$28
The Very Thing

SATURN FLYING
MODEL ROCKET
\$94.99
Pappy's Hobby Shop



WOODEN 1950'S CANISTER SET
\$50
Gokey's Old Town Emporium and Creamery

CALFENDA R

JULY

Huntsville

Gene Watson at the Huntsville Community Theater
JULY 2

Waxahachie

Downtown Farmer's Market
JULY 3, 10, 17, 24, & 31

Santa Fe

BBQ Cook-off and Wagon Parade
JULY 3

Baytown

Independence Day Celebration/Bicentennial Park
JULY 3-4

Montgomery

Montgomery Freedom Fest 2021/Community Center
JULY 3

Onalaska

45th Annual Fireworks Extravaganza
10th Annual Kids Fishing Derby/Waterfront Lodge and Marina
JULY 4

Canton

Tailwind Regional Balloon Fest
JULY 9-10

Spring

Ray Wylie Hubbard at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
JULY 9

Beaumont

Delbert McClinton at the Jefferson Theater
JULY 9

Mineola

Annual Volunteer Fireman's Rodeo
JULY 9-11

Galveston

Rev. Horton Heat at the Old Quarter Acoustic Café
JULY 10

Crystal Beach

6th Annual Beach Bash/Port Bolivar
JULY 10

Henderson

East Texas Soul, Blues & Zydeco Festival
JULY 10-11

Spring

Ronnie Milsap at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
JULY 11

Mt. Enterprise

American Hero Music Festival
JULY 16-17

Spring

Sara Evans at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
JULY 16

Galveston

Ray Wylie Hubbard at the Old Quarter Acoustic Café
JULY 17

The Woodlands

18th Annual YMCA Kids Triathlon
JULY 17

Houston

World Series of Dog Shows/NRG Stadium
JULY 21-25

Hawkins

Ray Wylie Hubbard at Red Rooster Ice House
JULY 24

Beaumont

Babe Zaharias Open/Beaumont Country Club
JULY 27

Nacogdoches

East Texas Junior Championship/Woodlands Hills Golf Club
JULY 27

Tomball

Tomball Cars and Crafts Extravaganza
JULY 31

Houston

Bridal Extravaganza Show/GR Brown Convention Center
JULY 31-AUGUST 1

Longview

Longview Kennel Club AKC Dog Show/Cobb Convention Center
JULY 31-AUGUST 1

Houston

Houston Shakespeare Festival/Miller Outdoor Theater
JULY 30-AUGUST 7

Mansfield

Texas Fusion Fest/Downtown
JULY 31

Liberty

Liberty Opry Country Oldies Show
JULY 31

AUGUST

Houston

The Fabulously Funny Comedy Festival/NRG Arena
AUGUST 2

Corsicana

Ben and Noel Haggard at the Palace Theater
AUGUST 5

Spring

Lorrie Morgan at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
AUGUST 6

Houston

Hunters Extravaganza/NRG Center
AUGUST 6-8

Lufkin

Lufkin Glow Show/Kit McConnico Park
AUGUST 7

Henderson

166th Annual Sacred Harp Singing Competition
AUGUST 7-8

Carthage

John Ritter Tribute Showcase
Tx Country Music Hall of Fame Show
AUGUST 12-15

Sugarland

John Legend at Smart Financial Theater
AUGUST 12

Port Arthur

Elite Redfish Series Tournament/Pleasure Island
AUGUST 13-14

Huntsville

The Texas Tenors/Huntsville Community Theater
AUGUST 13

The Woodlands

Matchbox Twenty and The Black Crows at CW Mitchell Pavilion
