



FIXIN' TO

A TEXAN MISCELLANY

PREFACE

THROUGH EXILE IN OKLAHOMA while I study graphic design at the University of Tulsa, I have seen my own Texas Pride take root and grow to its fullest strength. While away, I have heard so many stereotypes: I have been asked about my stetson, my horse, and my pick-up; I have been called out to justify my forceful usage of the word “y’all;” I have explained countless times that I live in a real city. But I know people who ride horses, regularly greet each other saying “Howdy,” and live on ranches more beautiful than any cinematic representation. Both of these sides of Texas call me home as I cross the Red River. This book is my tribute to the Texan in us all, written by those who understand the spirit to which I refer, and written for the benefit of those who don’t yet understand the love of Texas. But I’m FIXIN’ To show you.

FIXIN' TO



PREPOSITION:

On the verge or point of action; soon to pass.
About to. Usually followed by an infinitive.

“WE’RE FIXIN’ TO HEAD OUT.”

WHEN LIVESTOCK FIRST encountered barbed wire, it was usually a painful experience. These injuries provided sufficient reason for the public to protest its use. Religious groups called it “the work of the devil,” or “The Devil’s Rope” and demanded its removal. Free range grazers became alarmed that the new economical barrier would mean the end of their livelihood. Trail Drivers were concerned that their herds would be blocked from the Kansas markets by settler fences. Landowners built fences to protect their crops and livestock, and those who were opposed to fencing started fighting to keep their independence. Violence ensued and laws passed making wire cutting a serious crime. After many deaths and uncountable financial losses, the Fence Cutter Wars ended. A demonstration in the Military Plaza in San Antonio by John Gates proved beyond a doubt that barbed wire was durable and successful for controlling livestock. With his expertise in salesmanship, he eventually became the largest stockholder in the American Steel & Wire Company and a legend in barbed wire history. The last opposition fell when the large ranches in Texas began fencing their boundaries and cross fencing within. Among the first to fence were The Frying Pan Ranch, The XIT Ranch, and the JA Ranch, all located in the Texas Panhandle.

MY SON WANTED TO SHOOT HIS first deer last season. What a Rite of Passage for a boy! Our first several trips were marked with failure; either we saw no targets, or they were evasive. My business partner has a ranch down near the border that we traveled to for a final attempt. He dropped me in the first deer blind and went a half mile deeper into the ranch with my son to get the “Big One.” I got comfortable and admired the scenery. Only moments passed before I heard the sharp report of a rifle over the next rise. Knowing that hunting accidents are not uncommon among hunters, especially among neophyte hunters with large rifles, my heart stopped. Oh my GOD, I thought, my son shot my partner getting into the stand! Silence for about five minutes... Then, through the brush, came the sound of footsteps. I was invited to see my son’s magnificent ten-point buck. I was in total thanksgiving to GOD that my partner had been spared, a feeling only overshadowed by the bright, proud smile of a boy inspecting his first buck. The Big One.

TWO YEARS AGO, MY seven year-old daughter told me it was her year! Confused, I asked, “your year for what?” She said it was her year to shoot a deer. I was thrilled! I told her we needed to get her a gun to practice shooting before she could hunt. The next day, I returned home with a pink .22 long rifle. It was the perfect gun to start the many sharp-shooting adventures to follow. This little Texas girl’s passion for the outdoors has created many family memories. She shot her first deer that year. The tradition is now being passed to my four year-old daughter who took her first shot with that same pink rifle when she was only three and a half.

WE SIGHTED A BUCK about 180 yards away while hunting in South Texas but could not approach for lack of cover. I could only see the trophy when he raised his head from grazing. I braced my rifle and whistled. He raised his head. I fired. He fell. We checked the buck and could find no blood or wounds. It was a head shot. Through both ear holes!

Y'ALL



PRONOUN:

The informal second person plural as a contraction of “you all.” May be expanded to include larger groups when preceded with “all” and can be further contracted with common verbs as with universal pronouns such as “y’all’re” or “y’all’ll.”

