

Houston HISTORY

Volume 7 • Number 1 • Fall 2009



UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

CENTER FOR PUBLIC HISTORY

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the *Houston History* magazine celebrates the history of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. The annual Show and Rodeo is a major entertainment event, but it is also a celebration of our region's history and a fund-raising event for scholarships that are a major investment in our region's future. It is a part of Houston culture with deep roots into our past.

Special thanks go to our guest editor, Jim Saye, who contributed two articles to this issue and helped coordinate our work with the Media Center staff for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. All of us at *Houston History* join Jim in expressing our gratitude to the members of this exceptional staff: Sarah Poole, Clint Saunders, Lauren Rouse, Suzy Martin, and Johnny Westerhouse; as well as School Art Committee members Sally Woody, and Carole Look. Their hard work and spirit of cooperation can be seen in every aspect of this issue, from the content of the articles to the extraordinary photographs. With such a staff and the thousands of volunteers who help with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, it is easy to understand how the event is successful year after year. Special thanks also goes to Nancy Clark at the University of Houston.

We appreciate the cooperation of the current CEO, Leroy Shafer, and we give him the first word in this issue.

— Joe Pratt, *Editor-in-Chief*

LEROY SHAFER: HIS FUTURE WITH THE RODEO

The path from our youth to our life's profession is not always a straight line. Our supposed and well planned future can often be diverted by unexpected circumstances that push us into unexpected byways, and that is about the best way to describe the life of Leroy Shafer, Chief Operating Officer of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. For thirty-seven years, his life seemed to have a mind of its own. It began on September 16, 1944, in Roscoe, Texas, which lies just west of Sweetwater, "kind of central west Texas." Connecting the dots from this point to the Houston Rodeo is strewn with happenstance and what he describes as "weird sets of circumstances."

Although born in Roscoe he was raised and educated in Trent, a town a little east of Roscoe, between Sweetwater and Abilene, Texas. As a high school student, Shafer was active in FFA (formerly the Future Farmers of America) and 4-H that is described as a "hands-on" public education program designed to connect youth to country life. Pursuing that ideal, Shafer often showed steers and heifers at the Show, and in 1959, he caught a calf during the calf scramble when the rodeo was held in the old Sam Houston Coliseum. Through these early activities he came to know Dick Weekly, who at the time was the Executive Director of the Texas FFA, and young Leroy's hero. Later, he learned that Mr. Weekly had gone to work as general manager of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston.

Shafer attended Texas A&M University in the late 1960's, when it was primarily an all male cadet corps. At the time the Vietnam war was in full swing, and four months before graduation, Shafer received orders sending him to that conflict. He intended to attend Officer Infantry School followed by Helicopter Flight School but through the first "weird sets of circumstances" he wound up at Iowa State University where he got a masters degree in journalism and mass communications. Within twenty months after graduation from A&M, he was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam where he flew 327 combat missions. In time, certain conflicts between the military and the media arose prompting the need for an officer experienced in mass communications and Lt. Leroy Shafer fit the bill. He remained as the military's ombudsman between the military and the media until his tour of duty was over. He completed his last two years at Ft. Benning, Georgia, as a general's pilot and as the assistant editor of *Infantry Magazine*.

With his credentials, several opportunities arose within corporate America, but some of Houston's elite who were sustaining



members of the rodeo launched a campaign to hire him. There was no problem finding a civilian job as several opportunities presented themselves with companies focused directly and indirectly on agriculture. After several interviews from his short list, the most attractive was a position with DuPont, but Shafer was receiving pressure from other Aggies to consider the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo offer. Out of a sense of courtesy he made the trip to Houston where he met some of the organization's notables: Stuart Lang, Buddy Bray, Louis Pearce, and Tommy Vaughn. A more detailed offer was made and discussed. After the meeting, Shafer and his wife were driving home to west Texas and she asked him how the meeting had gone. He answered,

"Those people are crazy. That's the craziest interview I ever had. But the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is not what I remember. They've got two thousand volunteers and they have got this mammoth scholarship program." Shafer admits that the twenty scholarships the rodeo offered at the time was "mammoth," but it is far from the 535 the rodeo distributes today.

Perhaps it was Dupont's arrogance or pushiness, or perhaps it was the number of volunteers and scholarships that changed his mind, but he decided to work for the rodeo; and when Dupont called, he told them of his decision. "Well, we go to bed that night, I woke up like at 4 o'clock that morning in a cold sweat. I thought, damn I told those people in Houston a month or so ago that I was not gonna go to work for them. I remember that Mr. Vaughn

told me that he was at work by six o'clock in the morning every day. So I waited until 6:15. I asked him if the job was still open and Mr. Vaughn assured that it was. I told him I could only promise him five years and he replied, 'Well Aggie, I can't promise you one! But I'll make a deal with you, if you go to work for us, at the end of every year, if you're doing a good job we'll take you on for another year. Now you got to

make a deal with me.' I said, 'Okay, sir.' He said, 'You won't leave until you get the job finished.' I said, 'Okay, sir.'"

"Mr. Vaughn passed away some five years ago, but up until that point he would come up to me at every annual meeting and say, 'Got the job done yet?' 'No sir, still working on it.' So I've been here thirty-six years." What follows in this magazine, reflects much of his work in getting the job done.

Ernesto Valdés is Director of the Oral History Project in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston.

"The future: The gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present."

— Percy B. Shelley

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Volume 7 • Number 1 • Fall 2009

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Houston History is published three times a year by the Center for Public History in the History Department at the University of Houston. We welcome manuscripts, interviews, and photographic essays on the history and culture of the Houston region, broadly defined, as well as ideas for topical issues. All correspondence should be sent to *Houston History*, University of Houston, Center for Public History, 547 Agnes Arnold Hall, Houston, TX 77204-3007 (713-743-3123); or emailed to: HoustonHistory@uh.edu.

Subscriptions are \$10 per year for students, \$15 per year for individuals, and \$25 per year for institutions. Single issues and back issues are available for \$10.

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POSTMASTER send address changes to:

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Center for Public History
547 Agnes Arnold Hall
Houston, TX 77204-3007

*Cover photo courtesy
Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.*

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SHOW AND RODEO

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™: A Historical Perspective *by Jim Saye*



The Sam Houston Coliseum developed a special temporary floor for the Houston Fat Stock Show & Livestock Exposition arena that allowed the spectacular grand entry ceremonies with speeding horses, sparkling costumes, flags, spotlights, and music.

Unless otherwise noted, all pictures are courtesy of The Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo™. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a registered trademark.

Scratch Houston and you will find—underneath each of the soil people, refiners, pipeliners, space scientists, retailers, real estate moguls, politicians, manufacturers, cotton merchants, seafarers, whomever—there’s always the heart of a cowboy.

When visitors, especially those from the East, come to Houston, you can regale them with the wonders of this giant city, fourth largest in the USA: the great Medical Center, Reliant Stadium, Minute Maid Park, Toyota Center, and their professional sports teams; the incredible ship channel and port; the skyscrapers and the Galleria; the renowned centers of education; and more, *ad infinitum*. Then, when you pause to take a breath, they will interpose—“Yeah, well, but where are the cowboys?”

“Pilgrim,” the cowboys are here. Every February they doff their workaday garments and reveal the Texas in their souls. From every point of the compass, trail rides converge on Houston. Cowboys on horses, wagons, stagecoaches, and festive floats parade down the streets of Houston. Streets lined six or eight deep with cowboys and cowgirls of all ages in their “Go Texan,” pointy-toed boots, jeans, fancy Western shirts with pearl snap-buttons, and wide-brim cowboy hats.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo co-opts every facet of city life from late February through March. This remarkable

spectacle is an outpouring of a suppressed cowboy spirit on a scale that is all-encompassing . . . and authentic Texan to the bone.

Not at all surprising . . . the roots were always there.



Spectators lined the streets of downtown Houston dressed in their western finery to kick off the Show each February. Children were given a holiday from school to attend the parade.

COWBOY FROM DAY ONE

In 1836, when the Allen Brothers were busily founding a city, they wisely hired another pair of brothers to do the real work of surveying the city, and laying out the streets. Thomas Borden and brother Gail laid out the streets on a grid pattern. All of the streets were planned with an eighty-foot width, except two. Main Street was to be ninety feet wide, and Texas Avenue was expanded to a width of 100 feet to accommodate fourteen head of longhorn cattle moving abreast across the city to the stockyards and port. Later, Lubbock Street was named for early settler Francis R. Lubbock, who had an 843 acre ranch in the area where Hobby Airport now stands. Lubbock's cattle brand and earmarks remain listed in the "Records of Marks and Brands" book in the Harris County clerk's office.¹

"History of the Texas cattle industry is full of unlikely events and circumstances," wrote Leon Hale in 1988. "The settlers who came into this state from the east weren't really livestock raisers. Most were farmers and knew little about ranching. But when they saw the oceans of Texas grass waving over free or cheap land, they began having pleasant dreams."²

TOP CATTLE COUNTY IN THE TOP CATTLE STATE



The 1932 Grand Champion was purchased by George Kelly for \$504. The 1948 champion shown here, an Angus exhibited by Robert H. Johnson of Goldwithe, Texas, was purchased by Cliff Rampy for \$12,500.

The bountiful, nutritious grasses, the abundant sources of good water, the moderate climate, and the access to markets made Houston/Harris County a center for raising cattle. For much of the twentieth century, Harris County was the leading Texas county in cattle production with adjacent counties, Brazoria and Wharton, close behind.

Some figures from the *Texas Almanac* illustrate the extent of Harris County's lead. The top three counties in 1954: Harris – 113,426 head, Brazoria – 96,801 head, Wharton – 82,286 head. In 1959: Harris – 105,230 head, Wharton – 87,059 head, Brazoria – 81,763 head. THEN, the top three counties in 1964: Brazoria – 98,388 head, Gonzales – 96,144 head, Harris – 95,829. By 1969, Harris County ranked eleventh, with 86,000



The 2009 Grand Champion Junior Market Steer was exhibited by Christopher Barton of the Jarrell FFA and sold for \$300,000 to Jim McIngvale of Gallery Furniture.

head. In 1974, even though Harris County held a substantial 94,194 head of cattle, it stood tenth among the 254 Texas counties.³

The *Texas Almanac*, 1956-1957 Edition, states, "Cattle raising is the oldest of Texas' present large industries . . . From the very beginning of the livestock industries in Texas, it has been a story of breeding up the original scrub stock—the Longhorn beef cattle, the blue-john milk cattle—into the fine blooded stock on Texas farms and ranches today." "Breeding up" is easier said than done. In the early twentieth century, knowledgeable cattlemen asserted that the outstanding Texas cattle could be seen only at the big livestock exposition (and legendary rodeo) in Fort Worth. Some mentioned San Antonio; Abilene, Pecos, San Angelo, Nacogdoches, Lubbock, and other cattle centers were respected as leaders in breeding practices. Houston area cattlemen were making advances, but they received less notice.⁴

A TOP HAND . . . WITH A TOP PLAN



J. W. Sartwelle was a prominent Houston business leader: president of Port City Stockyards. He founded the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition and served as its first president from founding in 1932 to 1948.

James W. Sartwelle was a prominent Houston businessman who ran the Port City Stockyards—a job that required mastery of the infinite details of the cattle business. In order to stay abreast of the significant developments in the cattle industry, Sartwelle made frequent trips to the leading livestock markets in the southwest. His observations persuaded him that the cities where livestock shows and competitions were held drew a better quality of livestock. Sartwelle believed that if an annual livestock exposition could make a substantial improvement in breeding and raising practices, then Houston should organize and produce an exposition. Preferably, the most popular, celebrated, and beneficial livestock show in the State of Texas. So he took steps to make it a reality.

To set up an organizational meeting, Sartwelle ran an ad in the Houston newspapers seeking Houstonians interested in founding a local livestock competition and show, along estab-

lished lines. The first meeting, in the Texas State Hotel, on January 30, 1931, consisted of J. W. Sartwelle and six “interested persons.”⁵

Sartwelle was a large, aggressive man whose enthusiasm and commitment inspired the “interested persons” to pledge their support and join in the founding of the “Houston Fat Stock Show.” The group elected Sartwelle to be president; J. Howard West, Marcus Meyer, W. C. Munn, and Julian A. Weslow were elected vice presidents. W. S. Cochran was elected treasurer, and Haygood Ashburn was elected secretary. The influence of these seven men spread to their families, their friends, business associates, farmers, ranchers, and real, authentic working cowboys! Volunteers turned out to perform the myriad tasks that required attention to produce an organized, large-scale, county-wide endeavor.⁶

On April 30, 1932, a year of preparation culminated in the first Houston Fat Stock Show. The show ran through May 4, in the huge, wooden Sam Houston Hall on Bagby Street. This historic 25,000-seat auditorium was built for the 1928 National Democratic Convention as a result of the efforts of Houston businessman Jesse H. Jones. Some 2,000 exhibitors showed livestock. Spectators watched the judging, and were entertained by Billie Ehman and his trick horse “Baby Doll.” While an official rodeo was not held in combination with the first Fat Stock Show, authentic bucking bronc action took place in the livestock

arena courtesy of Emil Marks, who owned the LH-7 Ranch in Barker and supplied the horses for the cowboy riders.⁷

Although the first Houston Fat Stock Show lost \$2,800, the effort was judged by one and all as a success and a new asset for the city. Plans were immediately set in motion for the second show in 1933.⁸

BIGGER AND BETTER – IN THE COLISEUM AND MUSIC HALL

From the first Show in 1932 through the much-expanded Show in 1936, Sam Houston Hall proved more than adequate. But in 1937, Houston was ready for something grander; something *with air conditioning*! So the hall was razed, and the elegant Sam Houston Coliseum and Music Hall built. No Houston Fat Stock Show was held in 1937; the organization devoted that year to preparations for a revamped Show in 1938.

The one-year hiatus proved to be of immeasurable value to the Show. The ranks of volunteers swelled. The Houston Chapter of the Junior Chamber of Commerce (soon to become the largest chapter in the world) helped with ticket sales and promotional endeavors. The new Coliseum and Music Hall offered state of the art facilities. The quantity and quality of the livestock exhibited and judged multiplied, and horse shows were held. Bands performed, including local favorites such as fiddler Leon “Pappy” Selph who played the western swing music that was wildly popular on the radio and in the honky-tonks.

Saddle bronc riding evolved from breaking horses for use on a ranch. To receive a score, the cowboy's feet must touch the horse's shoulders on the first jump out of the chute, and he must stay on for eight seconds. Points are awarded to the horse for bucking action, and to the rider for spurring and maintaining balance.





In February 1940, radio and honky-tonk stars Curly Fox (center) and Texas Ruby (seated on fender) took their Gulf Company sponsored panel truck and staged impromptu performances throughout downtown to promote ticket sales for the Houston Fat Stock Show. In the 1950s, the pair had the most popular live prime time show on KPRC-TV.

Photo courtesy Bob Bailey Studios Photographic Archive, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

FIRST STOCK SHOW PARADE – FIRST RODEO

In her definitive book, *February Fever*, Lynne Chesnar described the first Houston Fat Stock Show parade, “The parade in 1938 was a tremendous success. Headed by a mounted police escort and color guard, the parade line-up included state, county and city officials, a 20-piece band and officials of the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition. It also included a 65-piece cowboy band under the direction of Cliff Drescher and drum and bugle corps from area high schools, including the famous all-girl ‘Black Battalion’ from Sam Houston High School in Houston,” which was the only all-girl marching drum and bugle corps to perform under the baton of the great John Phillip Sousa.⁹

J. W. Sartwelle announced that the 1938 Show would be “The Show of Shows.” The excitement and wonder stirred by the downtown parade set the stage for the record-setting Show. Each performance opened with the Grand Entry spectacular in the arena of the Coliseum. There was special entertainment and the drama of livestock judging and auctions. But the favorite new element was the thrilling, action-packed rodeo. Reese Lockett, a respected rodeo hand and mayor of Brenham, served as the rodeo’s producer. Cowboy contestants flocked to Houston for this event. Texas cowboys competed with top hands from California, Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, and even Calgary. There were five rodeo events: bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding, steer wrestling, and calf roping. Barrel racing and team roping were added in later years.

