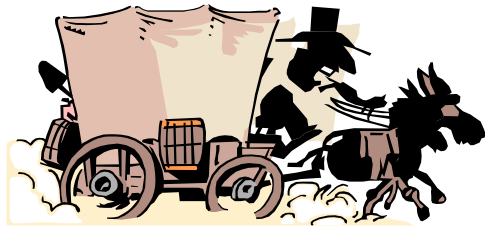


On The Trail To Cowtown



*From Houston to San Antonio to Fort Worth
The History of Cowtown CASI Pod
1976-2006*



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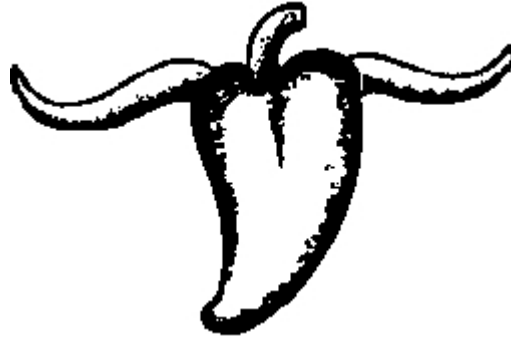
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Cowtown CASI Great Peppers

1977	Tom Wayne Tate(Supreme Great Pepper)
1978	Tom Wayne Tate
1979	Richard Knight
1980	Doug Beich
1981	
1982	Waldo Strein
1983	Jim 'Dog' Luhn
1984	Jim 'Dog' Luhn
1985	Jim Hudgins
1986	Ken Hudspeth
1987	Bill Cook
1988	Doris Coats
1989	Doris Coats
1990	Darrell Baxter
1991	Jim 'Dog' Luhn
1992	Ken Robbins
1993	Bruce Stewart
1994	Bruce Stewart
1995	David 'Budda' Manske
1996	David 'Budda' Manske
1997	Ken Robbins
1998	Dean Reynolds
1999	Terry Massey
2000	Terry Massey
2001	Anne Roberts
2002	Ron Barnes
2003	Mike Sweet
2004	Ron Barnes
2005	Tina Barnes
2006	Dale Reinecker





**30th Anniversary
Cowtown CASI Pod Officers
2005 / 2006**

Great Pepper: Dale Reinecker
Pepper Popper: Roger Foltz
Secretary: Tina Barnes
Treasurer: Shirley Sexton
Chilicity: Dale Reinecker

Steering Committee

Bruce Stewart Dru Stewart
Suzie Manske Beth Moon
Jim Johnson Ray Calhoun

Regional Referee

Bruce Stewart

Area Referees

David "Budda" Manske
Jim "Dog" Luhn
Beth Moon
Ron Barnes
Dee Palmer

To Cowtown CASI Members and Interested Chiliheads Everywhere

As part of Cowtown CASI Pod's 30th anniversary year, we decided to research the history of the pod, how and when it was formed, who were the players involved, and to try and capture some of the characters, personalities and general wackiness of the early years.

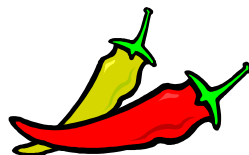
But Cowtown was only the 3rd pod formed in CASI. So we had to go back even further to Houston and San Antonio, the 1st and 2nd pods respectively, to really round out the history of this unique endeavor we have come to call "cookin' chili for charity". (From what I've learned however, charity was pretty low on the priority list in the beginning.) The information presented here, obtained through personal interviews, research and old newspaper articles is as accurate and factual as possible, but no guarantees are made.

We want to thank Keith Karaff of Houston, Irene Duffield of San Antonio, Debbie Turner and the *Goat Gap Gazette*, Renee Moore, Tom Wayne, Doug Beich, Richard Knight, Jimmy & Beth Moon, Candi Knight, David Manske, Bill Cook, Doris Coats and all the others who helped with input and research for this history.

Many of the readers will be intimately familiar with the contents, since they were there and helped shape this history. We hope they will get a kick out of reading this and have some laughs as they recall fond memories. Many others are relatively new to the chili world. As the saying goes, to understand 'today' it helps to know about 'yesterday'. So whether you are one of the more 'experienced' chili cooks or somewhat of a newbie, I think you will enjoy this brief glimpse into the past. I've learned one thing; there were some wild and crazy folks back then. What we do today is tame by comparison.

And so it goes on the chili trail.

Dale Reinecker
Great Pepper
Cowtown CASI Pod
2006



On The Trail to Cowtown. Houston, The First Pod.

In the beginning, The Houston Pod was born...it was early 1972 in Houston, Texas. Some of the locals knew about the Great Chili Shootout where Wick Fowler and H. Allen Smith were the mortal combatants. Frank X. Tolbert was the scribe. Terlingua was the arena because it was the remotest venue anyone could imagine.

Fred McMurry had known Wick Fowler in a couple of previous lives and felt his cause was just. He became a Chili activist because of Wick and because they shared an addiction to that “one combustible, indigestible, with heartburn and gas pains for all” CHILI!

Fridays in Fred’s Lamar Tower consulting office were devoted to making and serving chili for clients and friends. One regular was his old friend from our New Orleans days, Ed Paetzel. Others included Tex & Allegani Jani Schofield, Richard & Jo Ann Horton, Hal John & Judy Wimberly, et al. The Chili was served on tablecloths of *Wall Street Journals*.

The weekly gathering came to be such unusual fun and so well-attended that it seemed appropriate to institutionalize it. Tex and Jani volunteered to host a party at their West University home. They didn’t realize it at the time, but that meeting proved to be of rather monumental historic significance. Well, at least as far as CHILI is concerned.

It was a fairly enthusiastic little group, considering the subject at hand. They decided to start a movement. Little did they know! The world, they thought, would little note nor long remember the deliberations of this loose-knit fellowship.

As the story goes and to the best recollection of those who attended, that group included the Friday regulars and a few recruits. They even had supporters from afar: Dick Slocomb from Pasadena, Hondo (Crouch) from Luckenbach. There might have even been someone from Grimes County. Chiligula hadn’t been discovered yet, but they now know that he was there.

They had exactly a dozen founding members, more or less. A year later they had approximately a lot. Why? You decide. Fred doesn’t remember if they had dues or initiation fees but probably not.

Fred was elected president because somebody thought the group should have one and because he couldn’t talk Tex into serving. It didn’t seem too important anyway. Tex did agree to do it the next year if they were still in business. Then someone asked who would fill the other “necessary” jobs: V. P., Parliamentarian, Program Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. Fred suggested they accept volunteers. Good idea. Yeah, right.

Soon they wondered why no one had volunteered. Maybe it was because the jobs sounded like work instead of fun. Who, for example, would get a kick out of being President? Secretary? As for Parliamentarian, they didn't need one: no *Roberts Rules of Order*, no voting, no procedures. They would make decisions by consensus or by edict. Or, they'd just let things happen. Good grief !

So job titles were created to fit the group. Charlie Brown had made the "Great Pumpkin" a part of our national lore. So how about a "Great Pepper"? Okay. Then the other designations came easily (Pepper Popper, Chililetter Writer, Chancellor of the ExChili, etc.) Some said it was irreverent, some said inane, some said crazy. Then some, not afflicted with "seriousity", said it was fun. And after all, that was the whole purpose. The only purpose. So Be It!

Well, that first meeting took five minutes but the party lasted quite late. That became our custom. There was no program, no formal agenda. Just the intention to "talk about some stuff". Maybe something would come from it. Or maybe not.

Hondo's prognosis was to be memorable. Several of us were seated in a circle in the backyard. Our organizational meeting was finished and the toasting/consumption ritual had just begun. Hondo was singing "Malagueña Sale Rosa", as only he could do it. As he strolled into the circle, he stopped singing but continued strumming his guitar. "Do you all realize what the hell you've done?" he asked good-naturedly. "No, but we'll drink to it" was the consensus response. Tequila shots rang out in the night. Hondo resumed his wonderful song as he strode slowly toward the keg, chuckling all the way.

They had, of course, made a decision. It was to expand, prolong, repeat and intensify a worthwhile pleasure. They had no plan, just a tacit agreement. Although it was not clearly articulated, it was understood by all. For better or for worse, for good or for ill, something was born that night.

