



# Cookoff Time

## Chiliheads Off

1978

## For Terlingua

TERLINGUA (UPI) — Up to 10,000 "chillheads" are expected to converge on the West Texas ghost town of Terlingua this weekend to cook up champion-style chili, drink beer, dance and partake in other frivolous activities, including a Mexican fence-climbing contest.

The cause of this mass exodus to a desert hamlet 60 miles from anywhere is the 12th World Championship Chili Cookoff, originated by Dallas newspaper columnist Frank X. Tolbert, who says the event will be kicked off at 2 p.m. Saturday by the playing of a Mexican "beheading song."

Tolbert said he found a rare copy of the sheet music for the "Deguello," played during Mexican Gen. Santa Anna's attack on the Alamo in 1836, while he was researching a book in Mexico.

He said the playing of the blood-curdling song — which was played by Mexican troops to signify the cavalry's battle to the death — will herald the start of the cookoff.

Besides the chili cooking — which has drawn champion chefs from 25 states, three Mexican prov-

inces, two Canadian provinces and two Indian tribes — the gathering will feature a peculiar martini contest, a Comanche Trail jog-walk, wet T-shirt contest and, for the first time, a Mexican fence climbing competition.

The fence climbing contest was a late addition after Immigration Commissioner Leonel Castillo announced plans to build the so-called "Tortilla Curtain" walls at El Paso, Texas; San Diego, Calif., and San Luis, Ariz., to keep Mexican aliens out of the United States.

"We've got the fence covered with sheets and we're going to unveil a 12-foot-high section of steel chain fence erected near the huge outdoor stage at Glenn Pepper's Villa de la Mina Hotel in Arriba Terlingua," Tolbert said. "This will give a test similar to the proposed U.S. Tortilla Curtain between this country and Mexico.

"Contestants may jump, crawl, pole vault or tunnel under the fence. Tom Tierney, supervisor of the contest, said you may even use wire cutters on the fence and, in this event, it'll be quickly repaired."

ARIAN KREME LEMON CHOCOLATE HONEY DIPPED OLD FASH

## Texas Chili Cookoffs

ers of beer or wine. Some might crank up some music. It's a festive, party-time atmosphere. In my book, I call Terlingua "Woodstock on the Rio Grande."

In addition to the chili competition, most cookoffs feature a "showmanship" contest. Individuals and teams perform silly (non-chili) skits, song-and-dance numbers, or other vaudeville-type acts, which vie for the votes of anonymous judges mingling in the crowd.

The Terlingua competitions, the state's two best-known cookoffs, bring together thousands of chili-lovers as they cook, meet old friends, make



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new ones, discuss their differing opinions on chili, and, most important, have a good time.

"There's no money, no valuable prize, the winners aren't even likely to get their names in the paper," says Bob Horton. "Yet people go to the competitions over and over again and spend a lot of money and time entering the contests. These people probably wouldn't travel around going to hot dog cookoffs or pasta cookoffs—at least, a Texan wouldn't! But chili is a Texas tradition, and that makes all the difference." ★

Lubbock-based freelance writer CARLA WICKKEOWN speaks with authority, having judged a couple of chili cookoffs herself. Carla specializes in articles about food and best Texas.

The friendly competition among Texas chili cooks extends to the cookoffs themselves. The state's two biggest chili cookoffs (and related festivities) take place in Terlingua, immediately west of Big Bend National Park. The cooking contests at these events are traditionally held at the same time—noon on the first Saturday of November. Some cooks compete in different cookoffs in alternate years.

**The 31st Annual Original Terlingua International Frank X. Tolbert-Wick Fowler Memorial Championship Chili Cookoff** will be held "Behind the Store"

(look for the billboard on Farm-to-Market Rd. 170 one mile north of Terlingua) on Oct. 31-Nov. 1. Admission: \$10 per person (covers bean cookoff, black-eyed pea cookoff, margarita mix-off, showmanship contest, and musical entertainment throughout the weekend, as well as chili cookoff). Some primitive camping space available. Cookoff area not wheelchair accessible (though some people manage with assistance). Write to Viva Terlingua Headquarters, Box 617, Corsicana 75151; 903/874-5601.

**The 31st Annual Terlingua International Chili Championship** will be held at Rancho CASI de los Chisos, 5 miles west of Terlingua, on Oct. 30-Nov. 1. Admission: \$15 per person (includes a Western dance each night and a Halloween costume contest). Some primitive camping space available. Cookoff area wheelchair accessible. Write to Vickie Childers, 1307 Smiley, Amarillo 79106; 806/352-8783. Web site: [www.bigbend.com/casi](http://www.bigbend.com/casi).

### Other Cookoffs

Hundreds of other chili cookoffs take place in Texas annually. The following list includes a few of the larger ones.

**The 9th Annual Texas Open Chili Championship** (annually the second Sat. in Aug.) will be held Aug. 9 at Lake Park in Lewisville. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Lewisville Parks and Leisure Services, Box 299002, Lewisville 75029-9002; 972/219-3550.

The **28th Annual Chilympiad** (annually the 3rd weekend in Sep.) will be held Sep. 19-20 at the Hays County Civic Center in San Marcos. Admission: \$2-\$10 per person, depending on age and activity package (age 3 and younger free). Events include the Collegiate Open Chili Cookoff (for college students), the Men's State Championship Chili Cookoff, the Miss Chilympiad pageant, and entertainment both evenings. Partially wheelchair accessible. Write to Box 188, San Marcos 78667; 512/396-5400. Web site: <http://axiom.net/chilympiad>. Email: [chaos@itouch.net](mailto:chaos@itouch.net).

The **14th Annual Make-A-Wish Chili Cookoff** (usually the first Sat. after New Year's) will be held at the Tri-State Fairgrounds in Amarillo on Jan. 10, 1998. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Vickie Childers, 1307 Smiley, Amarillo 79106; 806/352-8783 or 355-9111.

The **27th Annual Texas Ladies State Chili Championship** (annually the 3rd Sat. in Apr.) will be held at Max Starcke Park East in Seguin on Apr. 18, 1998. Admission: Free. Wheelchair accessible. Write to the Seguin Chamber of Commerce, Box 710, Seguin 78156; 210/379-6382.

The **27th Annual Houston Chili Pod Cookoff** (annually the last Sat. in Apr.) will be held at 7979 N. Eldridge Rd. (Crater Village) on Apr. 25, 1998. Admission: Free. Parking fee for Crater Village: \$2. Wheelchair accessible. Write to Ralph Hay, 2505 Easy St., Pasadena 77502; 713/475-1660.

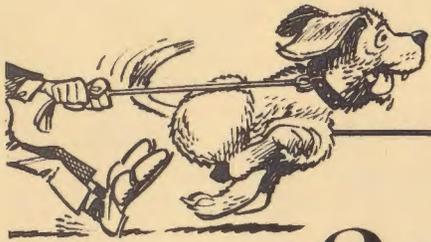
### Books

As entertaining as it is informative, *A Bowl of Red* by Frank X. Tolbert (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1994) is considered the definitive book on the history of chili and chili cookoffs.

For a history of Texas chili cookoffs and a collection of chili recipes—with and without beans—look for *Wild About Chili* by Dotty Griffith (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1985).

Now out-of-print, but still worth reading if you can find a copy, is *With or Without Beans: Being a Compendium to Perpetuate the Internationally Famous Bowl of Chili (Texas Style) Which Occupies Such an Important Place in Modern Civilization* by Joe Cooper (William S. Henson, 1952).

*Basic Texas Red* by Bob Horton (self-published, 1995) is available from the author. Cost: \$20 (includes tax, postage, and handling). Write to Bob Horton, Box 553, Lubbock 79408; 806/766-8759.



EXTRA EXTRA EXTRA!



# Luckenbach Daily Light

OCTOBER 9, 1976

Volume 1, Number 1



## LUCKENBACH NUPTIALS: CHILI QUEEN - MINSTREL

### Weather Wonderful

Luckenbach radar, located atop the abandoned firetruck southwest of the egg house, indicated no threatening cloud formations in the entire 14 acre Luckenbach metropolitan and suburban areas. In truth, Luckenbach radar indicated nothing, as it has been on the fritz for quite some time.

Nevertheless, the meteorological expert from the Luckenbach Weather-Predictin and Air Quality Control Board and Opa's Sausage Outlet (LWPAQC BOSO), Mr. Oliver Ottmers, gamely ventured to predict that there will be no rainfall from noon Saturday until late Saturday night, and after that it won't matter cause most everyone will probly go home. Temperatures are expected to be mild except around chili pots, chili cooks, and chili judges, where it's likely to be variable.

### Couple To Become Park Attraction

Mesdames Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Schoefferkoeeter all turned out in their best bib and tuck for a gala event takin' place just across Big Flat from Bear Creek at Luckenbach.

ALLEGANI JANI SCHOFIELD, that famous Chili Queen and women's lib (That's short for liberation, to save space) type was fixin' TO MARRY a guitar-box picker and chili appreciator, LEE MCCULLOUGH. But that wasn't all. They were havin a chili cookin-off contest just for ladies, with ladies from all over the territory there to show off where no one could see them.

It all started out (I mean our bein there) at last week's meetin of the Luckenbach Chamber of Commerce while Mrs. Wurstbottom was poundin' away with her new gavel. Held everyone's attention for five minutes, but she was just tightening some loose nails in the podium (speakin-from-place). You could've heard a pin drop. In fact, I was just about to drop a pin and show everybody when Allegani Jani busted through the door hollerin at Mrs. Wurstbottom, who was lookin for more

sure enough, he was there.

"That's right," exclaimed Allegani, "right here in LUCKENBACH, over there by the little stone house" (she pointed out the window at it), "I'm gonna get married right there at HIGH NOON SATURDAY."

"When?"

"On OCTOBER 9, and this year too!"

Mrs. Wurstbottom sputtered. It always gets everyone's attention, even better than the gavel. "But that's the day of the Sixth First Annual Ma Ferguson Ladies Only Chilibust!"

"And Lee's gonna help me cook!" she went on.

It got real quiet again, but I'd already put my pin away.

"But he's a man," Mrs. Wurstbottom growled.

"He sure is."

"But you can't let a man help you cook chili!"

"Yes I can. He said he'd let me ride up front in the pickup with him and the dog for better or for worse."

"We may have to take a vote on

to his proper seat then. We take votin serious. Everyone looked around at everyone else tryin to guess which way everyone else was gonna vote. Some murmurin started.

"He's a guitar-box picker," Jani said, lookin around hopefully.

It got quiet again. It seemed to be doin that a lot.

"And he's a chili appreciator," she threw in.

Everyone smiled and Mrs. Wurstbottom picked up her gavel and studied the nail marks in it for a long time. Then she noticed the votin was proceedin along without her, so she said she thought it was a wonderful idea after all.

"YOU'RE INVITED!" Jani said.

"I wanna be a bridesmaid," Mrs. Wurstbottom said.

It stayed quiet til the meetin ended, which was a minute later. Everybody said they heard it when I finally dropped my pin.

Peter Cedarstacker  
Writer

After an extended one week honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. McCullough will be residing in their farmhouse on the LBJ ranch in Stonewall.

The honeymoon will take them on a whirlwind tour of Ruidoso, Las Vegas, Niagra Falls, London, Paris, and winding up at the Bridal Suite of the Hondo Hilton Hotel in Terlingua, Texas.

And then it will be homeward for the happy couple, to their farmhouse on the Pedernales River. There, they will be an attraction of the Lyndon B. Johnson National Park with tour busses passing their lovely home every half hour. The tour is run by the National Park Service of the Department of Interior.

The tour is also remotely connected to a former owner of the place, a Mr. Sam Ealey Johnson, grandfather of LBJ.

Officially, to stave off curiosity seekers, their address will be, Box 954, Stonewall, Texas, 78671.

## Ceremony Topped In Austin

The wedding of Ms. Allegani Jani Schofield to Mr. Lee McCullough has probably been getting too much coverage in this paper already, and now a report from Austin indicates it got coverage there also—of a different type.

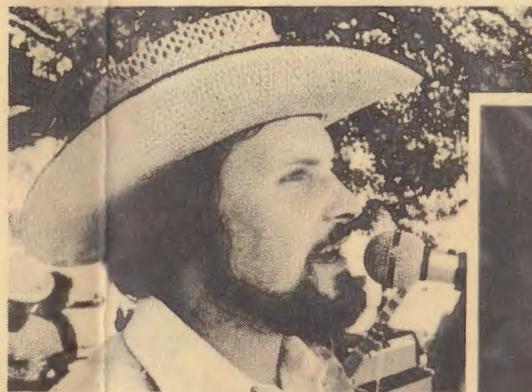
Mr. Manny Gammage and his wife Norma, upon hearing a few of the unique plans for this event, decided after some thought, that there was a way they could "top this thing". When he heard the event was to take place at the "ladies only" chili cook off, Manny burst into his famous grin and announced, "You can't go through with this wedding."

"But we must!" cried Allegani Jani, startled.

"We HAVE to," chimed in Lee.

"You *HAVE* to?" Manny asked, alluding to something, properly.

loose man  
"Here! Here!" cried Mr. Spite, and



"Yes. We've already reserved the Bridal Suite at the Hondo Hilton in Terlingua, and Hondo won't give the deposit back. \$5 is a lot of money."

"I understand," Manny said, realizing the gravity of the situation. "What I was going to say is that you can't go through with it without hats, and I have just the thing. Chili colored Hats."

"Chili colored hats?" the couple said, in unison.

"You may have the only ones in Texas," Manny went on, sending for the unblocked hats. "It'll be our wedding gift to you."

Stunned, the awe-struck couple stood mutely as Manny showed them several styles to choose from. They eventually chose two different styles: a "hi-roller" for Jani, and a "Texas Topper" for Lee, both done in a beaver-shag and sure to cause a stir at the reception. (The reception will be near a lot of chili pots likely in need of a stir).

this," Mrs. Wurstbottom pressed.  
Everyone in the meetin had to go back



"How long have you been making hats?" Lee asked.

"About twenty-five years," Manny said, "learned it from my dad. He was makin' hats before I was a twinkle in his eye. We brought the whole shebang over here from Houston in '64."

The latest addition to his line of wares is a collection of hand-woven hatbands produced by the nimble fingers of Ruffin Hill, a diminutive, perpetually smiling little lady who occasionally spins her own thread, makes her own yarn, and dies it by hand. She is hand weaving hatbands to match the chili hats.

Manny finished doctoring a wounded hat and handed it back to the customer who admired the work and asked "How much do I owe you?"

"A kind word is enough,"

"There sure must be a lot of folks out there with a lot of kind words for you, Manny. We'll be coming back to 2058 S. Lamar often."

Remember: Fight hypoglycemia.

## Nothing Halfbaked

In response to numerous questions about the cake for the celebrated wedding in Luckenbach, our food editor, Duncan Hines, has graciously consented to allow the printing of the recipe. This should also squelch the rumor that the reception dinner will consist of five loaves of bread and two fish.