One of the Texas cowboys who competed in 1938 was Warren Gunn from Houston. In 2000, Gunn was selected for the Texas Professional Rodeo Cowboys Hall of Fame. In an interview on the occasion of this honor, Gunn related memories of the 1938 competition. “I rode bareback and the bulls,” said Gunn. “Most of the bulls were Brahmas. My life-long friend, Gerald Abbott, worked pick-up at the 1938 rodeo. He continued to work pick-up for the Houston Rodeo for many years. Abbott worked pick-up at the Huntsville Prison Rodeo for thirty years.” The pick-up man is the cowboy in the arena on horseback who “picks up” the bareback or saddle bronc rider from his horse after the ride. Even though Gunn spent much of his life traveling to compete in rodeos across the country, he considered Houston his home until he retired to Fredericksburg to be near his ranch. He died in 2002.¹⁰

Another “first” followed the 1938 Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition when the event’s leaders decided to offer memberships in the Show for minimal annual dues. This organizational procedure has proved to be practical and successful. Wilhemina Beane purchased the first one-year membership for \$5.00 on June 24, 1938. Beane, a writer with the *Houston Press*, was a Show volunteer and became the first woman director of the Houston Fat Stock Show.¹¹

Throughout his tenure as founder/president of the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exhibition, J. W. Sartwelle was a flamboyant, forceful leader. He was not only a brilliant planner and organizer, but also a natural showman and impresario. Even so, he never lost sight of his original objectives: to promote Houston as a convenient and profitable marketplace for livestock, and to encourage area ranchers to produce improved livestock through better breeding and feeding practices. Over the years, the educational aspect of the Show expanded, and this has paid vast dividends in the billion-dollar agricultural and agribusiness segment of Harris County’s economy.¹²

DECEMBER 7, 1941 – WATERSHED OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The entire world experienced drastic change on Pearl Harbor Day. Certainly, the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock



The sign on this chuckwagon proclaims it to be an “OFFICIAL WAGON – HOUSTON FAT STOCK SHOW.” Inclement weather almost always marks the arrival of the Trail Rides and the traditional downtown parade.



Today, he may look like a rodeo clown, and sometimes act like a rodeo clown, but as this photograph demonstrates, he is really a bullfighter--which is now his proper title. His job is to divert the bull away from the exiting rider.



Rodeo clown Quail Dobbs entertained Houston audiences for decades as the clown in the barrel.



At each rodeo twenty-eight youngsters compete for fourteen calves in the exciting, and often chaotic calf scramble. They must get a rope halter on the calf and bring it across the finish line. They then receive a certificate to purchase a calf to raise and show.

Exposition was not immune from world events. Plans for the Show in early 1942 were all in place. Should the 1942 Show be cancelled? President Sartwelle and the association's executive committee decided to proceed as planned—an action of visionary wisdom that proved successful.

“Grand champion steer buyers during the war years were restaurateurs George P. Kelley, Bill Williams, and Virgil Shepherd of Grand Prize Brewery,” wrote Maudeen Marks in a lengthy story for the February 12, 1995, issue of the *Houston Chronicle*. “In all, a lot of fine folks gave their best and came through the war era with a sense of pride, having helped provide meat for the Army, and having done so with a camaraderie that is still magic in stock show circles.” She continued, “Despite rationing, war quotas to be met, inconveniences and personal stress, the Houston Fat Stock Show prospered in every way.



Harris County Sheriff T. A. Binford covered his desk with hide and horns from a champion steer he bought at a Houston Fat Stock Show auction. Binford was sheriff from 1918 to 1937. He rode his white mule “Madame Queen” in Show parades and on several Salt Grass Trail Rides.

Photo courtesy Bob Bailey Studios Photographic Archive, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

It came out of World War II with money in the bank, the calf scramble, better livestock housing, an organized rodeo visit for the handicapped, the quarter horse show and a half-dozen and more new committees. It gained in membership, efficiency and sophistication.” Maudeen Marks, daughter of Emil H. Marks, one of the early directors of the Show, volunteered with the Houston Fat Stock Show & Livestock Exposition from its early beginnings in 1932. During the war years she handled publicity for the Show. Maudeen remained active well into her eighties, and died at the age of ninety on March 20, 2009, in Bandera, Texas.¹³

THE TOP COWBOY MOVIE STAR PERFORMS AT THE HOUSTON SHOW

Fittingly, the first “star” entertainer brought in for the Houston Fat Stock Show was a native Texan. Born in Tioga, Gene Autry achieved worldwide fame as the “Singing Cowboy” in numerous Western movies. In Hollywood, he added a new dimension to the ever-popular Western genre and along the way, continued to turn out hit recordings, including “Tumbling Tumbleweeds,” “Back in the Saddle Again,” and “You Are My Sunshine.” Additionally, his recording of “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” reached legendary status and is now a Christmas tradition.



Gene Autry's horse Champion shows off his unusual intelligence and agility in the arena of the Coliseum. The pair starred in ninety-five movies, and Autry, the “Singing Cowboy” recorded more than 635 songs.

Photo courtesy Bob Bailey Studios, Photographic Archive, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

Superstar Autry and his famous horse, Champion, were a grand hit with Houston audiences. He brought business to a halt when he led the rodeo parade down Main Street. The Coliseum was packed for his six appearances in 1942, 1943, 1944, 1947, 1948, and 1955. Autry and his business partner Everett Colborn, from Dublin, Texas, produced the Houston Rodeo for several years, as well as the rodeo in New York's Madison Square Garden during its final years.¹⁴

The “Calf Scramble” was added to the program as a rodeo event in the 1940s. This energetic, somewhat chaotic event has given thousands of youngsters an opportunity to become “miniature” ranchers, with the responsibility for “hands-on” cattle raising.

Change was the word for the 1940's. The world changed. Texas changed. Houston changed, and with it, the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition. J. W. Sartwelle, the



The bull rider, hanging on to a flat-braided rope with one hand, must stay on the bull for an eight-second ride. If his free hand touches himself or the bull, he is disqualified. While he is not required to spur, it does add to his score. Points are awarded for the bucking action of the bull and the cowboy's style and control for a total score.



Beloved stars of Western movies, personal appearances, and television, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans entertained at the Houston Show eight times from 1950 to 1972. They always enjoyed a special popularity with Houston audiences.

Photo courtesy Bob Bailey Studios Photographic Archive, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

strong hand at the helm, retired from the presidency in 1948, and W. Albert Lee was chosen as his successor. Lee, a successful businessman who owned hotels and a radio station, enthusiastically worked in Show activities. His management style differed from that of Sartwelle, but he was effective and popular. Lee made his mark in the Fat Stock Show through his leadership on the advance ticket sales committee and his coordination of the first Rodeo and the first Rodeo parade. W. Albert Lee will be remembered also as “the man who brought television to Houston.” He outmaneuvered other applicants to gain the first license issued by the Federal Communications Commission for a station in the Houston area. His station, KLEE-TV, went on the air on January 1, 1949. Lee sold it to Governor William Hobby in 1950, and the station became KPRC-TV.¹⁵

GO TEXAN IN THE FABULOUS FIFTIES

The phenomenal progression of success for the Houston Fat Stock Show through the 1950s reflects the leadership of Show presidents Ralph A. Johnston, 1951-1954; Archer Romero, 1954-1957; and Douglas B. Marshall, Sr., 1957-1960. During the 1950s, Charles Giezendanner proved beyond any doubt that “should you happen to scratch a Houstonian, beneath the modern apparel you likely will find the big heart of a cowboy.” Advertising executive Giezendanner, restaurateur Bill Williams, and others sprang the “Go Texan Days” promotion on an astonished city and drew an immediate, powerfully positive response.



Bulldogging, or steer wrestling, is a timed event. The cowboy must leap from his saddle onto a speeding steer weighing as much as 750 pounds, grab his horns, and throw him to the ground resting on his side with all four legs pointing in the same direction.

Educational Programs and Scholarships

by Aimee L'Heureux

Since the scholarship and educational program support began in 1957, more than \$235 million has been committed to Texas students for their education. Currently, 1,934 students are furthering their education with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo scholarships. Enrolled students are attending eighty-eight different Texas colleges and universities. In order to qualify for any of the scholarships, students must demonstrate academic potential, citizenship/leadership, and financial need. Winners may major in any field of study leading to a bachelor's degree; however, they must attend a college or university in Texas. These three students are a sampling of the many scholarship recipients who were able to accomplish their goals and, today, follow the example set by the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's scholarship program by giving back to the community.

Kristina Kovar, a Rodeo Art Scholar from Lamar Consolidated High School who graduated in 2005, says that The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholarship made a difference in her life because it enabled her to attend college and pursue her dreams without worrying about how to pay her expenses or divide her time between work and school. Her artwork was chosen for the Rodeo Art Auction and sold for \$9,000. She says the auction was bittersweet because she knew that she would never again see the picture that she had poured hundreds of hours into; but much to her shock and surprise, the artwork was donated back to her. Kristina says that her life is now full of unlimited possibilities because of the generosity of the scholarship donors and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Since graduating summa cum laude from the University of Houston with a B.F.A. in Interior Design and a minor in Architecture, she is now attending Graduate School at UH, seeking a master's degree in Architecture, as well as being a student design intern at Newberry Campa Architects. Her time spent with the rodeo through the years, volunteering at their scholarship booth and speaking at one of their meetings were memorable and rewarding experiences that she treasures to this day. Kristina's ultimate goal is to give something back to the people and community that have given her so much. Through architecture, she hopes to positively contribute to the fabric of society.

Audrie Luna, a Metropolitan Scholarship recipient, 2002-2006, says that The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo scholarship helped her to attain her goal, while also providing her family with the peace of mind that she would be able to attend college even though they could not assist financially. Audrie Luna graduated from the University of Houston in 2006 with a B.S. in Psychology and a minor in Sociology. She is currently working at LINN Energy, a mid-sized oil and gas company in Downtown Houston as an executive assistant for the company's top three executives. In her spare time, she volunteers with CanCare, a local non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life for cancer patients and their families.

Gabynelly Galvan-Solis graduated from Furr High School in the top five percent of her class and always dreamt of going to college. Coming from a very low income Hispanic family, she wanted to be one of the first in her family to obtain a bachelor's degree. College was not an option unless she riddled herself with student loan debt. Her parents only achieved a middle school education and, even though she knew they wanted to

help financially, they did not know how to make this dream a reality. With her high school counselors and teachers pushing her to apply for as many scholarships as possible, the final tally was between thirty-five and forty applications. One by one she was rejected. Just as she was beginning to lose hope, she received a big yellow envelope in the mail that said she had been awarded \$10,000 from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Gabynelly Solis graduated in May of 2008 from the University of Houston majoring in Public Relations and minoring in Russian. Since graduation she has been working at the College of Optometry at the University of Houston as a Pediatric Research Coordinator. The program offers patients services, such as free eye exams, free eye care, and free eyewear.

Aimee L'Heureux is a master's student in history at the University of Houston.

CURRENT SCHOLARSHIPS THROUGH THE HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO INCLUDE:

FFA SCHOLARSHIP: 70 four-year scholarships at \$15,000 each, statewide.

4-H: 70 four-year scholarships at \$15,000 each, statewide.

FCCLA: 10 four-year scholarships at \$15,000 each, statewide.

METROPOLITAN: 214 four-year, \$15,000 scholarships to outstanding students graduating from Houston-area public school districts in Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller Counties.

OPPORTUNITY: 100 four-year, \$15,000 scholarships to outstanding students graduating from specified school districts within Harris, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller Counties.

AREA GO TEXAN: 70 four-year, \$15,000 scholarships presented to outstanding eligible students representing the counties participating in the Show's Area Go Texan program. An additional 10 awards are given at large to students within the 60 counties represented in the Area Go Texan Scholarship Program.

SCHOOL ART: 15 four-year scholarships at \$15,000 each.

HILDEBRAND: one four-year scholarship at \$15,000.



Gabynelly Solis (right) was able to make her dream come true, becoming the first in her family to graduate from college, with much thanks to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholarship program. She is joined by Chairman of the Texas Railroad Commission, the Honorable Elizabeth Ames Jones.

All of Houston rushed to dress in wide-brimmed cowboy hats, jeans, and boots, and to participate in one way or another in the Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition. This had to be one of the most successful community promotions in Houston history.¹⁶

Another major innovation in the 1950s was the scholarship program. The first scholarship was presented in 1957 to Ben Dickerson of Houston in the amount of \$2,000. Officials quickly recognized this community service program was an area with the potential for future growth. Today it has become a centerpiece of the program.¹⁷

The Houston Fat Stock Show and Rodeo included the Annual Rodeo Queen's Contest with generous prizes awaiting the winner. One prize was a convertible, donated by Don McMillian Ford. A sixteen-year-old brunette from Robstown, Kathryn Grandstaff won in 1950. The charming Ms. Grandstaff met a cattleman, with a 25,000-acre Nevada ranch, who had a special way with a song. He made an enduring classic hit of "Don't Fence Me In" with the Andrews Sisters. He recorded "Deep in the Heart of Texas" and, the never to be forgotten, "White Christmas." So Kathryn Grandstaff, 1950 Queen of the Houston Fat Stock Show and Rodeo, became Mrs. Bing Crosby.¹⁸

THE SALT GRASS TRAIL RIDE TRADITION

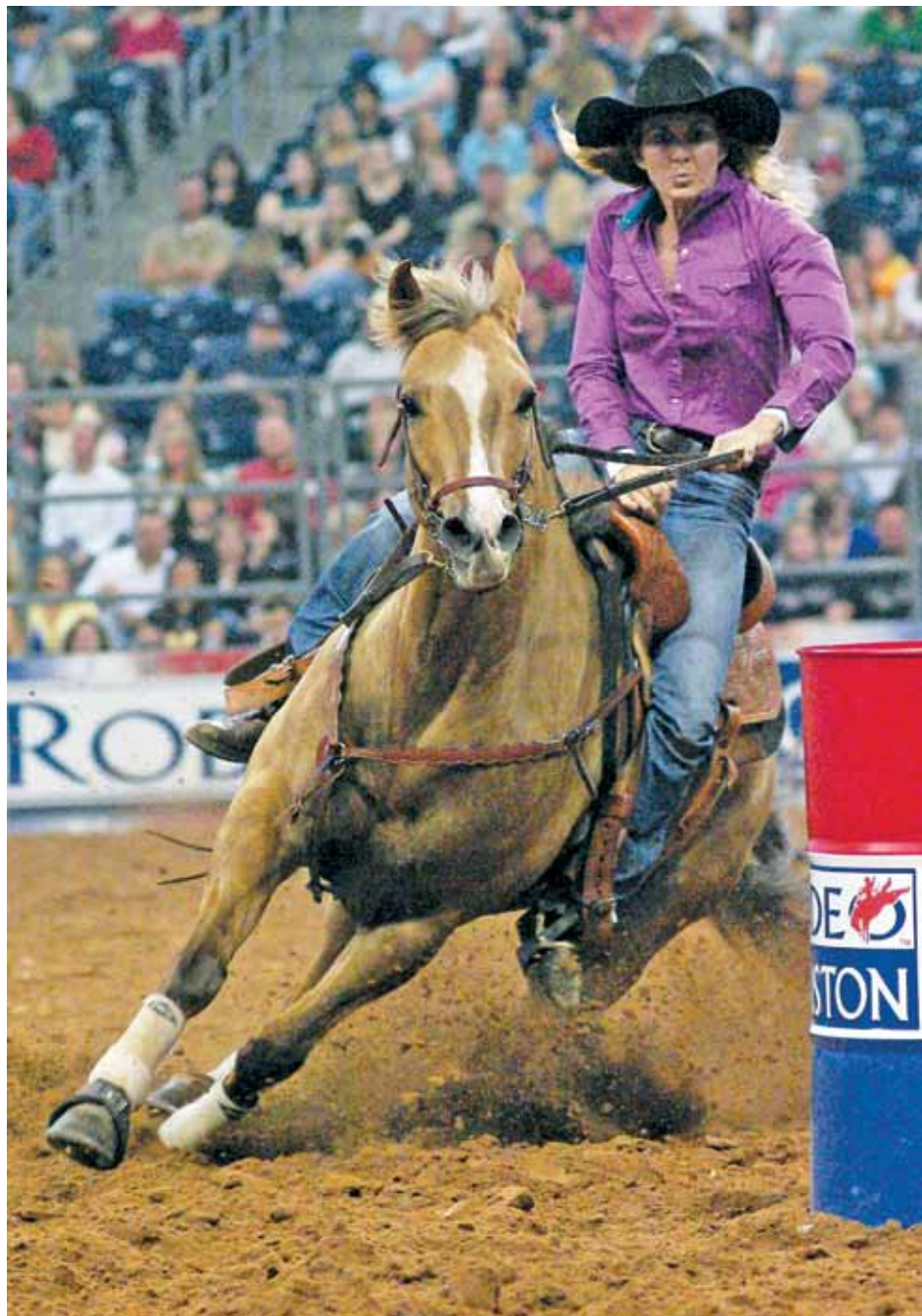
A friendly conversation in the Cork Club at the Shamrock Hotel turned into a challenge that changed Show history. Charles Giezendanner challenged Reece Lockett to ride horseback from his home in Brenham to the Fat Stock Show in Houston, and the Salt Grass Trail Ride was born. Rancher Emil Marks, TV personality Pat Flaherty, John Warnasch, and Lockett set out from Brenham on horseback, with one chuck wagon. Along the way, they were joined by other riders. J. W. Sartwelle and Vernon Frost were among one group that braved the elements to reenact the almost forgotten custom of driving herds of cattle to feed on the nutritious coastal forage. Although this trail ride was a publicity coup of epic proportions, hardly anyone would have imagined that by 2009 there would be thirteen trail rides, involving thousands of riders. One of the rides, the Los Vaqueros Rio Grande Trail Ride, originates in Hidalgo, Texas, and stretches over 386 miles. This is certainly "community outreach" on a grand scale.¹⁹

After a winter of foraging on unappetizing hay, the soft, sweet, verdant grasses of spring are just the thing for hungry cattle. Early South Texas ranchers held spring cattle drives to the coastal plains for the nutritious "salt grass." Today, barbed wire and dangerous highways have reduced this ancient practice to a much smaller-scale movement of cattle from one pasture to another.

