



WHERE WE'LL BE NEXT MONTH:

Join us for July's special coverage of Texas' great lakes. Find out where to stay, eat, and play on the waterfront, from Texoma and Possum Kingdom to Caddo and Amistad. We'll also venture to the Viva Big Bend music festival, sample sweets at Susie's South Forty Confections in Midland, and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the TEXAS Outdoor Musical at Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Then it's off to Travaasa Austin for an equine encounter and other fun—giddyup!



ANY TIPS ON THESE SPOTS? LET US KNOW ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER, OR INSTAGRAM

See Sea Turtles

Allison will steal your heart. She's a rescued Atlantic green sea turtle at South Padre Island's Sea Turtle, Inc., who was found on the beach by a patroller in 2005. Likely the victim of a predator attack, Allison had just one of her four flippers and could only swim in counter-clockwise circles. Within a few years, an innovative STI intern named Tom Wilson devised a prosthetic "rudder" (essentially a wooden blade attached to the turtle by a Neoprene wrap) that allowed Allison to propel forward. Several years and five prosthetic designs later, Allison now sports a streamlined carbon-fiber device, a graceful glide, and an ever-fresh lease on life.

STI staff attach the prosthetic for a few hours every day (closed to the public on Monday) starting at 10 a.m. to give Allison, now 12 years old, a chance to exercise and socialize with other turtles. While visiting the center last year, I observed her splashing with excitement as the technician approached with the device, much like our pooches do when we reach for the leash. During Allison's swim hours, a lifeguard stands watch by her pool, shares her story, and answers any questions from visitors.

Sea Turtle, Inc.'s mission is to "rescue, rehabilitate, and release injured sea turtles, educate the public, and assist with conservation efforts." Along with resident turtles like Allison (those with less than 75 percent of their flippers are deemed

unsuitable for release), you can see other turtles in various stages of recovery, attend "Turtle Talks" throughout the day, and witness one of the occasional scheduled rehab or hatchling releases. Find a release schedule, a turtle cam, and details on June's YappoPalooza Sea Turtle Fest at www.seaturtleinc.org.

As the author of *A Worldwide Travel Guide to Sea Turtles* (Texas A&M University Press, 2014)—and our sea turtle feature, which begins on page 54—Melissa Gaskill became fascinated with hatchlings more than 10 years ago. "After having my first encounter with nesting sea turtles in Baja California, I geeked out on them and started collecting turtle T-shirts and memorabilia," she tells me. "I sought out encounters everywhere, including hatchling releases here in Texas on Padre Island National Seashore. It's an amazing experience. Sunrise is such a beautiful time to be on the beach. People come from all over and stay until the last little critter hits the waves."

As Melissa explains, five Gulf species of sea turtle are listed as threatened or endangered, so every effort to protect and grow their numbers is important. At Sea Turtle, Inc., a capital campaign is underway to fund a facility expansion, to include a nature walk and a new amphitheater, gift shop, and holding tanks. Construction of the new education center begins this fall.

Speaking of expansion, green sea turtles like Allison are believed to live to 100 years or more and reach 500 pounds. Here's to having room to grow!

Jill Lawless, Editor



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War and Peace

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. On September 2, 1945—just a few months after Axis forces surrendered in Europe—Japan formally surrendered to the Allied powers, bringing an end to the hostilities in the Pacific.

We lucky Texans have one of the nation’s premier military museums: The National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, which bills itself as “the only institution in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to telling the story of the Pacific and Asiatic Theaters in World War II.” What started in 1968 with the Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz Museum to honor the heroic local now spreads across a six-acre campus in the heart of town, crowned by the state-of-the-art, 33,000-square-foot George H.W. Bush Gallery. With hundreds of photographs and artifacts on display in the gallery alone, plan at least a half-day here for the full experience (your ticket is good for 48 hours). And check the website (www.pacificwarmuseum.org) for updates on the nearby Pacific Combat Zone and the Japanese Garden of Peace, which are currently undergoing renovation.