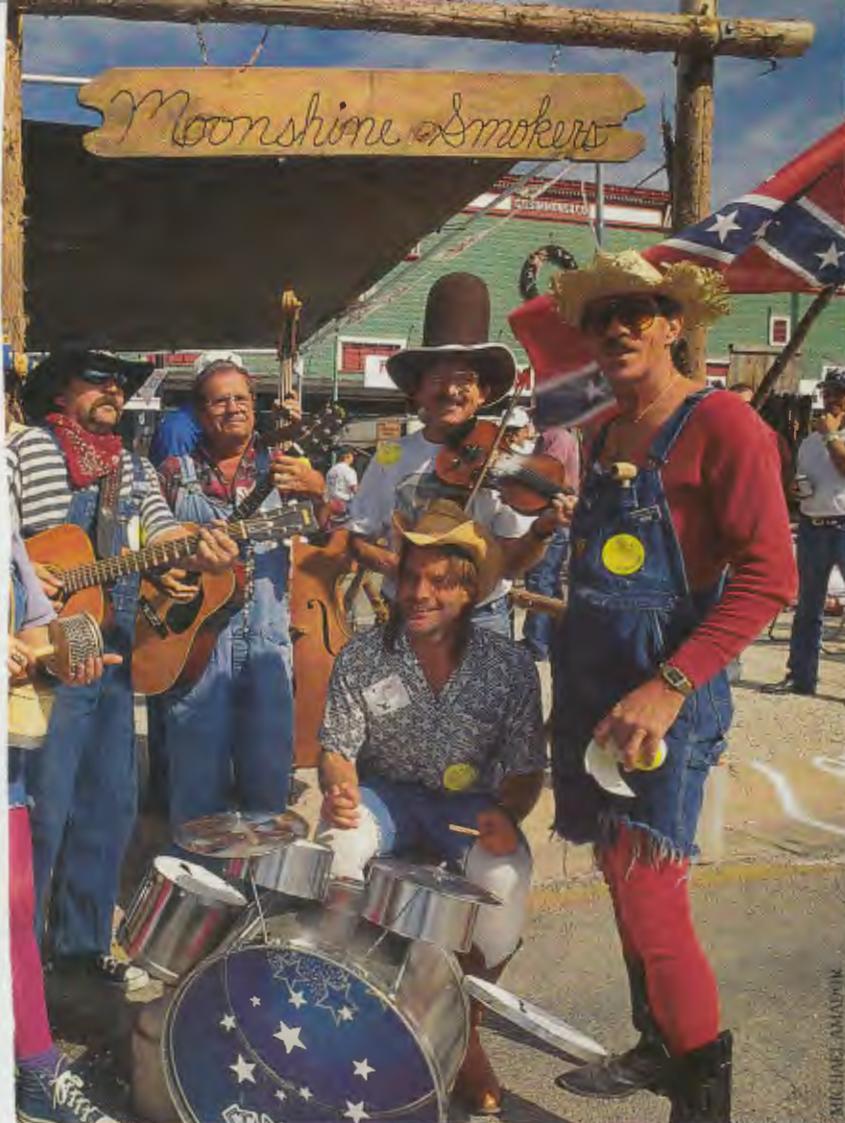
### PLAINE OLDE VANILLA WEDDING CAKE

800 lbs. sugar  
75 gallons butter or margarine  
25 cups vanilla  
600 lbs. sifted cake flour  
21½ lbs. baking powder  
94 gallons milk  
7,200 stiffly beaten egg whites  
White Frosting

Cream together sugar, butter and vanilla in bathtub. Stir together the cake flour and baking powder in a separate bathtub. Find a larger container, perhaps an unused grain silo, and add cake flour to creamed mixture, alternately adding milk. Gently fold in egg whites. Pour into as many #12 washtubs as you can find, making all layers about the same size. Cover washtubs and place in a building that will take 28 to 30 minutes to burn down. Remove from the debris. Frost with white frosting using relatively new rowboat oars.

Serves: Everybody.

For this and other exciting recipes write: Allegani's Appetizers, Box 954, Stonewall, Texas, 78671.



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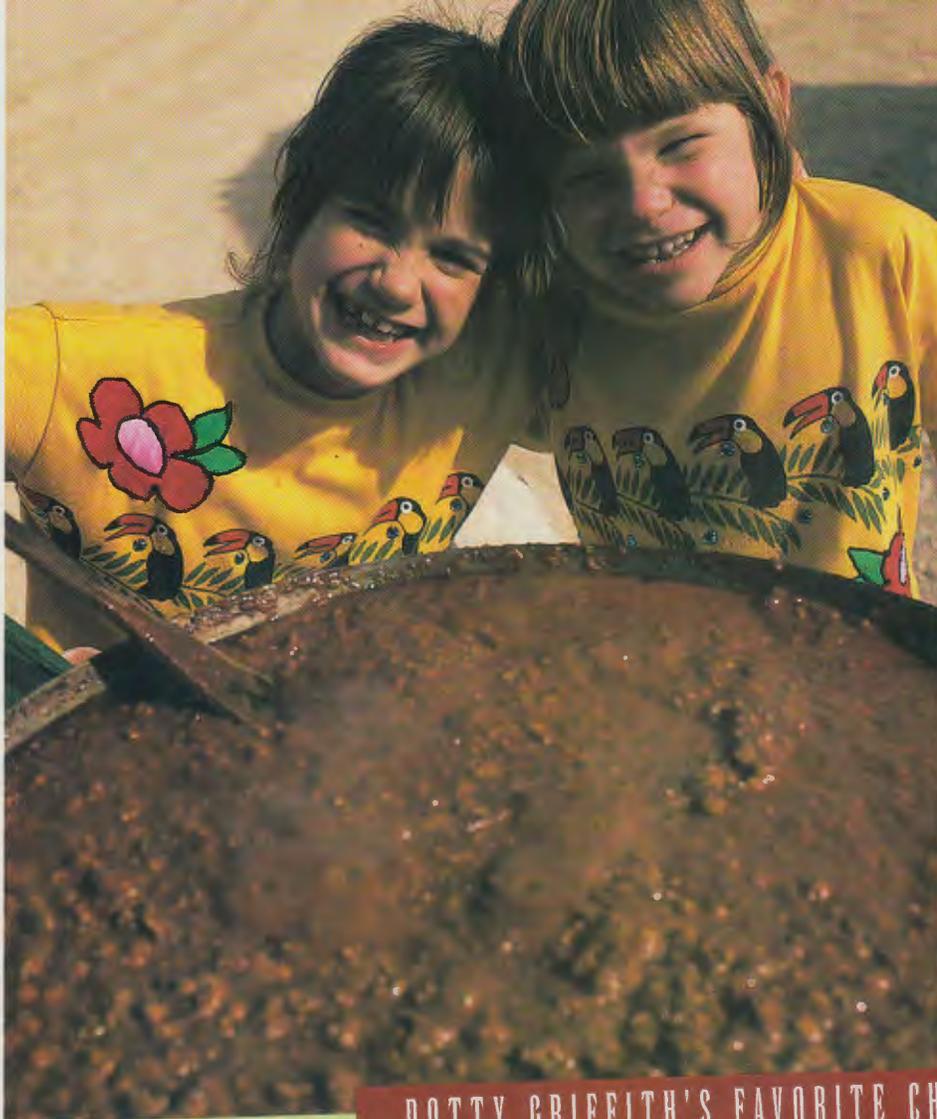
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[CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT] The thousands of chiliheads who gather each November at the Terlingua cookoffs are almost as serious about chili as they are about having fun. The Moonshine Smokers come prepared to play in more ways than one. An unidentified woman makes good use of great cheekbones. Roy Hannon of Sierra Vista, Arizona, sports a custom-made chapeau, as does Thomas Skipper of Jewett, while Big Tex wears his cowboy hat with pride.





The fund-raising aspect of some of the chili competitions attracts many cooks. CASI, for example, as a nonprofit organization, raises money for charities while promoting chili around the world. But the cooks don't let the seriousness of fund-raising interfere with their hell-raising. Chili cookoffs are really giant parties.

The night before a big cookoff, the organizers usually throw a wing-ding with food (often barbecue and side dishes) for the cooks, says Bob Horton, an editorial writer at the *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*. Bob, who is also an accomplished chili cook and the author of *Basic Texas Red*, a novel set during the two Terlingua competitions, continues: "On the day of the cookoff, most of the cooks have their own cool-

[LEFT] Two chiliheads in-the-making, Katy (left) and All Jay of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, pose by a pot of steaming chili at a Terlingua cookoff.

[FACING PAGE] Alan Selman and Sharon Alon exchange wedding vows at the 1995 Terlingua International Chili Championship.

## DOTTY GRIFFITH'S FAVORITE CHILI

*Dotty Griffith, dining editor of The Dallas Morning News, shares this recipe, adapted from one in her book Wild About Chili.*

- 4 dried ancho chilies, stemmed and seeded
- 4 dried arbol chilies (or 1 extra dried ancho chili), stemmed and seeded
- 2 japones chilies, stemmed and seeded, or ½-1 tsp. ground cayenne
- 1 T. cumin seed
- 7 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp. dried chili pequins, crushed
- 5 fresh jalapeños, stemmed and seeded
- 1 (14-½ oz.) can unsalted chopped tomatoes (undrained) or 1 lb. fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tsp. salt
- ¼ lb. chopped beef suet (ask the butcher for this)

- 4 lbs. lean beef, such as trimmed chuck roast or chuck tender, cut in ¼-inch cubes

- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 c. red wine
- 2-3 c. water

¼ c. masa preparado (a flour tortilla mix)

Place first 3 ingredients and enough water to barely cover in a small saucepan. Bring chilies to a boil over medium heat, and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes. Remove chilies, reserving liquid. Place softened chilies, cumin, garlic, chili pequins, jalapeños, tomatoes, and salt in a food processor, and process until smooth; set aside.

In a cast-iron pot or large Dutch oven, render enough suet to make ¼ cup. Cook meat in rendered fat over high heat until meat turns gray (cook away most of the liquid, but do not brown); drain excess fat.

Add chilies mixture, sugar, and wine to meat. Add just enough water (2-3 cups) to almost cover meat. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer uncovered about 1½ hours, stirring occasionally. Add water as needed to maintain same level.

Combine masa preparado with just enough water to make a smooth paste; press out all lumps with the back of a spoon. Gradually stir paste into chili to thicken. Taste, adding more salt and chili powder, if desired. (For a hotter chili, add some of the reserved liquid from chilies.) Cook about 30 minutes longer over very low heat, stirring frequently. Yield: 10 cups.

*Note: Use caution when working with chilies; wear rubber gloves and avoid touching your eyes*



## AL HOPKINS' CHILI

*Al Hopkins became involved in chili cookoffs in the late 1970s, when he worked for Wolf Brand Chili, a cookoff sponsor. Now retired, Al continues to enter chili contests in Central Texas and to coordinate the Original Terlingua International Frank X. Tolbert-Wick Fowler Memorial Championship Chili Cookoff.*

- 2 lbs. chuck tender, coarsely ground
- 1 (8-oz.) can tomato sauce
- 1 (14½-oz.) can beef broth
- 1 c. chopped onion
- 4 T. chili powder
- 2 T. ground cumin
- dash of salt
- dash of ground oregano
- dash of cayenne
- dash of coriander

Brown the meat in a large pot; drain well. Add remaining ingredients, and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes, or until meat begins to get tender. Taste, and adjust seasonings, adding more chili powder or salt, if needed. (If chili is too hot, add a little brown sugar. If chili is too thick, add a little water.) Cook 15 minutes longer, or until meat is tender. Yield: 6 cups.

qualify an entry). Cooks often purée or finely chop these ingredients or use powdered varieties. Some cooks add whole chili peppers and garlic cloves to the pot and remove them before serving.

"I think that, artfully prepared, they have a place in chili because they provide so much of the flavor," Dotty says about tomatoes, onions, garlic, and the like. "But the thing that separates chili from stew is the fact that in good chili, the only thing you can see is the meat and a very smooth, red gravy. The onions and everything else need to be puréed or chopped very fine so that you can't really tell that they're in there. You just have that magnificent blending of flavors that tastes wonderful."

No matter how strictly they follow the rules with their competition recipes, chili cooks often (gasp!) eat canned chili add beans to their recipes at home. "My wife and I eat chili two or three times a month," says Hut, whose mother cooked

chili when he was growing up on a ranch near Sanderson. "At home, we generally use hamburger—ground round, ground sirloin, or something very lean." Using hamburger, he explains, is faster than cubing or grinding chuck roast or chuck tender, the cuts of choice for many chili cooks.

## CHILI KIND OF PEOPLE

Jason and Susan Douglass of El Paso met while competing in a local chili contest. Last fall, they separately entered CASI's 30th Annual Terlingua International Chili Championship, cooking side-by-side but using different recipes. "Sometimes, we aren't speaking after a cookoff," Susan says with a laugh. "I like to claim that Jason married me to find out my secret ingredients."

The Douglasses are not unusual in chili-cookoff circles. As the cooks travel around the state and even around the country to enter the plethora of chili contests that, in Texas, lead up to the two big cookoffs in Terlingua, they make fast and steady friends. Some, like Jason and Susan, find romance. At the CASI championship in Terlingua, several chili-loving couples have exchanged wedding vows before the crowd of chiliheads.

## BOB HORTON'S CHILI

*Bob Horton, author of Basic Texas Red, has participated in one or the other of the Terlingua cookoffs each year since 1990. Bob's competition chili is a little spicier than this toned-down version, which he created for eating by the bowlfuls.*

- 6 T. chili powder
- 3 T. onion powder
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- ½ tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. ground cayenne
- ½ tsp. ground oregano
- 1 T. paprika
- ¾ tsp. salt (or salt to taste)
- 1 tsp. Accent (MSG) (optional)
- 3 lbs. lean, boneless beef roast or round steak, diced or coarsely ground
- 1 (8-oz.) can tomato sauce
- 1 (14½-oz.) can chicken broth
- 1 (14½-oz.) can beef broth
- 1 T. ground cumin
- 1 T. brown sugar

Combine first 9 ingredients in a small bowl; divide into thirds, and set aside.

Brown the meat in a large pot; drain well. Add tomato sauce, chicken broth, and beef broth, and simmer, covered, 2 hours, or until meat is tender, adding ½ of the chili powder mixture after each half-hour of cooking. Add cumin and brown sugar with the last portion of the chili powder mixture. (Chili should cook about 30 minutes longer.) Yield: 6 cups.

"Most of us come out here for the camaraderie as much as for the chili," says Cindy Reed of Houston. Cindy has the distinction of being the only person ever to win the CASI championship twice—and she did it two years in a row (1992 and 1993) at that. "My secret is a decent pot of chili with fresh spices, a lot of luck, and good friends who support me," she says.