Ray Bullock, a director and a vice president of the Houston Fat Stock Show, had a special interest in the study of the grasses of the South Texas area. His family had extensive agricultural holdings, including a ranch in Washington County with 2,300 acres of pasture and a herd of Herefords. As he sought to im-

prove his estates, he developed a profound respect for the work of the Harris County Soil Conservation District, and served as chairman of this organization for twelve years. When Bullock assumed management of the family ranch, he found that it required eight acres to sustain one head of cattle. By improving the pasturage with better grasses, Bullock was able to reduce the ratio to only two acres per head.

With more than 6,000 different species of grasses, educated selection was very important. To encourage further improvements, Ray Bullock persuaded the leaders of the Fat Stock Show to include a judging of grasses and recognition for those exhibiting the best varieties. Finding no satisfactory space for judging in the Coliseum, Bullock rented the Music Hall. He covered the stage with trays of grass, and a professor from the University of



Barrel Racing is a timed event. The rider and horse must race in perfect synchronization to round the barrels in a cloverleaf pattern at top speed. Riders are penalized five seconds for knocking over a barrel.

Houston came in to do the judging. This display of grasses drew a great deal of attention and focused serious interest on the potential benefits from cultivating better grasses. The Show still has a plant and pasture identification contest as part of its judging.²⁰

HEADLINER STARS AND THE SPACE ERA

While the ultimate million-dollar potential of the entertainment element of the Show may not have been recognized when Gene Autry rode Champion in the show ring at the Coliseum, a new era had dawned. The crowds flocked in to see the stars. After Autry, came the Lone Ranger, Eddy Arnold, the Cisco Kid, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans, James Arness, Chuck Connors, and Hugh O'Brian. One thing was obvious: the Coliseum was no longer adequate to handle the vastly expanded Show.

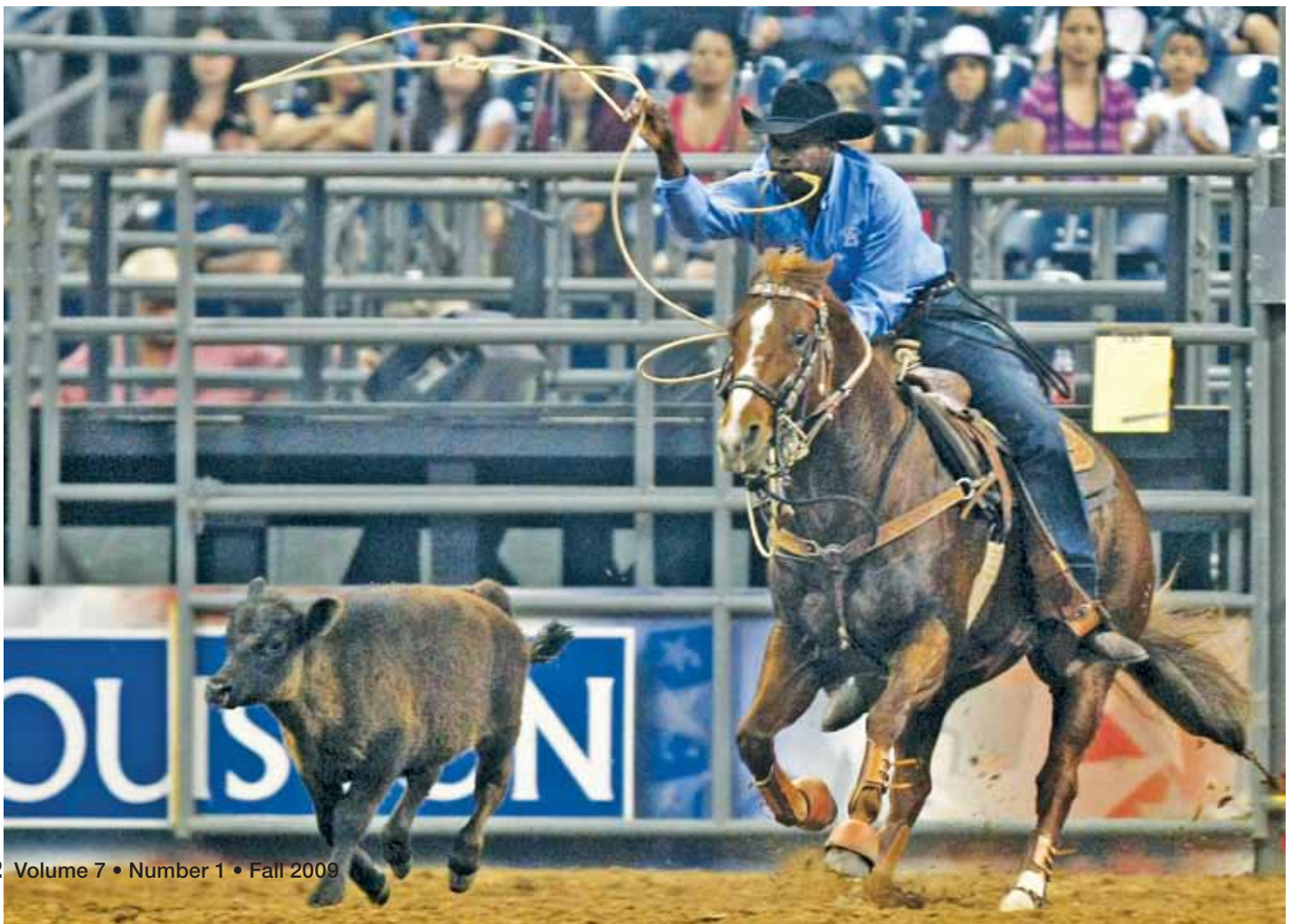
Changes began to be made in June 1961. Vernon Frost and others suggested that the name of the organization be changed to reflect the fact that the Rodeo was now a major part of the Show. The original name, "Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition," was outdated. For one thing, the Rodeo was now a major activity, important enough to be recognized in the organization's name. Additionally, the phrase "fat stock" had become increasingly unfashionable. The board of directors agreed, and voted to change the name to "Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Association."²¹

Space . . . the wonderful old Coliseum just did not have enough for the burgeoning Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. As presidents Douglas Marshall and Neill T. Masterson struggled with this problem, a site in northwest Houston was selected, and plans were readied for construction of a new home for the Show.

Stuart Lang was elected Show president in 1964, at a time when everyone was talking about the giant domed stadium that was nearing completion on the bald prairie south of the Main Street and O.S.T. intersection. Lang had a vision of a Show complex adjacent to the Astrodome with enough space for multiple cattle and horse arenas, convenient loading and unloading of livestock, offices and meeting rooms, vendor sales areas, and parking spaces stretching to the far horizon. The directors were persuaded by this vision. Think big! And they did.

The negotiations with Harris County, the Houston Sports Authority, and the many other interested parties were intense. The logistics of a move on this scale were mind-boggling; but the vision of space, of having enough room to accomplish their immediate goals and to grow in the future, overcame obstacles. The thirty-fourth annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo opened in the new facilities on March 6, 1966. Much of the credit for this remarkable achievement goes to E. C. "Dick" Weekley, general manager of the Show from 1962 to 1984. The new Y-shaped building, named the Astrohall, evolved into a

Tie-down roping, previously called calf roping, requires precise teamwork between horse and rider. The cowboy must lasso the calf running out of the shoot. He then dismounts the horse, and while the horse maintains the tension on the rope, the cowboy flips the calf to the ground and ties three of the animal's feet together. When done, he throws his hands up to stop the clock. He remounts the horse, which releases the tension on the rope. The calf must remain tied for six seconds for the cowboy to receive a time.





A far cry from those modest days at the downtown Coliseum, Reliant Park provides a massive space for showing livestock including multiple breeds of beef cattle (27), dairy cattle (3), rabbits (27), swine (5), and dairy goats (5). Other animals exhibited include turkeys, cavs, broilers, Boer goats, alpacas, and llamas.



Reba McEntire, a former barrel racer from Oklahoma, has entertained at the Show more than seventeen times since her first appearance in 1984.



"The King," Elvis Presley appeared at the rodeo in 1970 and 1974. He set a record for Houston rodeo attendance. The event was also the largest crowd for which Presley had performed, with his previous high being 25,000 fans at the Cotton Bowl.

2010 HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO EVENTS

World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest:
February 25-27

Go Texan Day: February 26

Trail Rides arrive at Memorial Park:
February 26

Downtown Rodeo Parade: February 27

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO:
March 2 through 21

Preliminary Schedule:
For up-to-date information visit:
www.rodeohouston.com

30.1 acre complex by 1990. It cost almost \$22 million and became a gift from the Show to Harris County.²²

Famed cowboy artist/sculptor Mark Storm created a life-size sculpture of Stuart Lang that now has a place of high honor in the "Allen H. 'Buddy' Carruth Plaza" on the grounds of the Show's newest home at Reliant Park. At the base of this sculpture is a raised image of the Astrodome-Astroarena complex.

Louis M. Pearce, Jr., another strong leader, succeeded Stuart Lang for the 1967-1969 presidential term, followed by M. C. "Buddy" Bray, 1970-1972. Notable in 1970 was the first performance by Elvis Presley in the Astrodome, which set the single-performance attendance record at approximately 44,000 spectators.

Tommie Vaughn followed Bray as president for the 1973-1975 term. During Vaughn's term, Bill Bailey and Show volunteers produced the first "World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest." Show presidents, N. W. "Dick" Freeman (1976-1978), Allen H. Carruth (1979-1981), E. Norwin Gearhart (1982-1984), Dr. Joseph T. Ainsworth (1985-1987), and Hal Hillman (1988-1990), provided the exceptional leadership needed to continue the record-setting growth of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Dick Graves (1991-1993), Don Jordan (1994-1996), and Jim Bloodworth (1997-1999) led the countdown to the millennium. P. Michael Wells (2000-2005) became the last elected president. Subsequently, the Chairman of the Board became the top elected official. John O. Smith (2003-2005) was the first to be elected Chairman of the Board. He was followed by Paul G. Somerville (2006-2008), and Charles R. "Butch" Robinson (2009-2011).²³

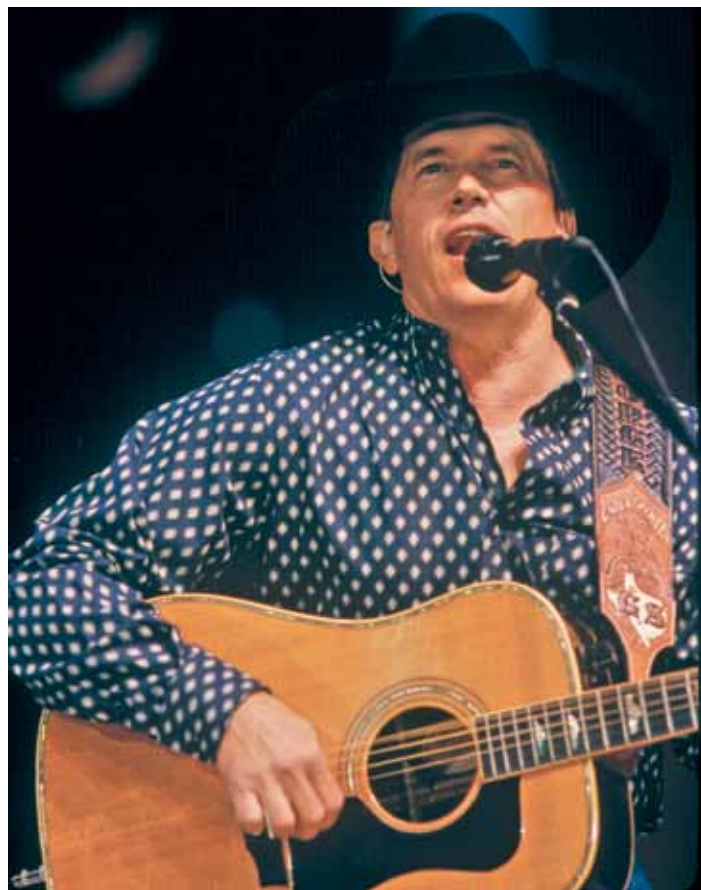
POST-MILLENNIUM — "TO INCREDIBLE, AND BEYOND!"

In 1999, the Show had signed on to a master plan to remake the Astrodome complex into Reliant Park, which proceeded at a fast pace. At the center of the Park sits the stadium that covers twelve acres, and rises forty feet above the Astrodome. The facility, home to the Houston Texans football team, has a retractable roof that remains closed for rodeo performances.

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo activities moved to the new stadium in 2003. Adjacent to the stadium, Reliant Center houses the main offices of the Show. A huge exposition center 1,532 feet long with some 706,213 square feet of space, it features ceiling heights ranging from twenty-five to sixty feet. The old Astrodome was razed; however, the 6.9 acre Astroarena, now Reliant Arena, continues to be used for horse events, as it was originally designed.²⁴

GEORGE STRAIT CLOSES THE DOME AND OPENS RELIANT

After thirty-seven breathtaking years, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo threw one of the world's great parties on Sunday, March 3, 2002, to mark the end of its relationship with the real and the mythic Astrodome, the world's first covered athletic stadium. For the first time, the event was all show, no rodeo—a special two-hour concert by legendary country music superstar, George Strait.



George Strait is a fourth generation Texas rancher. He is a talented team-roper and a long-time member of PRCA. He was airlifted to the Astrodome in 1983 as a last-minute replacement for an ailing Eddie Rabbitt. From that sensational performance, Strait has become a favorite of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, as well as an enduring country-western music chart-topper. In 1993 he starred in the movie, "Pure Country."

Team-roper Strait, whose cowboy credentials are impeccable, rode into the Dome on a brown and white paint horse and clutched the heart of a record 68,266 ecstatic fans. With his Ace in the Hole band, Strait rocked the Dome with a mixture of hits from his albums and classic country and western songs. Long after the concert ended, the applause and cheering continued as the crowd made its way one last time down the ramps and out to their buses and cars.²⁵

On Tuesday, February 25, 2003, at 7:00 p.m. George Strait took the microphone and opened the “Reliant” era of the

Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Strait was the only performer who could have followed the top-flight success of his 2002 performance. His sixteen Rodeo performances have entertained more than a million people. In more than one way, the achievements and the persona of George Strait exemplify the “Go Texan!” spirit of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

THAT WAS THEN . . . THIS IS NOW

The 2009 Show was another record-breaker. A new attendance record was set – 1,890,332 visitors! Professional rodeo athletes competing in the seven rodeo events won more than \$1.4 million. Clint Cannon of Waller won \$59,250 as Bareback Riding Champion, and Douglas Duncan of Alvin took home \$55,000 as the Bull Riding Champion. “Perhaps the most exciting record was set March 15 – Go Tejano Day,” stated C. R. “Butch” Robinson, Chairman. “Paid attendance reached 74,147 fans for championship Rodeo action and Ramon Ayala and Alacranes Musical performing in concert. On a rainy afternoon, this performance broke the paid Rodeo attendance record set in 2008, when Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus performed.”²⁶

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is now the world’s largest livestock show and the richest regular-season Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association competition. It consists of ninety-nine committees, ranging from Poultry

Auction, to Calf Scramble, to Gatekeepers. It has tremendous community influence and has made a positive contribution to Houston, Harris County, and Texas beyond imagination. It has enriched and inspired. Not bad for a bunch of cowboys, now is it, Mr. Sartwelle?