AUGUST 13

Jacksonville

Cherokee Ranch Golf Club Luau Tournament
AUGUST 13-15

Beaumont

Car Show! Largest in Southeast Texas/Classic Southeast Texas
AUGUST 14

Mabank

Dickeys BBQ Pit Classic Car Cruise Inn
AUGUST 14

Stafford

Allan Parsons Live Project/Stafford Theater
AUGUST 14

Corsicana

Sons of Bocephus: A Tribute to Hank Jr./Palace Theater
AUGUST 14

Galveston

Texas Tenors at the Grand 1894 Opera House
AUGUST 14

Longview

Longview Trade Days/Gregg County Fairgrounds
AUGUST 14-15

Houston

Bret Michaels/Def Leppard at Minute Maid Park
AUGUST 17

Spring

Radney Foster at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
AUGUST 19

Port Arthur

Sabine Causeway 5K/Walter Umphrey State Park
AUGUST 20

Tyler

Tyler Coin Show/Harvey Hall Convention Center
AUGUST 20-21

Colmesneil

Summer Back to School Rally/Victory Camp Colmesneil
AUGUST 21

The Woodlands

Rod Stewart at CW Mitchell Pavilion
AUGUST 21

Galveston

34th Annual AIA Sandcastle Competition
AUGUST 21

Spring

The Gatlin Brothers at Dosey Doe/The Big Barn
AUGUST 22

Galveston

Ray Wylie Hubbard at the Old Quarter
AUGUST 23

Sugar Land

Marc Anthony at Smart Financial Center
AUGUST 28-29

Sugar Land

Goo Goo Dolls at Smart Financial Center
AUGUST 31

CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

Grapeland

45th Annual Labor Day Bluegrass Festival/Salmon Lake Park
SEPTEMBER 2-5

Greenville

21st Annual Greenville Swap Meet/Hunt County Fairgrounds
SEPTEMBER 2-4

Lufkin

Jeepin for Jesus Jam Fest 2021/Expo Center
Jam Fest-Mission 22/Ellen Trout Zoo
SEPTEMBER 4

Waxahachie

Waxahachie Gun Show/Civic Center
SEPTEMBER 4

Lufkin

Marty Stuart and his Fabulous Superlatives/
Temple Theater
SEPTEMBER 4

Alvin

2021 Alvin Whiskey Festival/Morgan Falls Event Center
SEPTEMBER 5

Sugar Land

Taste of the Carribean Festival/Crown Festival Park
SEPTEMBER 5

Houston

The O'Jays at the Arena Theater
SEPTEMBER 6

Beaumont

Beaumont Peddler Show/Ford Park
SEPTEMBER 10-12

Anahuac

2021 Texas Gator Fest
SEPTEMBER 10-12

Longview

Longview County Fair & Expo
SEPTEMBER 10-18

Lufkin

The Man From Snowy River/Pines Theater
SEPTEMBER 11

Port Arthur

Sabine Showdown Fishing Tournament/Lamar State College
SEPTEMBER 11

Houston

Enrique Iglesias & Ricky Martin/Toyota Center
SEPTEMBER 11

Lufkin

Texas State Forest Festival Kick-off Parade
SEPTEMBER 13

Sugar Land

Alicia Keys at Smart Financial Center
SEPTEMBER 14-15

The Woodlands

Dave Matthews Band/C W Mitchell Pavilion
SEPTEMBER 17

Tomball

2021 Lone Star Blues Festival/Tomball VFW
SEPTEMBER 17

Commerce

36th Annual Bois de Arc Bash
SEPTEMBER 17, 24 & 25

Montgomery

2021 Montgomery Wine Festival
SEPTEMBER 18

Beaumont

Cash Cow Contest/Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum
SEPTEMBER 18