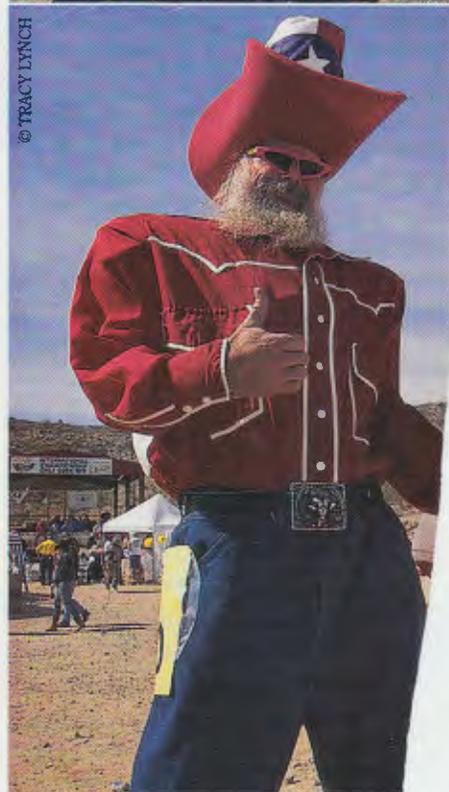
CASI members, who belong to small chapters, or "chili pods," throughout the country, come from all walks of life. "We have doctors, lawyers, housewives, teachers, and farmers who cook alongside each other," says Vickie Childers.

## LET THE COMPETITIONS BEGIN

Chili-cookoff madness began in 1967 with an event organized by a group of chili-loving Texans, including the late Frank X. Tolbert, *Dallas Morning News* columnist and author of the definitive chili book, *A Bowl of Red*. Through the pages of the newspaper, Tolbert had waged an ongoing battle with New York humorist/writer H. Allen Smith, whose article "Nobody Knows More About Chili Than I Do" ran in the August 1967 issue of *Holiday* magazine. Tolbert took issue with anyone from the East Coast saying he was more knowledgeable about chili than Texans.

Finally, a showdown between Smith and Austinite Wick Fowler, another Texas newspaperman and chief cook for CASI, was arranged in Terlingua. After much hoopla and ceremony, the judges declared a tie.

Although that first cookoff didn't establish the reigning king of chili, it did succeed in setting the stage for more than 30 years of chili cookoffs (which have themselves inspired as much controversy as the ingredients in "a bowl of red").



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## BEANS OR NO BEANS?

No matter which chili creation story they side with, most folks have a pretty good idea of what you're talking about when you say "chili." Much to the delight of chili-lovers worldwide, however, the basic recipe leaves plenty of room for interpretation.

Chili starts with meat and hot peppers, but chiliheads, as CASI members and other aficionados of the spicy dish like to refer to themselves, debate even the most basic ingredients. What kind of meat should be used in authentic chili—beef, venison, pork? Almost all the cooks at CASI competitions, including the annual Terlingua International Chili Championship in November, use beef, says Hut.

"There are some who like to cook chili with exotic meats—squirrel, deer, or freshly killed rattlesnake," says Kenneth Davis. "In my opinion, putting rattlesnake in chili is just about as bad as making chili with fried chicken!"

And the chili peppers—dried or fresh? Red or green? Hot, mild, or a combination? Whole chilies

or commercial chili powder? The choice is up to the cook.

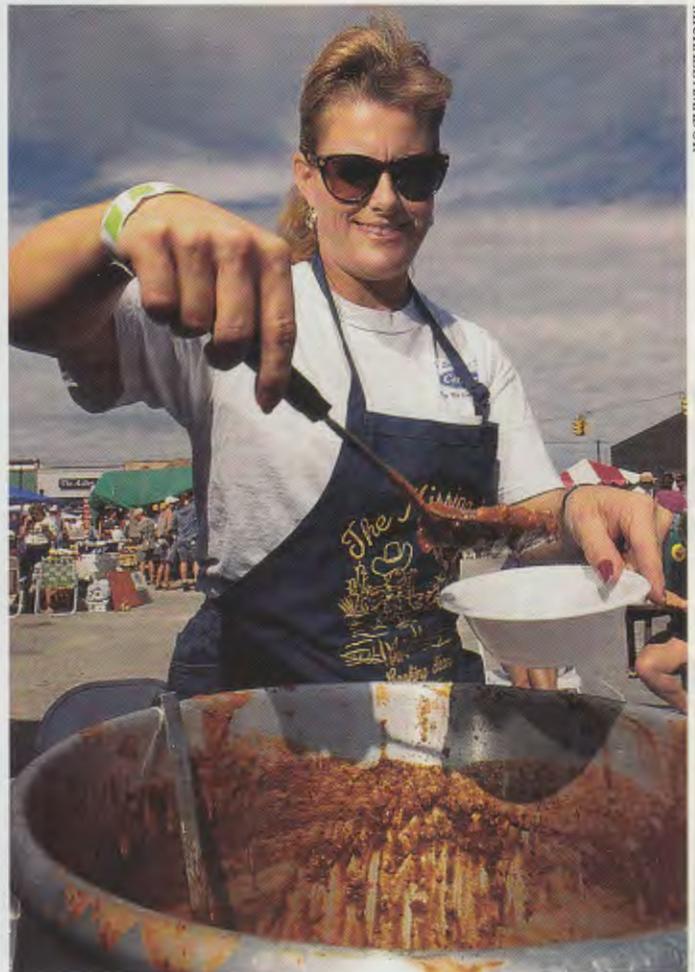
Recipes abound for any and all tastes, but each chili cook seems to think his or hers is the best. "Where chili is concerned, there is the bean faction and the anti-bean faction. The anti-bean faction thinks that chili should contain nothing more than water, meat, and chilies," says Kenneth. "They are adamantly opposed to putting beans, tomatoes, onion, garlic, or anything else in chili."

As if the good-natured debating over ingredients isn't enough, there's a distinct difference between the chili that most cooks make for the competitions and the recipes they use at home.

Vickie Childers, CASI's "chilicity" chairperson, says that when competition cooks make chili at home, it's typically a lot milder. "We use more spices per pound of meat at the cookoffs," she says.

"We want the judges to get more of the taste in one bite. When you sit down and eat competition chili, you'll *know* you've eaten something!"

Competition chili should be a combination of meat, seasonings, and spices in a smooth liquid gravy. "It must be cooked from scratch, and scratch means starting with raw meat—cuts that you either dice up yourself or



MICHAEL AMADOR

[ABOVE] Karen Craig of Pearland dishes out her chili, dubbed "The Missing Link," at a cookoff in Flatonia.

[FACING PAGE] The population of tiny Terlingua, just outside Big Bend National Park, swells each November when the state's two largest chili cookoffs take place concurrently at nearby sites.

have the butcher grind with a special 'chili plate'—and your own mixture of spices," says Al Hopkins, coordinator of the Original Terlingua International Frank X. Tolbert-Wick Fowler Memoria Championship Chili Cookoff, the other big-name chili competition held each November in Terlingua just outside Big Bend National Park. "It cannot contain beans, pasta, rice, or large pieces of vegetables. It should be just a meat-and-spice concoction."

Onions, chili peppers, garlic, tomato and other flavorful additions can be used in competition chili, but they should be visible (chunks of vegetables can

A desperate man (a.k.a. Ray Calhoun) roams among the crowd at the Terlingua International Chili Championship, seeking solace for his spicy addiction.



© TRACY LYNCH



## Go West!

For more information about **Davis Mountains State Park and Indian Lodge**, write to Supt., Davis Mountains State Park, Box 1458, Fort Davis 79734; 915/426-3337. For park rates and reservations, call 512/389-8900. Indian Lodge's number is 915/426-3254. For Texas State Parks information only, call 800/792-1112. **The area code is 915.**

The **Davis Mountains Scenic Loop** traverses 75 miles of Texas 118, Texas 166, and Texas 17 west from Fort Davis. Be sure to begin your journey with a full tank of fuel, as there are no gasoline stations along the route. With numerous low-water crossings along the way, watch for potential flash floods during the rainy season (late summer through early autumn). With the exception of Davis Mountains State Park and roadside parks, all land along the scenic loop is private ranch property. At dawn and dusk, be cautious of livestock and wild animals that may roam freely along and across the road.

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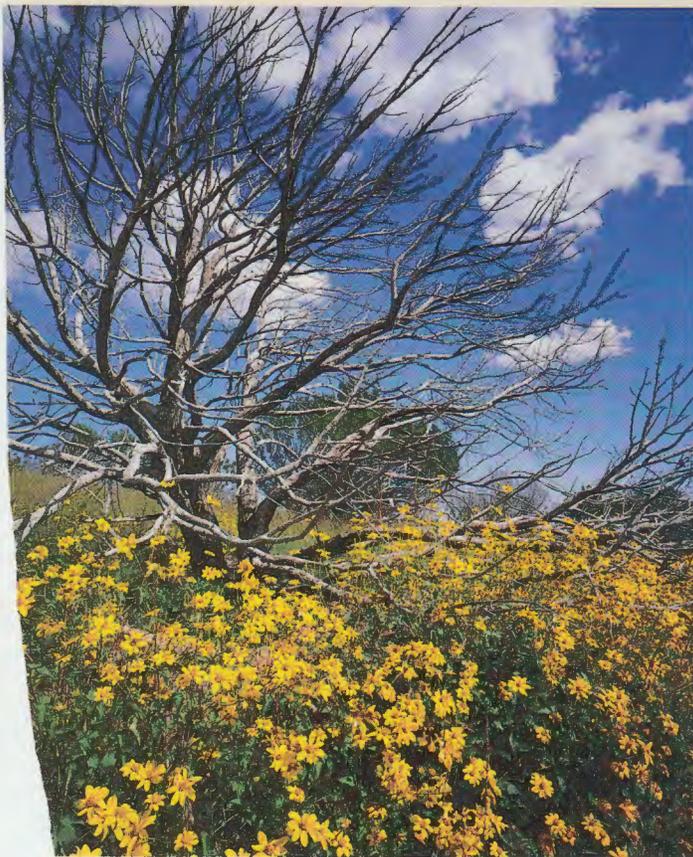
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# Loop *with a* View



By JANET R. EDWARDS Photographs by STEPHAN MYERS

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**[ABOVE]** Here comes the sun. About six miles west of the state park, scenic loopers encounter this solar power facility, operated by West Texas Util Brian Champlon, renewable site supervisor, inspects a solar collector.

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As white-winged doves gradually coo the world awake, take a stroll through the lobby, whose Western décor evokes the image of a simpler time. Giant windows to the east draw your eye to another view of the Davis Mountains. Telescopes peer out from the porch, providing a surreptitious inspection of javelinas, raccoons, skunks, occasional coyotes, and other wildlife that wander in and out of Keesey Canyon. A full-size pool, located a few steps below, offers the perfect setting for a swim, as well as shaded tables for those who prefer to stay warm and dry.

Avid birders should plan a weekday visit during late August through late November or early March through late May (weekend stays can be arranged for groups by advance request) in order to participate in the park's bird-banding activities.

"Over 3,500 people from 46 states and 19 foreign countries have visited our bird-banding station at Limpia Canyon over the last five years," says Linda Hedges, a graduate student at Sul Ross State University in Alpine. "With the help of trained volunteers, we've banded more than 15,000 individual birds representing 127 species. This has enabled us to establish baseline data on the abundance and diversity of migratory and resident songbirds of the park, while at the same time helping to educate station visitors."



**[ABOVE]** The plateau grasslands of the Chihuahuan Desert provide a refreshing, inspiring solitude.

**[BELOW, LEFT]** Because of its clean, clear air and mile-high altitude, Davis Mountains State Park attracts stargazers like Kenneth Drake of Conroe, an amateur astronomer who views the heavens through his homemade telescope.



Gently captured in Japanese mist nets set out in shaded, open sections of the park's primitive area, during cooler morning hours, each bird is identified for species, age, gender, date of banding, and band number. The condition of its feathers, its size, and its weight are often recorded as well, along with photo documentation of any rare species. Though the birds are held in bags designed to cause no harm, every effort is made to complete the entire process within 30 minutes of capture.

"Birders love to observe our banding activities," says Kelly Bryan, a biologist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. "However, they are often most excited at the prospect of seeing the rare Montezuma quail. They also keep an eye out for a pair of common black hawks that have nested along Limpia Creek near

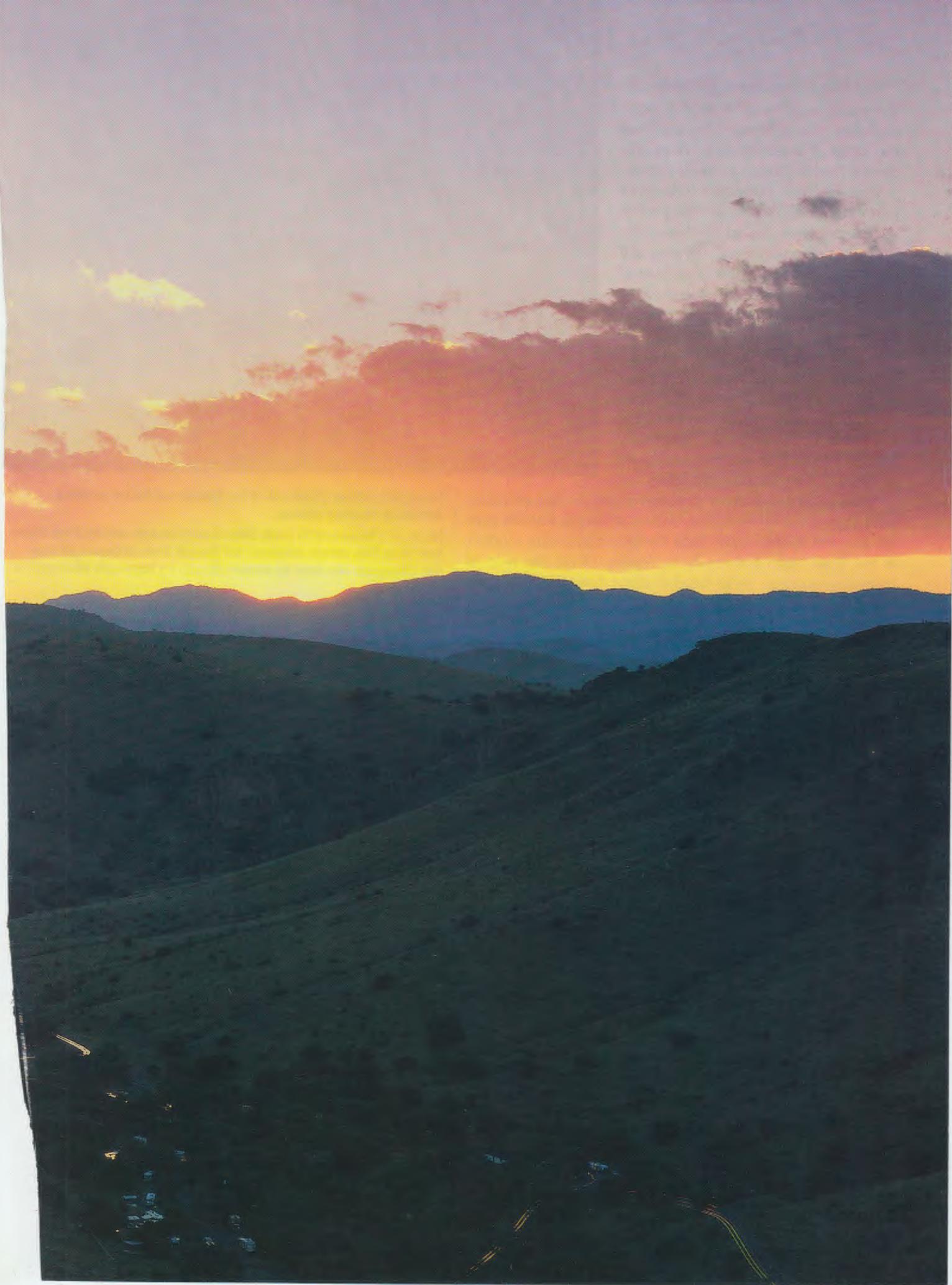
the park for the past several years. Only a few pairs of this species nest in the Davis Mountains. In fact, they are the only viable nesting population of common black hawks in Texas."