Writer Kathryn Jones, whose “War and Remembrance” story begins on page 60, had initially intended to tour the museum with her father, Sam Jones (above), a Pacific Theater veteran who now lives in Corpus Christi. But a brief illness for Sam this spring thwarted the plan, so she brought the

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Let’s celebrate Texas cities, with insider tips on food and fun—from pizza and barbecue to Longhorn drives and live music—and a roundup of urban parks and other places to play. We’ll talk dance halls with Kevin Fowler, cheer 100 years of seafood at Gaido’s, and delve into RGV history. And who made this year’s list of Extraordinary Texans? Find out in September!

museum experience to him, sharing her own videos and photographs, along with *TH* photographer Will van Overbeek’s images for the article. That visit resulted in a compelling interview about Sam’s wartime experiences—including his first-hand account of the harrowing Battle off Samar—and a deepened father-daughter connection. Give it a listen at texashighways.com/webextra.

I recently had the honor of visiting with Sam, who said that he joined the Navy at age 17 and within nine weeks was serving his country aboard the USS *Portland* in a raid at Tarawa. Of the nine battles and various skirmishes Sam experienced, he describes Guadalcanal as the “most aggressive,” and adds: “After the battle, the captain announced over the loudspeaker, ‘You are congratulated to be alive.’”

Decades removed from the atrocities witnessed in his youth, Sam, now 90, has spent the past 20-plus years cultivating orchids at Corpus Christi’s South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, expanding the collection to more than 2,000 plants representing 25 species. The center’s new conservatory bears his name.

Sam says he enjoys the solitude of gardening. Reflecting on the first orchid he ever grew, he adds, “I remember being flabbergasted by the beauty of the flower and the ugliness of the plant.”

The same could be said of the contrasts in Sam’s remarkable life.



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P.S. For details on 70th-anniversary events across the country, go to www.spiritof45.org.



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Claus With a Cause

Oh, the places we will go this season—shopping for this and that, holiday partying here and there, up the attic ladder for lights and ornaments, and back to the store for more.

But where to go to catch that Christmas spirit? Across the state, holiday memories await at Christmas tree farms, ice-skating rinks, lighting displays, Las Posadas processions, and plentiful parades, pageants, and plays. Unwrap a few of our favorite Yuletide travel ideas in this issue, from Galveston’s Winter Wonder Island, with its Dickensian spin on the season, to Amarillo Botanical Gardens aglow. And who can resist the architectural gems in Waxahachie’s “Gingerbread City” this—or any—time of year?

Seeking some Christmas merriment while drafting this column on a 95-degree day in October, I checked in with Chuck Lee of Ovilla, who we first met in last November’s special “Makers” issue. Chuck, who crafts custom banjos in his backyard workshop—some 710 of the pickin’ instruments to date—says, “You can’t be sad playing the banjo.” He and his wife, Tamara, also spread cheer playing the roles of Santa and Mrs. Claus at special events during the season, including a standing gig at Dallas’ Plaza at Preston Center on Saturdays in December.

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We’ll ring in 2016 with a ramble on US 90, including Pecos River rock art, Judge Roy Bean country, and the cool pool at Fort Clark Springs. See San Antonio then and now through the eyes of noted writers, make a melodic detour to the Texas Musicians Museum in Irving, and take a nostalgic cruise on Route 66. And look for your Main Street favorites—coming up next year!



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And throughout the year, the Christ-massy couple has spirit to spare as members of the Lone Star Santas (www.lonestarsantas.org). The nonprofit organization, made up of volunteer Clauses, elves, and other helpers, provides “Love, Hope, Joy ... and Toys, all wrapped in a big Santa hug” to children affected by natural disasters, no matter the season. FEMA- and Red Cross-approved, the LSS takes its Convoy of Toys (made up of donations) where the need strikes in Texas and beyond.

“Mom and Dad have possibly lost everything, so what the child is going through may not be top of mind at the moment,” says Chuck. “We’re here to tell that child ‘I care about you, and I want to meet your needs.’” After the Memorial Day floods this year, some 60 members of the Lone Star Santas set up in Wimberley and San Marcos to welcome hundreds of children from families who had lost their homes. Each child could choose several toys, stuffed animals, and sweet treats, and perhaps glean a little hope for brighter days ahead.

“This group of big-hearted men and women has a tremendous, terrific mission,” Chuck says of the Lone Star Santas. “I have lived in other parts of the country, and Texans have a heart like no other.”

Now *that’s* the spirit.

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