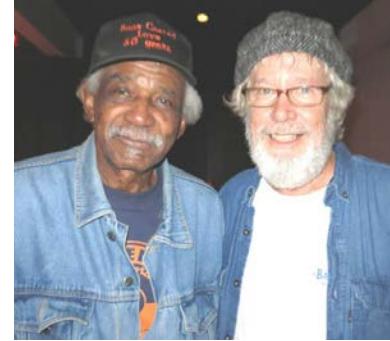




Wind in the Sails B7



Three Chords and the Truth B8



Backwater Adventures B1



Briscoe King Pavilion A7



Beachcombing Report A5

Issue 1133

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By Dale Rankin

We almost made it through 2025 Around The Island without Old Man Winter finding us but alas, he came blasting in OTB with a roar and not a whimper but fear not we will be back wearing flip-flops by the time the wave of Winter Texans comes rolling in fleeing the first taste of winter up north. Look for a parade of recreational vehicles on the JFK this week. You know the Winter Texans have arrived when you drive down the beach blasting your heater and see pale-skinned folks wade fishing in board shorts and tee-shirts. We encourage our Winter Texan friends to take Traveling Moon photos to send to their friends back in the Frozen North so they can attach them to their snow plows, and send us a copy here at editor@islandmoon.com so we remind them what they are missing.

The New Year always puts us in a reflective mood and as we look back at 2025 there are a lot of success stories for Islanders to be proud of. In this issue we feature the variety of projects that served to change our little sandbar this year but in retrospect it is the recurring ones put on by Island volunteers that stick out.

La Posada

The 2025 La Posada Lighted Boat Parade was the best in memory as it continues to mature with the expansion of the Friday Night Parade. It was announced after the parade that the event raises the third highest number of toys for the Marine Reserve Toys for Tots program in the United States after only Mattel and Lego, that's pretty heady company folks. The second year of the lighting of the Island Christmas Tree at Whitecap NPI has also added a great new element to the event. Steps are underway to see if the parade can be broadcast statewide next year to put the Island's best Lone Star foot forward and the goal is to move some of the deck parties onto boats and into the parade. This event is the crown jewel of the Island calendar and the more boats the better.

Around cont. on A7

2025 The year that was!

Bob Hall Pier



Ongoing construction of Bob Hall Pier this week

History will record that one of the most impactful additions to The Island in 2025 was the new Bob Hall Pier. As 2026 dawns the opening of the \$22.7 million pier is imminent with completion of the new 5000 square-foot \$3.7 million restaurant space expected to be done by mid-2026.

The return of the pier comes five years after it was demolished by Hurricane Hanna in 2020 and marks its fourth reconstruction after being damaged or destroyed by hurricanes since its original construction in 1950 at 300 feet. The new pier is of steel construction and designed to withstand a 100-year storm.

More photos on page A3

The 2025 Election that wasn't

Lack of voter quorum leaves empty seats on PIPOA board

By Dale Rankin

One of the big election stories of 2025 was the election that wasn't. A move toward electronic voting and away from paper ballots by the Padre Isles Property Owners Association resulted in a lack of a quorum of voting members nullifying the results.

The vote to fill two empty seats failed to produce the required number of votes to reach a quorum as required by its bylaws. Elections for the three year terms are held each March for staggered terms and the 2025 election marked the first to use the online ManageCasa system for casting ballots. PIPOA Executive Director Rick McGinnis said 1456 paper ballots were mailed to members with return ballots checked against membership rolls for verification, another 3557 notifications were sent out through the ManageCasa system. A total of 424 votes were cast, 78 votes short of the 502 required to reach ten percent of the 5020 members.

The 2026 election is set for March.

Brewster Street Comes to the Island



The opening of Brewster Street Ice house in 2025 on The Island was a new addition to the Island landscape this year. It brings another waterfront spot for boaters and attracts visitors from OTB.