Jim Saye has written for magazines, newspapers, radio, and television during his forty-five-year career in advertising in Houston. He was also a writer and editor with a cowboy sports magazine for three years. Jim holds degrees from two universities; he earned one before and one after sea duty in the Navy during the Korean War. He is an Honorary Captain of the *SS SELMA*, the World War I concrete ship stuck in the mud of Galveston Bay.

PRESIDENTS OF THE HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO

1932-1948	James W. Sartwelle
1949-1951	Albert W. Lee
1952-1954	Ralph A. Johnston
1955-1957	Archer Romero
1958-1960	Douglas B. Marshall
1961-1963	Neill T. Masterson, Jr.
1964-1966	H. Stuart Lang, Jr.
1967-1969	Louis M. Pearce, Jr.
1970-1972	M. C. “Buddy” Bray
1973-1975	Tommie Vaughn
1976-1978	N. W. “Dick” Freeman
1979-1981	Allen H. Carruth
1982-1984	E. Norwin Gearhart
1985-1987	Dr. Joseph T. Ainsworth
1988-1990	Hal Hillman
1991-1993	Dick Graves
1994-1996	Don Jordan
1997-1999	Jim Bloodworth
2000-2003*	P. Michael Wells
2003-2005	John O. Smith
2006-2008	Paul G. Somerville
2009-2011	Charles R. “Butch” Robinson

*Wells became the last elected president. Subsequently, the Chairman of the Board became the top elected official.



Charles R. “Butch” Robinson, in his first year of his term as Chairman of the Board, has been an outstanding leader. New records have been established in several major categories.



On “Go Tejano Day” in 2009, Ramon Ayala and Alacranes Musical set a new all-time paid Rodeo attendance record of 74,147 fans.

THE SPANISH MUSTANG AND THE LONG WAY HOME

by Callie Heacock and Ernesto Valdés

The evolutionary history and preservation of the Spanish Mustang is complex; its historical importance to the Spanish-Mexican settlements of Texas and, ultimately, to the colonization of the American West, cannot be overstated. J. Frank Dobie, who spent years researching *The Mustangs* and is credited with the best chronicles of the horses ever written, estimated that, at their height, over a million Mustangs ran free in Texas. In *The Mustangs*, he wrote: “To comprehend the stallions that bore conquistadores across the Americas, I had to go back to mares beside black tents in Arabian deserts. Before I could release myself with

the runner of aboriginal wildness, I had to trace the Age of Horse Culture that he brought not only to Western tribes but to white men who took their ranges. My chief pleasure has been in telling the tales, legendary as well as factual, of Mustangs and of rides on horses of the Mustang breed—but historical business had to come before pleasure.”²² The Mustang history in the Americas is believed to begin with the arrival of the first Europeans; however, an intriguing twist in its evolutionary path reveals that for the horses, it was a homecoming.

In 1493, on Christopher Columbus’ second voyage, twenty



Spanish horses stepped off the ships onto the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo and within a decade, this small band had multiplied to over sixty horses. By 1540 another 250 horses were added in an effort to meet the growing demand and to infuse fresh blood into the nascent American herds.³ By the mid-sixteenth century, the success of the breeding farms allowed Spain to cease any further importations of horses.⁴ No doubt to their surprise, as explorations of the new lands progressed, the Spanish discovered there were no horses native

to the Americas. As a result, historians cited the arrival of the horse with Columbus as the introduction of a new species into the American biosphere.

Later scientific analysis revealed that instead of being a new arrival, the Mustangs were the culmination of a long evolutionary journey. The general belief among scientists in the late nineteenth century held that the horse was native to Central Asia. Then, in 1870 American paleontologist, O. C. Marsh, studied some previously unclassified fossils from remote

*“For after God, we owed
the victory to the horses”¹*

– attributed to the Spanish Conquistadors



“The Run” by Jolie Alongi, Arrow Rock Spanish Mustangs, Tulsa, Oklahoma, www.arrowrockspanishmustangs.com.

regions of Nebraska and concluded that the fossils suggested they were part of the evolutionary lineage of the modern horse that appeared some thirty-four to fifty-four million years ago. He named the creature *Eohippus* (dawn horse) which appeared to be about the size of a collie, weighing no more than fifty pounds. Later during the Pliocene era, *Eohippus* evolved into *Hipparion*, sharing the biosphere with camels, giant mastodons, and other mega-fauna.⁵

Marsh's conclusion was supported in 1901 when the American Museum of Natural History displayed a lineage of similar fossils, including a nearly complete *Eohippus* skeleton found in Briscoe County, Texas (1899), and an incomplete one found in the Llano Estacado (1901).⁶ *The New York Times* covered the exhibition on September 15, 1901, and reported an astonishing conclusion: "The discovery forms another link in the chain of proof that the horse was originally an American animal . . . There is abundant geological evidence to prove that the ancestors of the horse to-day roamed over the western portion of this continent long before man came upon the earth or before the horse appeared upon the steppes of Asia or in the lowlands of Arabia."⁷ This latter phase suggests other chapters in the Mustangs' development that remained locked in their genetic code, until modern scientists were able to interpret the evidence.

Hipparion migrated from North America across the Bering Land Bridge into eastern Siberia where the species wandered onto the steppes and the vast plains of Eurasia. Nature's evolutionary forces molded *Hipparion* into *Equus*, while the species in America became extinct. How *Equus* emerged over the millennia remained a mystery until an international team of scientists from Berlin's Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, the German Archeological Institute, Humboldt Institute Berlin, as well as American and Spanish scientists used DNA materials from the Pleistocene era and the Middle Ages to solve the mystery. The answer lay in Eurasia's Ponto-Caspian steppes (Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Romania) where by 3,600 BC, *Equus* emerged as one of the many animals that farmers of Eurasia were able to domesticate.⁸ The team's findings were published on April 24, 2009, explaining that by using DNA testing, they had discovered evidence of extensive and selective breeding by ancient farmers, including the array of colors so appreciated by owners, that was made possible by domestication. From this selective breeding within a domesticated environment over thousands of years, the horses of Spain that were brought to the new world finally emerged.⁹

Spain acquired this "world-conquering breed" from the Moorish tribes of North Africa when the "highly adept warrior horsemen, riding hot-blooded, desert bred horses, invaded Spain." For the next eight centuries the Moorish horses were bred with the heftier Iberian warhorses that resulted in "the most successful horse types in history." "Within all domestic animals, no other species has had such a significant impact on the warfare, transportation, and communication capabilities of human societies as the horse. For many centuries, horses were linked to human history changing societies on a continent-wide scale, be it with Alexander the Great's or Genghis Khan's armies invading most of Asia and Eastern Europe, or Francis Pizarro destroying the Inca Empire with about thirty mounted warriors."¹⁰

By the Middle Ages, these desert bred horses became world



Edd Hayes' "Wild and Free" was created for the sixtieth anniversary of The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, in February 1992. This bronze and stone sculpture of wild Mustangs portrays the spirit of freedom through three mares, two colts and a stallion, and is located at Carruth Plaza in Reliant Park.

famous and were "sought after by the royal stud farms of Europe."¹¹ These crossbreeds are described as an "ideal blend of elegance, agility and durability that developed an extraordinary and heritable 'cow senses' [sic] making them useful in all herding and ranching situation. . . . When the Spanish set out to colonize the New World, they brought their Mustangs with them."¹² From a historical perspective, the horse left the Americas through the back door of the frozen Bering Sea and returned through the front door at Santo Domingo and the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea—they had come home.

The impact of the horses on the Spanish conquest and colonization of the Americas was so pervasive that the Conquistadors commonly stated that, "for after God, we owed our victory to the horses." The companionship between them "is wellnigh [sic] impossible to understand today . . . A companionship and pride at the same time, such as a man may feel for a younger brother who has accompanied him in some adventure."¹³ How this view translates into the chapters of the conquest is written in the accounts of Hernán Cortés' epic march to Mexico City in 1519.


After Mexico City, Spain penetrated the Mississippi River drainage during the 1539 expedition of Hernando De Soto who explored an area that would become ten of the southeastern United States. His expedition was bolstered by 300 Spanish horses that were "broken and fit for war," that represented the largest force of cavalry set out for any conquest up to that time.¹⁴ A year later, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado set out to explore the Southwest taking at least 1,000 horses on an expedition that went as far north as modern-day Kansas.¹⁵ Interspersed in the personal accounts and reports are comments that during some early incursions into the new lands, horses often escaped or were stolen by the Indians. In addition, the horses were brought into the western and southwestern lands granted to the missions and the ranches of Chihuahua and Coahuila. The Spanish horse was so popular that they provided most of the broodmares bred with the English stallions from the east coast that began to filter into the lands west of the Appalachians and Mississippi River. According to the Spanish Barb Breeder's Association, "Until the time of the American acquisition of the Spanish held western territories in 1803 [sic] (actually 1848) the blood of the Spanish Barb flowed in the veins of more early American horses than anyone would have dreamed at the time."¹⁶

As the centuries passed, escaped horses populated the American prairies and grasslands offering American Indians and eastern colonists access to the incomparable Spanish horses bred in the New World. Americans, Europeans, and American Indians began to add their own folktales about the horses to those of the Spaniards and Mexicans before them, and the horses' reputation diffused throughout villages, pueblos, and colonies. It became clear that the American progeny sustained its ancestral reputation. Sir Walter Raleigh reported that William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, described the Spanish horse as "strangely wise, beyond any man's imagination." Cavendish, in turn, reports that Sir Walter Raleigh having found "in the West Indies the finest shaped horses and barbs he ever saw." While

the Duke of Württemberg asserted, "There are better horses now in Mexico than in Spain." Finally, in 1778, Governor of Virginia, Patrick Henry, ordered two stallions and eight mares of "true Spanish blood" from herds in New Mexico.¹⁷

By 1800, the initial wonderment of the indigenous people of North America over the horse had evolved from stark terror at a new and bewildering enemy, to a welcome new food source, to recognizing its utility as a servant of man, to the almost mystic bond between the Comanche and his mount. "Nowhere . . . in North America were there the multitudes that gave their name to the Mustang Desert between the drainages of the Nueces and the Rio Grande."¹⁸ Feral descendants of Spanish horses became so numerous that travelers recorded innumerable mentions of herds that they encountered in the late 1700s until the 1860s. Each person—terrified or privileged to see them—was awestruck at their sheer numbers. Guesses of 10,000; 20,000; even 100,000 were estimated by the number of hours required for the mass of horses to cross a single stretch of prairie.

The origin of the word "mustang" is a corruption of the Spanish word for strayed, *mesteño* and *mostreño*. In Spain all horses were owned and accounted for by their owners, so describing horses as strayed only came into common usage for escaped horses after the Spanish brought the horses to the New World.



Yucaipa is the first foal of Jolie's personal riding mare, Luna Girl SSMA 2551, owned by Jolie Alongi.

Photo courtesy of Jolie Alongi.



"The Dance," by Jolie Alongi. The mare on the left is Windance and to her right is the stallion, Kemohah, both are Sorraia type Spanish Mustangs. The photo was taken during their first breeding season.

Photo courtesy of Jolie Alongi.

Ulysses S. Grant, as J. Frank Dobie writes in *The Mustangs*, was not known as a romanticist. He was, however, a famed horseman. In taming horses, he proceeded with kindness and patience, standing a long while and looking intently into a horse's nature. His riding skill was perhaps the finest that had ever come out of West Point.¹⁹ In 1846, serving with General Taylor's army camping at the mouth of the Nueces, Lt. Grant rode a freshly caught Mustang he purchased for \$3.00. He wrote long afterward that toward the border from Corpus Christi, "As far as the eye could reach to our right, the herd extended. To the left, it extended equally. There was no estimating the animals in it; I have no [sic] idea that they could all have been corralled in the State of Rhode Island, or Delaware, at one time. If they had been, they would have been so thick that the pasturage would have given out the first day. People who saw the Southern herd of buffalo, fifteen or twenty years ago, can appreciate the size of the Texas band of wild horses in 1846."²⁰

Though the Spaniards planted the seeds of the great southern horse herds, it was the Comanche who "fathered" or, in a vague way, managed the vast herds of wild horses. The prairies from the Rio Grande to the Brazos River seem to have been created for these small grass-loving horses. They thrived, grew healthy and strong, beautiful in their vast numbers, handsome and of matchless endurance from the wonderful grasslands of their new

home. They became incredibly prolific breeders. Since one mare can have only one foal per year and very rarely twins, only one of whom would survive in the wild, it is truly mind boggling that such vast numbers of the breed existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Texas. J. Frank Dobie believed Texas was the one true cradle of the vast herds ranging the west—part of one gigantic population sweeping with the grass, not north and south as the buffalo did, answering a silent call to change locations according to their own dictum.

The Comanches in Texas regarded the region as their traditional homeland and defended it violently. This running war would have been impossible without their Spanish horses.²¹ During the Civil War, bands of Indians in the state pillaged freely against the settlements, growing stronger. By 1874, however, the Army and the Texas Rangers were determined to rid the state of the Comanche menace. Their solution was Captain Ranald MacKenzie and his Buffalo Soldiers. Thoroughly and personally loathed by the Indians, and not well-liked by his troops who called him the "Perpetual Punisher," MacKenzie was infuriated by the refusal of the last great Comanche chief, Quanah Parker of the Kwerharehmuh (Antelope) band to speak to whites, let alone talk "treaties" or come into the reservation. MacKenzie was further tormented because his troop movements were constantly shadowed by Quanah and his warriors.

The cavalymen sometimes saw the Comanches circling their camps in the moonlight, always just out of range, always silent, always there.

Quanah Parker was the son of Comanche chief, Peta Nocona, and a white woman captured in childhood, Cynthia Ann Parker. Cynthia Ann, who took the name Naduah, lived with the Comanches for over twenty-eight years, and refused traders' offers several times to leave her husband and children to return to the Parkers. In 1864, however, Cynthia Ann and her eighteen-month-old daughter, Topsannah, were captured in a raid on their camp while the warriors were hunting. She was returned to the Parkers and made several attempts to escape to her Comanche family, only to be returned to the Parkers, east of Waco. When Topsannah died at age four of a "white man's disease," Cynthia Ann mourned in the Comanche way, ripping her clothes, wailing, mutilating herself, and cutting off her hair. She then starved herself to death, never knowing that her husband and sons still lived.

After learning of these circumstances when his father lay dying in 1872, Quanah took the name Parker. He never attended a parley or made a treaty; his Antelope band fought every encroachment on their hunting grounds with a whirlwind ferocity, and then vanished completely, as if by magic, one officer said. At about this time the Indian agent, Labadi, estimated that the Comanche had 15,000 horses and 300 mules on the upper Texas plains.²²

In the late summer of 1874, the cavalry caught a Comanchero, Jose Tafoya, on his way to a meeting with the Comanches. MacKenzie had Tafoya stretched against a wagon wheel until he talked, revealing that Quanah and the other Comanche bands had a secret encampment in the Palo Duro Canyon, an almost-invisible, but enormous crack in the earth on the Texas plains.²³

MacKenzie sent scouts to the "vast crevasse opening in the apparently level high plateau. They crawled to the edge on hands and knees, amazed at what they saw. Far below, along a stream that had cut through the earth over countless aeons [sic], they saw hundreds of grazing ponies and a three-mile-long stand of scattered tipis."²⁴ The scouts reported their findings to MacKenzie who immediately drove his regiment through the night to Palo Duro. The cavalry arrived at dawn, and scouts found only one trail down into the canyon, so narrow that the troop of fifty cavalymen had to pass through in single file to the canyon floor. MacKenzie's men ran to the horse herd, stampeding more than a thousand horses down the canyon. The surprised warriors sprang to resistance, allowing the women and children to retreat farther down the canyon, scramble up the walls, and escape across the prairie. The warriors then set a great fire and vanished behind it, after insuring noncombatants had made their escape.