According to available records, the first Houston Pod chili cookoff was held on August 26, 1972, at the Hotel Sonesta right in downtown Houston. There was music, media, around 30 chili teams, and a big dance in the hotel ballroom...all in the name of fun for charity, The Burnett Bayland Children's Home.

The rest, of course, is history!

(The Grand Pepper, Fred McMurry, and the first slate of Houston Pod officers contributed the above story of the Houston Pod's beginnings.)

Next Stop San Antonio, The Second Pod

A couple of years after the formation of the Houston Pod in 1972, Tex Schofield pulled up roots and moved to San Antonio. Since there was no pod in San Antonio and since he had been the Great Pepper in Houston, Tex and a fellow named Steve ‘Yeller Dog’ Hamlet decided to start the 2nd pod in CASI. (Yeller Dog was known to most people as Robert Marsh, the name he adopted and used since he had departed from Virginia without anyone knowing, including his wife, where he was going.) The year was 1975. The original members, as recalled by Irene Duffield, were Yeller Dog, Nan Marsh as she was known then, Tex, Shorty Fry, Jo Ann and Richard Horton and Crash Stewart.

Yeller Dog was the first GP of SAP CASI. Pepper Popper was Mike McGlothlin, secretary-treasurer was Irene Duffield. The first cookoff was held at La Villita and was an invitational only cookoff as was allowable in those days. Only those who had won other cookoffs were able to cook, and it must be remembered that there was maybe one cookoff a month in those days. The name of the first cookoff winner has been lost, but it is remembered that he drank Everclear and orange juice. It is also recalled that Hal John Wimberly preached that day on the balcony on the top of the hotel. Hal John’s preaching was not exactly according to the Bible according to those who heard him preach with a Bible in one hand and a bottle of tequila in the other. Could he have been the model for Elmer Gantry?

In the early years, San Antonio also had the last of the walk around CASI cookoffs. Showmanship had started so that the judges, as they walked around tasting the chilis, would remember a chili by the showmanship that was displayed. This wasn’t the most objective method of judging chili but it did establish showmanship as an integral part of cookoffs, and of course, later became something to be judged on its own.

“I remember a cookoff at Kirby where Karen Wayne Tate and I were in charge of the chili numbers. Mike had come up with a cockamamie way of changing the numbers. Karen numbered then and then I changed the numbers, making me the only one who knew what the real numbers were. Mike decided that Karen and I could not associate with each other. Therefore I spent the day in Judie and Ray King’s motor home and Karen spent the day out in the rain. Every so often, she would open the door and say “you bitch” and close the door and leave”, recalled Irene.

It was also this same day that for some reason, Albert Agneau used a ladder and went on top of the overhang of the motor bank. Somebody decided that it would be nice to remove the ladder, leaving Albert up there a very long time. It is thought that he managed to get down by turn-in time.

The Trail Reaches Ft.Worth! Cowtown, The Third Pod.

It was a small blurb in the newspaper that caught his eye, something about a Prairie Dog Chili Cookoff in Grand Prairie. Sounded interesting, so Jimmy & Beth Moon went to check it out. Some people were setting up, some were cooking various things, but overall a pretty tame atmosphere. Before long, the weather started acting up and they decided it was time to go home. Because it was by now sleeting, they took a short cut through a campsite, and in the process got yelled at by one of the cooks. Turns out, the guy doing the yelling had recognized Jimmy and was an old friend, and he was just yelling to say “Hi”. The Moons returned the next day to help with the cooking and asked where the next cookoff was. It was something called Howdy Roo and was being held in Marble Falls, Texas. They decided to go.

And so it was with these early doings and cast of characters that Jimmy and Beth Moon found themselves cooking chili, making new friends and in general, having a great time.

Chili cooking was still in its infancy in the mid 1970s. There were no chili cookoffs in the North Texas area. If you wanted to go to a cookoff, you had to go South to Houston or San Antonio. It was during one of those trips to the San Antonio area for a cookoff that Jimmy and Beth Moon had the good fortune to meet Tom Wayne and Karen Tate.

At the time, Tom was working as a disk jockey in San Antonio, and both Tom and Karen were active in the local chili scene. However, as the Moons were soon to learn, Tom was to be transferred to Ft.Worth to become a deejay for station KXOL. The Moons and Waynes agreed to get together after the Waynes had gotten moved and settled in Ft.Worth.

They all soon became good friends and made numerous trips back to the South to attend chili cookoffs in Houston or San Antonio. It didn't take many of these 500 mile round trips for Tom to decide there had to be a better way. Why not start a chili pod in the Ft.Worth area? The pod could have a cookoff of its own, which would attract additional interested individuals to chili cooking, and perhaps lead other interested groups to organize and promote other local cookoffs.

To get the ball rolling, a “meeting” was soon held in the Moon's backyard. The Moons were there of course, along with the Waynes. Also attending were Bill Cook, Jim Luhn and the

Motleys. It was during this gathering and after much discussion and many beers, that a new pod was born, the third pod in CASI. The year was 1976.

Tom was chosen to become the Supreme Great Pepper and Jimmy was to become the original Pepper Popper. But this new pod needed a name. Since the pod would be serving the North Texas area with an emphasis on Ft.Worth, Cowtown was a natural, and so it was named. It was also determined that a logo of some sort was needed to reflect the identity of this new group of chiliheads and the pod's geographic origins. By this time, the hour was growing late and many more libations had been consumed, allowing the creativity of the group to flow. Lacking paper, Tom and Jimmy grabbed a marker and started sketching right on the top of Jimmy's table they were using. When finished, the 'horned chili pepper', still used today, had been designed to the group's satisfaction.

Soon after the 'birth' of the pod, an inauguration party was held. The December 1976 issue of the *Goat Gap Gazette* reported, "Cowtown CASI, headquartered in Ft.Worth, got underway November 20 with installation of officers at "Tag" Taggart's giant and modern flea market in Grand Prairie. Officers installed at a really great party were Tom Wayne, Great Pepper, Jimmy Moon, Pepper Popper, Karen Wayne, treasurer and Beth Moon secretary. Beth is this year's Texas State Ladies' Chili Champion."

In attendance were many of the 'chilibrities' at the time from the Houston and San Antonio areas, including Jack Lierbo (GP, Houston) and Yellow Dog Marsh (GP, San Antonio). Tex Schofield was emcee. Chiligula, God of Chili, was represented by Hal John Wimberly. It was fitting that mounted sets of steer horns were awarded by the new pod to several dignitaries. The new officers of Cowtown were sworn in with much fanfare, the sprinkling of chili powder, and of course, cold beverages. The pod was off and running.

"A very large number of the out-of-town participants in the inaugural ceremonies stayed overnight with the Wayne family at their palatial residence just west of Ft.Worth. A body count at 6 a.m., Sunday, November 21, showed 24 on the floor and two in bed. Children were not counted. Nor were dogs," reported the article in the *GGG*.

From these early beginnings, the Cowtown Pod experienced growth in membership and prominence within the chili world. Meetings were held at various places including Trader's Village, Ben E. Keith's offices in downtown Fort Worth, Fuddruckers at Irving Mall, Top of Texas Restaurant in Irving, BJ Keefer's in Fort Worth, Logan's Roadhouse off 820, even a Sports Bar on 157 in Euless before being moved to the Arlington Elk's Lodge in 1998, where the pod continues to meet.

Several early Cowtown Pod members were active not only in promoting Cowtown, but developing CASI also. Richard Knight, Cowtown Great Pepper in 1979, was heavily involved, along with Ray King and Vann York, in turning CASI into an organization that made Terlingua a qualifying event. They developed the basic set of rules that still influence CASI today.

It was during one of these early ‘organizational’ meetings that Knight designed the CASI logo (world map inside the pepper) on a napkin in Paul Smith’s kitchen during a discussion with Ray King and Frank Tolbert on how to take CASI from a Texas organization to an international organization. Talk about forward thinking!

The Branding Iron Trophy

In the early years, the Cowtown cookoff trophy was pretty much at the whim of the Pod. At some point it was determined that a trophy reflecting the history and heritage of ‘Cowtown’ would be more appropriate and thus the ‘branding iron’ trophy concept was born, sometime around 1985-86, but not without its labor pains.