“T’LL SEE Y’ALL LATER.”

THE ORIGINAL VON ROSENBERG ENTERED “Tejas” (as it was still known) in 1820 from New Orleans as part of an expeditionary force. When they arrived at Goliad, his group was confronted by a Mexican military force. A five day skirmish ensued during which neither of the two sides experienced injury. After a celebratory banquet to mend differences, most of my ancestor's military detachment joined the Mexican army. He was later executed by firing squad for supporting Maximilian.

SOME MEN WERE CLEARING GROUND, surveying, and laying out plans on the lot at the corner of Texas Avenue and Fannin Street one day when a cattleman on horseback rode along Texas Avenue—herding before him his cattle. He paused and watched. “What are you doing?” he finally asked. They explained that they were preparing to build a church. The cattleman took his lariat from his saddle, roped a steer, pulled it in, and handed the rope to one of the churchmen. “Here,” he said. “Let me give you the first contribution toward your church.”

This story has been handed down since the beginning of Christ Church. It came into this century when it was told to a lifelong Christ Church member and historian. There is reason to believe it is true, but there is no record to show which church building was being laid out. The first church wasn’t started until 1845, quite some time after this legendary exchange. Either way, to this day, a steer is part of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas’s seal.

AS WE CONVENED FROM ALL PARTS of America, the representatives of our global company gathered at the bar of our Dallas hotel. I sat at a small table enjoying a Shiner with three compadres. A preppy peer from the New Jersey area approached with his finger extended toward the registration desk. He was laughing with a condescending jeer, poking fun of a true Texas cowboy procuring a room. The Yankee spoke ill of the cowpoke’s boots, of which the tops were proudly displayed, his trousers tucked inside. Without a glance or hesitation, and with uncanny unison, the four Texas pardes proudly lifted a leg and squarely atop the table dropped four different examples of manly footwear. Without prior thought, and as a matter of regular daily life, we four men from Texas had worn our boots as we always do. When the penny loafer looser from New Jersey took his jab, we acted instinctively in a synchronized and truly heartfelt Texas way. The look on the Yankee’s face was something between humble horror and deep apology.

FOUL UP



VERB:

To complicate, impede, disrupt, or cause confusion or disorder.

NOUN:

A mix-up, mistake, or complication.

**“HE FOULED UP SO BAD HIS
FOLKS MIGHT JUST KILL ‘EM.”**

MRS. CRESTMAN AND HER HUSBAND, a neurosurgeon, live out near Hutto. They used to be out more into the country than they are now with the growth of the city. Anyway, she’s famous for scaring the crap out of the good doctor: One night, she got out of bed and took her shotgun after some varmint that was eating her shrubbery or burrowing under the house or something equally reproachful. She went outside in her nightgown and crawled around the house through the bushes to right up under the bedroom window looking for whatever it was, and fired a 12-gauge at it, blasting a hole in a sprinkler line and nearly causing poor Marvin a heart attack.

THIRTY-NINE YEARS AGO LAST month, I was introduced to the great state of Texas, by luck rather than choice. I had just completed an MBA at Ohio University in May 1970 and having been commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Air Force the prior year, I was assigned to active duty at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. Having driven from Ohio to Wichita Falls in a car without air conditioning, I was immediately struck by the flat landscape and heat of the Lone Star State. Upon arrival at Sheppard Air Force Base, I was assigned a room in the World War II vintage Bachelor Officer's Quarters. This was a two-story wooden structure that resembled something I envisioned from the dust bowl days portrayed in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Within hours of unpacking my car and moving into my new home, I was startled by a high-pitched siren unlike anything I had ever heard growing up in the Ohio Valley. I rushed

outside to find my fellow officers running to a shelter for cover from a possible tornado. Needless to say, I was in a state of shock and wondered just what I had gotten myself into. Following three months of training and living in this hot, flat hell called Texas, my luck changed and as they say "...the rest is history."