MacKenzie, having managed to kill only four warriors, dealt the harshest blow he could by ordering the soldiers to burn everything left behind: tons of flour, sugar, blankets, cured buffalo meat, tents, new carbines, and ammunition—winter provender stored up over the year. Not yet done, MacKenzie ordered the killing of 1,200 trapped Comanche ponies. "MacKenzie had destroyed... the Comanches as surely as if he had shot them with the horses."²⁵ This manner of warfare, the systematic killing of Indian horses, was repeated all over the west in succeeding years. Killing the horses destroyed the Indians' power to resist

Quanah, unsure of moving his People to the reservation, walked to a private place and asked for a sign to guide him for his People. As he stood, gazing off into the clear, bright air of the high plains, an eagle circled over him several times, and then flapped off to the southeast. A wolf appeared and ran southeast, where the dreaded confinement of the reservation lay. He had received an answer, and agreed to take his People to the reservation. Because the Antelope band had never signed and therefore never broken any treaties, they were not subjected to the harsh treatment received by some of the other tribes on the reservation.

Quanah went on to become a friend of Teddy Roosevelt, going to Washington, D.C. several times. He reconciled with his Parker relatives and had the government pay to move the bones of Cynthia Ann and Topsannah to his home in Cache Creek, Oklahoma, a twenty-three room house (the Star House) built for him by Texas rancher and businessman, Burk Burnett. Quanah Parker personally took the bones of his mother and sister, tenderly washed them and held a Comanche ceremonial burial. He had also acquired the only extant image of his mother, the captive photo after she was returned to the Parkers. Quanah's descendants and the descendants of Cynthia Ann's family hold family reunions each year, either at Cache Creek, Oklahoma, or Fort Parker near Groesbeck, Texas.

General Ranald MacKenzie was retired from the U.S. Army on March 24, 1884, with a diagnosis of "general paresis." In December of 1883, he had begun exhibiting odd behavior and showing signs of mental instability. Upon his forced retirement, he was taken under military escort to the Bloomingdale Asylum in New York City. The descendants of Quanah's Comanche herd still thrive and are registered by the Southwest Mustang Association.

*Quanah Parker, born in 1845 to Comanche Chief Peta Nacona and Cynthia Ann Parker, was a protector of the Comanche interests in both war and peace. "As a result of Quanah's shrewd business negotiations the Comanches and affiliated tribes, by 1900, generated an aggregate annual income of \$232,000 per year through grazing leases."*¹

Photo courtesy of Old Fort Parker, Groesbeck, Texas.





Iron Horse has the largest LP blanket of the 2009 foals born at Arrow Rock. His dam, Iron Maiden is on lease from Jerry and Peggy Brietzke of La Vernia, Texas.

Photo courtesy of Jolie Alongi.

Anglo westward expansion, or “manifest destiny.”²⁶

In the spring of 1875, an emissary was sent to persuade the last wild Comanches—Quanah Parker’s Antelope band—to come into the reservation. Quanah’s People had just endured a terrible winter and were close to starvation, their primary food source was gone. Buffalo hunters had annihilated the great southern buffalo herd in violation of the Medicine Lodge Treaty of 1848. With little game to be found, Quanah agreed to bring his People to Fort Sill. On June 1, 1875, now General MacKenzie stood at attention as Quanah Parker, clad in chief’s attire, with 700 Comanches and 1,500 horses came to their new homeland.

When the American Indians in the Southwest had mostly been subdued and sent to reservations in Oklahoma, and cattle markets opened in the East, Texas became cattle ranching country. Without the threat of Indian depredations cattle ranchers had no worries other than the price of beef and drought.²⁷ Mustangs became a nuisance, eating the grass on government land that otherwise would be leased to cattle ranchers for raising a commercially viable product in great demand “back East.” By the early 1900s, the very word “Mustang” was a synonym for an ugly, useless animal. The beautiful, indomitable horse that carried the Spanish in their pursuit of gold and converts, who

became a complete culture and part of the religion of the Indians and allowed the Comanches to repel the tide of Spanish colonization and Anglo expansion into Texas, was now considered worthless. Taking wild horses became a sport in some areas, and for a time, there was a bounty for dead horses. They were killed for leather, shot for “fun,” rounded up and sold for chicken feed, and later, shamefully, for pet food. All their beauty, stamina, and courage came to dust.

In the twentieth century, after the dust clouds of gold and silver had settled, and the struggles for possession of the North American continent were decided, a small western horseman fell in love with the American horse—the Spanish Mustang—and began to seek them all over the West, fearing their eminent extinction. This was an important moment for the present-day horses of Texas. Bob Brislawn was employed by the U.S. Geographical Survey Department, part of a crew that was using horses in mapping the western states. His deep roots in the West allowed him to become a friend, confidant, and interpreter between the western Indian tribes and his employers. Robert Emmett Brislawn and his brother, Ferdie, sought any horses they could verify either by oral tradition or physiology as being “Spanish.” Being children born at the end of the great western

expansion era, living among Indians, ranchers and cowboys all their lives, they knew what such a horse was, and their eye was accurate.

Bob was especially methodical and unyielding about what he wanted. He slowly traded, bought, or, helped by his Ute Mustanger friends, Monty and Sadie Holbrook, of Ft. Duchesne, Utah, gathered in the wild the ones that fit his standards. Bob Brislawn looked at hundreds of horses while he ran the government survey. During his time off, he haunted the wild places, camped for days by water holes, and examined horse skeletons. The horses he sought had structural anomalies not found in modern breeds. Educating himself with skeletal evidence, Bob became knowledgeable enough that he could feel the backbone and examine the round cannon bones and singular hooves of the live animals to recognize a purebred Mustang. There were very few left, and they were difficult to find, often in inaccessible box canyons or formidable mountain valleys that white men did not know existed. Old ranchos had bred the same strain of horse for 200 years, and Bob was able to acquire a mare or two. He bred generations of these horses to be sure that what he had were pure old blood from the Spanish arrival in America. Years before DNA was anything but a scientist's wistful dream, Bob Brislawn was studying everything he could about equine history and genetics.

After more than forty years, much travel, travail, and disappointment, there was a growing flicker of hope, on June 14, 1957, at Sundance, Wyoming, when the Spanish Mustang Registry was incorporated. Bob registered only seventeen horses he felt certain were the "razo puro." The breeding program was founded on the great Monty, a young buckskin Spanish stallion caught in the Book Cliffs of Utah by Monty Holbrook. This stallion sired two exceptional sons who became the first two registered SMR horses, Buckshot, a dark line-backed grulla stallion with the zebra-striped legs indicative of the "old blood" and Ute, an orange dun stallion in 1945, with a dorsal stripe, a cross over his withers, and white face and feet with silver in his mane and tail. The dam of these two was Bally, a sorrel Ute mare born about 1935. In the early 1940s, Monty escaped back into the mountains, taking some of his mares with him.

The Spanish Mustang Registry continued under Bob's careful, meticulous guidance until the mid-1950s, when his son, Emmett Brislawn, took the reins. Bob gained national recognition as a preservationist, and in so doing, gave respectability to a wonderful breed that had suffered every brutal consequence of its many gifts to mankind. In 1972, the United States Department of Agriculture recognized Bob Brislawn and his extraordinary life and research. Brislawn, "Mr. Mustang," died in 1979, and is buried near Oshoto, Wyoming. He was a giant among horsemen, breaking trail for all who continue to conserve his beloved breed which was made possible one horse at a time, by a man with no fortune, but great heart, and great wisdom garnered from years of devotion. The newly elected president of the Spanish Mustang Registry is a Texan, Jim Dildine of C-8 Ranch, Chilton, Texas, the first time a Texan has been president of this northern Spanish Mustang group.

While Bob Brislawn was patiently gathering his seed herd in Wyoming, the horse who had numbered in the millions on the wide prairies of Texas still existed, on lonely ranches whose owners would have no other, and who realized the worth of their hardy cow ponies, stubbornly and happily ignoring the often-erroneous American "bigger is better" mantra. Although the quarter horse is now thought of as the Texas horse, it was not initially a breed, but began as any sprinter who could run a fast quarter mile, often to its owner's monetary benefit.

When the U.S. Army was scratching its collective head about how the Indians kept outrunning their pursuers, it was said that a study conducted by the government concluded that for every inch over fourteen hands, a horse lost endurance and soundness. In other words, less was more—faster, smarter, stronger. Ilo Belsky thought so. His Phantom Valley Ranch used little Spanish cow horses exclusively, and the blood of those outstanding horses still resonates in the horses of his descendants. Tom East, an in-law of the Klebergs of the fabled King Ranch, raised a famous strain of ponies straight from the Spanish blood.

Men still seek the "Tom East" descendants within a second registry, the Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, established by Gilbert Jones, the hero of the Texas Mustang preservation movement. Born in 1906 in Hastings, Indian Territory, Gilbert helped his father, Monroe Ivory Jones, a poet and a farmer, author of *Jingles and Heart Throbs*, train horses. When he was seventeen, Gilbert was given a little mare named Susie by his uncle, and so began his nearly eighty year commitment to the Spanish Mustang. Gilbert gathered horses from the western tribes, from Mexico, and from the descendants of the Five Civilized Tribes who came to Indian Territory on the Trail of Tears in the 1830s, bringing their horses with pedigrees longer than their great flowing manes and tails. One such bloodline was kept by Jewell Whitmire, a lineal descendant of Old Hop and Corn Tassle, Cherokee chiefs who lived in the 1700s. The Texas Cherokee, having been promised land in perpetuity by their friend Sam Houston, lived in Texas from the 1820s until Mirabeau Lamar had them removed to Indian Territory.

Horses were collected from Mexico by Cap Yates, of Longhorn fame, and bred by Tally and Bessie Johnson, Oklahoma Cherokees.

Preservation from the original Texas herds probably owes more to Gilbert Jones and his supporters than to the Brislawns. The Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, begun in 1978 in Oklahoma as a closed registry with only horses descended from the breed stock of nine families, had better access to old Texas bloodlines. Along the way, the Spanish Mustang picked up many advocates. Dr. Gus Cothran, an equine geneticist at Texas A&M University, has been of inestimable help in the ongoing genetic research on bloodlines. Dr. Phil Sponenberg, Professor of pathology and genetics at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, and technical programs advisor of the American Livestock Breed Conservancy has been a friend of both registries and their color expert. Horseman and geneticist, Robert Painter, who owns what is believed to be the only herd of pure Barbs alive in the world today, understands the difficulties inherent in saving a breed from extinction, especially when no



Gilbert Jones (1906-2000) and his Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, begun in 1978, seeks only Mustangs with the purest of bloodlines. He is considered the hero of the Texas Mustang Preservation Movement.

Photo courtesy of Peggy Brietske, Sacred Ground Spanish Mustangs, LaVernia, Texas.

one involved is moneyed, and most are “horse-poor,” refusing to sell them except to a buyer committed to carry on the conservation begun 100 years ago. He says, however, “the horses call who they need,” which is evidently true.

In Texas today, the Spanish Mustang Council, owned by John “Mustang Mac” and Diane McSwain of Winona, Texas, is devoted to the one cornerstone principle of Bob Brislawn and Gilbert Jones: purity of bloodline. These horses must conform to standards to keep them as they have always been, not to be “improved” by making them larger, or bigger-boned, or heavy-hipped. They remain as they were 500 years ago. With that constancy come all the other admirable qualities that have smitten the Indians, the cowboys, and now, discerning modern horsemen who want a horse with great heart, extreme intelligence, enormous range of motion and flexibility, independence and spirit, large soft eyes full of life and curiosity, alert as a guard dog, and with a willing heart, always ready for adventure. They learn so quickly that repetitive lessons bore them into mischief. All these qualities, along with their special physical traits, are the result of centuries of living free on the American prairies. They are hardy, abhor stables, and avoid barns unless for some tasty hay. They require no high protein feed, regarding grass and fresh hay as “good grub.” They are not shod—their hooves are so thick-walled and hard, farriers often complain at the difficulty of trimming their feet. It is possible to believe that a breed so gifted has reached this apex because the perfect environment was waiting for their return, to the great grasslands of Texas, their *querencia*. *Querencia* is an old Spanish word for one’s spiritual home, the



Choctaw War Lance, a colt owned by Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo’s director Lance Heacock and Blue Hill Farm in Bellville, Texas.
Photo courtesy of author.

one place where body and spirit thrive best in all the world—and so it was with Texas and the Spanish horses.²⁸

Little more than 2,000 of these registered horses are alive today, and they are still seen as a “threatened” breed, subject to extinction. The horses still retain all the colors of their breed, and all the character. They are usually gaited, as were their Spanish ancestors; and because of centuries of being trained to remain with their rider, will stay close to camp. It is difficult to exaggerate the charm of these horses. They exhibit playfulness and a *joie de vivre* not seen

in other breeds. Many of the hard-bitten old horsemen believe them to have something magic.

There are many breed conservators in Texas, some within 100 miles of Houston. There are Shelby and Alice King, with their Choctaw herd at Santa Guadalupe Ranch near Gonzales; Mona Pomraning near Hockley; Mary Ann McLeod of Brenham; Tony Riojas of Houston; Callie and Fred Heacock of Blue Hill Farm in New Ulm; and Nanci Falley with her American Indian Horse Registry in Lockhart. There are more Spanish Mustangs now in Texas than in any other state, finally and again.

Many who read this will have seen the powerful life-sized bronze of a plunging herd of horses in front of the Texas Memorial Museum at the University of Texas at Austin. That sculpture, *Mustangs*, was created by A. Phimister Proctor who spent nearly a year on Tom East’s San Antonio Viejo ranch, modeling each horse on a live Spanish Mustang, descended from the once-fabled Rancho Randado herd, raised in the brush country of South Texas, and caught forever in their wild beauty.

The future for the first American horse looks brighter each year, as more people discover they still exist. Many had assumed they were gone forever. Our American treasure, the Spanish Mustang, which, with the exception of the pure Barb, may have left Spain with Andalusian, Arabian, Portuguese Sorraia, and native Spanish blood in their veins, became a breed themselves when they first swam ashore and touched their dainty, hard hooves on the sand near present-day Vera Cruz, the first equine since prehistory to feel the American continent beneath them. From 1519 to the late 1800s, they were one of America’s most valued resources, eclipsed only by the grandeur of the new land itself. Whatever one believes about the effects of the Spanish conquest, one thing remains beyond question; a magnificent and everlasting gift was left behind—the Spanish Mustang.

Callie and Fred Heacock live at Blue Hill Farm near Bellville, Texas, on a Stephen F. Austin land grant, where they are breed conservators for Spanish Mustangs and own a small herd. Fred is also a criminal lawyer, and Callie owns Bexar Moon, an Indian trading company. Her family has lived in Texas since the 1830s.

Ernesto Valdés has a B.A. from Trinity University, a J.D. from South Texas College of Law, and an M.A. in Public History. He serves as Director for the Oral History Project in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston.