The Davis Mountains State Park's primitive area offers you the seclusion of a wilderness setting unspoiled by the trappings of the modern world. Stout hikers with good walking shoes may want to make the rugged climb to the summit of the primitive-area overlook, whose glorious vista equals that of Skyline Drive.

But if you lack the inclination to wander far and wide, take time at least to explore Limpia Creek, located near the bird-banding station. Along its rocky margins, beds of cowpen daisies gently nod in the breeze, their yellow faces smiling at the sun. During the summer monsoon, the creek's cold passage slowly cleaves the course of Limpia Canyon ever deeper and reminds us of an earlier period. For here, via horseback and covered wagon, traveled early settlers and soldiers of old Fort Davis, who likely saw the same types of flowers, heard the same kinds of birds, and refreshed themselves in similar life-bringing waters as those we behold today. And because we enjoy the comfort of steel-clad, air-conditioned, modern-day versions of the stagecoach, many more of us can travel West and discover for ourselves the delights of this region, dramatically showcased in Davis Mountains State Park. ★

JAN EDWARDS explored the Caverns of Sonora and Balmorhea State Park in the July issue of *Texas Highways*.

Photographer STEPHAN MYERS went underground to shoot Jan's cave story, and underwater to reveal the cool pleasures at Balmorhea.



The granddaddy chili fest of them all

# HOT TIME IN TERLINGUA

By Dave Goska  
Photography by Don Heit

**ARRIBA TERLINGUA!** Those welcome words mark the entrance to the World Series for chili fans everywhere, the Terlingua World Championship Chili Cook-Off.

While Texans today have their choice of more than 100 chili cook-offs annually, back in 1967 they had none. Then Dallas newspaperman Frank Tolbert came up with the idea of staging one in the old ghost town of Terlingua on the edge of Big Bend National Park.

"It started as a joke to publicize my book, *A Bowl of Red*," the 71-year-old Tolbert recalled. "We didn't think anybody would show up, but we had delegations from California and Mississippi. We had two contestants—reporter Wick Fowler and humorist H. Allen Smith. And we had some 500 spectators."

Fowler, now deceased, was widely known as the father of Texas chili. The Terlingua Cook-Off is dedicated as a memorial to him.

During the 15 years the event has been held, it has grown in size and popularity. Last year, 86 contestants entered the competition, and more than 7,000 chili lovers were in attendance. An invitational cook-off, the chili chefs at Terlingua represented the winners of contests held in various states and in Canada and Mexico.

Chili historian Tolbert noted the first recorded evidence of the dish was in the 1840s, when Indians in the San Antonio area used peppers

to preserve meat. But he explained that chili really caught on in popularity about the 1890s, with the advent of powdered peppers.

The owner of two chili restaurants in the Dallas area, prolific

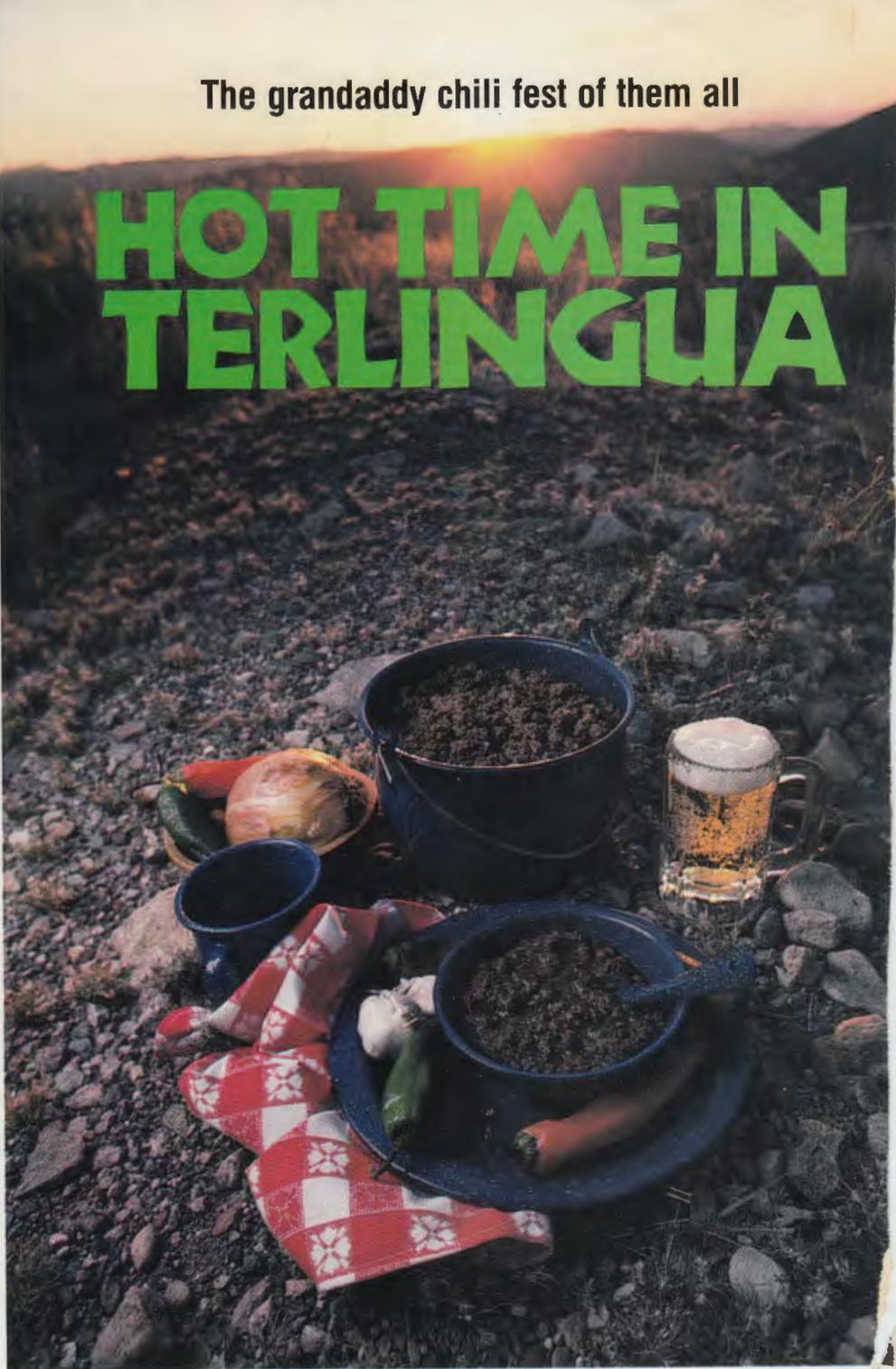
author, food columnist for the *Dallas Morning News* and director of the Chili Appreciation Society International, Tolbert admits, "I was raised on it; my dad was an old chuck wagon cook."

Since that first cook-off at Terlingua, which resulted in a tie for first place between the two contestants, the festivities have been moved to the nearby Glenn Pepper

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*Dave Goska is a free-lance writer from Vermont who recently moved to Austin.*

*Don Heit is a free-lance food photographer in Dallas.*



# Texas

THE OFFICIAL STATE  
TRAVEL MAGAZINE **HIGHWAYS**

11th & Brazos Streets Austin, Texas 78701

November 1982 Vol. 29 No. 11

*Texas Highways* (USPS 385-770) is published monthly to promote energy conservation through more efficient recreational travel planning, and to inform its readers about public parks, recreational opportunities, scenic places, historic accounts, and other subjects concerning the State of Texas that are of interest and value to the general public.



OFFICIAL TRAVEL MAGAZINE  
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Information Division

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Inquiries, manuscripts, and other material should be directed to *Texas Highways*, 11th & Brazos Streets, Austin, Texas 78701.

*Texas Highways* is available on a subscription basis at \$10 annually, or \$1.50 per copy (price includes state sales tax). Write *Texas Highways* Circulation, Attention Mike Talley, PO Box 5016, Austin, Texas 78763, or call 512/465-7408.

Second Class Postage paid at Austin, Texas, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send notification (Form 3579) regarding undeliverable magazines to *Texas Highways* Circulation, PO Box 5016, Austin, Texas 78763.



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### ABOUT OUR COVERS

Front—A common sight in our grandfathers' day, the iron barque *Elissa* sails toward Galveston after a training voyage. Randy Green got this shot on a rainy gulf morning with a Nikon F3 and Kodachrome 25 film. To learn more about the newly restored tall ship, turn to page 32.

Back—Brilliant cottonwoods line the shore of Lake McClellan, a small, picturesque lake that is part of the Black Kettle National Grassland in the eastern Panhandle. Randy Green shot this scene with a Mamiya RB67, Ektachrome film, and a 90mm lens.



Thousands travel annually to Glenn Pepper's Villa de la Mina Ranch near the ghost town of Terlingua for the World Championship Chili Cook-Off. Besides tasting chili, they enjoy elaborate productions by show teams that build sets costing up to \$10,000. British filmmakers used the helicopter (below) to get footage of the goings on. Some revelers brought recreational vehicles and camped at the ranch.



Ranch because Tolbert said he feared one of the old quicksilver mine shafts that honeycomb the area might collapse and someone would be injured. Another reason for the move to the new site was because "someone was always falling in Dirty Woman's Creek."

Now held every year on the first Saturday in November, a date that has been proclaimed by the gover-

nor as the "Official Chili Day in Texas," the cook-off is "the culmination of a year's effort by chili cooks throughout North America," according to chili judge L. T. Felty.

Felty, who judged last year's cook-off along with his daughter, Margaret Averett, a home economics teacher, was given the title of "Chili Advisor to the Governor" by State Senator Betty Andujar in

1977 when she was governor for a day. The title is for life, the Waxahachie banker quipped, "unless they impeach me or whatever."

More recently, the Texas Legislature designated chili the "Official State Dish." It won out over such entries as gumbo, barbecue, and Hopkins County stew.

In his duties as a chili judge, Felty explained, "I know what



everybody's looking for. They're looking for a certain color, aroma, and flavor. I look for the aroma first, then the color. And it should have a taste that invites you to take another bite."

The chili should have a reddish-brown color and a consistency that's not too thick or too runny, "with pieces of meat—not mush." And, the governor's chili advisor emphasized, "It should be hot enough to give you a tingle, but not too hot."

Beans are strictly taboo. And while some chili cooks make their dishes with chicken or pork, or even with armadillo or rattlesnake meat, the standard ingredient is still good lean beef. Making chili without beef will greatly reduce a cook's chances of winning an invitation to Terlingua, says Felty.

To win an invitation in 1981, Frank and Barbara Fox, a Houston couple, entered some 30 cook-offs during the year on separate teams in friendly competition against each other. "You cook all year to come here," claimed Mrs. Fox.

Preparations for *high noon*, judgment time at Terlingua, began at 6 a.m. for the couple. "Cooking good chili is like cooking good spaghetti sauce; it takes a long time. But the last 15 minutes are the most critical," Barbara noted.

Some 2,112 miles separated Lee Ruck, the 1981 Virginia State Chili Champion, from his home and the cook-off. Before winning the title, Ruck said it was decided among the Virginians that "whoever won, we would move heaven and earth to get the team to Terlingua."

En route to the event, Ruck's partner had to fly home from San Antonio on urgent business. Un-

One cook added eight kinds of chile peppers to his flaming entry.

daunted, Ruck continued on alone in his van to bring the crowd "the best chili east of the Red River."

Among the ingredients Ruck listed in his recipe was one that helps give it a decidedly Texas flavor: Lone Star Beer.

When the Turbo Chili Team of Toronto won the Canada Chili Championship, their grand prize was two airline tickets to Terlingua. Member Mike Slaughter said the team's national first place in Canada was their first cook-off. "We went in blind and won," said Slaughter, a newspaper photographer.

Most Canadians use ground beef in their chili. But those who have tried the Turbo Team's chili with chunks of beef "really like it,"



Joe Sierra, war captain of the Tigua Indians of Ysleta (El Paso), stirred up a fiery concoction in his cauldron (above). The "Chili B. DeMille" production of *Gone With the Wind* featured 12 actors and authentic Confederate uniforms.

Slaughter said.

Sherry King of San Francisco used small bits of bacon and sausage in her chili recipe along with beef. It won the first prize for her team, Earthquake Chili, in the Northern California Chili Cook-Off.

One Earthquake Chili team member, physician Brent Blue, touts the health benefits of eating chili. "It will cure anything. Use lots of garlic and lots of peppers, and it will make you live to be 100."

Louisiana State Champion Max Johnson says he tries to cook a brand of chili "that puts a warm glow on the back of your palate." While training to get in shape for a season of chili cook-offs, Johnson



usually cooks 25 to 30 pots of chili for friends and neighbors.

As for the stiffness of competition among the Terlingua cooks, Johnson remarked, "Competition? You damn near throw your number in a hat and draw. It's that good."

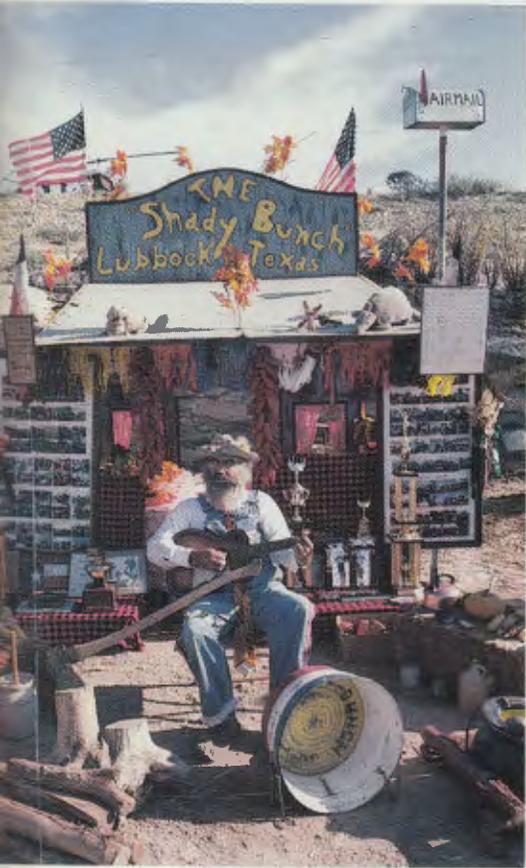
While everyone entering the cook-off hopes to win, Johnson believes "everybody's happy even if the other fellow wins. We're a congenial bunch of people. We have a good holiday here and a lot of fun. And 50 percent of the cooks, by golly, we know."