Gladewater

2021 Gladewater Arts & Crafts Festival/Downtown
SEPTEMBER 18

Carthage

2021 Potlatch Reunion
SEPTEMBER 18

Greenville

Cotton Patch Challenge Bicycle Rally
SEPTEMBER 18

Longview

Rotary Club of Longview Centennial (+)1 Celebration
SEPTEMBER 18

Bullard

21st Annual Red, White & Blue Festival
SEPTEMBER 18

Houston

Tanya Tucker at the Heights Theater
SEPTEMBER 19

Nacogdoches

Casey Donahew Band/Banita Creek Hall
SEPTEMBER 20

Lufkin

Hearts for Hope-The Mosaic Center/Civic Center
SEPTEMBER 21

Lufkin

Rodney Marsalis at the Pines Theater
SEPTEMBER 23

Tyler

East Texas State Fair
SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 3

Humble

Taste of the Town-Lake Houston
SEPTEMBER 23

Mineola

Iron Horse Fest and 5K Fun Run
SEPTEMBER 24-25

The Woodlands

Brooks and Dunn at C W Mitchell Pavilion
SEPTEMBER 24

Houston

7th Annual Creole Heritage Festival/Midtown Park
SEPTEMBER 25

Jacksonville

Nicky Wheeler Memorial Bull Bash Rodeo
SEPTEMBER 26

The Woodlands

Hall & Oates at C W Mitchell Pavilion
SEPTEMBER 26

Nacogdoches

2021 Gun and Knife Show/ Nacogdoches County
Expo Center
SEPTEMBER 26-27

Tomball

Ray Wylie Hubbard at Main Street Crossing
SEPTEMBER 26-27

The Woodlands

Maroon 5 at C W Mitchell Pavilion
SEPTEMBER 28

Winnie

Texas Rice Festival
SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 2

OCTOBER

Montgomery

Montgomery County Quilt Walk/Community
Center
OCTOBER 1-2

Humble

Pollinator Festival/Mercer Botanic Gardens
OCTOBER 1-2

Huntington

2021 Catfish Festival
OCTOBER 2

Huntsville

2021 Fair on the Square
2021 Wine Knot
OCTOBER 2

League City

Galveston County Fall Fest & BBQ Cook-off
OCTOBER 2

Houston

The Temptations & The Four Tops at the Arena
Theater
OCTOBER 3

Houston

Texas Wine and Art Fair/G R Brown Convention
Center
OCTOBER 3

Center

East Texas Poultry Festival
OCTOBER 7-9

Winnie

Larry's Old Time Trade Days
OCTOBER 8-10

Conroe

Cajun Catfish Festival/Heritage Place
OCTOBER 8-10

Grapeland

Crockett-Mission Tejas Trail Run
OCTOBER 8-9

Mineola

League of Arts Annual Quilt Show
OCTOBER 8-9

Canton

Canton Main Street Festival
OCTOBER 9

Edom

Edom Arts Festival 2021
OCTOBER 9

Sulphur Springs

Indian Summer Festival
OCTOBER 9

Crystal Beach

CT's Texas Slam And Fun Fest
OCTOBER 9

CALFNDAR

Houston

Bayou City Arts Festival
OCTOBER 9-10

Tomball

Zomball in Tomball/Railroad Depot
OCTOBER 9

Houston

Wings over Houston Airshow/Ellington Field
OCTOBER 9-10

Houston

Amy Grant at the Arena Theater
OCTOBER 10

Tyler

Texas Rose Festival
OCTOBER 13-17

Gilmer

2021 Jeep Rodeo/Barnwell Mountain Rec Area
OCTOBER 14

Jefferson

Texas Sounds International Country Music Awards
OCTOBER 14-17

Rusk

27th Annual Rusk County PRCA Rodeo
OCTOBER 15-16

Jasper

2021 Butterfly Festival
OCTOBER 16

Mt. Pleasant

Uncorked Food and Wine Festival
OCTOBER 16

Livingston

Trade Days at Pedigo Park
OCTOBER 16-17

Coldspring

Wolfcreek Car, Truck and Bike Show 2021
OCTOBER 16-17

Sugarland

Alice Cooper at Smart Financial Center
OCTOBER 18

Gilmer

84th Annual East Texas Yamboree
OCTOBER 20-23

The Woodlands

The Doobie Brothers/C W Mitchell Pavilion
OCTOBER 21

Houston

International Quilt Market 2021/G R Brown Conv. Center
OCTOBER 21-25

Palestine

36th Annual Cars of Palestine Car Show
OCTOBER 23

Waxahachie

TCR Festival/Celebrating 50 years of Texas Country Reporter
OCTOBER 23

Gilmer

The Fabulous Blackwell Quartet/Gilmer Civic Center
OCTOBER 23

Sulphur Springs

World Championship Hopkins County Stew Festival
OCTOBER 23

Colmesneil

Harvest Festival and Pumpkin Patch/Victory Camp Colmesneil
OCTOBER 23

Spring

Los Lobos at Dosey Doe-The Big Barn
OCTOBER 24

Jasper

Little Anglers Big Bass Showdown/Lake Sam Rayburn
OCTOBER 24

Tyler

Lone Star Gun and Knife Show/Harvey Hall Conv. Center
OCTOBER 24

Longview

Harvest Festival and Livestock Show
OCTOBER 27-30

Rusk

Scare on the Square 2021
OCTOBER 29

Mt. Pleasant

Everything Texas Ranch Run
OCTOBER 30

Palestine

Wiggy Thump Festival 2021
OCTOBER 30

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