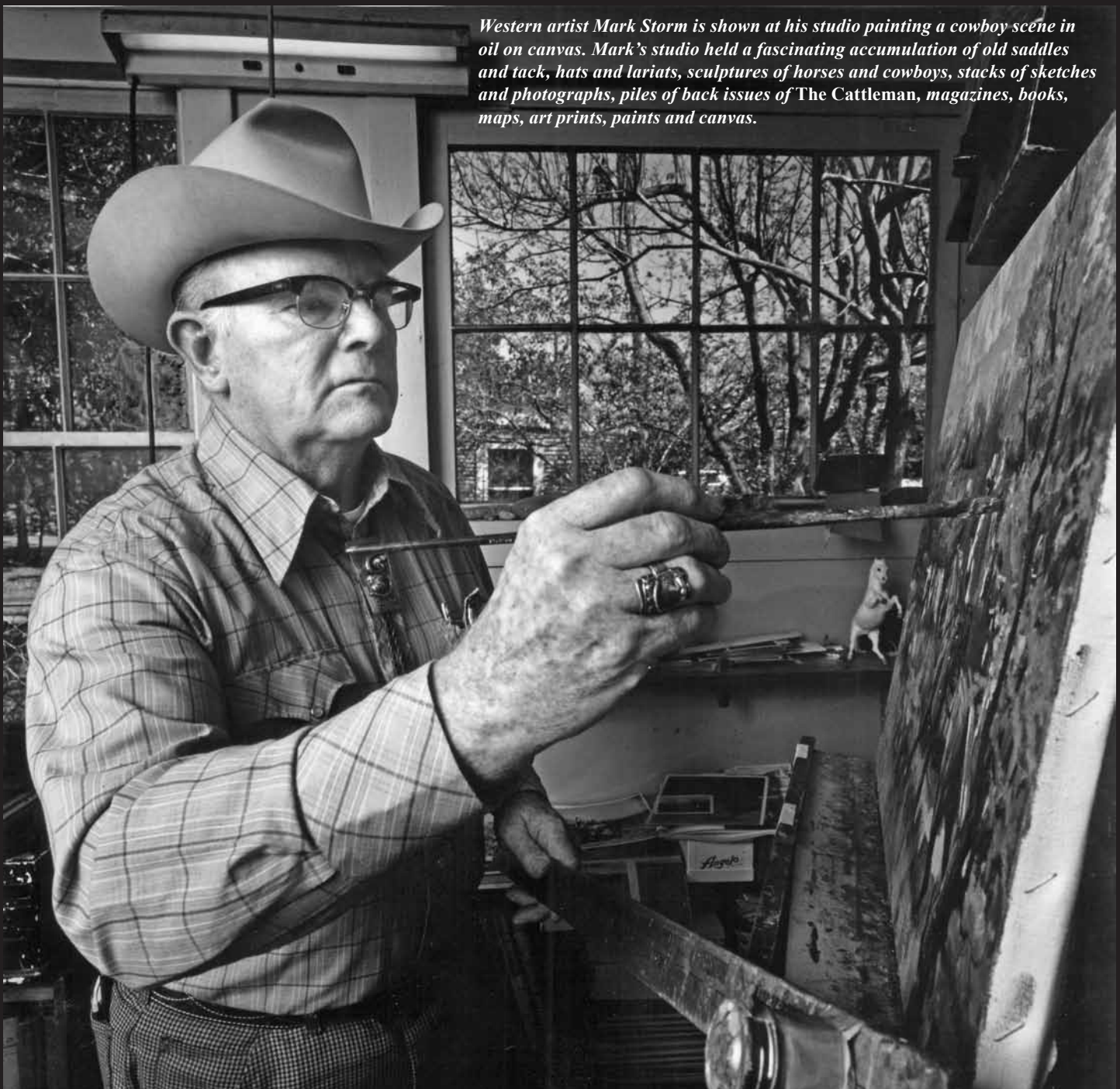
Peyote Dream, born at Blue Hill this spring, is a very rare foal color, pink, with bright red mane, red dorsal stripe, and red and white tail. This birth color has not been seen in the registries in twenty years and is indicative of the ancient Spanish blood, as are her heavy leg stripes, and withers’ cross. She should mature as an equally rare color, apricot dun, retaining all her Spanish markings. Photo courtesy of author.

REMEMBERING MARK STORM — Cowboy Artist

by Jim Saye

Mark Storm died seven long years ago; on Friday, October 4, 2002. Yet his quiet, competent, multi-talented presence abides. Mark's impressive body of work, produced through a long and inspired career is proving to be an important means for preserving the cowboy heritage.

It is often said "a picture is worth a thousand words." Mark created a thousand eye-catching and truthful pictures that focus attention on the "Cowboy Way." Once, when he was immersed in sculpting a statue of Stuart Lang, Mark explained his painstaking efforts devoted to the folds of the trousers around the knees. "An artist is above all a careful observer. Noticing and attaching significance to the tiniest of details becomes almost an obsession. Truth is in the details," Mark related as his big, powerful hands smoothed and shaped the folds into the sculpting clay.



Western artist Mark Storm is shown at his studio painting a cowboy scene in oil on canvas. Mark's studio held a fascinating accumulation of old saddles and tack, hats and lariats, sculptures of horses and cowboys, stacks of sketches and photographs, piles of back issues of The Cattleman, magazines, books, maps, art prints, paints and canvas.

Standing five-feet ten and weighing about 200 solid pounds, the stocky Storm in his cowboy boots and hat looked more like a successful rancher or oilman than a gifted artist. However, his prolific work through a distinguished career as a painter and a sculptor have established Mark securely in the front rank of Texas and Western artists. Mark was a charter member of the Texas Cowboy Artists Association. His canvases hang in offices, homes, and ranches throughout Texas and New Mexico, and in other western states. Prints of his oilfield paintings are posted on the walls of drilling rig “dog houses” worldwide.

In the field of sculpture, Mark designed the Lombardi Trophy, which is presented annually to the winner of the Super Bowl, and many of the trophies awarded each year by the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. He sculpted busts and life-size statues of a number of prominent Houstonians, including Leroy Melcher and Stuart Lang. Paintings by Mark Storm were featured in many Western magazines, including *The Cattleman*, *Quarter Horse Journal*, and *Horseman Magazine*. Prints of some of his paintings and posters still sell briskly.



Mark Storm's statue of Stuart Lang in the Allen H. "Buddy" Carruth Plaza at Reliant Park was created to honor the man who led the Show's move from the Coliseum to the Astrodome.

GENUINE COWBOY

Mark's father was a mining engineer who designed and built mine structures in remote areas. Mark was born in Valdez, Alaska, in 1911. This was an era when the “Wild West,” especially in the more remote areas, was still more than somewhat wild. At the turn of the century, the U.S. flag had only forty-five stars. Oklahoma became a state in 1907. New Mexico and Arizona joined in 1912, filling out the “Lower Forty-Eight.” Alaska finally joined the Union in 1959.

The Storm family, including Mark and his two brothers, moved more often than most. After Alaska, the family moved to Oregon, then made a major move to a location in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. Young Mark found this to be a fascinating learning experience. Upon completion of the mining project in Mexico, the Storm family moved north to New

Mexico—to a working horse ranch of 150 acres in the heart of what became the Ruidoso resort locale.

The Storm ranch is near Glencoe in southeastern New Mexico, in the vicinity of the Mescalero Apache Reservation. This area is famous as the scene of the “Lincoln County War” in the 1870s. Billy the Kid, Sheriff Pat Garrett, and a large number of ranchers, cowboys, and gunslingers waged ferocious shoot-outs in this rugged, sparsely inhabited area.

Abundant water, fertile pastures and moderate climate, plus grazing rights on adjacent government land, made the Storm ranch well suited for breeding and raising fine horses, as well as cattle. Mark and his brothers grew up as ranch hands, tending the horses and cattle, roping and branding, building fences, repairing corrals, performing all manner of chores, and keeping up with school. Mark developed skills in plain and fancy roping that stayed with him all of his life.

He also gained a wealth of experience with horses. His life-long fascination with sketching, drawing, and painting horses was built upon hard-won knowledge from years of constant interaction with them. Some of this involved bronc busting. One of Mark's proudest memories was of winning the bronc riding event at the big July 4th holiday rodeo in Fort Stanton, New Mexico, in 1933.

While the family kept the ranch, and always considered it “home,” they moved to Austin to enroll the boys in the University of Texas. Mark majored in art and architecture. His interest in higher education waned when he met a beautiful coed from Houston, Ferne Sweeny. They were married, and settled in Houston in the 1930s.

THERE ARE JOBS FOR ARTISTS IN HOUSTON

A headquarters city for much of the worldwide oil industry, Houston offered opportunity for talented young people in the growing graphic arts support businesses. Publishers, printers, engravers, typesetters, commercial artists, writers, and associated trades were needed—even in the Depression Era years.

In one capacity or another, most of the people in Houston's graphics community did work for Humble Oil & Refining Company. Humble was big and prestigious, and the company expected the very best; but it was always open to creative artists, especially in 1934 to 1935, when the State of Texas was making preparations for the 1936 Texas Centennial celebration.

Centennial activities were centered in Dallas. The Texas State Fairgrounds were almost totally rebuilt. Leading Texas corporations vied for spaces for elaborate productions of historical and futuristic displays. Because of its special relationship as one of the largest corporations in the state, and its close rapport with Texas historical commissions and societies, and artists and writers, Humble was expected to have bigger and better displays than all others at the Centennial Fairgrounds. Which it did.

Mark Storm was one of the artists hired to augment the Humble Oil staff to produce the Centennial display in Dallas. This was a career-building opportunity. Subsequently, Mark was called upon frequently by Humble's public relations and advertising departments, and he was commissioned to produce a number of cover paintings and illustrations for *The Humble Way*. Reprints of his covers were widely distributed by Humble. Gulf Publishing Company reprinted numerous color paintings by Mark, and the framed prints lined the walls of the second floor hallway of its building on Allen Parkway.

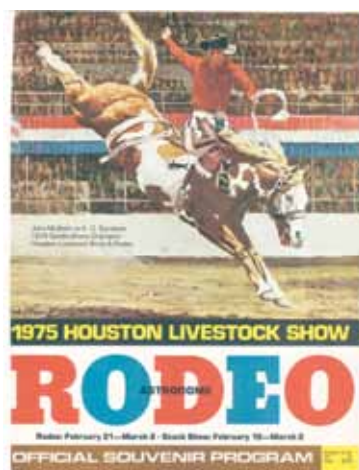
Wetmore Printing Company hired Mark to be a staff commercial artist. At the time, Wetmore was one of the few Houston printers to offer both standard letterpress and silkscreen printing. The silkscreen process offered excellent color reproduction values on sturdy cardboard. Wetmore used their silkscreen facilities to print the large, colorful, sturdy cardboard posters created to advertise the annual Houston Fat Stock Show and Livestock Exposition.

During the 1940s, these posters were the primary medium of advertising for the Fat Stock Show. Mack Wetmore put Mark to work on creating cowboy art posters that would attract attention and sell tickets to the Show. Mark's posters did that; in addition, they featured realistic portrayals of horses and cowboys. These Fat Stock Show posters were proudly displayed all over Houston—in corporate lobbies, banks, offices, shops, restaurants, schools, feed stores, ice houses, service stations, dance halls, and honky-tonks. It was not unusual for the Show to get calls from shop owners reporting that the sun had bleached the color out of their poster and requesting a replacement.

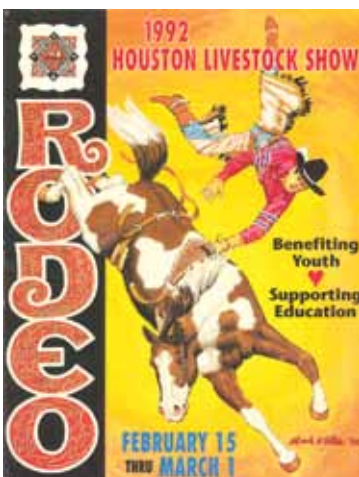
YEARS WORKING FOR THE HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO

The annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Souvenir Program is a “telephone book” size volume, running to about 1,100 pages each year. Most Houston businesses, both large and small, buy space for an advertisement in the program. The design of the program's front cover sets the basic art theme for most of the Show's marketing activities—advertisements, posters, television spots, and all of the related materials.

The 1975 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Souvenir



This 1975 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Program cover was a reproduction of a 20" x 24" oil on canvas painting by Mark Storm. It has the distinction of being the first work of fine art to be featured on the program's cover.



As this 1992 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo program illustrates, Mark Storm's covers were lively and vibrant portrayals of the Show. Storm designed the covers from 1974 to 1999, and the cover of the 2000 edition was dedicated to him.

Artwork courtesy of Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.



Mark Storm, seated, with sharpshooter Joe Bowman on the left, and Ray K. Bullock, former Show vice-president on the right.

Program was the first to use a fine art painting for the front cover. Mark Storm created the art for that cover. The painting portrayed John McBeth, winner of the 1974 Houston Saddle Bronc finals and the 1974 RCA Saddle Bronc Champion riding K.O. Sundown. This dramatic action painting was so popular that the Show's Souvenir Program for the next twenty-four years featured an original painting by Mark Storm. In honor of his many years designing and producing program covers, the year 2000 cover was dedicated to Mark.

In 1992 Mark was commissioned to sculpt a bronze statue of past Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo President Stuart Lang, who had borne the tremendous responsibility when the Show moved from the old Coliseum out to the Astrodome on the site of the Astrodome complex. This impressive larger-than-life sized statue is about eight feet tall. It stands on a four foot pedestal. At the foot of the figure, on the top of the pedestal, there is a sculpture of the Astrodome complex—the Astrodome, Astrohall, and Astroarena. This sculpture is now situated in a prominent location in the Allen H. “Buddy” Carruth Plaza, across from the Reliant Center Building.

Mark Storm strongly influenced the Houston graphic arts community during the middle years of the twentieth century when Houston saw many major changes in the communication industry. He will long be remembered for his work with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, which is as it should be.¹

Jim Saye has written for magazines, newspapers, radio, and television during his life-long career in advertising in Houston. He and Mark Storm were friends and business associates for more than forty years.



The Grand Champion winner in 2009, "A Mother's Love," is a colored drawing by Renee Zhan of the Katy ISD and sold at auction for \$155,000.
All images courtesy of Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Rodeo Art: More than One Way to Show a Cow

by Debbie Z. Harwell

In October 1963, two Houston women met for lunch at the Sir Robert's Club in the Tower's Hotel. They talked and, on the back of a napkin, sketched an outline for a new competition at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, one that would allow students who could not raise an animal the chance to take part. From that inauspicious beginning came one of the rodeo's most lucrative events—The School Art Program—which in 2008 reached a record \$1.6 million in sales.¹

Lynne Chesnar, a former graduate student at the University of Houston and a staff member at the Lloyd Gregory Advertising firm, which handled the rodeo advertising, first expressed the idea “to form a program where children who did not have an opportunity to raise animals and exhibit them . . . could still participate through the creative endeavor of a school art program.” She presented the idea to Houston Independent School District (HISD) Deputy Superintendent for Art Education, Grace Smith, who liked the concept of tying art to the study of western heritage but had concerns about the

increased work load for teachers. Within a week, the two met at the restaurant again. Teachers had shown an overwhelmingly positive response to the idea, and so the pair devised some basic rules.²

With little lead time before the event, they chose to make the first year's program very informal—a Go Texan Poster Contest—with three divisions for elementary, junior, and senior high students. Not expecting to receive many entries initially, they decided that the competition pieces would be dropped off in the parking lot at the Lloyd Gregory Advertising offices. To their surprise over 700 pieces of art were turned in between noon and 5:00 p.m. The large number of entries also meant they needed a bigger space to display the pieces for judging. R. A. “Al” Parker of Al Parker Buick volunteered his showroom, and the art filled every available space. Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo officials showed their support with rancher Ray K. Bullock agreeing to purchase rodeo tickets for the winners, and restaurateur G. D. “Sonny” Look hosting an awards ceremony at his restaurant.³

Tyler Mitchan of Giddings ISD was awarded the 2009 Reserve Class Champion Sculpture for his work entitled “How the West Was Won, Bible, Fist, and Gun.”



Over time, the School Art Program expanded tremendously and the rules were refined. In 1969, five school districts participated, and judging moved to the individual districts. The program, under the Go Texan Committee, grew so large that it eventually became a separate committee. Their mission statement reads, “The mission of the School Art Committee is to provide students the opportunity to be a part of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo through their artistic abilities, encourage the education and appreciation of their Western heritage, and to provide art workshops and scholarships.”³⁴

Dave Morris, the general manager of KNUZ-AM and KQUE-FM, became the first chairman. Original members still serving on the committee forty years later include, Jim Glass, Delores Lang, Carole Look, and Pam Potter. Carole Look expressed this sentiment about their efforts, “I am so proud of what it means to the kids who don’t live on a farm and cannot raise an animal to exhibit or even visit the country to see what it is like [to live there]. They are learning Texas history and their agricultural heritage through art.”³⁵



Jewell Chang from Lamar Consolidated ISD won the Quick Draw Portrait competition in 2008 and received \$1,000.



Julia Mason's sculpture "Jack" was the 2008 High School Champion in the non-auction category. The non-auction class consists of students that do not wish to auction their artwork and, therefore, are not eligible to compete for the Grand Champion or Reserve Champion prizes. Instead, they compete against other non-auction participants.



The colored drawing, "Exploring New Trails," by Trenton Mendez of Lamar Consolidated ISD was the Grand Champion at the first art auction held in 1996.



The monochromatic drawing "Cute Companions" by Stephanie Hasenleder of Dickinson ISD was Reserve Class Champion in 2008.