Fortunately for me, following my indoctrination to Texas in Wichita Falls, I was assigned to permanent duty at Bergstrom Air Force Base in Austin. I still remember driving into to Austin for the first time at sunset and thinking how beautiful the Texas Hill Country was compared to what I had known to be Texas—Wichita Falls. Two years later, upon completion of my military obligation, I made a life changing decision to remain in Austin rather than returning to my roots in Ohio. Today, Ohio is a distant memory as I am proud to say that I am a Texan by choice, not birth. Fate is a funny thing!

TO A NON-TEXAN, THE LONE STAR means, among other things, opportunity. In the 1830's, when an economic depression hit the South, it was not uncommon to see abandoned houses from the Carolinas to Alabama with these letters painted on the door: "GTT", which stood for "Gone to Texas."

It was not just economic opportunity that attracted folks, but the chance to achieve a full measure of greatness, often without the constraints of the past. Texas has always represented freedom, including the freedom to rise to greatness. Consider Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin, both natives of Virginia, and William B. Travis and James B. Bonham, South Carolinians both, all whose destiny and fame were fulfilled in Texas. And in the 20th century, we might include George H. W. Bush, born in Massachusetts. Or Maurice Benitez, one of two West Point graduates to become a bishop in the Episcopal Church. Both could have put "GTT" on their doors, just as both could put "WTTFG"—"Went to Texas, Found Greatness". Texas gives people the freedom to let that happen.

No wonder the Lone Star shines so bright.

WHEN I MOVED HERE FROM Missouri, I had no idea what to expect. I'd always sworn to myself that I would never live in Texas. I chose to move here for school, but I was still quite apprehensive when I arrived. But I must admit, these three years have changed me. Texas really is its own nation. I never expected to experience such pride for a state that I was not born in.

It wasn't until I got to experience the culture around the Great State that I became a convert. There is nothing like living in Central Texas. From Austin, I can drive an hour to jet ski on any one of four major lakes but be back in the heart of the city for dinner. Another short drive down the road and I can get back to the ranch life that I love and miss from the days of my childhood.