One pot of chili started with choice pieces of sirloin tip browned with onions and garlic in a cast iron frying pan. Below, the "Devil's Workshop" show team produced "Inferno Chili."

Dave Goska





The "Shady Bunch" brought a truckload of trophies and paraphernalia from Lubbock to impress and entertain the crowd while the chili simmered.

Show teams who provide entertainment—and sometimes even chili—are a major part of the festivities at Terlingua.

One such team that has been very popular on the chili circuit is the Be Bop and the Spicettes Team from Dallas. "It's our first year, and we worked an awful lot to get here," said team member Mark Dellinger.

The idea of starting a chili team that does songs and skits resembling a '50s rock and roll group, Dellinger explained, evolved from a nice evening at Frank Tolbert's restaurant.

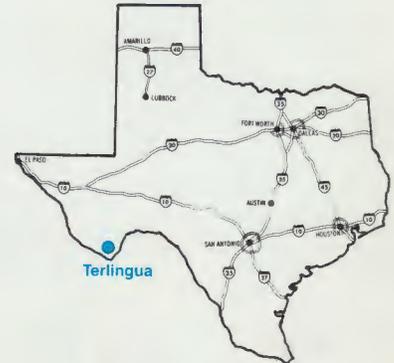
"The Be Bop Team tries to win on its chili cooking, naturally, but we're a show team. We've got a lot of crazy folks," he remarked.

The members wear dark sunglasses, white buckskin shoes, white sport coats with ruffled shirts, and their hair is slicked back. Dellinger says the team has never failed to win a prize, either for showmanship or cooking in the chili cook-offs they have entered.

Last year's top cook at Terlingua, Bill Douglas, a 26-year-old Dallasite whose team goes by his nickname, "Iced Tea," let out a secret. "I can see why everybody else enjoys chili, but personally, I hate it."

Douglas' dislike for a "bowl o' red" however, proved to have no effect on his ability to cook it. "I cooked a basic recipe, nothing fancy."

Frank Tolbert (standing), who started all the ruckus at Terlingua in 1967, and his daughter, Kathleen, helped judge entries in the 1981 contest.



#### When . . . Where . . . How

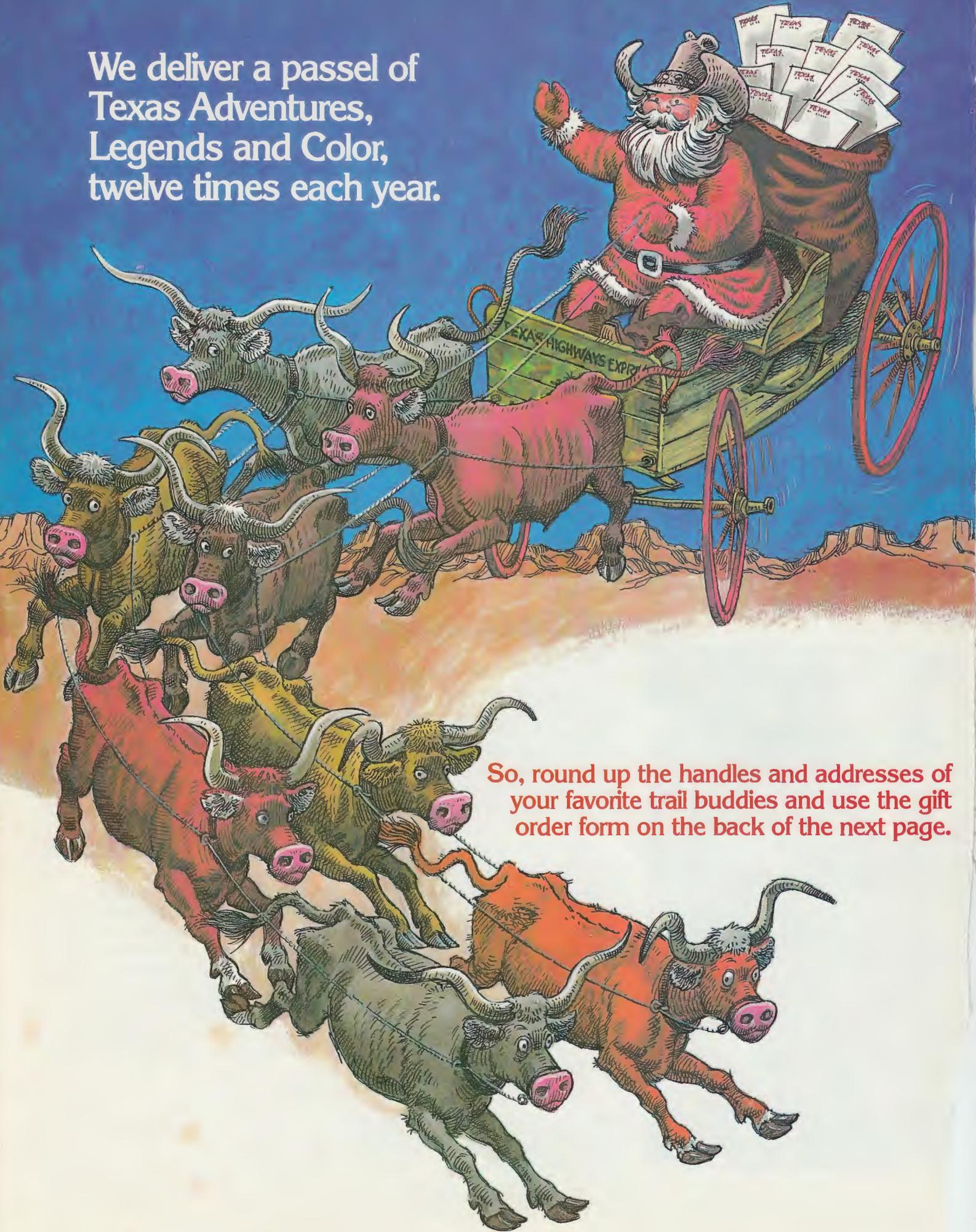
The World Championship Chili Cook-Off will be held on Glenn Pepper's Villa de la Mina Ranch on Saturday, November 6. Visitors may come as early as Thursday and camp on the ranch, which is three miles west of Terlingua on Farm to Market Road 170 northwest of Big Bend National Park. Campers should bring all supplies, including water, with them. Admission fee of \$7 per person includes camping until Sunday morning, the chili cook-off, and dances Friday and Saturday night with live music. Food and drink will be available during the cook-off, and after the judging visitors can sample the entries.

Though Douglas entered only about a half-dozen cook-offs before Terlingua, he had experience as a chili judge. This helped him hone his recipe to championship caliber.

As for future competition, now that he had won the Big One, Douglas mused, "I'm thinking of retiring. I can never top this." 🍲



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July 18, 1988

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Dear Joe:

We would like to thank you, both personally and on behalf of Mile High United Way, for participating in our 1988 Fifth Annual Colorado State Championship Chili Cook-Off.

The cook-off was once again a great success, largely due to your participation. One hundred and four cooking teams gathered to make this our best cook-off yet, raising \$11,500 for Mile High United Way.

Once again, thanks for your participation. Please join us again next year for the 1989 Colorado State Championship Chili Cook-Off. See you then!

Best wishes,

Martin J. Maldonado  
Fund-Raising Events Manager

Annie Schmitz  
Special Events Coordinator

MJM/AS/ja



centex  
scene

# Some cars are low-slung, but this one's ridiculous

By NATH HENDERSON  
State Correspondent

Robert "Yellow Dog" Marsh, a San Antonio computer programmer who constantly computes practical jokes to play on Austin chili tycoon Charley "Red Dog" Fowler, got the doggonedest, lowdown dirtiest, delightful trick pulled on him this week in Flatonia.

Yellow Dog, his wife Nan, their young daughter Madeline and their faithful canine Clyde arrived Saturday in all their flamboyant glory at Czhilispriel TV in Flatonia in their green Pontiac station wagon. They parked their motorcar in a special space allotted to judges of the chili cookoff and faded away into the large crowd for a day of utter joy.

Yellow Dog and Red Dog both were conspicuous. The former wore a yellow shirt which looked like it had been made from a diaper of a baby whose mother had not learned about the magical powers of borax on TV. The latter's shirt was as brilliantly red as if it had been boiled in a pot of the late Wick Fowler's "Five-Alarm" chili. The two elite members of chili society exchanged amenities and all that friendly stuff all day. They even bought each other a beer a dozen or so times apiece.

ALAS! WOE! MOAN! Yellow Dog's jubilant day turned to disaster at dusk at a birthday party for Shorty Fry, the congenial "Luckenbach Chili Queen" who was not wearing her usual 1920 Coney Island bathing suit because of chill weather in Flatonia.

Shorty would have made points with that suit in Flatonia, since the top part matches the name of the town. But back to the big jokes, the birthday gifts were given to Shorty.

Red Dog Fowler broke into the gift opening to announce that he and Mayor Leslie Greive of Flatonia flatly wanted to show their flat appreciation to Yellow Dog Marsh for his outstanding contributions to chilidom.

"We know you have everything except one thing," Red Dog howled at Yellow Dog. "You don't own a squashed car, and we want to present you one of your very own."

A flatbed truck pulled up in Flatonia loaded with a green Pontiac stationwagon squashed flatter than a fritter. It weighed 4,300 pounds, just like Yellow Dog's jalopy except it was only two feet thick.

OLD YELLOW DOG was as mad as if he had rabies. He ran to where he left his car. Sure enough, it had been ripped off.

"Surely you (expletive deleted) took my dog Clyde out of the car before you squashed it?" Fowler assured Marsh that Clyde was safe and

just out somewhere chasing cars or socializing with the Flatonia dogs.

Yellow Dog barked, "But how am I going to get my family back to San Antonio?"

Fowler replied, "We'll loan you the flatbed truck. You have to get your present home somehow."

Nan Marsh was irritated because Shorty Fry's birthday gift was in the car. Madeline, 9, was mad because her little purse and 47 cents were in the car.

Finally they told Marsh the truth. They had combed many wrecking yards until finding a wrecked car exactly like his station wagon. They hauled it to Houston to have it pressed. They had towed Yellow Dog's bonafido car away to a hiding place and put the license plates on the squashed car.

Charley Fowler had intended to pull the prank previously. He already had squashed one car exactly like Marsh's old Rambler, but Yellow Dog unknowingly double-crossed him by buying a station wagon.

Neither Yellow Dog nor Red Dog would hurt a flea, but the frightening thought of what Marsh might do next to get even gives me a flock of geese pimples. I suspect Yellow Dog's next trick will be a primevil cat-astrophe.

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AUTO



# Poteet holds festival despite cold

4/13/80

by Bill Cunningham

Express-News state editor

POTEET — It was a dark and stormy day but they held the Poteet Strawberry Festival anyway Saturday.

It was one of the coldest festival days in the history of the event, but the bidding for the grand champion crate of berries was the hottest ever.

Southwest of San Antonio and Lehmberg Oil Company of Poteet got in a bidding war with A.W. Gray, president of the First State Bank of Poteet, and Schlitz Beer of San Antonio and finally got the champion crate for a record breaking price of \$2,400.

The champion crate of Sequoia variety berries was exhibited by Brenda Chavez, 14, who entered the contest for the first time. Joe Chavez, her father, had exhibited seven grand champion crates.

The reserve champion crate was of the Fresno variety and was shown by Maria Valentina Sanchez. It brought \$900 from Atascosa Auto Parts of Poteet.

The first place crate of Tioga berries was grown by Louis Granato and was bought by First State Bank of Poteet for \$400.

Another record was in the total sale, with the 46 crates sold bringing about \$10,600, an average of \$230 per crate. The old record was \$9,515 in 1976.

First State Bank of Poteet bought seven crates for \$1,275. Other volume buyers included Schlitz Beer of San Antonio, Alamo Packaging Company of San Antonio and Tri-County Co-op of Devine.

Storm clouds hovered around Poteet all morning, but the parade went off on schedule, with only a few drops of rain falling.

The parade had about 115 entries, including six bands.

First place winners in the parade were: Out of town organizations, Alzafar Shrine of San Antonio; out of county commercial, Clydesdale horses of Crain Distributing Company of San Antonio; local organizations, Poteet Grange; chambers of commerce, Freer Rattlesnake Hunt; youth organizations, Pleasanton Cub Scouts; schools, Poteet Multihandicapped; county organizations, Atascosa County Wolfhunters, and local commercial, Harris Western Center of Lytle.

Ana Briones was crowned queen of the festival Friday night, and David Amaya was crowned king.

4/5/74

# Chili Debate Bubbles To A Draw

By JAMES GEBSTENZANG

WASHINGTON (AP) — Featuring friendly insults and a spicy blend of meat and beans, the great chili debate has bubbled to a draw.

While politicians' banter boasted the benefits of native beans, a debate that started two months ago with a few friendly jibes on the Senate floor ended Thursday night with a "chili cook-off" at the National Press Club.

Before the contest was concluded, the favorite recipes of six states had been sampled and President Nixon had entered the fray to boost the chili of his native California.

There were actually two contests, with press club members and their guests choosing one winner and a panel of "experts" — five hardy persons claiming to be chili aficionados — picking a second winner.

The audience chose the Texas recipe, to the delight of John Tower, the state's Republican senator, who took off his suit jacket and dished out hundreds of portions.

The "experts" chose the Arizona chili, giving Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., some new ammunition in his battle with Tower over which state produced the best chili.

"The proof of the pudding is that Arizona ran out and they're still serving the Texas chili," Goldwater said.

Tower sampled the Arizona brew and told Goldwater it tasted like beef stew.

Then, as the Arizonan tasted Sen. Joseph Montoya's New Mexico chili, he frowned and said, "If you've never tasted chili it's all right."

The New Mexican offering

came in second in both contests.

President Nixon, declining the club's invitation to take part in the contest, wrote:

"I was astonished to learn that tonight's proceedings would permit inclusion of a group of Johnny-Come-Latelies

who don't know true chili from Peking Duck.