In 1976 the School Art Committee received 40,000 entries and had 2,000 volunteers working on forty-nine committees. The best of show and gold medal winners were displayed in the Astrohall at the Hayloft Gallery. Scholarship awards were based on the student's application and artwork, and professional artists served as judges. In the late 1970s, the committee began awarding scholarships to the Glassell School at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts Summer Workshop to select students. By 1983, the program received 200,000 entries from forty-nine districts. The following year, five seniors received scholarships to study at the Cowboy Artists of America Museum in Kerrville, Texas, in affiliation with Shreiner College. Later, students were given the option to attend the workshop or receive a \$2,000 scholarship to any Texas university. The committee added a photography category

in 1990. In 2007, a Quick Draw contest was incorporated with fifty contestants selected from approximately 400 high school student applications. Students are given fifty minutes to complete a drawing of either a still life or portrait/figurative display chosen by the committee. Five winners receive trophies and cash prizes.⁶

After twelve years of lobbying, the biggest change came in 1996, when the committee held the first auction of winning entries. Their records indicate: "Fifty pieces of high school art sold for a record \$254,600, with the Grand Champion selling for \$40,000 and the Reserve Grand Champion selling for \$26,000." The following year, the organizers held the first School Art Print reception, with 290 signed and numbered prints of the Grand Champion being offered for sale. The School Art Committee split in 2002 and formed the School Art Auction Committee, which has conducted the auctions since 2003. In 2009, the auction earned \$1,163,400 with the Grand Champion bringing in \$155,000 and the Reserve Grand Champion selling for \$145,000. The 250-member committee received 300,000 submissions from ninety-eight school districts and sixty private schools. The committee currently awards fifteen four-year college scholarships of \$15,000 each, thirty-four three-week scholarships to the summer workshops at the Western Art Academy for high school

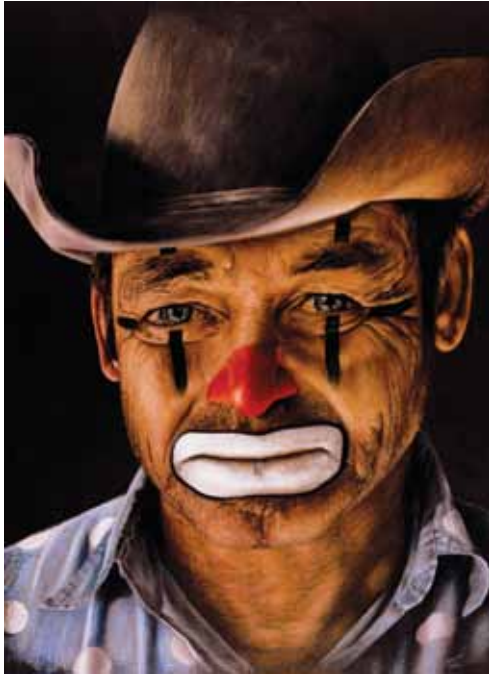


Giddings ISD student, Cayden Lehmann, won the prize for Class Champion in 2008 for the sculpture, "You Might be a Redneck."



Victoria ISD student Virginia Tejerina's "Los Cincos Amigos" was named Junior High Reserve Champion in 2008.

- “Kickin’ Up Dirt” by Tiffany Foote of Victoria ISD was the Class Champion for mixed medium in 2008.



▲ “Humorous Hero,” a colored drawing by Sherwin Ovid of Goose Creek ISD was the 1997 Grand Champion.



- ▼ Grant Messinger of Conroe ISD won as the 2008 Elementary Champion for his picture “Peaceful Grazing.”





students, and 120 summer workshops for kindergarten through twelfth grade students at the Glassell School. The Committee and the Glassell School provide awards for one high school student to participate in the Advanced Curriculum for Teens Program and ten teachers to attend the Glassell's Professional Development Course for Visual Arts Teachers.⁷

Even though the program has grown exponentially since its inception, both in the number of participants and in revenues generated, former Committee Chairman Sally Woody reminds us that, "The purpose of the original program, first written on the back of a paper napkin in 1963, has remained intact—to provide students unable to exhibit animals at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo an opportunity to be a part of the Show through artistic abilities and the study of their Western heritage."⁸

Debbie Harwell is a Ph.D. student in history at the University of Houston.

The 2008 Grand Champion, "Packing Up," is the creation of Jennifer Light of Spring ISD and sold for a record \$185,000.

Andrew Cherry of Huffman ISD received the Grand Champion Award in 2004 for his painting, "Beside Still Waters."



Clear Creek ISD student Nika Cramer created this colored drawing entitled "Saddle Up" for the 2008 auction.



Larry Gatlin (center) with his brothers, Steve and Rudy (left and right), entertained some of the largest crowds in Rodeo history.

All photos courtesy of Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo unless otherwise noted.

Larry Gatlin: "Singing at the World's Biggest Rodeo Show"

by Debbie Z. Harwell

Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers played the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo twelve times between 1980 and 2002. Apart from being one of the event's most featured performers, the group is the only one to have immortalized the rodeo in a number one hit song: "Houston."

Larry Gatlin remembers the first time he and his brothers, Steve and Rudy, were invited to play the Houston Rodeo as one of the "excellent, great thrills of our lives." He personally found it meaningful on several levels to play Houston's rodeo and to play it in the Astrodome: first, as a native Texan who understands the rodeo tradition; second, as an alumnus of the University of Houston who had lived in the city and has many friends in the area; third, as a former football player who scored

a touchdown on the Astrodome field when UH beat Tulsa 100-6 in 1968; and lastly, as a spectator who watched his friends from the Imperials sing back-up to Elvis Presley—the King himself—at the rodeo in 1970. Then, Gatlin remarked, add to that having a hit song about their experience—"singing at the world's biggest rodeo show was a great time for me and the guys"—says it all.¹

Larry Gatlin was born in Seminole, Texas, in 1948, a self-proclaimed "American by birth and Texan by the grace of God!" Raised in the country and gospel music tradition, he and his brothers sang in church, on local radio, and occasionally on television. After high school, Larry attended the University of Houston on a football scholarship, majored in English (he later

attended law school there as well), and sang with the Imperials, a gospel group. The Imperials were performing with Jimmy Dean in Las Vegas when Larry met country singer Dottie West who recorded two of his songs and became one of his biggest supporters. She gave his demo tape to contacts in Nashville and financed his move to the city where he became a back-up singer for Kris Kristofferson. In 1973, he signed his first solo record deal with Monument. Gatlin's brothers began performing with him on the album *Larry Gatlin with Family & Friends* in 1976, and the group had several chart-topping hits with songs like "Broken Lady," "I Don't Want to Cry," "Love is Just a Game," and his first number one hit, "I Just Wish You Were Someone I Love." Between 1973 and 1990, Larry Gatlin had forty-two songs on the charts, including seventeen in the top ten, and he wrote all of them independently, "an achievement unmatched by any other artist in popular music." In addition to West and Kristofferson, stars who recorded Gatlin's songs include Johnny Cash, Tom Jones, Barbara Streisand, and Elvis Presley.²

"Houston" was not Larry's first hit song to have connections to the Bayou City. "All the Gold in California" played an integral part in one of the largest prize-money promotions in Houston radio history during the early 1980s. When country-music station KIKK-FM played "All the Gold in California" along with two other specified songs, the designated caller won \$100,000. To this day, people who listened to country music in Houston at that time remember the contest and react almost instinctively when Gatlin's song comes on the radio. The inspiration for the song came when Larry was stuck in traffic near the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. He saw a car with Oklahoma license plates full of people who looked like the

Beverly Hillbillies moving to California. He said to himself, "These Okies are going to find out that all the gold in California is in a bank in the middle of Beverly Hills in somebody else's name." He wrote that on a Hertz rental car receipt, went to a meeting at Warner Brothers Records, and when he came out, sat in the parking lot and wrote "All the Gold in California" in about eight minutes. Larry flew to Houston that night to play a concert at the Summit with Charlie Daniels and Willie Nelson. He taught the song to his brothers backstage, and one of his guitar players, Steve Smith told him, "That will be the biggest hit you'll ever have." They debuted the song that night to rousing applause and requests for two or three encores. Six months later in 1979, it hit number one. The next year, Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers were invited to make their first Houston Rodeo appearance.³

The story behind the hit song "Houston" actually begins at Cheyenne Frontier Days, another one of the world's most famous rodeos. Larry explained that "Bridge over Troubled Waters" was a hit about that time, and Nashville music was in the "warm and fuzzy, touchy, feely" phase. He wrote a gentle piece, "Cheyenne means I'm one day closer to you," and taught it to the band. His brother Steve told him, "Boy that really stinks! You ought to put that in a four-four Texas shuffle. We're doing the Houston Rodeo the day after tomorrow in our home state. Make it a four-four shuffle so somebody can dance to it, and some cowboy can put his hands in a cowgirl's back pocket of her Levi's and dance around the dance floor, and you may have something." Larry did exactly that; and they performed the song the first time in front of a Houston crowd that went crazy when they heard that now familiar refrain, "Houston,



One of Gatlin's favorite Rodeo memories is singing "Brothers" with his close friend, and Houston native, Patrick Swayze who lost his battle with cancer on September 14, 2009. Gatlin considered Swayze to be "like a brother" and wrote the song for Swayze's movie, Next of Kin. Shown left to right: Steve Gatlin, Patrick Swayze, Larry Gatlin, and Rudy Gatlin.

Houston, means that I'm one day closer to you..." Six months later, "Houston" was the top-selling song on the country music charts.⁴

The Gatlin Brothers, played the Houston rodeo in 1980 through 1987, 1989, 1991, 1992, and 2002. Special moments that stand out in Larry Gatlin's memory include playing their first rodeo in 1980; singing "Houston" on the Astrodome stage for the first time to the hometown crowd; and singing a duet with Houston native Patrick Swayze, who Larry said was like a brother to him. Gatlin had written the song called "Brothers" for Swayze's movie *Next of Kin*. Larry also remembers the thrill of riding around the arena waving to the crowd after his performance and hearing the announcer say, "Ladies and Gentlemen: the Houston Rodeo Association is proud to announce that the

Gatlin Brothers have just sung to the largest crowd ever assembled for a rodeo anywhere on our planet 47,748 people' or something like that." Of course, he added with amusement, the record only lasted until they added more seats the following year.⁵

From the interview, one gathers that the words to Gatlin's song "Houston" are just as true for him today as they were the day that he wrote them. He cares deeply about his family, and he loves his life. "You and God in heaven above know I love what I do for a living, I do . . ." His only question was: "When are they going to ask me to come again? . . . me and the brothers!"

Debbie Harwell is a Ph.D. student in history at the University of Houston.



Larry Gatlin, who during his time at the University of Houston played on the football team and scored a touchdown in the amazing win against Tulsa by a score of 100-6, sang the Star Spangled Banner at the opening Cougars football game on September 5, 2009.

Photo courtesy of Thomas Campbell/University of Houston.

Lyrics to "Houston" by Larry Gatlin

*Singing at the world's biggest rodeo show was a great time for me and the guys,
Ah, but when I'm away from you, honey, time always never flies.
Sleeping alone in the holiday hotel sure can make a cowboy blue,
But here I am in Houston and I'm one day closer to you.
Houston, Houston means that I'm one day closer to you.
Aw, honey, Houston, Houston means the last day of the tour and we're through.
Well honey, you and God in heaven above know I love what I do for a living, I do,
Ah, but Houston, Houston means that I'm one day closer to you.*



Larry Gatlin made the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo a legend with the hit song, "Houston."

A high-angle, wide shot of a massive trail ride taking place on a multi-lane highway. A long, single-file line of riders on horseback and in covered wagons stretches far into the distance. The riders are dressed in traditional Western attire, including cowboy hats, chaps, and boots. Some are carrying flags, including a large American flag. The highway has a concrete median and a grassy shoulder on the left where some spectators are visible. The scene is set during the day with overcast lighting.

The Trail Rides: The Oldest and The Longest

By: Ernesto Valdés

Today, spectators still line the highway watching the riders converge on the city.

All Photos and trail ride map are courtesy of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo unless otherwise noted.

Along the Gulf Coast, the weather in the month of February cannot seem to make up its mind to be cold or wet—or worse, cold and wet. It is probably a cruel coincidence that February was the month chosen as the time for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. On the other hand, one of the purposes of the Show is to allow Houstonians to step out of their modern life style and to relive, as closely as one chooses, a historical era that helped mold our Texas heritage and mystique. The coincidence of choosing February as the time to begin the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and its trail rides is that its name comes from the Latin phrase *februariolus menis*, “month of purification.” Although that “purification” may not register with all Houstonians, certainly the riders feel the “purification” from modern niceties and the daily routines as they ride through the weather, in all manner of discomfort including sore “extremities.” Still, the recurring

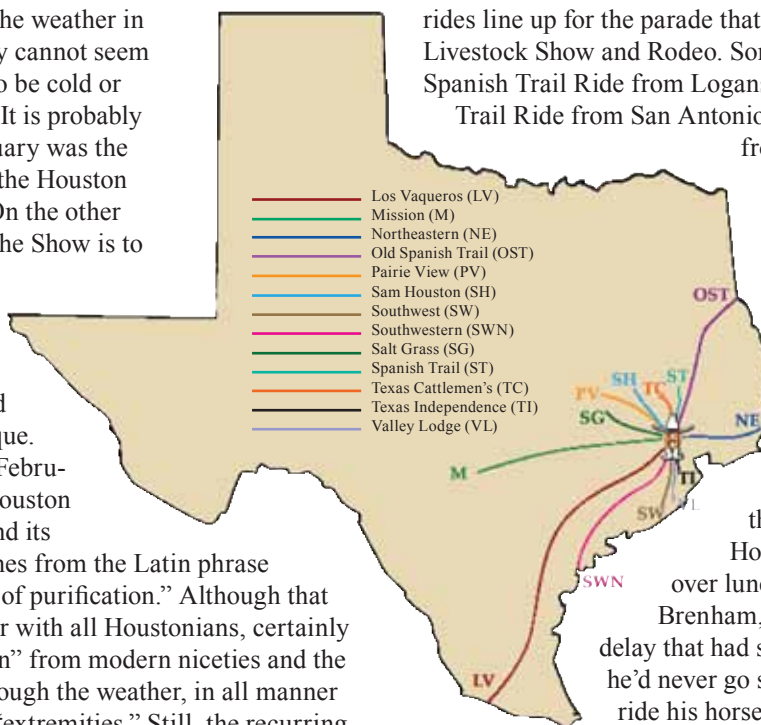


John Warnasch, Emil Marks, Pat Flaherty, and Reese Lockett (left to right) enjoyed the adventure of the first Salt Grass Trail Ride in 1952. No one could have imagined at that time what they had started.

response is that it was a lot of fun!

Implicit in this annual region-wide celebration are the cultural roots that remind us of the city's birth expressed in the trail rides that begin in some thirteen cities and towns throughout the Texas Gulf Coast and make their trek to Houston riding horseback, buckboards, and covered wagons. The first trail ride begins early in February, 386 miles away in the border town of Hidalgo, Texas. Later, the other trail rides begin on a staggered schedule, timed so that they all arrive in Houston's Memorial Park on the same day. The following day, the trail

rides line up for the parade that officially opens the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Some of the major rides are the Old Spanish Trail Ride from Logansport, Louisiana; the Mission Trail Ride from San Antonio, Texas; Sam Houston Trail Ride from Montgomery County; and Prairie View Trail Ride from Hempstead, Texas.



The Salt Grass Trail Ride

The granddaddy of them all is the ninety mile long Salt Grass Trail Ride from Cat Springs that began in 1952 as a dare. Like so many Texas events, the history of the Salt Grass Trail began in the Cork Room of the Shamrock Hotel where one afternoon in 1952 over lunch, Reese Lockett, then mayor of Brenham, was complaining of a weather delay that had stranded him in Florida. “He said he'd never go so far away again that he couldn't ride his horse back,” Maudeen Marks, daughter of rancher Emil Marks, recalled.

Someone at the table responded, “Reece, you couldn't ride your horse from Brenham to Houston.” The gauntlet had been thrown down and the challenge accepted.¹

In an article for the *Houston Chronicle*, Maudeen Marks remembered, “Reese said he had driven cattle all the way to the Salt Grass in winter time and, yes, he could ride from Brenham.”² That, of course, ignited all sorts of discussions and when all the bravado died down the ground was set for the Salt Grass Trail Ride. In winter months of the 1900's, when ranches were open-range, cattlemen drove their herds of longhorns from Hempstead to the green nutritious salt grasses along the gulf coast. Accompanying them were cowboys and wagons that would pick up the calves when they tired. Converging on the gulf grasslands were other herds from as far away as Orange County and Brownsville. From November to February cattle were branded as they grazed and intermingled with other herds. At the end of the season the cowboys helped each other cut out their respective herds and began the trek home.