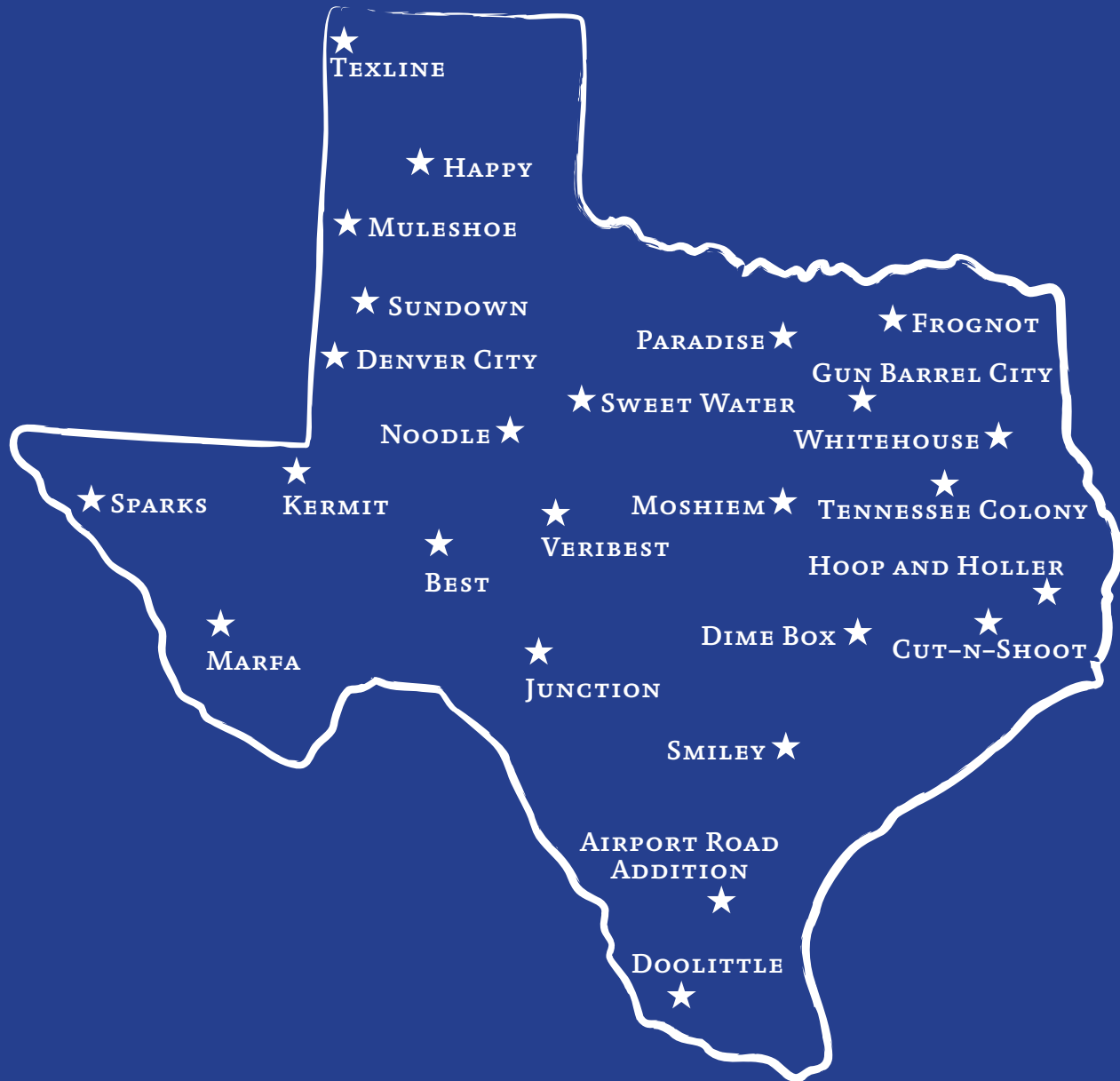
I never understood the obsession about this place until I lived here. Football, the idea of the "Great State," and the proper usage of "y'all" just don't make sense until you get here. I guess looking in on it, you can't understand it and speaking out from it, you just can't explain it.