Originally it was simply the branding iron mounted on a piece of board, the assembly of which had been held at Jim Hudgins’ home. During one of these manufacturing sessions, Budda thought it might be a great idea to actually heat the branding iron and imprint the ‘brand’ on the board. In order to demonstrate this, he heated up a branding iron and proceeded to ‘brand’ a step on Jim’s back porch, which was constructed of wood. Jim’s wife Melinda came out of the house and was not real pleased! But the ‘branding’ idea caught on, and in fact, the ‘stacked double C’ with the current year’s number inside the C, was for years registered with the Texas Cattlemen’s Association as the official, state recognized brand of Cowtown CASI.

It was also determined that a simple board would not do justice to the branding iron and something more suitable should be found. Around this time, some de-construction was taking place in the stockyards with many of the old, original livestock pens being torn down. Several Cowtown members inquired as to what was to be done with the scrap lumber. They were informed that they could help themselves to the wood that had been pushed aside into a large pile. Which they did. But they also determined that this would not be nearly enough to last for years to come.

Being the ‘free’ thinkers they were, and also having a perfectly good chain saw with them, they went over to an area of still standing pens and proceeded to cut down entire sections of standing fence, which were promptly loaded on their trailer and hauled back to Manske’s warehouse for storage. Those involved in the ‘Great Wood Heist’ were Budda Manske, Bruce Stewart, Dean Reynolds, Ken Robbins and Dog Luhn. Over the years, the branding iron/original

stockyard pen lumber trophy has become one of the most unique, symbolic and highly desired trophies in the chili world.

Old '320'

In 1989, Bob Whitefield, then CASI Treasurer, suggested that shares of the Terlingua Rancho CASI de los Chisos cooking site be sold to CASI members so that they might have a permanent cooking spot, and as a way to raise money to finance land purchases for the Rancho. He later named the shares "the Old 320", which the Board agreed would sell for \$200.00 per share. Cowtown Pod stepped up to the plate and purchased two such cooking sites, back-to-back, which the pod still owns and is available to any Cowtown Pod member to use on a first request basis.

Cookoff Venues

During the 1990s, cookoffs were held in conjunction with Chisholm Trails Days in the Ft. Worth Stockyards with huge crowds and lots of activities. Towards the end of the decade, the promoters of Chisholm Trails Days started to experience financial problems. The current and past Great Peppers of Cowtown Pod were invited to a meeting at the White Elephant Saloon called by the Chisholm Trail Committee. At that meeting, the GPs were informed that it would cost the Pod \$8-10,000 to stage the next Cowtown CCO. As a result of this meeting, the Cowtown Pod cookoff was moved to Trader's Village in 1998, where it remained until it returned to the Stockyards Station for the 2004 and 2005 cookoffs.

It was believed at that time that the Cowtown cookoff had returned to its roots and would be held in the Stockyards area for many years to come. As it turned out, while planning for the 2006 cookoff, representatives of the Stockyards Station area were apparently less than enthusiastic about Cowtown's return, as repeated requests for information and pricing went unanswered. The decision was made to once again move the location for the cookoff, but that it should remain somewhere in Ft. Worth in acknowledgement of the pod's name and heritage.

The *Bull Sheet* Newsletter

In the late 70s, the Bottom of the Barrel Gang had a team newsletter that was mostly about Cowtown CASI. The first Cowtown newsletter, *The Cowtown Crier*, was published by Richard Knight in 1978. *The Bull Sheet* evolved from this original *Cowtown Crier*. At some point, it was decided that the newsletter should have a new name, and Andy Faber is credited with coming up with the name *Bull Sheet*.

Michele Goodwin produced the *Bull Sheet* in '92 and '93, with approximately 100 copies going out to members by regular mail; email wasn't big at that time. Then Ken Robbins did a one page version in '94. Charlie Atherton took over in 1995 and expanded the newsletter to 4 pages. Charlie published the *Bull Sheet* for the next 9 years before turning it over to Dale Reinecker in 2004. As of January, 2006, 54 members received the *Bull Sheet* by regular mail with 120 receiving it by email. Times change.

The Constitution and By-Laws

From its inception, the pod had been loosely governed by a sense of 'what was right' and the majority opinion of who happened to be at the meeting at that time. In some cases, the pod 'rules' were modified, bent or even broken to fit the situation at hand. (Chili cooking rules were strictly followed.) It was eventually determined that some form of official structure was needed, so a committee was formed to draft a Constitution and a set of By-Laws.

The official Constitution and By-Laws for Cowtown CASI Pod were written and went into effect January 28, 1997. Signing off on the document were Ken Robbins, Great Pepper; Don Tittle, Pepper Popper; Peggy Robins, Chili Scribe; and Doris Coats, Chili Penny. The By-Laws have remained unchanged to date.

Cowtown Members Are Leaders and Winners

Cowtown members have not been content to sit on the sidelines. They get involved and as the saying goes, "get 'er done." Jim Ezell, a lifetime member of Cowtown, is the current President of CASI and prior to being elected to this position, served many years on the Board of Directors. Pod member Mickie McGarity also serves on the Board.

The pod has had three Great Peppers of the Year; Doris Coats in 1989, David Manske in 1996 and Dale Reinecker in 2006. Glyn Gaines in 1987 and Jim 'Dog' Luhn 1998-2002 served as TICC Head Judges.

Cowtown members have also proven themselves to be a tough bunch of chili cooks. TICC winners are Doris Coats in 1991, Colleen Wallace in 1995, Glen Dickey in 1997, Bob Coats in 1999 and recently Roger Foltz in 2004.

Taking a look at current or past Cowtown cooks who have placed in the Top Ten over the years reads like a 'Who's Who' in the chili world. The list includes Ray Calhoun, Darrell Baxter, Patti Cook, Bill Cook, Dru Stewart, Bert Paine, Mike Sweet, Dusty Hudspeth-Sweet, Andy Faber, Bob and Doris Coats, Ken Robbins, Beth Moon, Charles Breeden, Suzie Manske, David Manske, Terry Massey, Richard Knight, Tom Hornsby, Charles Breeden, and at TICC 2005 Dee

Palmer earned 2nd place. There are no doubt others who belong on this list, and if their names have been accidentally left off, I sincerely apologize.

We won't even attempt to publish a list of TICC winners in beans, show, salsa or wings, but rest assured, if we did, the list would be full of Cowtown members!

Today and Beyond

In 2002, a four-color brochure was produced about Cowtown and what cooking chili for charity is all about. The brochure was written and produced by Dale Reinecker and Clay Renick at no cost to the pod. The brochure remains in use today and Cowtown is the only pod in the chili world that can boast of such a brochure.

The first use of PodCast broadcasting for a chili cookoff and pod meeting was in 2005. This new technology, introduced by pod member Steve Heaser, can be accessed via chilipodcast.com. Steve's broadcast is international and it is not unusual for him to receive hits and replies about chili cooking from around the world.

Over the years, membership has continued to increase from the few founding early members to its current membership of 170+, making it one of the largest pods in CASI. Through its charitable cooking endeavors, Cowtown Pod has raised and donated thousands of dollars to local charities and deserving causes. This does not include the money required to be turned back to CASI or outright donations to CASI for various funds and improvements at the Ranch.

As the pod moves forward with plans for the 30th anniversary cookoff, the future looks bright, more pages will be added to Cowtown's history, and Chiligula willing, there will be many more pots of fun times yet to come, and many more chapters added to the history of Cowtown.

THE FIRST COWTOWN POD COOKOFF

The first Cowtown cookoff was held on Sunday, June 12, 1977. It is not known if a designated charity had been chosen at that time. However, the following article provides an interesting, informative and nostalgic look into the window of Cowtown Pod's early history.

(From the June 24-30, 1977 issue of the Dallas Weekly Reader, Page 7, by Charles Adler)

“On a very hot Texas Sunday afternoon it was about 40 degrees hotter in a small cleared area in Fort Worth. Some 75 chili cooks had gathered there from varied, distant points to match their aromatic concoctions in the First Annual Cowtown Chili Appreciation Society International

Chili Cookoff. The contenders came from all over Texas and as far away as Florida for the event earlier this month.

A crowd estimated at 1,500 was on hand for the activities, which were sponsored by the Cowtown Pod of CASI as part of the city's Chisholm Trail Round-Up. The cookoff was held in 'Chili Alley' adjacent to the North Side Coliseum.

The Great Pepper of the Cowtown CASI, Tom Wayne, who is program director of KXOL, and his wife, Karen, assisted by other members of the pod, made the cookoff and its related events a rip-roaring success.