Commodores Bridge completion

The \$10.1 million Commodores Drive bridge was completed in late 2025 and will eventually add another water passage from Packery Channel to the Laguna Madre. The bridge was funded through the Island Tax Reinvestment Zone #2 and came in on schedule and on budget. The year 2025 began and ends with almost \$50 million in bridge work done at four Island bridges, the Don Patricio Bridge, Commodores Bridge, and two city-owned bridges, the Gypsy Bridge and Whitecap



The Commodores bridge ready for vehicular travel 7-16-2025

Commodores cont. on page A7

Bulkheads Rebuilt



Bulkhead damage from Tropical Storm Alberto

Bulkheads damaged by Hurricane Alberto in mid-2024 were rebuilt in 2025 by the Padre Isles Property Owners Association. The new bulkheads at the corner of the Cutlass Ave. and Cuttysark St. were redesigned to stand up to moving water once the canals are reopened to water flow.

More photos on page A8

Whitecap NPI

Work continued at the Whitecap NPI project throughout 2025. As the year ends work continues on model homes and an option for building single-story homes was added to the list of possibilities this year.



The Preserve area at Whitecap NPI



Happy Birthday Shorty's



Port Aransas' Oldest and Friendliest celebrated 79 years this year as a full house gathered at Shorty's Bar to celebrate the occasion.

Literally Hearing Cats



A house full of abandoned cats brought city rescue crews to The Island to herd them into cages and in some cases chasing them down storm drains.

Over 50 cats were removed

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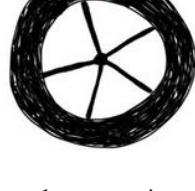
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By GENE SAEGERT

Letters to the Editor

I AM WHEEL. HEAR ME SQUEAK.



Thinking about the upcoming year, there needs to be a new look at the water projects and what can actually be done. The cost estimates and construction timelines, along with the amounts of water that can be delivered for every project seems to be changing and not for the better. This list, presented to the city council had about 150 MGD now there seems to be much less available water that could be potentially delivered from the list.

EV Ranch? This project is at square one. Basically just a concept at this point.

CC Polymer is now a no go. I don't believe this was ever a good possibility for many reasons.

STWA went from 28 to 10 to 1.4MGD. Now going to a new location. Back to Square one. They are going to stay with a 3 MGD desalination project. The City of Alice Desalination Plant built by Seven Seas took five years. The Alice desalination plant is still only producing 1.5 MGD because needs to drill another water well. That is my understanding.

Reuse is still tracking but has a limited delivery amount and dependent on the end user building the needed reuse pipeline for their use.

NRA Harbor Island, states four years to receive water?? I don't believe this schedule is realistic as I have been on several large construction projects through my career. Numerous design, engineering and construction challenges.

The Inner Harbor desalination project was on the list, however, was removed and not back on the list yet as another plan is in the works. This project has been and will be further delayed along with cost concerns and potential further legal concerns.

Evangeline may have legal concerns?? Currently there is moratorium on permits being accepted and I believe there will be issues with the location of the Wells and construction cost. The amount of water that can be pumped from the ground may be in question.

City wells may have legal concerns? Also the city has indicated the wells are for emergency use only. These wells are now not intended for long-term solutions meaning growth for the city.

Projects not on a list, but are being discussed.

Barney Davis site location is still only in discussion. Long term project maybe.