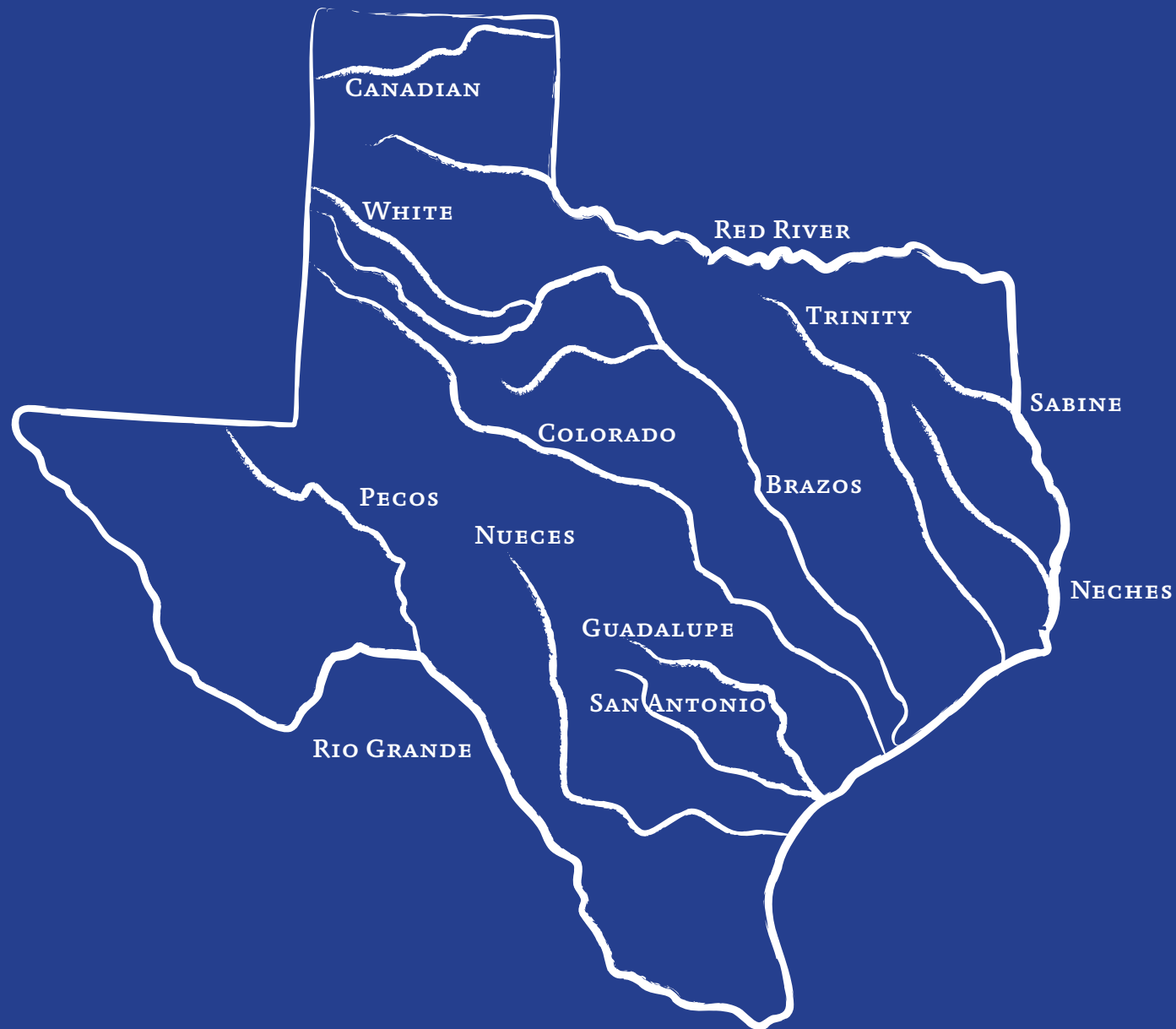
TOWNS



RIVERS







TEXANS ARE AN ETHNO-centric bunch and rightfully so. We are proud of so many things in our Great State. Our roaches are bigger than yours.

SPEAKING OF INSECTS, the roaches of Houston, Texas take the cake! The day my sister got married, they were out celebrating, too. The courtyard had them in layers! Each time we went outside, there was this crunch, crunch, crunch. As you know, I wear prize-winning shoes and did not like this.

ONE NIGHT, I WENT to my bathroom and saw a gigantic cockroach crawl out of the sink drain! I ran to get my brother so that he could kill it; however, when he arrived, it crawled into a small crack in the cabinet. Less than two minutes later, another roach began to crawl out of my drain but decided to crawl back in. I turned on the water to coax the roach out, but then yet another roach came out of the other part of the drain. Three in three minutes! From then on, I decided to protect myself at night. I now sleep with a towel stuffed under the door between my bedroom and the bathroom.

A NEW NEIGHBOR moved in a while back. He's Canadian. They don't know about big bugs. One morning, he went out to retrieve his paper from the bed of ivy it had landed in. What looked to be the roach from Hell crawled right up the sleeve of his robe! In a total panic, he tore off the robe and set to dancing to shake the beast off. Though we understood what had befallen him, we still often comment about our naked dancing Canadian neighbor and how those Yankees sure do things differently.

WE WERE ONCE INTRODUCED to a scorpion when it came up the drain of my mother's bathtub. This was when we had just moved to San Antonio. We don't live there anymore.

THE BIGGEST ROACHES outside the rainforest live in Houston—I used to drop a mixing bowl over 'em to trap them until my husband got home because they were tough old suckers and I couldn't ever kill 'em in one whack with a shoe. The last thing you ever wanna be is trapped in room with a mad, flyin' cockroach.