The first place trophy in the chili cooking contest was awarded to Doc Koch of Houston, head cook of Kissin' Cousins Chili. Koch will represent Cowtown at the world championship cookoff at Arriba Terlingua next October.

Second place went to Tom Synodis of Garland for his Greek Chili. Shotgun Wright of Richardson, chief cook of Bowl-O-chili, was third.

In the showmanship category, the Southwestern Institute for the Advanced Studies of Texas Red, headed by Johnny King of Mobette, Texas, won top honors. The display consisted of a 'laboratory' in which white-coated technicians tested the chili ingredients with scientific instruments.

The Scottish Clans of North Texas from Ft. Worth, won second place for their exhibit, which included a kilted bagpiper and two young ladies who danced Scottish dances. The Corpus Christi Crab Claw Chili Cookers won third place for their cantina.

Other activities during the weekend were a party for chili cooks and teammates on Friday evening, June 10; a street dance Friday night; a Bloody Mary mixoff Saturday morning; a number of contests, including a wet T-shirt event sponsored by CASI pods, on Saturday afternoon; and another street dance Saturday night.

The Cowtown Chili Cookoff was one of more than 15 cookoffs scheduled in Texas between now and the Terlingua bash in October.

A new Dallas Pod of CASI was recently organized, with Dick Hitt of the *Times Herald* as chief chilihead. Bart McLendon of Dallas radio station KNUS, a director of the Dallas Pod, announced that KNUS will sponsor a Texas Open Chili Championship Cookoff at Big John Brigham's ranch near Plano in September, with the winner going to Terlingua.

Frank X. Tolbert of the *Dallas News* pointed out that there is a need for a Texas Open, since it can be entered by any inhabitant of Texas regardless of sex. There is an annual Texas

Women's Championship in Luckenbach, and an annual Texas Men's Championship in San Marcos."

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The following captions under photos accompanied the article:

- Doc Koch of Houston holds the winning trophy awarded to his Kissin' Cousin chili.
- Johnny King of Mobeete chug-a-lugs his Lone Star out of a showmanship trophy.
- Big John Raven of Temple, a cookoff regular and walking testimonial to his own cooking.
- A man can't live by chili alone. Billy Bills gave out free kisses and chili peppers to ladies at the Las Fagayan Indian Chili booth.
- Jack Bronstad of Dallas prepared his Trinity River Chili, finishing sixth.
- Chili-Gulf style. The Corpus Christi Crab Claw Chili Cookers put up a cantina for home base.
- Pre-cookoff hi-jinx. Billy Cook, of Ft. Worth, douses a buxom wet T-shirt contestant. Tom Wayne says he'll drink to that.

From Candi Knight, Candi Kisses Chili. Reprinted with her permission; edited slightly for length. For the entire story, and pictures, see <http://knightsisters.tripod.com/terlingua/id7.html>

When mom and dad gave birth to me November 4, 1970, little did they know that they were giving birth to a chili cook kid. In a few years, they would be raising me in an environment like no other. On today's standards, I'm surprised the state didn't remove us. We were exposed to a lot at a young age....drinking, cussing, and nudity in some cases, but it was all in fun. Some people look at me today and question my perspective in life, but all I say is look at the source. I was raised as a 'chili cook kid'. I had no choice but become who I am today.

Mom and dad went to their first cookoff at Trader's Village in April of 1976. Yes, that made me 5 ½ years of age. My younger sister, Kristi, was 9 months old in a stroller and my older sister, Lisa, was 9 years old. Mom and Dad were at Trader's Village to look for fake fur to line the inside of our brown Chevy van. They came across some people too wild to be believed, got involved in the pickled quail egg contest, and were immediately hooked. The rest is history.

They named the 'team' Bottom of the Barrel Gang and Other Rotten Apples. They found that showmanship was more their niche than chili and the best show team ever evolved. At the time, the only members of the team were Mom, Dad, my Uncle Perry, and some friends at my Dad's work, and of course, us kids. Maybe because Lisa and I were older, we were more involved with show. My younger sister, Kristi, was tied with one end of a rope around her waist and the other end tied to a table. I guess that's how Mom and Dad kept up with us kids while they played. Soon Mom and Dad met Karen & Tom Wayne and Beth & Jimmy Moon. They struck up a friendship and became part of the team. By 1980, Doris Coats, Mike Sweet, and Ray & Judie King joined the team. (With this group, you can see why I'm screwed up). Each weekend we would travel Texas together trying to win at show and chili. We always won in show, but it would take Mom & Dad almost a year just to place in the top ten in chili.

In the beginning, we would travel EACH weekend to some little town in Texas for cookoffs. Every Wednesday, Mom would unload the van from the weekend before and every Thursday, she would reload the van for the coming weekend. We would travel in a van that my Dad and Grandfather had rigged. They welded a bed in the back for me and my two sisters to sleep on, while Mom and Dad slept on the middle chairs that folded into a bed. Behind the van was a trailer that held the chili stand. The trailer was brown with yellow lettering that read 'Bottom of the Barrel Gang' on the sides and back. On the way to the cookoffs, Dad would stop at every historical marker he could find. Our weekends were filled with traveling from this point on.

By the late '70s, it became a family affair each weekend. Besides the unusual friends who had joined the team, my grandparents, Pat and Nita Winters, would travel with us. I guess they tagged along to help babysit us or maybe it was the beer and good times. Our chili stand consisted of a tattoo parlor, the saloon, and a kissing booth. Grandfather Pat, or Dr. John as he was known in the chili world, would sit in the front of the stand giving free breast exams and cooking his world famous Dead Armadillo chili.

And then there was Dad, who walked around mooning in his bright yellow underwear. On his underwear was an armadillo hanging onto the sun. He would go thru the crowd giving shotgun weddings in front of our stand. And then there was Mom, Miss Glad Ass Knight and her pits. She would wear a golden outfit. The pits would wear brown tuxedos, yellow afro wigs with their face painted black. Along with them were the Booze Brothers in bright pink tuxedos. All of them would sing chili songs. And who could forget Karen Wayne giving out kisses in the kissing booth. Karen got involved in walking around and freaking people out, so I would sit in the

window of the kissing booth, eventually dethroning Karen as Miss Cotton Candy. At the age of 9, I walked around in my bright pink outfit with balloons in my shirt for breasts thinking I was hot shit because I was making money by giving kisses to old men. (Like I said, I'm surprised the state didn't step in). Mom would later become Miss Prairie Dog Hot Stuff with her Glad Ass Knight gig in 1979.

By the mid '80s, the team was tired of loading and unloading the chili stand so we went for another concept. Armadillo racing! Mom & Dad built cages in the back yard that held our armadillos. All with names like Bo Dilla, Willie, Sherman, etc. Each day they would go out and clean the cages. Each weekend we would set up a race track at the cookoffs for spectators to watch armadillo racing. (You know you're a redneck when...). This race gig went on for a couple of years and eventually we would go thru what I call the corporate phase. We found sponsors like Dodge. We no longer did show, instead showing cars for Dodge. By this time, Dad had a motor home and we were cooking under a canopy with a table and stove. I miss those show days. We were the original era of true show.

Terlingua.....all our lives Mom and Dad would leave for a week the first week of November. The excuse that we kids couldn't go was because it was for "adults only". As a teen, this didn't matter much because it just meant that I had the house to myself and all my rowdy friends for a whole week. Oh, the parties I had at the house while they were gone.

I went to Terlingua for the first time in 2000 and swore I'd never miss another year. I finally got to spend my birthday with my parents and all my new found friends. Afterwards, I started going to a few cookoffs in the northern part of Florida. Once again, I won some and lost some. But this time around it is different than when I was a teen cooking in the Juniors division. I'm traveling to Texas, Tennessee and Florida cooking with the big boys. When I was a teen, I wanted to win. Now it's not so much about winning but about charity and making friends along the chili trail. It's about going to Terlingua and seeing the changes the chili world has made at the end of the year. Winning is just a plus if it is your lucky day. I could cook for the rest of my life and not win anything in chili. I'd be just fine with that because I consider myself a winner in life anyway. I was raised with great parents, great chili folks around me, and I learned that there is more to life than winning. I'm a chili cook kid and damn proud of it. I don't care who questions my perspective in life and sense of humor anymore. If they only knew the way I was raised they'd understand. I have had a life like nobody else.

