

BIGGER & BETTER IN TEXAS

By MANNY GONZALEZ

IF YOU ARE NOT FROM TEXAS, I AM almost sure that everything you know about it you learned from TV. (Heck, this is probably true even if you are from Texas).

From the series "Dallas," we learned that Texas has ranches (there is a real Southfork, apparently) and oil wells. That about sums it up. It's a rare Texan who doesn't have a family ranch and an oil well in his back yard – or so I was told by my Texan friends, and I believe it.

Actually, as I almost never tire of saying, everything I know about [whatever], I learned from the movies. And so it is that, long before TV's "Dallas," I learned about Texas from the movie "State Fair" (the second one). In that movie, I learned that Texans like to sing a lot, like Pat Boone. And that most Texas girls look like Ann-Margret, which is to say, Hot. Very Hot. Except that they will break your heart. (If you don't know what Ann-Margret looks like, you need to find out. I guarantee you, it's better than discovering lemon cheesecake for the first time).

At about 250,000 square miles, Texas is the largest state in the Lower 48, over two times larger than the entire Philippines. And it's mostly flat. It is also mostly dry and (like Ann-Margret) Hot, so the main uses of that land are cattle-grazing and drilling oil wells.

If you do wind up in Dallas someday, there is actually quite a bit to do there. (Exactly how I wound up in Dallas, I don't care to tell you, except that it was on Official Business related to the Federal Government of the United States).

JFK didn't sleep here

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President John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas in 1963, and this museum is in the exact building where Lee Harvey Oswald ambushed him (according to the Warren Commission). In fact, you can stand at the exact window, on the sixth floor, from which the two shots were fired (according to the Warren Commission). If you have the slightest interest in JFK or the conspiracy theories surrounding his assassination, you need to come. Most people come first thing in the morning. So you should come after lunch. You're welcome.

After the Sixth Floor Museum, it's just a quick walk to the Perot Museum of Nature and Science. Considering that it's not the Smithsonian, this isn't too bad. There are several Nat Geo-type movies, a gigantic turtle skeleton (98 percent real, said the guard, which is impressive since most fossils on display anywhere are 2 percent real fossil and 98 percent plaster). There was an even more gigantic brontosaurus or something, as long as a basketball court. The guard had no opinion on what percent of it was real, but it was still awesome.

The museum also conveyed the reassuring message that the extinction of the woolly mammoths (the nice hairy elephants in the *Ice Age* movies) was NOT due to human activity, no matter how many of them we stampeded over cliffs in order to harvest 1 percent of the meat. Whew.

The Perot has a magnificent collection of crystals – you know, quartz, tourmaline,morganite, stuff like that. Oh, you don't know. Texas, as far as I know, isn't big in crystals, so I figure this exhibit was thrown in to prep you for what Perot really wanted to display: drill bits.