FETCH



VERB:

To arrive or stop, usually accidentally, in an unintended and often hilarious location.

NOUN:

A short distance.

“DOWN THE ROAD A FETCH.”
“HE FETCHED UP IN A DITCH.”

FREDERICKSBURG, BELIEVE IT OR not, hosts a shopping competition that benefits a charity in town every summer. Teams of shoppers dress up (there are prizes for most outrageous, best dressed, and the like) and hit the stores. Most merchants in the downtown area participate and give a portion of that day’s profits to the chosen charity. The team that spends the most money wins! (If I were you, I’d bet on some chick from Dallas.) But there is also a prize for the team that manages to make a purchase at the most stores within the designated time, which is usually the whole day. Can you imagine? Only in Texas!

OUT OF THE UNSTEADY CONDITIONS of Prohibition emerged Texas' most famous nightclub. Galveston Island became a smuggler's haven again, a precise century after the demise of the pirate Jean Laffite. Racketeers shipped high quality liquor from Canada to British Honduras, placed it on large freighters and sent it to "rum row," forty miles offshore from Galveston. Bootleggers with small, fast speedboats met the freighters outside United States waters, carried the liquor to the island city in small quantities, and then transported it, disguised as scrap, by rail as far north as Ohio. Gangsters competed for control of the operation, but after shootouts, murders, and jail terms, Rosario "Rose" and Sam Maceo surfaced as the underworld leaders in Galveston.

Although smuggling gave them their start, the Maceos were really interested in gambling, which remained illegal in Texas. They organized, distributed, and took over wagering on lotteries, slot machines, casino games, and horse racing on the island and nearby mainland.

In 1942, they transferred much of this activity to their Balinese Room, a remodeled nightspot at the end of a long pier that extended off the island's beach into the Gulf surf.

Since places with open gaming and drinking could be closed by injunction, the Maceos operated the Balinese Room on a loose membership basis as a private club. This was not much protection, so a guard at the front of the long pier screened patrons and warned of unwanted visitors. The Maceo organization usually received tips about gambling raids and stored away the illegal paraphernalia before getting caught but when the red lights flashed and bells rang a warning, it took only thirty-two seconds to clear a dice table but it took three minutes to walk the length of the pier. Supposedly, on one such raid, after the state officers clumped down the pier and burst into the dining area, the orchestra struck up "The Eyes of Texas" as the band leader announced, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, we give you in person, the Texas Rangers!"

WE WERE WATER skiing one afternoon. The boat turned hard to port. The very skilled skier turned harder. We met in the middle and he sat down on the bow.



OH, WHAT I LOVE about this wondrous place: Texas really has it all—beaches and tall mountains, dry deserts and swamps, huge rocky canyons and rolling green pastures, the fourth largest city in the Union and entire counties that claim more livestock than people.

IDO NOT UNDERSTAND why people in Maine and Virginia and the like get so self-righteous about their weather! I'll have you know Texas has four seasons too: Almost Summer, Summer, Still Summer, and Christmas.



KEEP AUSTIN WEIRD didn't really set in for me until Leslie Cochran, the homeless drag queen that repeatedly ran for mayor beginning in 2000 wound up in the hospital and dominated evening news and inspired candlelight vigils for a week.

I WAS VISITING WITH A history professor one day. Noticing the gargantuan stack of papers on his desk, I asked how he managed grading them all. He decided to demonstrate by picking up a sizable handful and forcefully throwing them out into the hallway. "The ones that go the farthest get the A's," he grinned.




I HAVE SEEN, WITH MY own eyes, a fish become roadkill after Houston flooded a few years ago. It was a large Gar too. And it was on the fly-over exit ramp off the highway.



GOT TO TEXAS BY picking it from a map. I was born and raised in Hawaii. Hadn't really traveled to the mainland too often. I heard Houston was dirty; Phoenix was hot. I thought about Albuquerque because it had a cool name, but that got voted down. I so wound up in Dallas, and seventeen years later, I'm still here.