Thanks Mom and Dad! I'm looking forward to many more years in chili.

Over The Years, thousands of anecdotes and stories have come from the chili trail. Please enjoy these memorable moments. In some cases the names have been changed to protect the not-so- innocent. Not!!

I am sure you know the Motleys. At one cookoff in Wimberly, Texas, Tommy Vance, known as 'Bird Dog', decided to demonstrate the proper way to parachute. Now 'ol Bird Dog had made over 400 jumps from altitudes of 11,000 feet with no problems. He picked a tree that he would jump from and demonstrate the proper way to land and roll from a parachute jump. The tree was not very tall, and Bird Dog was not very sober. So in front of the crowd that had gathered to witness the demonstration, he jumped. It was more a crash landing as he suffered a broken pelvis and several broken ribs and had to be taken to the San Marcos hospital. **From Irene Duffield.**

The first cookoff I ever went to was out in Blanco. I might add that they did not have another for quite a few years, but I was not the blame. Anyhow, at the cookoff some blithering idiot decided a gun in the gunrack in a friend's truck was not loaded so he pulled the trigger. He was quite amazed to find that bullets came out the end of the unloaded gun. It was pointed in our direction and I found that I could duck very fast. The bullets went over our heads and hit cars in the parking lot. Harold Gunn, a personality on Houston radio, wore guns that were unloaded as part of his show. He got arrested as well as the man who shot the gun. I almost gave up chili cooking after that but I am glad that I didn't; would have missed too much fun. **From Irene Duffield.**

At a cookoff in Flatonina, the cooks all stayed at an old, unused nursing home that had been made available to them. The night before the cookoff, Yeller Dog Marsh arrived in his old Pontiac and had his dog, Clyde, with him. Now Clyde was special to Yeller Dog, as he had found Clyde running loose on a highway and had taken him in and given him a home. Yeller Dog went inside leaving Clyde in the car. While he was inside, several cooks moved his car around back and moved into the parking space an old, crushed Pontiac that resembled Yeller Dog's car. The cooks then started yelling and hollering for Yeller Dog to come outside quick. Yeller Dog ran out, saw the crushed car and started yelling about his dog Clyde being in the car. After a good laugh by the pranksters, they assured Yeller Dog that his car, and Clyde, were just fine. A few

years later, Yeller Dog vanished and was not seen or heard from for about 10-12 years. **From Jimmy Moon.**

There is one among us who has a habit of leaning back in his director's chair and propping his feet on his chili stand as he chili cooks. One day, this person drove from Dallas to Wichita, KS for a cookoff. Upon arrival, he set up his stand, had his meat boiling in the pot, and everything was proceeding according to schedule. As was his custom, he leaned back in his chair and propped his feet on the shelf. However, the shelf had not been properly secured and down came the shelf, stove, chili pot, chili fixins' and all. Splat. Right on the cement. So, he loaded everything back into his van and drove back to Dallas making a round trip of about 700 miles. No runs, no hits, one error. **From Dale Reinecker**

Bert Paine lived three houses down and I had seen his infamous 'Book'. He invited me to go with him to a cookoff at Trader's Village, and having nothing else to do on that day, I went. During the day, the 'Book' was on display. So I proposed a wager, could he get five new shots for the book in 15 minutes, with me tagging along to observe? He said, "Of course", I said no way and \$10 bucks was put on the line. Bert grabbed his camera and we headed out. Unbeknownst to me, a whole group of Biker Babes were congregated two rows over. In short, he got the shots, I paid off, and we were back at his cook site with five minutes to spare. At this same cookoff, I was introduced to Bill & Patty Cook and inquired what that thing was on their cook stand. I was told it was a fart bar; you grab hold, apply pressure, and let 'er rip! Boobie shots, beer, fart bars, more beer, outlandish people and chili cookin'. Hey, I could get into this! **From Dale Reinecker**

At a Cowtown cookoff, Sunny Wilkerson cooked five pots of beans. He kept a pot for himself and told his friends to pick any one of the four remaining pots and turn them in for judging. Everybody placed but Sunny. **From Bruce Stewart**

At the '95 or '96 Cowtown cookoff, the bands were playing and the party was going hard. I was in the judging area cleaning up. This guy comes wandering in with bright, flaming orange hair and starts poking through the ice chests. Not knowing who he was I said, "Can I help you?" and he replied that he was looking for a beer for his dad. So I said "Ok, who is your dad" and he replied Jim Ezell. It was Jason. **From Budda Manske**

Budda and I had been way over-served at a Ladies' State. Budda decided that he should run at me and that I should catch him. So he runs and jumps and I caught him, but our legs got tangled up and we rolled and hit the ground pretty hard. As we landed, Budda cuts the biggest, loudest, nastiest fart ever. It cleared the area. **From Greg Goodwin.**

Carol Knight brought her mother, Neta Winters, to a cookoff. Now Mrs. Winters was in her 60s and a most prim, proper and straight laced lady befitting her station in life. Over the course of the cookoff, Mrs. Winters had taken to nibbling on a very tasty batch of brownies that had been laid out for tasting. Actually these were Alice B. Tokeless brownies, heavily laced with a dose of good old Mary Jane. The more she ate, the better she felt, and by the time it was to do the show act, she was, as some said "loose as a goose". She really got into it, and wound up winning Show for that day. **Name withheld**

There was a cookoff down around Whitney called "Cross the Brazos" held in the late 70's. Seems that Karen Wayne felt the urge and headed off for the porta-potty to do her business. While inside, a bunch of cooks proceeded to shake the 'john' and in so doing, tipped the thing over, with Karen apparently staying seated for the entire performance. However, unfortunately "stuff" was splashed all over her. The 'john' was eventually set upright, and Karen, not to let a little incident like this faze her, proceeded to strip, turn her clothes inside out, and emerged from the 'john' apparently all clean, except for the smell. She was not popular that day. **Doris Coats**

One Christmas season, a party was held at Ray & Judie King's house in the late 70's. There was some friendly competitive drinking games taking place, but Ray seemed to keep changing the rules. After awhile, Ray was no longer able to compete and decided to take a nap. While he was asleep (passed out), Richard painted his 'private' in red & white stripes, like a barber pole. The females meanwhile painted his feet and toenails in shades of pink and red. (So Richard, did you enjoy doing the painting?) It is said that for the next 10 years, Ray King went to cookoffs with a bag full of magic markers waiting for the guilty parties to pass out and a chance to get even. **Doris Coats.**

Sometime around 1983, give or take a year or two, when the TICC was held at Glenn Pepper's Ranch in an area called Villa de La Mina, the President of CASI got himself arrested by the local

police. Apparently there were two hills facing each other with the cooking area in the 'bowl' below. Seems as though the then President of CASI instigated a wet T-shirt contest on the crest of one of the hills. The local Brewster County cops deemed this indecent and arrested him. One of the onlookers approached the cops and, explaining that they didn't want to go to Alpine to bail out the President of CASI, asked if they could pay his fine and have him released right then. This was agreed to and Robert Bell was released into the custody of Doris Coats! Lord have mercy!

The Quill

Terlingua participants have been known to do some hard drinking, and Nick McGarity and Bob Coats were doing their best to uphold the tradition at TICC in 1985. Having consumed copious amounts of booze in the preceding hours and not willing to give it up, Nick and Bob, seated on 4-wheelers, were proceeding to solve all the world's problems. They loudly called for more Vodka, and a full bottle was quickly made available. For the next hour as they discussed world events, they passed the Vodka bottle back and forth, each taking healthy drinks. What they didn't know was that the bottle had been filled with water, and they had been drinking H₂O and never knew the difference! **Fly on the Wall**

On the way to Terlingua, Pat & Neta Winters, Carol & Richard Knight, Ray & Judie King, Beth & Jimmy Moon and Doris Coats were caravanning down the highway. They got out to Monahans, Texas, and turned left and shortly thereafter pulled into a rest area to party a bit and grab some sleep. Party they did. The next morning one of the group set out to find some water to make coffee, which they did and greatfully consumed. It was only later that they discovered the source of the water had a sign on it that said "non-potable water". Yuck! Nobody got sick, so no harm, no foul! **Doris Coats**

South Side Foggy Mountain Chili

Jim Johnson - Head Cook

This is the story of how one of the greatest chili show teams in history was formed, rose to the rank of world champions in 1998, and continued to maintain their presence in the chili world for over twenty-six years and counting.