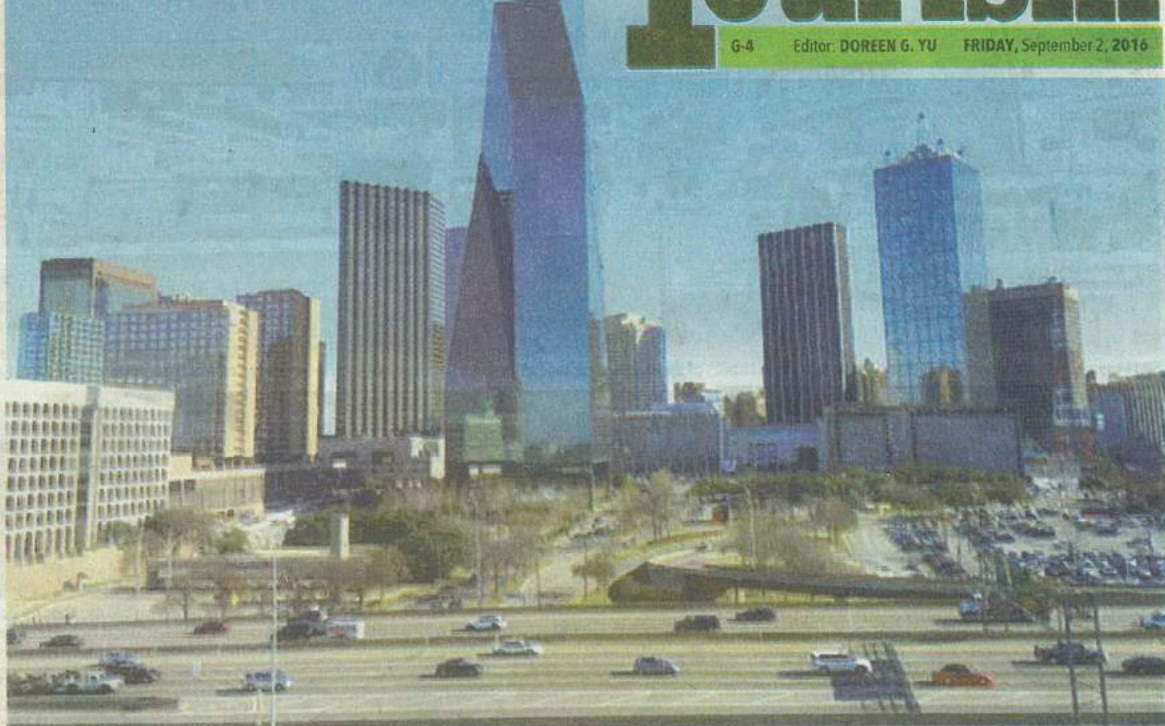
Oil-drilling drill bits. I am serious. This is a fascinating subject for rich Texans, right up there with barbecue and Twin Peaks, so if someone gets started on drill bits you are well-advised to derail him quickly before he builds up steam.

Bon appetit

Speaking of barbecue, right downtown are several pork ribs havens. I unfortunately chose Tex-Mex instead. Let me tell you something about Tex-Mex, if you promise not to report me to any Texans. Come to think of it, Texans are a touchy lot, and if you'll forgive my saying so, you don't exactly look like you're good at keeping confidences. So we'll leave my thoughts on Tex-Mex where they belong, deep inside my heart.

And speaking of Twin Peaks, in case you didn't know, it's a wittier version of Hooters. But because the

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Travel & Tourism
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Art museums and universities

Dallasites take justifiable pride in their Museum of Art. As city museums go, it is probably one of the best-funded in the world and has acquired some knockout trophy pieces, representing just about every

famous artist you can think of – Rodin, Monet, Sargent, Pollock, Miró, Picasso, Moore. . . The most appealing exhibit for me was a re-creation of a villa from the South of France. Almost the whole villa was there inside the museum. It was once owned by Coco Chanel, who was apparently talented in more matters than high fashion, since she got the Duke of Westminster (of the family that owns a fair chunk of central London) to foot the bill.

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cally, thick, juicy, mouthwatering steaks. Talk to Texans anywhere and they will be of the opinion that steak was invented here.

And, making some allowances for the absence of Global Positioning Satellites back in the 1800s, they're right.

Though Texas joined the Union in 1850, it pretty much sat out the Civil War and didn't get noticed until after the war when jobless ex-Confederate soldiers headed west to flee the devastation back home. They soon noticed that lots of cattle were running around (well, moseying around) Texas with no owner, just waiting to be branded by the first man who lassoed them.

The cattle were direct descendants of those brought over to the New World by the Spaniards centuries before, and stragglers kept wandering northward from

lots of time to develop into a breed that tolerated heat, sun and water shortages. Thus, after the Civil War, Texas' arid expanses were progressively turned into sprawling grazing lands, to feed the growing masses back East.

Now here's where the absence of GPS comes in handy. After two years of grazing in Texas, the cattle were still without any value, until they could be driven (i.e., forced to walk) to some place where the railroads passed, such as Abilene, Kansas, which last time I looked is not in Texas.

Having lost weight on the hard 700-mile drive, in Abilene they spent a few happy months eating corn in stockyards. Corn isn't a natural food for bovines, but is much easier to digest than raw grass, so the steers fattened fast and developed unhealthy "marbling" – fat

The problem of shooting and hitting a moving target, part II

Can you aim ahead to "lead" a target? YES, but it's like shooting at an aircraft – the best way is to pour a continuous stream of fire and have the target move into it – however, doing this would create a "beaten zone" of bullets landing in a circle, likely killing everyone in the JFK limousine, too many bullets in too many bodies



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North Side. Why this is so, I haven't figured out yet, but it's a pretty safe assumption for any large city. In Dallas's Prosperous Uptown there are various attractions a visitor might want to see and the one I did see was Southern Methodist University.