THE VERY FIRST WORD from the surface of the moon was "Houston." "Houston, the Eagle has landed."

IN TALL COTTON



ADJECTIVE:

Wealthy, well off, successful.
(also “in high cotton”)

**“SINCE HE OPENED HIS SHOP,
HE’S BEEN IN TALL COTTON”**

WE DRIVE COURTEOUSLY IN THE Texas country. Road signs that in winter warn “ice on bridges” are usually folded down revealing “Drive Friendly.” We allow each other to pass, but when passing, “The Wave” is beyond obligatory. A simple gesture of thanks. A lazy right-handed wave below the rear-view mirror. Hardly any effort, but absolutely mandatory. It is customary to give a slight wave over the steering wheel while passing oncoming traffic, though this is optional. The Wave is not, or at least it shouldn’t be.

NOBODY KNOWS QUITE WHEN THE preacher's dog, a roguish Airedale of discriminating palate, gained access to the dining room, but approximately two hours before the guests were slated to arrive for a formal tea in appreciation for our senior Daughters of the King mentors, an irregularity in The Cake was discovered. It was missing a large "chomp-shaped" corner. A certain 6th grade resident junior Daughter (that would be me) wailed in dismay at the sad, crumbly sight, and the preacher's dog, with tell-tale frosting clinging to his muzzle, was formally banished to the yard for the remainder of his natural life. It was simply unthinkable—a dog-sampled cake at a formal tea! There would be no invitation extended to us to join the Junior League once this got out! And there would be no more receptions of the Daughters of the King at our house. (For which the preacher's wife, my mother, gave silent thanks, no doubt.) Back in those days, stores were not

open on Sundays, and it being a Sunday afternoon, we were left to our own devices to sculpt a reconstruction. Despite attempts to repair the damaged corner using a hastily prepared cake mix baked and cut to fit, the icing could never be made to match. The President of the chapter, who arrived early, noted the misshapen corner almost immediately. An explanation ensued which was met with raised eyebrows and a polite murmur about "these things" that happen. To my dismay, the story circulated quietly amongst the first few to arrive, but was fortunately soon forgotten as more guests arrived and were served a slice of the ill-fated cake. It was, in fact, a lovely party; its unique comic episode chuckled over to this day. I have since learned that true hospitality, for which Texans are famous, is in no way diminished by unruly dogs, boisterous children, bad weather, burnt offerings of the kitchen, or any other of "these things" which happen to us all sooner or later.

TUMP



VERB:

Shortening of “turn over and dump.”

Generally for accidents.

**“THE HORSE KICKED THE
CART AND TUMPED IT OUT”**

CONTRIBUTORS

Ralph Daniel

Kenny Frazier

Jim Gdula

Emily Herring

Darren E. Levin

John A. Logan

Bill von Rosenberg

William “Billy” Shand

Jennifer Shand

Scott Shipman

Deborah Smith

Jim Smith

Walta Jean Smith

Diane Swartzendruber

Marguerite Barnes (*Church Historian/Author*)

Devil’s Rope Museum (*Barbed Wire History*)

Humanities Texas (*Balinese Room History*)

COLOPHON

WRITTEN by the Contributors

EDITED & DESIGNED by Taylor Smith

DESIGNED & TYPESET using
Adobe InDesign and Illustrator CS4

TYPEFACES: Absara Light, Buckboard

PAPER: Mohawk Via Felt in Warm White
and Jute, Mohawk Proterra in Chili Antique
and Iris Antique, and Mohawk Proterra
Cover-Weight in Black Antique

SPECIAL THANKS for two superheroes
of this project: Carla Hammer for procur-
ing this paper and Jim Smith for tirelessly
recruiting more contributors



TEXAS FEELS LIKE ITS OWN country. The immeasurable pride and tradition is infectious. I came here for school. Three years later, I am hooked. By The Horns so-to-speak. I do not plan on leaving.