It all started in 1979. Jeff Gatlin and Jim Johnson were running buddies and neighbors. Jeff was a junior and Jim was a sophomore at South Grand Prairie High School in Grand Prairie, Texas a suburb between

Dallas and Ft. Worth. Jeff and Jim were in the high school band and both played trumpet. These guys were not your typical band geeks. Jeff's dad was a Grand Prairie police officer and Jim's dad was a school teacher in Dallas. Their moms were both housewives and did the typical motherly duties of worrying about their teenage sons. CB radios were a big deal back then and Jeff and Jim both had CBs rigged up in their rooms to communicate late in the evening. This was long before email, cell phones, pagers, etc. The town where Jim and Jeff grew up had two high schools at the time. The older of the two was called Grand Prairie High and was located in the northern part of town. The city was growing predominantly towards the South and a second school had been built and named South Grand Prairie High. Jim and Jeff attended this school and there was a strong rivalry between the North and South campuses. Jeff had a part time job at a local flea market called Trader's Village. He ran the carousel in an area of the market that had a few amusements and small rides. Jim's father had leased one of the first booths at the market and sold Mexican imports on the weekends to subsidize his exorbitant teacher's income. So one day Jim went to speak to Jeff while he was on break from running the merry go round. It just so happened that there was a chili cook-off going on that weekend on the west side of the market. Jim and Jeff wandered over to the cook-off area and strolled up and down the aisles taking in the strange behavior and wide array of personalities that were present at this whimsical event. One thing that was a common denominator among each of the teams seemed to be beer. Everyone was drinking beer. Being fairly well educated and very creative, this type of event appealed to both Jeff and Jim. There were teams of people cooking chili and doing skits of all kinds to entertain the crowd. And there was a lot of beer drinking going on. So the boys talked it over and decided that since this was an annual event, they would plan on forming a team and attending the following year. The idea was that even though they were under age to legally drink, it appeared that at this event no one would notice as long as their team blended in with the other crazy contestants.

A year went by of endless planning. The first and most important thing was to come up with a good name for the team. Since the guys were musically inclined, they wanted to have a name that sounded like a band name. Lester Flat and Earl Scruggs were an influence. Being involved in the North South academic rivalry, they also wanted to make sure they included something in the name to make everyone know that the team was from the south side of town. After many nights of banter on the CB radios, the name South Side Foggy Mountain Chili was born. Originally it was going to actually be South Side Foggy Mountain Chili Team and Jug Band. The idea was to get a team together of other kids from the band and have them playing tunes on gallon whiskey jugs filled with different amounts of liquid to produce various tones that would create simple songs. This idea fell by the way side when they realized that it would be impossible to get enough volume from the jug band to be able to compete in the frenzied showmanship competition during a large cook-off.

There are two aspects to the competition at a chili cook off. Of course there is the competition to see who can cook the best bowl of red. Chili is the state dish of Texas you know! But aside from the culinary side there is also a colorful competition known as showmanship. Most chili cooks have a small wooden stand that they set up their Coleman stove on to shield the cooking area from the wind and provide a place to set their beer can while tending to the chili. These stands are generally painted with the name of the team and some are real works of art. A team can have from one to several members. Some teams do showmanship once in a while, some never do show and only focus on the chili, while some live for doing showmanship. The true show teams build elaborate setups usually of plywood and spend hours painting and planning to construct these portable backdrops and facades.

During the annual Prairie Dog Chili Cook off held each year at Trader's Village in Grand Prairie, there were several fun games held during the day at the cook off. These included the anvil toss, lemon roll, prune pit spitting contest, a chicken flying contest and a Miss Prairie Dog Beauty contest. The boys from South Side planned on participating in several of these events. As with many things in high school, although a lot of plans were made throughout the year in 1979, when it came time to go to the cook off in April of 1980, not a lot of things had actually been done. This was a three day event that started on Friday. The boys got home from school on Friday and started loading the green and white 1969 Chevy C-10 pickup with lounge chairs, coolers, band instruments and a Rhode Island Red Rooster in a small wire cage. Jim had hastily constructed some side boards for the long wide bed of the truck and they found some black paint and a brush to paint the team name on the side boards. Since they were in a hurry, once the side boards were in place there were a few "runs" in the paint but it was still legible. They tried to paint some mountains and clouds and sun but it wasn't very good. The main thing was that the team name was visible for the world to see. The chili world would never be the same again. Who knew that twenty years later the words "South Side" would be so well known in the chili circles? Not necessarily well liked, but well known!

Going to a chili cook off is one of the most relaxing feelings in the world. Everyone at a chili cook off is there to have fun. You can forget about all your problems for a while and just enjoy being outside, sitting around in your favorite lawn chair with your beverage of choice and relax. If you happen to forget something such as a chili ingredient or whatever, another fellow cook will always help you out. Chili cooks are some of the nicest people in the world and go to great lengths to help those in need. Some "one day" cook offs are really fun since you don't need to do as much planning or preparation. Back in the 1980's, chili cook offs were gaining popularity in the south and especially in Texas. They were combined with several musical acts and included big name sponsors. These events were usually two or three days long and required a little bit more planning, preparation and gear. But the reward was being able to go to a remote location and party down with no worry of having to drive home intoxicated.

The Prairie Dog Chili Cook off and Pickled Quail Egg Eating Competition was an event that included a full weekend of activities. This cook off is held each year in April in Grand Prairie, Texas and was where South Side Foggy Mountain Chili made their debut in 1980. Jim and Jeff arrived in the 1969 green and white Chevy truck and proceeded to register at the check in booth. They were both a little apprehensive and wondering when they would get some kind of arm band or other moniker that would alert the world that they were too young to be drinking. But with their true Steve McQueen style, the boys swaggered out of the booth with their “goodie bags” and a site map denoting their assigned spot that would become home for the weekend. It was muddy. April in north Texas means high wind and rain mixed with occasional sunshine. It seemed to always rain on the cook off weekend. So Jeff hiked out through the muddy field to locate the campsite, while Jim waited in the truck on the asphalt portion of the road. Once Jeff found it, he motioned and Jim gunned the hell out of the old truck and went sliding wildly toward the spot next to the fence adjacent to the rodeo arena. The truck came to a stop positioned at a forty five degree angle on the ten by twenty foot space. Jim shut off the engine, got out and said “I think that will be good enough”. The boys proceeded to unload a few things and then started to wander about meeting the other teams and looking for free beer. It didn’t take long. There was a team from Louisiana that had some real party animals in their camp. They cooked crawdad chili and were dancing and singing from the moment they arrived on Friday until they drove off on Sunday. There were several classic teams present such as the Texas Red Ozone team, The Jersey Lilly, Pole Top Chili, Alamo Chili and our soon to be good friends at Black Jack Chili. Since both Jim and Jeff were in the local high school band, they had recruited some other band members to come out and be part of the team. Chris Cook, David and Richard Canter, Jim Stearman, Freddie Gerik along with Jim’s brothers, Tim and Scott, arrived on Saturday morning.

Saturday morning kicked off with a jalapeno pepper cutting ceremony and a colorful parade of chili heads through the flea market area. South Side Chili quickly took over as the leaders of the parade. Since the actual chili competition was on Sunday, Saturday was packed with zany contests and a beauty contest all of which South Side participated in. The highlight of the Saturday activities was a huge cooks’ party and country western dance that started around seven o’clock. This event was held in a huge tent setup inside the Rodeo arena. Once a couple of hundred drunken chili cooks started dancing in the dirt floored arena, the dust would get so thick that you couldn’t see more than ten feet. The flea market beer carts were deployed to the party and provided mobile free beer for the cooks and their support team members. This was all very appealing to the newly formed South Side Foggy Mountain Chili team. More free beer, dancing and an opportunity to meet some lovely Texas ladies. Sunday morning was rough. At most two or three day cook offs, this is generally the case. But Sunday was the big day. The day the team had to prepare their chili and muster the energy to organize the small band of minstrels and entertain the crowd in hopes of winning a

trophy and making their mark on the chili world. Since Jim was the equipment manager for the local high school band, they had “acquired” a few instruments such as a tuba, bass drum, baritone, etc. They used sheet music from their marching band performances and played everything from the high school fight song to the theme from *Star Wars*. The crowd was impressed. As for the chili, Jeff took over the culinary tasks and created a very greasy entry. It seems that he found a recipe that called for some Crisco in the blue can. It probably required a teaspoon or so but for some reason Jeff put the whole can of Crisco into the chili. Shall we say it was “shiny”? The showmanship competition lasted for two hours and the boys made it through with multiple sets of music as waves of people stopped by to listen to the “all kid” team. Following the showmanship competition, the team had a chance to lie around and rest. After a while, some got a second wind and were back in full party mode. Things were good. No one had been arrested, the weather was nice, it was Sunday afternoon, and they were at a chili cook off in Texas! What could be better?