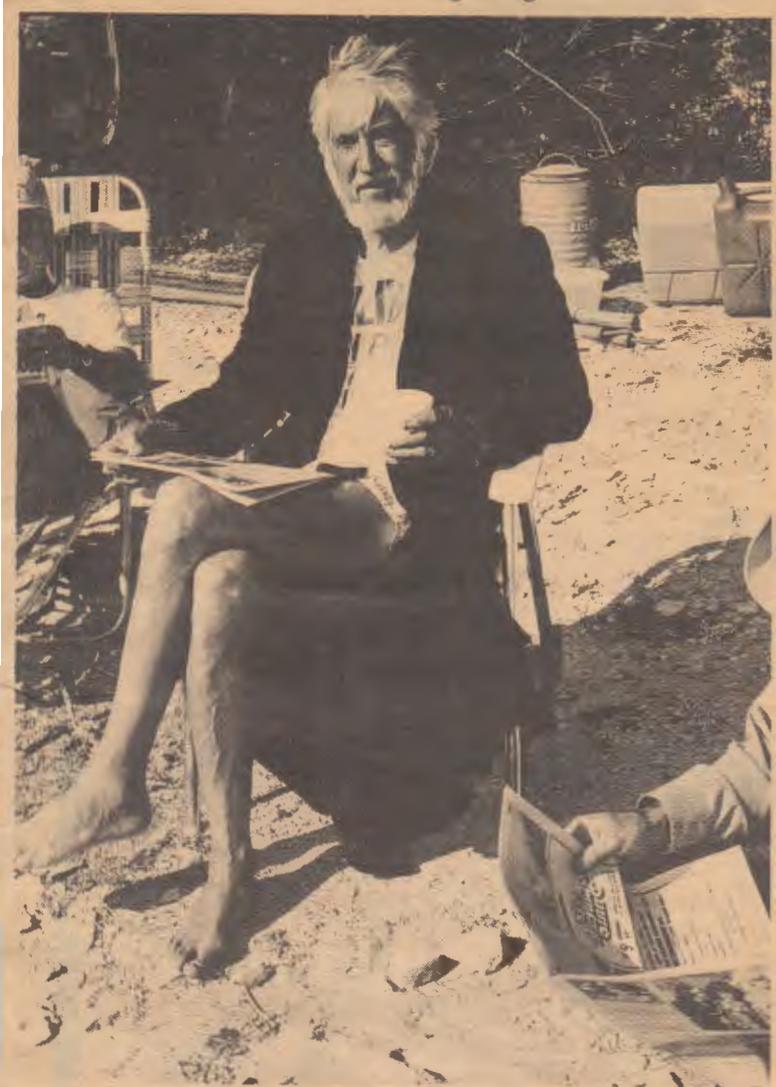
"I suppose that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and to that extent, I applaud the efforts of the distinguished senators from Texas, Arizona, O k l a h o m a, New Mexico, Louisiana, Ohio (Ohio?) to

emulate the genius of the California chili makers."

Then, recalling that as a small boy he ate chili pepper dipped in horseradish, the President said: "It was then I first made the discovery that the hotter it got, the collar I got."



AFTER THE VERDICT — Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., gives a playful kick in the direction of Sen. John Tower, R-Tex., after the great chili cook-off was a draw last night at the National Press Club in Washington. In the "popular" contest, Texas' entry was awarded first prize; but Goldwater was awarded first place in the judging by the "experts." (Mobile Press AP Wirephoto)



It was a Bloody Mary morning for Hondo Crouch as he recovered in front of his adobe "Menopause Manor" after first night activities at World Championship Chili Cookoff. In photo below, a group of human chili squirrels from West Texas with their missionary in a pot.



OCTOBER, 1977

# Having a hot time in good old Luckenbach

I have sipped champagne by moonlight at the Acropolis. I have seen the wonders of the Taj Majal. I thought I had done it all. But that was before Luckenbach came into my life — before I was invited to “come on down and cook a bowl of red.”

Jack Harmon, press secretary of Luckenbach — who makes P. T. Barnum look like a wilting violet — put it this way: “You haven’t really known life until you have entered the Hell Hath No Fury Like a Woman Scorned Chili Cook-Off.”

I have now known life. Also near death. I have also known 2,000 chili nuts who form the cult that follows the smell of red peppers wherever it may lead. Where it leads them is to those places too small to show up on a map.

Like Brigadoon, Luckenbach only appears once a year. There is no way to find it. People swipe all the signs. But it is somewhere in the vicinity of the LBJ Ranch and if you just keep driving around Blumenthal, you may come across it. Don’t worry if you miss it — even the National Geographic missed it during the recent cook-off. Mrs. Mel Payne, an intrepid traveler of National Geographic fame, set out, got caught in a traffic jam and turned back in despair.

But I can tell you where Luckenbach is. It is where 2,000 people who all look like they’re going to a Halloween party gather. Trailers, Volkswagens, dancing flora-dora girls all wind their way through the cars and booths following the aroma of the simmering chili.

“**WHERE IS** my booth?” I asked on arrival. This brought a loud peal of laughter from non-planner Kathy Morgan who pointed me to a five by five piece of pasture by Hondo Crouch’s old store. And we set up our propane stove and booth proclaiming: Equal Rights Chili — Good For your Constitution. Here in this smaller-than-jail-cell area was to be the scene



of our crime for the next eight hours.

On one side was a nice, smiling lady already hard at work behind a cardboard storefront labeled “Luckenbach Ladies Bank” and while she chopped peppers and garlic, her friends handed out blank checks, all marked “Overdraft.” It was a kind of Bert Lance chili, concocted by Mrs. Jack Harmon of San Antonio.

On my left was the Cheatham Street Warehouse Saloon Chili “booth” with a sign which read, “Not just another pretty place” and featuring “the wurst taco!” Normally these folks are just dear hearts and gentle people who run an authentic old-timey saloon in San Marcos.

Anne Richards, the chili queen for the day, took over at the microphone located on a makeshift stage that had unfortunately been placed near a large nest of red wasps who kept making their appearance during her remarks. She lived through that which proves she can survive anything the Travis County commissioners deal out — that’s where she normally does time.

Anne set the rules of the Annie Oakley Memorial Cook-Off — dedicated to the principle that “women are created better not equal.” The rules were: 1) restrain from snuff dipping while leaning over chili pots; 2) avoid playing tricks on other contestants, and absolutely no rubber snakes or plastic spiders in the cooking area; 3) when the winners are announced, there will be no pinching, biting or jostling.

**BESIDES** making chili, the contestants are supposed to stage a show

every so often. We had brought an old door — left over from some dilapidated house and lettered it with the slogan: “Open the door for women — ratify ERA.” And we had our spiel all ready.

“The way to a legislator’s heart is through his stomach,” said Karen Sutherland in her West Texas drawl, “And this chili is guaranteed to go right through a stomach.”

“We’ve been preparing this chili for 200 years,” said Carol Hatfield of Austin, “It’s the chili all America yearns for. It’s time to eat up.”

Actually we didn’t need the propane stove. The sun was searing down at 110 degrees, melting our secret potion — a square Mexican chocolate — and igniting our tequila which we planned to use when the judges came by to flambe the chili. I don’t know if the judges ever came by. I do know the entire world came by wanting a taste, and what Jesus did with the loaves and the fishes was equaled by what we did with Equal Rights Chili!

**A FEW THANKS** are in order. I want to thank the judges for not giving us first place — which saves us from finding Terlingua for the world championship cook-off. I want to thank the man at Stonewall for lending us two bales of hay to sit on while we stirred. I want to thank Nancy Negley of San Antonio for dispatching Rosita to the marketplace for fresh chilis, tomatoes, etc. and then mincing them into a fine potion as only Rosita can.

I want to thank Franklin Hall of Austin’s Lone Star Meat Co. for picking out the greatest chunk of beef and grinding it just right. I want to thank Sarah Hatfield and Jennifer Ledlow — two winsome 9 year olds for hustling us up a crowd.

I want to thank Jack Harmon for the beautiful certificate declaring Luckenbach — a state unto itself — the 36th state to ratify ERA. I want to thank Gov. Hugh Carey for telling nationwide television that I have the hottest tongue in Texas — and Hughes Rudd for denying it. And mostly, I want to thank God it’s over.

# Chili war victory claimed by Texans

There's a "Chili War" shaping up between Texas and California, but the Tejanos are claiming victory before the first shot is fired.

Hostilities started with an announcement from Los Angeles that the 9th World Chili Championship cookoff would be held in that area.

The pronouncement came from C.V. Wood, who revealed a glamor lineup of Hollywood stars as judges.

Wood, a former chili champ, said Joey Bishop, Joanne Dru, Robert Mitchum, Dale Robertson, and Peter Marshall would be the judges.

## California brew called 'weak water'

"Wood is a former chili cookoff champ who won at Terlingua a few years ago," affirmed Frank X. Tolbert of Dallas.

"But we kicked him out after he refused to defend his title."

Tolbert heads the International Chili Appreciation Society.

He added other chili chefs scornfully referred to Wood as "Chicken Chili" because he used that type meat for his hot conction.

"The ninth annual chili cooking championship will

definitely, officially, and legally be in Terlingua," Tolbert declared from his office in The Dallas Morning News.

Terlingua, the far West Texas host town, has been the site for the World Chili Cooking Championship since 1967.

And it again will be the site of the 9th annual event Saturday, Nov. 1.

"Those Hollywood dudes don't even know what real chili is," a San Antonio member of the Appreciation Society declared.

"The weak, watery stuff they call chili wouldn't even bring a tear to a baby's eye," the chili aficionado said.

Tolbert said the Terlingua event already has attracted chili cooking champs from Mexico, including Guadalajara, Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee and New York.

"We've got an entry from an Ivy League group in the East," said Tolbert. "Also from Florida and even Scotland will be represented."

### Scotch broth

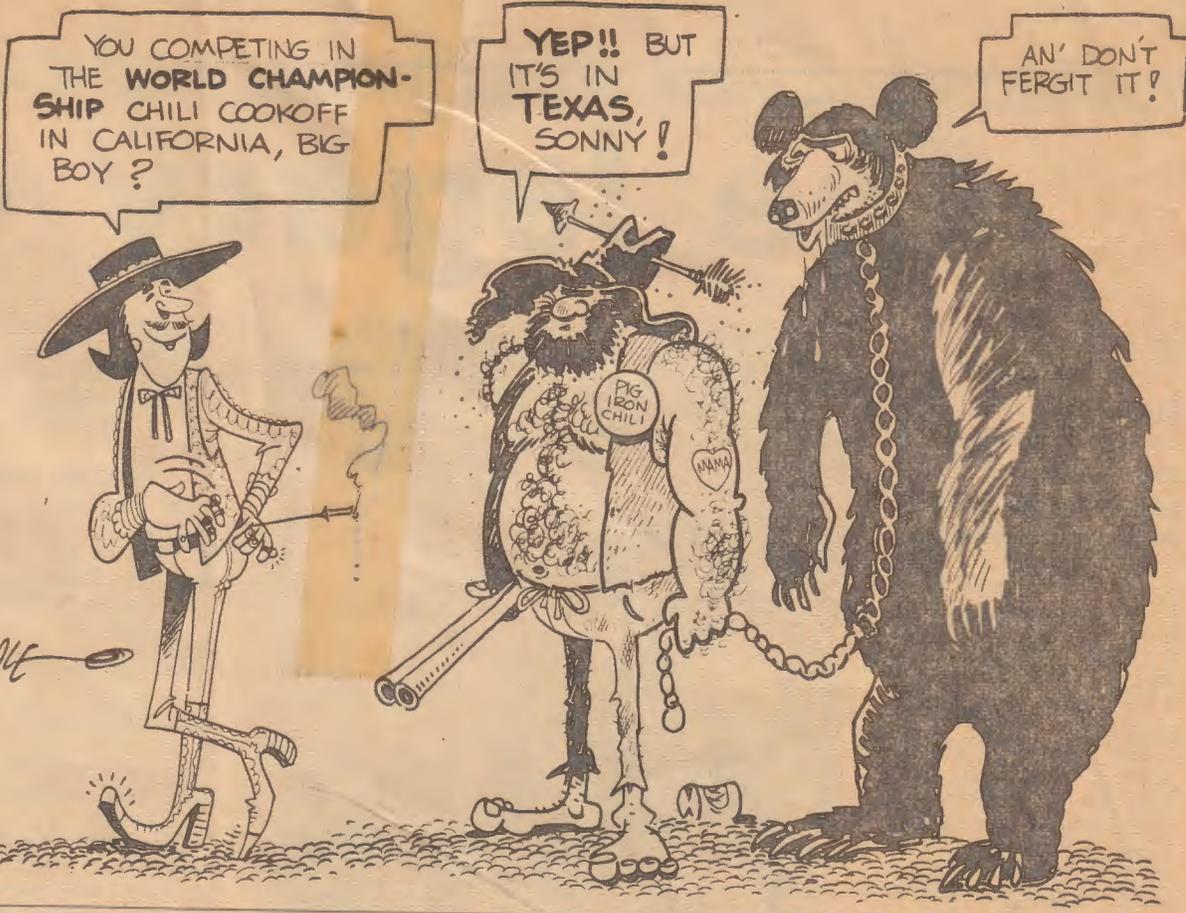
The Scot entry is really a native Texan who has been stationed in that country working on North Sea oil drilling operations. It'll be Scotch Broth Chili.

Tolbert promised judges for the Texas event wouldn't be headliner, Hollywood types but genuine chili savoring experts of long years standing.

These include Happy Shahan, Gordon Fowler, Bill Neale and David Witts.

"We're still looking for more area champs to show up," said Tolbert, "the Comanche Chili Cookoff is still to be held in San Angelo, and Fulton Battise, a former Terlingua champ, may compete again."

"Chili War?" Those Californians might hold their "weak water cookoff" at the Tropico Gold Mine Nov. 2, 90 miles north of LA, but all the real shooting will have already come off in Texas a day earlier.



1977

# Red Ants, Ashes Make Chili Champ

By K. MACK SISK

ARRIBA TERLINGUA (UPI) — A Houston man who first entered chili contests on a dare seven months ago Saturday won the 11th World Championship Chili Cookoff with his "Buzzard Breath Chili," a concoction which he claimed contained red ants and cigar ashes.

"We've got the exclusive importation rights on these Mexican ants," Tom Griffin told the raucous crowd which gathered on the West Texas prairie.

The "ants," Griffin admitted later, was only chili powder. The ashes, he said, were real.

"Fantastic," beamed Griffin when Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, presented him a shiny loving cup for the champion chili.

Griffin and his partners, Dave Harper and Richard Holleyfield, entered their first contest in March and won second prize in the Houston Chili Cookoff.

Winning second place Saturday was Nick Wright of Dallas who served up a dish he called "Bola Chili."

Two women won third and fourth places respectively. They were Casey Kirby of Houston and Ann Davis of Dallas.

An Alpine man, J. J. Holt was named Mr. Terlingua, making him chief flasher for a whole year. It was Holt's third attempt at the title and he wore the same pair of faded jeans with the rear end cut out.

Winning first place from a record field of wet t-shirt competitors was Kathi Brooks, 20, of Alpine, a bookkeeper who entered the contest on a dare from her husband.

Most of the dozen wet t-shirt contestants competed by having beer poured over their chests.