In February 1952, timed to arrive for opening day of the Houston Fat Stock Show, two horsemen, Mayor Reese Lockett and Emil Marks rode into town accompanied by two “wag- oneers.” John Warnasch, a hand from the LH7 Ranch, drove a wagon pulled by a pair of mules, and Pat Flaherty, a reporter from KPRC, rode in a second wagon sitting on a pillow nailed to the bench. This group of Salt Grass Riders drew a lot of attention and was enough to spark the interest of many others.

Two years later there were 100 riders, then 300, followed by 500 people on horseback settling into Memorial Park at the end of the trail. People lined the highways to watch the riders pass by as they made their way to the city. Today there are some 2,000 folks on horseback and 50 wagons.

Los Vaqueros Trail Ride

In 1974 Larry Ramirez, who loved riding horses, decided that he might enjoy participating in one of the trail rides that converged on Houston during the Livestock Show and Rodeo. Since no Hispanic trail ride was currently in existence, he decided to



As the trail rides began catching on, even those who did not participate in the ride, enjoyed the view—lining the trails, watching the riders making their way into the city.

ride with the Southern Trail Ride that went from Bay City to Houston at that time. Later, he proposed his idea for a Hispanic trail ride to Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo officials who approved his suggestion. When he was asked where he was going to start the ride, Ramirez answered, “Mexico.” The next logical question was what part of Mexico? Ramirez explained: “I didn’t want to start from Brownsville, and I didn’t want to start in Laredo, so that’s the reason I started in Hidalgo, the center part of it [the border].”²³

He named his trail ride “Los Vaqueros,” or the cowboys, and initially chose to start in Reynosa, Mexico, just across the border from Hidalgo, Texas, and 386 miles away from Houston. But he did not foresee the complications and time-consuming requirements of crossing an international border with a line of wagons and horsemen. Ramirez quickly solved that problem the following year by starting from Hidalgo. As it turned out, this made the trail ride the longest in distance and time (three weeks), two facts of which Ramirez is proud.

When asked why he wanted the trail ride to start from such a distant point, Ramirez replied, “It was just something different. I could have started in San Antonio . . . or Dallas . . . or anywhere in Texas, but since I called it Los Vaqueros, I figured it would be appropriate to start at the border.” Coincidentally, this decision echoes early centuries of Texas history when the European colonists from East Texas and the upper Gulf Coast of Texas were educated about the land by the colonists from Mexico who brought the ranching culture and the livestock—mustangs and longhorns—that have become Texas icons.

In addition to giving Ramirez the opportunity to ride his horse, the ride had another more practical purpose—it allowed him and his family time to share an endeavor that required cooperation to attain a common goal, i.e., family togetherness. Today Los Vaqueros trail ride is comprised of his children, grandchildren, and extended members of the family as well as other families who participate in the unique experience of the trail ride. David Ramirez, Larry’s son and now the trail boss, says that his father used to take the whole family fishing until he became interested in the trail ride. “Ever since I was twelve years old, he would bring us along on the trail rides. It kept us



The trail rides compete for a trophy designating the best trail ride in each of three divisions--small, medium, and large--based on the number of riders. Judges observe the participants to be sure they are adhering to the Western heritage and take off points for tennis shoes, baseball caps, and t-shirts. As this group demonstrates, every trail ride wants to look its best for the parade.

out of trouble and off the streets, and it helped us get his and my mom’s guidance our whole lives. We learned a lot of respect and discipline with a lot of family values and morals. Every single weekend there was a trail ride—I mean every single weekend. My daddy didn’t miss a trail ride for nothing. Now with our children we ride the Houston Show and Rodeo every year and we have fun.”

The logistics of this lengthy trail ride would be seemingly overwhelming were it not for the fact that the ride is made up, for the most part, of families, each of which is responsible for their own creature comforts, including food and shelter. At any given time the number of people on the trail ranges from eighty to one hundred. Aside from families, occasionally individual riders from other states journey to join the Vaqueros. “Very seldom do we get a guy riding by himself but we met a guy, Kevin Bowen, in Pierce, Texas, who asked if he could ride with us. ‘I heard about your trail ride and wanted to come out. I traveled over 1,000 miles to get here.’ So we invited him to join us. He said he’d really enjoyed the trip and told us he’d be back next year.”

Aside from the family fun and camaraderie, members of Los Vaqueros are involved with a lot of charitable work for handicapped children. Early on, they laid the foundation for “Go Tejano” segments of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo program by organizing a committee of Mexican Americans whose goal was to raise money for those less fortunate Mexican American students who could not afford to go to college. Later the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo broadened their scholarship program to help a wider range of students in the Texas Gulf Coast area.



ABOVE: Cowboy superstar Gene Autry led the 1942 Fat Stock Show parade down Main Street. Following behind is Reese Lockett, who organized the first rodeo and parade in 1938. To the right is W. Albert Lee, the second president of the Show. Photo courtesy of Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, at the University of Texas at Austin.

The Grand Finale

The thirteen trail rides from across Texas and Louisiana converge at Memorial Park where they prepare for the annual parade. Much has changed since 1952 to accommodate the logistics of such a large crowd. In 2006, Memorial Park required one hundred volunteers to direct the riders, sixty port-a-cans, thirty trash dumpsters, four ninety-kilowatt generators, two water trucks, and twenty-six travel trailers for committee members. Despite the size and no matter what the weather, the general consensus echoes the words of Yance Montalbano a trail ride committee chairman standing in the rain who said, "It's been great. We have a good time. It's been a little wet, but the spirits are still bright."⁴

Thousands of people line the city streets to welcome the riders as they parade through downtown Houston—the grand finale at the end of the long trail. The parade winds through the modern buildings that stand juxtaposed to the horses, covered wagons, and mule-drawn buckboards from a not too distant past. In addition to the 6,000 riders, the parade includes 7,000 horses, approximately twenty floats, fifteen marching bands, huge helium balloons, Color Guard, rodeo officials, the mayor, senators, and representatives. The trail rides share several common purposes, the uniqueness comes from what each rider gains from the days on the trail—that, of course, is personal and perhaps beyond words.⁵

Ernesto Valdés has a B.A. from Trinity University, a J.D. from South Texas College of Law, and an M.A. in Public History. He serves as Director for the Oral History Project in the Center for Public History at the University of Houston.

A covered wagon winds through the streets of downtown Houston—reminding Houstonians of their heritage.



Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP BAR-B-QUE CONTEST

The World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest began in 1974 on the southwest corner of the Astrodome parking lot. Now it is one of the largest bar-b-que cook-offs in Texas, a three-day event of cooking, competition, and fun to help kick off the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Several Show volunteers had the idea of hosting a bar-b-que contest, and the first contest was initiated under the direction of the Go Texan Committee. During the inaugural year, the entries were limited to fifty teams, with each team required to cook at least ten pounds of meat. Seventeen teams competed that year, with five judges including actor Ben Johnson. By 1981, the World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest had grown to include more than 200 entries and more than 45,000 visitors.

At today's contest, each team must cook two slabs of ribs, two chickens or two briskets, and the brisket must be a minimum size of ten pounds. The meat cannot be cooked with an electric or gas pit, only with wood or wood-substance fires. Teams compete for the coveted title of World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest Grand Champion, but trophies also are awarded for preparing the best dish in each category of brisket, chicken, and spare ribs, and an overall winner is named. Teams also compete for awards for the most colorful team, the team with the cleanest area, the most unique pit, and the team with the best skit; Go Texan teams are presented with recycling awards as well.

Celebrating its thirty-fifth anniversary, the 2009 contest drew a record-setting crowd of 217,640 guests to the bar-b-que feast with approximately 249 teams competing. The 2010 World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest will run **Thursday, February 25 through Saturday, February 27.**



For thirty-five years contestants have fought for the coveted prize of World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest Grand Champion with careful attention to all the details: fire, temperature, cooking time, sauce, and, of course, friends.



The first World Championship Bar-B-Que contest was held in 1974, and the event has become a popular annual tradition.

Barbequed Corn

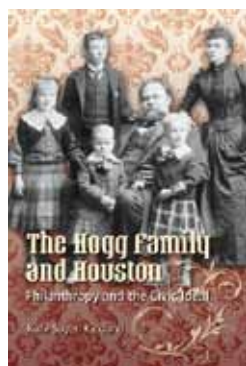
*6 pieces of corn, in the shuck
1 stick butter, melted*

Pull shuck back carefully. Remove silk. Brush on melted butter. Put shuck back into place. Place pieces of corn on outer edges of fire. Barbeque, turning now and then for 45 minutes. Serves 6.

Ladies Go Texan Committee, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo 50th Anniversary Commemorative Cookbook, (Houston: Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, 1982).

News Updates & Books by Barbara Eaves

TEXAS BOOKS:

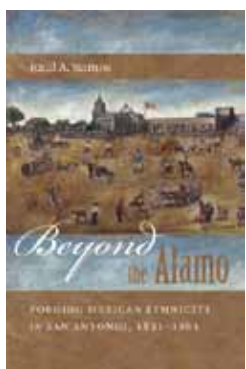


The Hogg Family and Houston: Philanthropy and the Civic Ideal (University of Texas Press, 2009), by Kate Kirkland, Rice University. Kirkland's dissertation on the Hogg family is the basis for a virtual "how to" book on using a family's political ties, social position, and fortune to build a great city. The Hoggs espoused city planning, zoning, and mental health care; they planned neighborhoods like River Oaks; they created the Houston Symphony and Memorial

Park; their volunteerism inspired others. In short, the family envisioned Houston as a great city, one that nurtures well-being and knowledge of the "American Heritage that unites us." This well-written book tells the familiar story of our city with a slightly different cast of characters. List price is \$65. Available at River Oaks and Brazos bookstores, Bayou Bend, and www.utexaspress.com.

Texas Almanac 2010-2011: 65th Edition, edited by Elizabeth Cruce Alvarez and Robert Plocheck. The *Texas Almanac* has chronicled the state and its residents for 152 years. With the 2010-2012 edition, this useful book switches publishers, moving from *The Dallas Morning News* to the Texas State Historical Association—itsself a 112-year-old organization. The new almanac is printed in color with hundreds of photographs. Relief county maps show major and minor roads, as well as waterways and parks. Each county's history, physical features, recreation, population and economy are discussed. Special articles include Lady Byrd Johnson's early life, the unique contributions of Scandinavian Texans, the history of earthquakes in Texas, and comprehensive lists of high school and professional sports statistics. Hardcover \$29.95; paperback \$19.95. Available at www.tamu.edu/upress or call 940-369-5243.

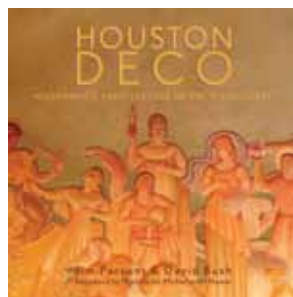
AWARDS:



T. R. Fehrenbach Book Award – *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008) is a 2008 recipient of the T. R. Fehrenbach Book Award presented by the Texas Historical Commission. The author, Raúl A. Ramos, associate professor of history at the University of Houston, introduces a new model for the Texas creation story, placing Mexican Americans at the center. From the perspective of the Tejanos of San

Antonio de Bexar, Anglo-Americans were immigrants and the battle of the Alamo was a war between brothers. Ramos

explores the factors that helped shape the ethnic identity of the Tejano population, including cross-cultural contacts between Bexareos, indigenous groups, and Anglo-Americans, as they negotiated the contingencies and pressures on the frontier of competing empires. Hardback for \$35; paperback (in March) for \$22.95. Available at the University of North Carolina Press, <http://uncpress.unc.edu/books/T-8181.html>.



2009 Independent Publisher Book Award – The Greater Houston Preservation Alliance's book, *Houston Deco, Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast*, received a bronze award for Best Regional Non-Fiction presented during BookExpo America in New York. *Houston Deco* was photographed and written by GHPA staff members Jim Parsons and

David Bush, with foreword by GHPA board member Madeleine McDermott Hamm. The book includes original images of more than 100 Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings in southeast Texas. It was produced with support from the Houston Architecture and Strake foundations and was published by Bright Sky Press. Signed copies are available from GHPA for \$25 each, including sales tax and priority shipping. Order at 713-216-5000.

Texas Historical Commission's Award of Merit – The Friends of the San Jacinto Battleground was recently awarded the Texas Historical Commission's Award of Merit for archeological work conducted at the San Jacinto Battleground – which found the probable spot where hundreds of defeated Mexican soldiers disarmed to surrender to General Sam Houston. NRG Texas and Moore Archeological Consulting also received awards, and Michael Strutt, director of Cultural Resources for Texas Parks & Wildlife, was recognized. John Crain, president of the Summerlee Foundation and chairman of THC's archeological committee, presented the award. Friends' president Jan DeVault accepted on behalf of the Friends and Moore Archeological Consulting; Ben Carmine represented NRG. Dr. Jim Bruseth, head of THC's archeological division, explained to the audience how the field work was conducted and the importance of the finds.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Houston Arts and Media Debuts New HAM Slice– HAM debuted its newest web-based educational video about the first television station in Houston, KLEE, which began broadcasting to about 26,000 local TV sets in 1949. Early broadcasts from the station, which became KPRC-TV in 1950, were all live and local; highlights included Houston Buffs games, entertainment shows, and a news program with a weather segment using a chalk board to illustrate weather patterns. This HAM Slice

combines narration, music, and historical images to create a mini-documentary that recreates the drama and excitement of the early days of television for modern audiences. HAM's growing series of web-based videos, each about a minute in length, shed light on fascinating tidbits of Houston-area history. Visit: www.houstonartsandmedia.org.

San Jacinto Museum of History – The Cecil Thomson photographic exhibit will continue through the end of the year, when its focus will turn from Houston to Galveston with elements from the Great Storm. The new show will also include personal information about the photographer and his family that have surfaced over this past year.

The Houston Public Library – Weather permitting, the first phase of the \$32 million restoration and addition to the Houston Public Library's Julia Ideson Building should be substantially complete in January. The new wing, built from plans drawn by Ralph Adams Cram 80 years ago, will house the library's Texas and local history book collection, archives, photographs, architectural drawings, oral histories, maps, and a first floor reading room. Next, the current building will be restored. When finished, this building will be a multi-purpose library with meeting rooms, exhibition space, reading rooms, a new photo lab, a conservation lab, and more. Construction progress is updated monthly on the website: www.ideson.org.

DATES TO SAVE:

December 14, 2009 – Mayor Bill White presides over the formal ribbon cutting for the new wing and garden of the downtown Houston Public Library. Visit www.ideson.org for construction progress.

March 4-6, 2010 – Texas State Historical Association 114th Annual Meeting, Dallas. www.tshaonline.org.

April 14, 2010 – San Jacinto Museum of History annual fund-raising dinner.

April 17, 2010 – San Jacinto Symposium, Hilton University of Houston Hotel and Conference Center. Watch www.friendsanjacinto.org.

April 21, 2010 – Battle of San Jacinto commemoration at the monument, 10 a.m.

April 22-24, 2010 – Texas Historical Commission's State Preservation Conference at the Westin Galleria. For details as they evolve, visit www.thc.state.tx.us, click on "about us," then "annual conference."

April 24, 2010 – San Jacinto Festival all day at the San Jacinto Battleground. Visit with "Living Historians" from 10 a.m., battle re-enactment is at 3 p.m.

Contact Barbara Eaves (barbara.eaves@att.net) with significant events for the next edition.

NEWS:

Houston History Archives (UH-HHA), a collaborative effort between the Houston History Project and the University Libraries, invites researchers to explore the online inventories for several recently processed collections. Newly posted inventories include Outdoor Nature Club and Citizens' Environmental Coalition (environmental history), plus the Ninfa Papers and Thomas Cole Papers (ethnic history). A listing of transcripts for the UH Oral History collection is also available. To view these and other inventories, find "Research Tools" on the M. D. Anderson Library homepage (<http://info.lib.uh.edu/>), select "Archival Finding Aids," then "Record Groups," then "Houston History Archives." For more information about our collections, contact Teresa Tomkins-Walsh (tomkinswalsh@uh.edu), or visit our reading room in Special Collections.

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