Late in the afternoon it was time for the awards ceremony. This was a long drawn out ordeal that several hundred people attended to find out who had cooked the best chili that day and which team had put on the best show. The awards always start with a bunch of thank yous to sponsors and organizers. Usually they announce 10th place chili first, followed by 10th place showmanship, and proceed up to 1st place in each category. As luck would have it, the South Side Foggy Mountain team received a 7th place armadillo trophy. They were ecstatic. Only a few weeks before, the high school band had won several awards at a state competition but this award meant much more to the members of South Side. They were hooked. Where else in the world can a group of friends spend three days camping, drinking, harassing passersby and playing loud music and then get a trophy for it all? This was great. Unfortunately, it took seven years before the South Side boys realized that their chili was being disqualified at each event for having large chunks of visible ingredients which is a “no-no” in competition chili.

April of 2005 marked the 26th year that the South Side Foggy Mountain Chili team had participated in the Prairie Dog Chili Cook off.

“Those who ride.....Choose South Side!”

A Terlingua Journal

by Christopher L. Cook

As I prepare for my departure, to defend myself against the erroneous charges trumped up by an oppressive arm of the government, an uneasy feeling nags me. A question? A question of what one packs for the trial of the United States of America verses Christopher L. Cook, a trial that I will attend alone and without legal counsel.

A trial I wish I didn't have to attend. A question I wish I didn't have to answer. What to wear?

Washing the needed clothing, digging up a duffel bag, and packing for a trip is normally a joyful task. It means a voyage that brings the promise of the unknown, an adventure where the anticipation sends endorphins racing through your body, mind and spirit. No such feeling sits with me tonight. It's not as deep as dread, but no anticipation is present.

Leaving Deep Ellum, I head west on I-20 into a fireball of a sunset balanced on the horizon. The brilliant orange and yellow hues pull me towards them as if they know what fate awaits me in Big Bend.

To tell you what is about to happen, I must go back and tell you what has already happened. Every November, the town of Terlingua erupts with the spirit of Chiligula, the God of chili. Two chili cook-offs bring tens of thousands of spectators and hundreds of cooks and show teams. I made my rite of fall trip to Big Bend country early this year to rest and recoup after a personally trying year. I bought new tires for my Jeep. Larger and wider than my stock tires, I felt eight foot tall and bulletproof, ready to tame the rough Terlingua backroads with my friend, Glen Dickey. He also had left civilization early to get a jump on the good camping spots. I arrived at the CASI 320 cook-off site at noon Saturday, a week before the competition, to find Glen's camper locked and his T-bucket off-roadster gone. This I expected because of Glen's love for off-roading and adventure. I figured I would make camp and wait for Glen to return. I spotted a primo location to set up the smaller of my two tents, thinking I would set up the monster 10x14 Winnebago IV later in the week when more of our team joined us.

Woo, back to reality. I just meet a nice Highway Patrol Officer. He just noticed I was driving at a rate of 79 miles per hour in a 65 mile an hour zone. He suggested I send \$120.00 to Odessa County in the next four weeks or a warrant for my arrest would be issued. I thanked him for his help and decided I better stop in Monahans to rest for the night. Driving five hundred miles each way to deal with 4 tickets, what better way to start a trip than with another ticket!!

The drive from I-20 south to Big Bend is breathtaking. It is also very dangerous at night because of the wildlife, the winding mountainous roads, and the unpredictable weather. I saw a deer that I am glad I didn't run into last night. This road has more rabbits than a magic hat. I awoke at 5:00 AM this morning to make my 10:00 AM court date in Big Bend National Park and I am dodging small mammals like an Indy car driver. While I dodge rodents, I will attempt to finish my story about why I am going back to Terlingua in March after just being there in November. This stretch of highway gives me the opportunity to finish that story.

Where was I, oh yes, Glen eventually returned to camp and we decided to embark on a 4-wheel journey in the morning. After a foil wrap dinner, I crashed early to dream of off-road heaven. We got up at 7AM to hit the trail. After a few hours of following Glen, who knew the topography much better than I, I got stuck about 11AM. Brewster County, the largest county in Texas, had not had a drop of rain in 9 months. I found the only patch of silt within three hundred square miles. I sunk immediately, all the way to the frame. Glen's T-bucket was too light to pull out my Jeep. We drove his car back to camp to recruit help to excavate the Jeep. We found help in the form of Bubba and Bo from Oklahoma. Bubba had a Jeep Wrangler 4-wheel drive and Bo had a GMC ¾ ton 4X4 pickup truck. Actually, Bo tracked us down after we had attempted to remove my Jeep with only Bubba's Jeep. He followed his brother's tire tracks in the loose basin shale and white sand. We chained both vehicles to the ball on my hitch and stuffed large flat rocks under all four tires, "Yes, the same tires I had purchased to tame the Terlingua Desert". With this entire circus of elephants latched to my bumper, I felt my Jeep inch backwards just slightly. I had

the transmission in neutral and I jammed it into reverse. Just as quickly as I got stuck, I was free. FREE, FREE. I backed out of the quicksand and parked on higher ground. I leaped out of my truck and we celebrated like Super Bowl Champs, Bo, Bubba and I. These Okies saved my ass. I didn't even know these people four hours ago. You would have thought we saved the world from aliens. The sun was setting, it was 9PM and my truck had been stuck for ten hours.

Ok, I could bore you with more details about how relieved I was to have rescued my Jeep but I won't go into any of that with you. I did leave out one small detail. When my friends and I returned to my stuck truck, there was a note under my windshield wiper. A message from a United States Park Ranger, saying:

Christopher L. Cook, do not remove this vehicle without notifying Ranger Vereses. If you remove this vehicle without contacting a U.S. Park Ranger, the severity of your offenses will increase.

I, of course, immediately ignored this as I would a parking ticket in downtown Dallas. The only problem with that logic was the United States of America did not forget these offenses. Soon after I returned home from my November Terlingua adventure, I started receiving tickets. Not parking tickets. Not speeding tickets. Tickets like I have never experienced.

Ticket # P209148 Littering

Ticket # P209147 Illegal Off-road Travel

Ticket # P209146 Destroying Park Property

Ticket # P209149 Interfering with Park Ranger Business

All of these tickets had the same remark where the collateral amount is suppose to appear.

Mandatory Appearance Required.

So, this is how I get you to where I am right now. About to enter Big Bend National Park to defend myself against these erroneous charges that I aluded to earlier. I departed a motel room some four hours ago in Monahans and I am registering at the Alamo Motel in Study Butte, Texas, ten miles east of Terlingua and 25 miles north of Big Bend National Park headquarters. I needed to stash my gear before my trial at 10:00. Expecting the worst, which is a slow painful death, I want a place to stash any contraband somewhere other than ground zero, if you know what I mean. I unloaded my three-foot cooler of beer, my duffel bag, and guitar in the motel room. I brought my camera, my driver's license and three thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills. Enough to bail myself out of jail but not enough to be accused of bribery.

It is time to confront Ranger Verese. Is it time to begin my sentence or exonerate myself? Is this the beginning or is this the end? I leave my motel room and drive south toward Big Bend National Park, a direct recipient of the income tax I pay to the U.S. government. Funds are taken out of my paycheck to subsidize this operation of which I am subjecting myself, less than voluntarily I might add.

The Trial of Christopher L. Cook vs. the United States of America

The court proceedings are to be held at the ranger station in Panther Junction. This is the headquarters for the geologist, the park management and, of course, the Park Rangers. The ranger station is behind the exhibit buildings. One of which contains a mountain lion captured, killed, and stuffed that is 16 feet long and weighed 1100 lbs. Anyway, as I walked past that lion I thought it was appropriate as I was being feed to them. I walked up a gravel path around behind the main buildings toward the ranger station. "They built this way in the back to muffle the screams," I mutter to myself.