Thirty-three of the world's best chili cooks were at their cauldrons by dawn brewing their own versions of the spicy meat dish which has become a symbol of frivolity in Texas.

Each cook had his or her own gimmick to attract attention to their bubbling concoctions. Griffin, obviously, had the best.

One attraction at a dirt stage in this desert area 85 miles from the nearest hint of civilization was a beer-swinging chimpanzee which cookoff officials named C.V. Wood Jr.

Wood has come in for quite a bit of ribbing here at the cookoff because he left the Chili Appreciation Society International three years ago to begin a competing world championship chili cookoff in the California desert.

## A 'Ghost Town' Comes Very Much Alive Where History Passed

### own That Was ll Be Again Terlingua

cluster of mostly-ruined, t-deserted adobe structures, still tin-roofed, is on Texas as Terlingua, the state's famous "ghost town." West highway 118 on the road lead- Presidio, it has a long and history and soon will be a t town" no longer.

urchase of the 640-acre town y Houston financier Mel La- e was announced late in mber by developers of the Terlingua Ranch property, it included.

Vergne, a 40-year-old nativeuston, immediately engaged d Stripling, an architect specializes in restoration of ic buildings, and together began planning to bring Ter- -town back to a semblance prosperous and colorful pe- n its varied past. The pur- A combined Texas historic ment and tourist attraction.

home of the fabulous Ho- E. Perry, founder of the prosperous mining town, is completely restored, it was nced, along with the old g company store, the tiny a, the town hall, the school; ntina and even the jail.

Vergne's plans also encom- an adobe-block factory to and market the outer ma-



APACHES AND COMANCHES FOUGHT HERE AND CINNABAR MINING YIELDED MILLIONS

seum, plus tourist hotel and club. The old "opera house" could, it was suggested, provide quarters for "Little Theatre" performances now being offered at Sul Ross University in Alpine, and other attractions.

acquired several sections of land in the area the following year, then sold their claim to a local group who in turn sold it to the Marfa & Mariposa Mining Co., for a reputed \$125,000.

## Competition Is the Life Of the Chili Champions

be used in the reconstruction of a company to manufacture Spanish-style furniture such as which will appear in the new buildings.

planned to rebuild, furnish and provide utilities. In addition to the small, shabby houses on the property, they will make them available as quarters or camp sites. The church will be reconstructed and returned to the town, LaVergne and the old Perry Mansion and the old Perry Mansion are the storied 19th Century developer of cinnabar (mercury) mining in the area — will become a historic mu-

Terlingua's name is a corruption of "tres lenguas," referring either to the three languages (Spanish, English and Nahuatl Indian) once spoken there, or to the three "tongues" or forks of Terlingua Creek. Its most notable history is connected with the mining of cinnabar, the ore from which mercury (or quicksilver) is extracted.

The most common legend of its discovery is that the red rocks were noticed by a Mexican goat herder who gathered some up in 1892, and took them to friends. New Mexico mining promoters recognized the potentialities, and

acquisition of the richest mine area by Howard E. Perry, from faraway New England, came early in this century and the boom years were before and during World War I. His Chisos Mining Co. made him many times a millionaire, but it was bankrupt by 1941, the year in which he died. Briefly, from 1954 to about 1958, the "ghost town" came to life, and again — even more briefly — in the early 1960s.

But few people heard of Terlingua again, except as the site of the elaborate "World Championship Chili Cook-Off," until resort development of the Terlingua Ranch began two years ago.

## When Hot Stuff in the Pot Really Heats Up



SCENES FROM THE 'WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP COOK-OFF'

Away back there in the middle-1960s, a writing fellow named H. Allen Smith turned out a piece for a national magazine, in which he allowed as how he made the world's best chili.

This aroused the indignation of Frank X. Tolbert, columnist for the Dallas Morning News. It was a natural reaction, since Tolbert was author of a book titled "A Bowl of Red," and the recognized Texas authority on chili.

After all, Smith was a Yankee, a resident of Mt. Vernon, N.Y., author of "Low Man on a Totem Pole," "Life in a Putty Knife Factory," "Lost in the Horse Latitudes," and a couple of dozen other books with nonsensical titles such as those. What did he know about a serious subject like chili?

Columnist Tolbert took up the challenge and so did Wick Fowler, another Texas humorist and newsman who moon-lights as a manufacturer of a packaged chili seasoning mix, designated as "Two-Alarm" or "Four-Alarm" depending on the daring and resistance of the consumer.

The first "World's Championship Chili Cook-Off" was a face-to-face, pot-to-pot encounter between Smith and Fowler. It was declared a draw and followed by heated words, mock bitterness and charges of favoritism against just about everybody even remotely concerned. Neutral observers — if there were any who could be termed unbiased — might be found to admit that they didn't especially care for the concoction of either contestant.

The end results, however, were amazing. "The World's Championship Chili Cook-Off" became an annual event, with competitors from many parts of the country entering local, sectional and state semi-final chili-cooking contests for the honor of traveling to Ter-

lingua for the final World's Championship event.

Various theories exist as to why Terlingua was chosen in the first place as the site for the "Chilympiad," as it has since been termed. The most likely reason seems to be that the "ghost town" as a location appealed to the sense of the ridiculous possessed by all the original organizers. If these citizens, however, believed that nobody would attend, they miscalculated. The crowds came by car, bus and aircraft, in numbers since estimated as high as 3,000 for the 1970 occasion.

The 1971 "World's Championship Chili Cook-Off," under the direction of Mel LaVerne, new owner of the "ghost town" site, attracted a "wall-to-wall" crowd of more than 5,000.

Novelist-humorist Smith, who wrote a book titled "The Great Chili Confrontation" after the first encounter, was among those present as a spectator. His new satiric novel, "The View From Chivo," had just been published and he said he was busy with others. Terlingua must have some attraction for him, though. He now lives in Alpine, only 80 miles away, instead of way to hellangone up in New York State.



MEL LAVERGNE

...ready to welcome and meet  
with Arab chiefs of state, presumb-  
ably if they came to Cairo.

"I am not ready to meet with any  
person, apart from the kings and

(Continued, Page 2), Col. 1.)

## S.A. 'Chilihead' Wins Cookoff

ARRIBA TERLINGUA (UPI) —  
Chili cook Richard Simon of San  
Antonio, braved rain and cold au-  
tumn winds Saturday to win the  
11th annual World Championship  
Chili Cookoff in this dusty south-  
west Texas ghost town.

Fort Worth's Mike Sweet was  
runner-up and Geneva Barron of  
Bryan came in third.

The chili festival annually draws  
thousands of tourists to the ruins of  
Terlingua, nestled in the southwest  
Texas mountains near Big Bend Na-  
tional Park for two days of drinking  
and eating chili.

# Goats, Burros Reclaim Ranch

By MACK SISK

ARRIBA TERLINGUA (UPI) —  
Goats, sheep and burros reclaimed  
the desert Sunday as hundreds of chili  
loers straggled back home from a wild  
three-day party in a dusty natural  
amphitheatre near the Mexican border.

The fling officially ended with a loud  
foot-stomping dance that sent swirls of  
dust 10 feet into the air Saturday night,  
but whoops and hollers were heard  
throughout the night in a makeshift city  
of campers on Glen Pepper's ultra-  
remote Villa De La Mina ranch.

A Houston stockbroker was named  
the 1977 world champion chili cook over  
32 other contestants when his "Buz-  
zard Breath Chili" particularly enlivened  
the taste buds of a panel of judges  
headed by Sen. John Tower, R-Tex.,  
and Texas Land Commissioner Bob  
Armstrong.

Mustachioed Tom Griffin was a first-  
time entrant in the contest and said he  
began cooking chili competitively on a  
bet seven months ago, winning second  
place on his first try at the Houston  
cookoff.

"I like a challenge," said Griffin, who  
claimed key ingredients in his winning  
chili were imported, dried red ants  
from Mexico and sparing flicks of cigar  
ashes.

Also accorded honors were Kathi T.  
Brooks, 20, of Alpine, Tex., who  
defeated a dozen other contestants in a  
closely matched wet-shirt contest, and  
Alpine's J.J. Holt, selected Mr.  
Terlingua.

Popularity of the desert chili bash,

carried out in an area so remote there is  
no television, has grown greatly since  
1974 when Californian C.V. Wood  
antagonized the organizing Chili  
Appreciation Society International.

Wood, husband of actress Joann  
Drew, who gained publicity for  
bringing the London bridge to the  
Arizona desert, split away from the  
Texas group, formed his own chili  
society and began his own  
championship chili cookoff in  
California.

Charlie Fowler, whose uncle Wick  
Fowler participated in the first  
Terlingua cookoff in 1967 against author  
H. Allen Smith, said the whole spat was  
a "personality conflict" with Wood.

The vendetta against Wood was still  
present during the weekend causing  
one California chili chef to post a large  
sign on his stand, saying: "Yes, I'm  
from California. No, I don't know C.V.  
Wood."

In Wood's honor, cookoff officials this  
year made a beer-drinking chimpanzee  
honorary judge and called her C.V.  
Wood Jr.

Texans pride themselves on their  
chili, a spicy meat dish born during the  
late 1800s around San Antonio and  
carried far and wide on cattle drives.  
The Texas Legislature this year made  
chili the official state dish.

Camp Finlay, whose band performed  
at the cookoff, wrote a song for the  
occasion calling chili "God's gift to  
Texas."

11/3/74

Sell it faster! Call 225-1666 for the most effective want ad section.

## Hot stuff

Allegani Jani Schofield of Houston stirs a pot of her winning brew after copping top honors Saturday at the World Series of Chili Cooks at Terlingua, a wild, arid West Texas ghost town. — AP Wirephoto.



# Chili chefs square-off

By LEIGH FENLY

Viva Terlingua and chili eaters across the country.!

Congregations of "red dish" eaters, cooks and a few curious onlookers converged on the dusty ruins of Terlingua this week-end for the annual chili cook-off.

Staged by C. V. Wood Jr., famous for bringing the London Bridge to Arizona, the cook-off began in early morning and simmered and stewed until afternoon.

The chefs' costumes were as varied as the chili's ingredients. Decorated with leis of strung red chili peppers or necklaces of elephant tusks, the cooks resembled witches over the proverbial brew.

George Wood, owner of the Dallas Cowboys Restaurant in New York City, where, incidentally, chili goes for \$2.50 a bowl, graced the proceedings in top hat and tails.

Owner, sheriff and mayor of Luckenbach, Hondo Crouch in a coat he claimed was made of gorilla, served as a judge for the contest.

The seasonings for the chili were in keeping with the rest of the event—unbelievable.

Wino Woody added a few bottles of champagne to the wok of chili he concocted and a few to himself. Arkansas Ozark chili was made of, you guessed it, razor-back.

There was Zuni Indian chili, super chili and even a pot of male chauvinist chili, that was overturned midway through the contest. Could it be sabotage?

As the chili simmered on, the crowd took to exploring the adobe ruins of the once booming mercury mine.

Overlooking the great expanses of Big Bend National Park, the ghost town of Terlingua looks ominous.

The town went bankrupt soon after World War II when the need for mercury dropped and water began seeping into the mine.

Bank statements and bills of sale were found among the rubble dating back to 1915. Letters from creditors asking for payment and receipts for lard and spuds were also unearthed.

Around noon, with the aroma of chili strong in the air, the crowd got what it came for. Sampling from spoons, crackers, or nut cups, the tasters mingled among the chili pots and made their decisions while the judges inside made theirs.

For those who didn't get enough chili, heaping platters of barbecue and beans were served in the true way of Texas hospitality—free for everybody—courtesy Odesa Chamber of Commerce.

As the pots of chili were emptied and the cook-off

# Super bowl planned for chili world series

STAFF SPECIAL

TERLINGUA — A "super bowl" has been added to the program here Nov. 6, as a feature of the fifth annual World Series of Chili Cooks.

The "super bowl" contest will pit winners of the past two sessions, 1969 and 1970, against the 1971 champ.

This will give the big annual event in the West Texas wasteland two titles instead of the one for past years.

All past champions are on the program: Wick Fowler of Austin and H. Allen Smith of Alpine, 1967 co-champions; Woodruff "Woody" DeSilva, Los Angeles, 1968 champ; C.V. Wood Jr., Lake Havasu, Ariz., 1969

SAN ANTONIO  
*Evening*

## NEWS



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titlist; and Fowler, last year's victor.

This year's chili champ cook-off will feature the longest and most colorful list of contestants in the four-year event. The roll will include several state champions, determined by contests in their areas.

States now in the process of determining champions are Nevada, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Connecticut.

Other contestants include Mrs. John Craig of San Antonio, whose "Jersey Lilly Chili" gave

her the Texas women's chili championship in the Hill Country last Saturday.

In addition, contestants will come from the Ysleta Tigua Indian tribe of El Paso, the Tarahumara Indians of Chihuahua, Mexico; Chief Fulton Battise of the Alabama-Coushatta Indian tribe, Texas.

Also in the contest is Ma Unser, Albuquerque, N.M., mother of the famous auto racing champion, Bobby and Al Unser; Mrs. Jerry Fales, New York City chili champ; George Wright, Manhattan championship runner-up; George Wright, chef of the Park Avenue Chili Parlor in New York City; Lum Motlow, Tennessee champion; Joe DeFrates, Illinois titlist; Steve Riesen, Charlotte, N.C.

# Pearl's 'Judge Roy'

John Collins impersonates Judge Roy Bean as the law west of the Pecos in a publicity ploy for Pearl beer.

Old Judge Roy would have been proud of Collins, a walking page from history on the controversial scoundrel who had horse thieves hanged almost as fast as his pet bear swigged Pearl beer for spectators who were willing to pay for the spectacle.

If Bean loved from his heart, that love was directed at the bear and Lily Langtry, an English actress of world renown during the late 1800s whom the judge idolized but never met.

Collins loves to spin Roy Bean yarns, and he can quickly give tourists who visit Pearl Brewery a verbal thumbnail sketch on one of Texas's most lionized and talked-about rascals.

A newcomer to Texas and San Antonio's Pearl Brewery will quickly be dealt the following Bean information by

the talkative Collins:

Bean was a con man and hustler of the first rank, and he dispensed his own peculiar brand of justice based on one law book and two six-shooters in the West Texas town of Langtry.

He held court in his Jersey Lily Saloon which, like the tiny town, was named after his fantasy sweetheart Lily Langtry.

All cases were finable because Bean's establishment lacked a jail. Frequently, Bean punished an offender by sentencing him to buy the crowd a round of drinks in the bar.

The judge was in law for the money.

Bean is a colorful folk figure now that he's long gone. While alive, he was a conniving ol' cuss whose tough hide covered a big heart generous to those down on their luck.

It's fitting that Bean serve as a symbol for Pearl beer. After all, brewery owner Otto Koehler grubstaked the Judge when he slunk

out of San Antonio and on to Langtry and immortality.

Seems that Bean sold milk to the army that one day contained a minnow. Confronted, he explained that his cow must have swallowed the varmint while drinking from the San Antonio River.