SMU is home to a very respectable art museum (The Meadows) and the George W. Bush Presidential Library. The Bush building was impressive and intimidating, so on this occasion I gave it a miss. But there was time to see SMU's star attraction – coeds! Here's a little tip for you – try to go on the hottest, sunniest day possible, at lunch. Wear shades. You're welcome.

Barbecue, again

All this talk of coeds brings barbecues and Ann-Margret to mind again. More specifi-

cally, eventually forming feral herds. The gringos called them Texas Longhorns, but the truth is that Texas was part of Mexico for quite a long time, so "Spanish-Mexican" would be more accurate. (For history-challenged readers: like Texas, the Philippines also was part of Mexico, which is why our Galleon Trade was with Acapulco, and why our queso de bola is really Dutch Edam that dried out during the four or five tortuous years it took to get from Rotterdam to Mexico via the Atlantic, across land to Acapulco, from there to be shipped to Manila. So Filipinos and Tejanos have a lot in common. Except for the cattle and the oil wells).

Unlike fussy English cattle (such as in New Jersey) that like cool, moist weather and heavy overcast, the Spanish-Mexican Longhorn had had

pockets mixed in with the muscle, which is what makes US steaks so tasty.

Meanwhile, the complacent French with their Charolais beef, the Italians with their Chianina beef and the English with their Scottish beef (no self-respect, the English) up to today are still relying on grass. So are the Argentines and the Australians. All of these countries will claim that grass-fed is healthier, has more Omega-3, etc. But the bottom line is that they, unlike Kansas, don't grow corn.

So the American steak as we know it today is the outcome of precise historical and geographic confluences, and was indeed created in Texas.

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The author is founder and CEO of Plantation Bay Resort & Spa in Mactan, Cebu.

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By Manny Gonzalez, Plantation Bay Resort & Spa

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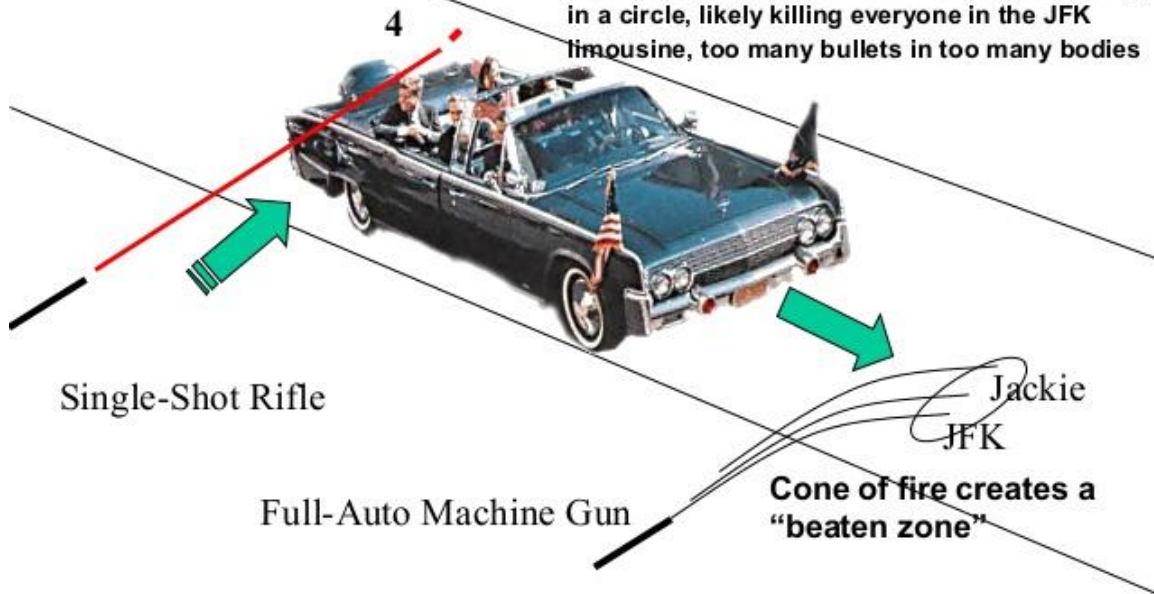
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