The United States Magistrate from Alpine, Texas was an older, perhaps 60ish, woman with black and gray hair, reading glasses and of course the required long black robe. After a brief confusion over where my file was located, Ranger Verese, his supervisor, the judge and I close ourselves into a small room.

The judge read the charges against me, and their respective fines.

1. Illegal off-road travel \$100
2. Destroying Park property \$500
3. Interference with Park business \$100
4. Littering \$100

She also mentioned something about, but not limited to, a 6 months jail sentence. That didn't help calm my nerves.

Ranger Verese read his statement about finding an abandoned Jeep and calling a tow truck to remove and confiscate said Jeep. The tow truck arrived at the scene, the driver assessed the situation, and decided the Jeep was stuck too deep. He was afraid of damaging the Jeep and his tow truck, so he left. Ranger Verese also noted in his report that he spotted a chili sticker on the back window of the Jeep and thought maybe the driver was with one of the chili cook-offs in town. Quite an astute observation, I thought. Ranger Verese then left the note on my windshield telling me to call him before I removed the Jeep from the river bottom. He stated that the park border was clearly marked with signs and fences. He returned the next morning to find the Jeep gone. At that time, he found a 6 ft. length of chain and an empty Natural Light beer can. He then filed the above charges.

The judge then asked for my side of the story. I thought I better stick with the truth. I was off-roading outside of the park, mistakenly got into the park, and got stuck. I returned to camp to recruit help. I brought help 15 miles from camp, which was an hour and a half by dirt road and river bottom and 500 feet from the Rio Grande River and Mexican border. I found the note but removed the Jeep any way because the daylight was short. I did not want to leave my Jeep overnight. And I feared for my life if I stayed with it overnight. I didn't think I could talk Bo and Bubba into returning in the morning.

The judge then asked Ranger Verese the extent of the damage to the riverbed. She asked if that wasn't underwater frequently because of the frequent Terlingua flash floods. Ranger Verese hesitated but admitted that the judge was correct. She asked Ranger Verese to produce the chain

and beer can. He said he didn't bring the evidence because he was confused about the exact date of this trial.

The judge asked me if I had anything else to say. I threw myself on the mercy of the U.S. Magistrate. I told her of the damage to my Jeep. I told her of the cost of gas and lodging to be here in the middle of the week for this hearing. I told her the littering charge because I didn't drink lite beer. I told her that if she didn't fine me a nickel, I had learned a valuable lesson. I told her about my job in Dallas working with lawyers and judges. And my great respect for the law and legal profession. I laid it on thick.

After considering all of the evidence the U.S. Magistrate registered the following verdict.

1. Littering - Not Guilty
2. Interference - Guilty \$100 fine
3. Destroying Park property - Guilty \$100 fine
4. Illegal off-road travel - Guilty \$100 fine

The court costs for the proceedings cost me an additional 5 dollars, bringing the total cost of my fines to \$305. The judge handed me a self-addressed stamped envelope and instructed me to drop it in the mail within the next couple of weeks. I told her I had the cash with me, but she said she didn't accept cash. She said she trusted me to drop a check in the mail because I had come all this way to clear up this legal matter and she didn't believe I would weasel out now.

Ranger Verese and his supervisor were not pleased with the U.S. Magistrate reducing the fines and dismissing one of the charges. I could see the anger in their faces. As I stood up to leave the courtroom, Verese and his pal were shaking their heads. I could tell they were not happy with the judge's decision. I was grinning ear-to-ear. I shook the judge's hand, thanked her, and walked out a free man.

So I left Big Bend National Park. I did glance back a few times in my rear view mirror looking for Ranger Verese.

After lunch at the When Pigs Fly barbecue establishment, I did a few things that I never have time to do when the chili cook-off is in town in November. I took black and white pictures of the cemetery and ghost town in the surrounding mountains. I kicked around at the old 320 and stopped by the ring of fire where I have warmed myself and cooked my meals many times.

My mind kept wandering back to the hearing. I can't help but wonder why Ranger Verese lied three times to the judge during the trial. He didn't know me but I could tell he had hate for me. I was one being harassed, I had the reasons to hate, but I don't hate him. From where does that hate come? I don't know but I do know that he perjured himself three times, risking his job, his career and his family. Just to convict me on four charges for being stuck in the mud.

Later that evening, I cleaned up for dinner. The Starlight Theater is my favorite place to eat in Terlingua. It's a converted movie theater built in the early 1900s. The restaurant was nearly full so I sat at the bar. Of course, you never have to twist my arm to get me to sit at a bar. Anyway, I

met a park geologist and we started talking about why I was in town. And almost immediately he asked me if I have a Jeep. He tells me he started his job at the park last November. He said the Park Rangers were acting like they were chasing a criminal when they found that Jeep. They were shaking hands and high-fiving and backslapping as if they were chasing Bonnie and Clyde. I'm a chili cook not a serial killer. He said there is a Gestapo-like mentality with some of the Rangers. They talk about Big Bend being a last frontier, and they are the "law west of the Pecos". It's sad they have tarnished my image of Big Bend National Park. I wonder how many other people have visited the park and been harassed for burning the wood of the dead tree. How many retired old couples have been given a ticket for traveling one mile an hour over the speed limit by a Ranger having a bad day. Big Bend is like no other desert on this planet. It's empty and full. It's at once bleak and majestic. I wonder how many people won't come back to the park because of the actions of Ranger Verese.

What To Do With Leftover Chili Nachos

Cover a plate with Tostitos, heat up the chili and cover the chips. Melt CheezWhiz and pour over the chili, making great nachos for football games. Serve with cold Lone Star. **Budda**

Baked Potato

Take a baked potato and split in half. Cover both halves with warm chili. Grate cheddar cheese on top and add a bit of sour crème, and a few jalapeno slices if desired. Enjoy. **Dale Reinecker**

Burritos

Heat chili and burrito-size tortillas separately. Spoon hot chili onto the tortillas, top with light shredded cheddar (or jalapeno) cheese and chopped onion. Fold and roll, garnish with sour cream. Serve with a sliced red grapefruit salad on leaf lettuce. **Newspaper**

Chili Con Queso Dip

Warm 1 pound of chili in a large saucepan over medium heat. Cut 1 package (16 ounces) pasteurized processed cheese into cubes and add to chili. Cook, stirring frequently, until cheese is melted. Stir in 1 small diced tomato and 1 can (4.5 ounces) chopped green chiles, drained. Keep warm, serve with tortilla chips. **Newspaper**

Throw Down Chili Dip

2 pkgs (or more)	Philadelphia Cream Cheese
2 Cups (or more)	Left over chili
1 Cup	Colby Jack Cheese
To Taste	Chopped Green Onion

Smear Philly Cheese in bottom of glass casserole. Pour left over chili over the cheese. Sprinkle the Colby jack cheese over the chili. Put in microwave on high for 1 minute. Sprinkle chopped green onion over the whole concoction. Serve with chips (Frito scoops are good) and cold beer. Easy to make and delicious!! **Johnnie Sullivan**

Lazy Chili

Heat it and eat it. It's good cold, too. **Big Jim McGraw**

Chili Dogs

Put hotdog into the bun, pour chili over the top, sprinkle grated cheese and onion on top. Place a large bib around your neck to protect your shirt. Open wide, chomp down, enjoy. **Steve Heaser.**



**COWTOWN CASI POD
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
COOKIN' CHILI FOR CHARITY**

DUES: \$8.00 per person (\$12.00 per couple), due the 1st of July
Please make checks payable to COWTOWN CASI

Today's Date _____

NAME: _____
(Last) (first-His) (first-Hers)

ADDRESS: _____
(Street)

(City) (State) (zip)

PHONE: _____ CELL # _____

CHILI NAME: _____

BIRTHDAY MONTH-HIS _____ HERS _____

ANNIVERSARY MONTH _____

Are you a: New Member _____ Re-newing Member _____

If a re-newing member, are you a CASI member _____?

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

How do you want to receive your monthly newsletter, the "Bullsheat"?

E-Mail _____ USPS "Snail Mail" _____

PLEASE MAIL APPLICATION TO:

Suzie Manske, Cowtown CASI Pod, 5422 Crested Butte Cir., Arlington, TX 76017

THANK YOU FOR JOINING COWTOWN CASI!!