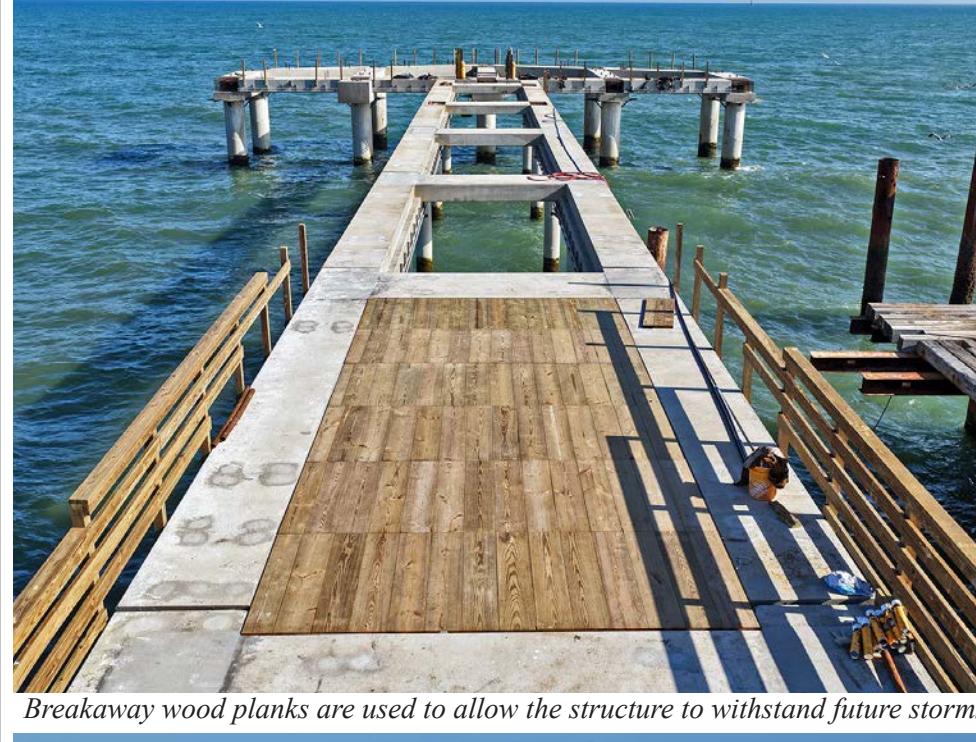
Storage, recovery, and aquifer (ASR) project is in the very early planning stages.

The La Quinta desalination project, which I think should really move forward but again still needs the discharge permit and in the very early stages of planning. San Patricio municipal water District through a letter to the city, have asked for the permits.

Currently, the City of Portland is actively exploring and planning a brackish groundwater desalination plant. They are in the early stages (Request for Qualifications) to develop a brackish groundwater desalination plant to diversify their water away from Corpus Christi.

In 2017, the city of Ingleside was exploring the concept of developing a desalination plant off the La Quinta Ship Channel, but

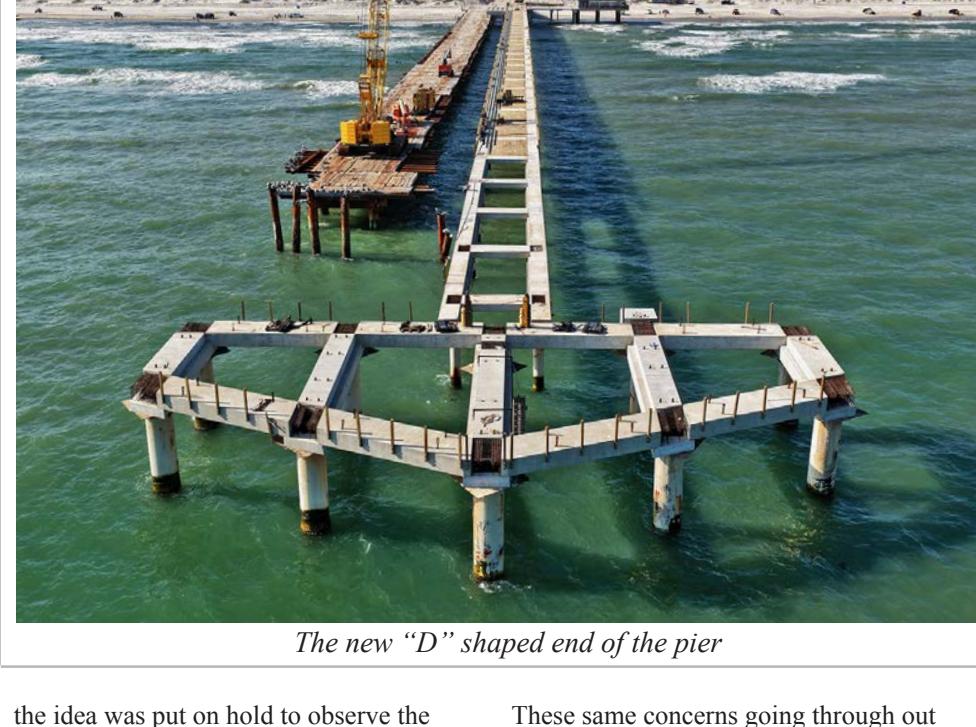
Bob Hall cont. from A1



Breakaway wood planks are used to allow the structure to withstand future storms



The new restaurant and concession foundations



The new "D" shaped end of the pier

the idea was put on hold to observe the progress of other regional projects. The project at the time was for 100 MGD for about \$700M.