Actually, the sneak diluted his delivery with branch when his cows failed to yield the contracted amount of moo juice.

That's how the minnow wound up in the milk.

His antics proved too much for the respectable folks who invited Bean out of town. They still burned over his wood business in which Bean sold timber cut from another man's land.

Bean headed to Langtry, a thriving railroad construction town in the glory days of the Southern Pacific. He carried along some beer Koehler gave him.

Bean sold the brew at a dollar a bottle during a championship boxing match. He charged what the market could bear.

Those are a couple of tales told by Collins who spins many a knee-slapper about Bean that are often punctuated by his own appreciative cackle.

Collins began his character acting four years ago when a staff cutback zapped his position as a regional sales manager for Pearl.

"They came to me and asked if I wanted to be Judge Roy Bean. Well of course I said yes. If I had to, I'd have dressed up as Lily Langtry to keep my job," he said.

With a fleecy white beard and locks, Collins seems an out-of-season Santa Claus clumping around in western garb.

Strapped to his side is an Army frontier .44. Cradled in his arms is a 1907 12-gauge, double-barreled shotgun.

Collins gallivants about the state presiding over chili cook-offs, menudo championships, beauty pageants and wet T-shirt exhibitions.

His brown eyes

As for the grub contests, Collins confided that his decisions are easily rendered despite the dozens of samples he may taste.

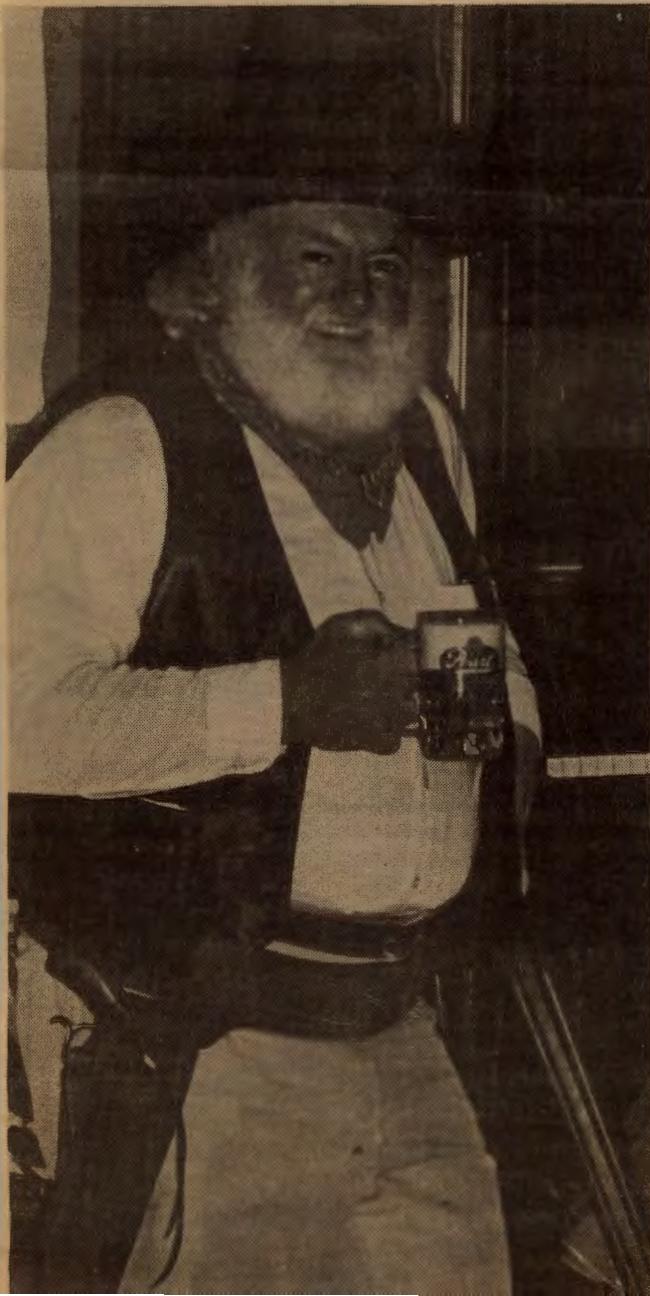
"Usually only three or four bowls are any good. Some are so bad flies won't touch them," he said, shaking his head as he recoiled at the memory of the foul concoctions he's sipped.

Proceeds from his appearances and admission fees to the Jersey Lily Saloon go to charitable organizations like the Boys Club.

The fun he gets to keep for himself.

Collins briefly broke off the interview to pose with a young lady for a camera crew covering his appearance at Boehler's Beer Garden.

The chesty young thing delivered a long, enraptured kiss while deposited on the Judge's lap.



# Chili Relations

by Joe Nick Patoski

**I**CAME TO THE WEIRD WORLD OF CHILI COOKOFFS rather late in life—last year on the first Saturday of November, to be exact. I'd been invited to judge the twenty-fifth annual Terlingua International Chili Championship, and having heard many a wanton tale about this

annual debauch, which is the granddaddy of all chili cookoffs, I immediately accepted. If nothing else, I might better understand why otherwise mature middle-class adults, most of them males, journey hundreds of miles to a ghost town in the Chihuahua Desert just to dress up like Gabby Hayes, go loco, and cook chili.

I phoned my friend Kirby Warnock, the publisher of the *Big Bend Quarterly*, to ask if he was going too. Yes, he had been invited to judge at Terlingua, he said. He then proceeded to burst my bubble by asking which cookoff I would be judging.

Come again?

"Which cookoff?" Kirby repeated. "There are two cookoffs. Didn't you know?" At that point I learned that although there is only one Terlingua, the community hosts two "original Terlingua international championship" cookoffs on the first Saturday in November within nine miles of each other.

As it turned out, Kirby was judging the Official Terlingua International Championship Chili Cookoff, conducted by what is known in chilidom as the Fowler-Tolbert faction, in honor of Wick Fowler and Frank X. Tolbert, two of the godfathers of the chili phenomenon. I

**In the ghost town of Terlingua, rival factions duke it out over who has the best chili cookoff.**



**Food fight: The most ridiculous, overblown squabble this side of the Legislature.**

was one of one hundred judges at the Chili Appreciation Society International (CASI) cookoff. Kirby voiced the opinion that the Behind the Store cookoff was far superior to the CASI cookoff. Otherwise, he wouldn't be judging it.

Determined to decide for myself which cookoff was best, I accompanied Kirby to the Behind the Store cookoff before going on to the CASI cookoff. In due course, I got a perspective of the most ridiculous, overblown, and irreconcilable political squabble this side of the Legislature.

As we motored in from Fort Stockton, Kirby gave me a brief history of the split. In the beginning, or 1939 at least, there was George Haddaway, the Dallas publisher of *Flight Magazine*, who used the name Chili Appreciation Society International in the unsolicited critiques he gave restaurants that served chili. One of Haddaway's chili reviews, delivered at the Baker Hotel in Dallas, was observed by a loose confederation of journalists, media mavens, public relations executives, and other idlers who gathered at the hotel's bar. They embraced Haddaway's ideals, especially his appreciation of chili, and informally adopted the Chili Appreciation Society International as their own.

In 1967 Frank X. Tolbert, a columnist for the *Dallas Morning News* and the noted author of the chili tome *A Bowl of Red*, was shooting the bull with other members of the Baker Hotel gang over bowls of chili cooked up by Wick Fowler, who they regarded as the best chili cook in all of Texas. Fired up by Fowler's chili and an inflammatory article in *Holiday* magazine titled "Nobody Knows More About Chili Than I Do," written by New York humorist H. Allen Smith, the Texans issued a challenge to Smith: They would put Wick Fowler up against him in a cookoff to be held in the ghost town of Terlingua in Big Bend. The Great Chili Confrontation, as it came to be known, was as much a test to see if the Dallas group could attract a crowd to the middle of nowhere as it was a culinary showdown. Tolbert, via his position with the newspaper, took the lead in hyping the event.

The first Terlingua cookoff attracted more than a thousand people to what amounted to a lost weekend for overgrown boys. Copious quantities of alcohol were consumed. All sorts of tomfoolery were not only tolerated but encouraged. Somewhere in the midst of it all, Smith and Fowler even cooked chili. The contest was declared moot after the tie-breaking judge allegedly gagged on a spoonful of Smith's chili. Still, the event was so much fun that everyone resolved to do it again the next year.

The PR was almost too effective. The

first event had received so much coverage—including articles in *Sports Illustrated* and other national publications—that by the time November rolled around again, the organizers were greeted by an even larger crowd.

By 1970 the Terlingua cookoff had grown into an adult version of spring break, creating a cult of devotees big enough to justify other chili cookoffs around Texas and the nation. In short order there was even a monthly newspaper, the *Goat Gap Gazette*, devoted exclusively to cookoffs and the chili lifestyle.

And so it continued, well into the eighties—until the Great Terlingua Schism.

If you believe the CASI version of history, the split was a cooks' rebellion against the old guard, specifically Tolbert. If you believe the Tolbert faction, the breakup of the chili world was caused by showoffs, Johnny-come-latelies, and minor league coots with absolutely no sense of chili history, much less respect for pioneers such as Tolbert, Smith, and Fowler and their Baker Hotel compadres Tom Tierney, Dave Witts, and Bill Neale. In truth, though, the answer boils down to something as simple (and complex) as blending coarse ground meat, spices, and seasonings into a bowl of red: It comes down to egos.

Tolbert, it seems, showed up at the 1982 cookoff with two Europeans whom he wanted to enter in the competition. He was challenged by cooks who protested that they, unlike the foreigners, had earned their place at Terlingua by qualifying at other cookoffs. Since most of the cooks had invested thousands of dollars and dozens of weekends in hopes of earning a trophy, they wanted everyone to observe the same rules and regulations.

These complaints struck Tolbert as being so pissant that he organized his own cookoff in Terlingua the next year. After a series of legal maneuverings and dirty tricks that thoroughly divided the two groups into the cooks versus the Tolbert faction, two cookoffs were held on the same day in 1983. Tolbert then petitioned for trademark status for the term Chili Appreciation Society International.

By the time the trademark was issued in February 1984, however, Tolbert had died. The ensuing rivalry became more heated and contentious by the year, culminating in a 1988 lawsuit filed by the cooks' group, now known as CASI Inc., against the Tolbert faction over the use of the phrase "Chili Appreciation Society International."

U.S. federal district court judge Lucius Bunton urged both sides to settle their differences out of court, but after the two parties were unable to compromise, Bunton [CONTINUED ON PAGE 85]

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 64] ruled that the Tolberts had no right to the federal trademark and instead awarded it to CASI Inc. Still, the good judge, cognizant of the fire storm into which he was walking, would not touch the issue of which organization had the right to claim itself as the "official" Terlingua cookoff. "The parties should see this as an issue of good sense and decency and not look to the courts," Bunton said. "This has not been an easy case for the court, but . . . better chili today than hot tamale." Aggravating that no-decision were legal expenses that cost both sides more than \$40,000 apiece.

In the four years since the suit was filed, perhaps the most damaging blow to the Tolbert camp was Wolf Brand Chili taking its sponsorship and its \$10,000 and going over to CASI, which had purchased its own permanent site.

So which Terlingua chili cookoff was better?

Well, the Tolbert crowd out behind Arturo White's store was funkier, wilder, and more laid-back all at once, appealing largely to traditionalists who maintain a connection to the cookoff's origins. For example, Hallie Stillwell, who was one of three judges at the first cookoff in 1967, prefers attending the Behind the Store cookoff, where performers such as Gary P. Nunn, whose compositions defined the Texas progressive country music movement in the seventies, perform in the evening. "We stay up all night Behind the Store," explained one Tolbert supporter. "At CASI, they all go to bed by midnight, like they have something to do the next morning."

The CASI cookoff, on the other hand, boasted a considerably larger site, which accommodated three times the Behind the Store crowd and four times the number of cooks. Showmanship, a staple of all cookoffs, was considerably more elaborate here: One cooking crew erected a miniature golf course; another did a synchronized clogging routine in drag; still another conducted audience participation games, like the toilet plunger toss. And there was even a Warnock among the judges, Kirby's uncle, Barton Warnock, known as the naturalist of Big Bend.

The CASI cookoff's judging area and stage were far more spacious than those at Behind the Store but lacked a certain aesthetic appeal—it would be more appropriate in an industrial park. The Tolbert-sanctioned cookoff's sotol-roofed pavilion, the adobe walls of the compound, the rusted heaps of cars and trucks strewn among the boulders and creosote brush, and the backdrop of the Chisos Mountains of the Big Bend gave the Behind the Store celebration a distinctive Western atmosphere.

Behind the Store's happy misfit ambi-

ence was a sharp contrast to the CASI brigade's, whose Winnebagos, Bluebirds, and Allegros, neatly arranged in rows with flags and banners flying, recalled an upscale version of Woodstock.

Despite the emphasis on cooking, hedonism was more than tolerated at the CASI cookoff: One team offered free shots of tequila for one and all, and three young ladies roamed the premises, willing to oblige a pack of camera- and videocam-toting men yelling, "Show us your tits." But whether due to the new morality or the evolution of the cookoffs, the high jinks all seemed tamer than what goes on in a topless bar.

After I finished judging (FYI: Luke-warm chili, championship grade or not, is still lukewarm chili), I met some of the CASI directors, sampled the deli platter in the VIP lounge (no chili in sight), then drove back to Behind the Store to fetch Kirby, who was three sheets to the wind and angling for a snapshot of an alleged winner of the wet T-shirt contest, who was exposing *her* breasts to an approving crowd.

"See? Isn't this more fun?" Kirby asked. Well, I reckoned, the breast exposure was certainly a little more spontaneous.

I eventually cajoled Kirby into the car, where we rifled through each other's official judge's goody bags while heading back to Fort Stockton. We agreed that there must be plenty of good times to be had in chili—otherwise the cookoff phenomenon wouldn't have grown to the point that all sorts of towns and organizations all over the country host chili cookoffs as charity fundraisers (there's even a Lone Star Vegetarian Chili Cookoff).

As the sun dipped behind the mountains in the rearview mirror, I realized that the concept of One Terlingua in chilidom is a pipe dream, at least for the immediate future. And maybe it's better that way. At least chiliheads can choose what kind of wild, rugged individualist they prefer to be—for the weekend.

The Tolbert faction might be more steeped in history, but its determination to eschew rigid rules and structure at all costs increases the likelihood that it will gradually fade away with the memory of the original generation of chiliheads. Clearly, the future is with CASI, which raises more than \$5 million a year for charity and has emerged as the official cookoff sanctioning body, with some four hundred cookoffs a year.

That's okay, I finally concluded. After all, as H. Allen Smith wrote long ago, "The chief ingredients of all chili are fiery envy, scalding jealousy, scorching contempt, and sizzling scorn." In other words, if it wasn't worth fussing over, it wouldn't be chili. And that, podnuh, just wouldn't be any fun at all. ♣