Yes, there are multiple water projects for the future of Corpus Christi, however, people need to know they all seem to have legal concerns, cost concerns, construction concerns, timeline concerns, and water amounts deliverability concerns.

Texas water law presents complex legal concerns, primarily around the "Rule of Capture" for groundwater (allowing landowners to pump freely but with exceptions for waste/malice) and state ownership of surface water (prior appropriation system), clashing with modern large-pumps, growing demand, and aquifer depletion, leading to ongoing disputes over pumping limits, permits (GWD) and potential constitutional "takings" claims, is making the progress of new water sources much more difficult.

These same concerns going through out the state of Texas are right here in Corpus because people are not wanting to give up their water as it has become a more valuable commodity for sustainability and growth. The state, the counties, the cities and individuals land owners will all be challenging who uses what water how much and when.

Thanks.
Dan Grimsbo

Moon Monkeys

Mike Ellis, Founder



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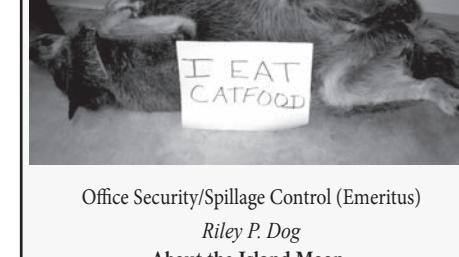
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Stuff I Heard on the Island

By Dale Rankin

In some ways 2025 was the year of hurry up and wait while in other ways it was a year of good progress on The Island.

Progress

The progress came primarily in the form of four major Island projects.

Bob Hall Pier. The first is the new Bob Hall Pier which is set to open in early 2026 after five years of waiting. The new pier is of a much more robust design than the one it replaced which was near the end of its lifecycle when Hurricane Hanna arrived in 2020. By the end of 2026 the new pier should be open and work on the new restaurant structure well underway if not complete. It took five years but we have a good pier.

Commodores Bridge. The completion of the Commodores Drive bridge was also a major step forward in 2025 and a rarity in that it came in on budget and on schedule. For those who live south of Whitecap Blvd. the new water passage will provide a much quicker and convenient path for reaching the area around the JFK Bridge. The water clearance at the new bridge matches that of the Don Patricio Bridge fourteen feet, setting a height limit for Island boats. The Whitecap Bridge has a clearance of eleven feet, the Gypsy Bridge nine and one-half.

The big question of when the water will once again flow from Lake Padre into Island canals is uncertain as 2026 arrives but as things have developed my guess is the first half of 2026 if not before. We didn't spend \$50 million on bridges to block water flow.

Whitecap NPI. Every few weeks we have run aerial shots of the progress at the Whitecap NPI project. Much of the work that has been done has been in the center of the footprint and is not visible from the street level. A project of that size takes years to move through the various stages of construction and there has been steady progress through 2025. What progress 2026 will bring is unknown at this point but the work is steady.

Bulkhead repair. The Padre Isles Property Owners Association made good progress in 2025 in shoring up Island bulkheads in anticipation of reopening canals in 2026. There is still much to do but 2025 saw not only the repair of damaged bulkheads but the fortification of the crucial stretch of system between the Gypsy Bridge and the Whitecap Bridge.

New projects in 2025

Briscoe King Pavilion. A plan to build a new Briscoe King Pavilion at Padre Balli Park was hatched in 2025 and as the year ends \$8 million in funding from the Island Incremental Reinvestment Zone is in place along with engineering plans which are now at 90%. This is a long-needed addition to The Island for many reasons and as 2026 begins it is uncertain if construction on the new project will begin this year, but funding is always the first hurdle and this project cleared that obstacle in 2025.

JFK Bridge improvements. While this project could be placed in the *Hurry up and Wait* category I include it here because the progress that was made in 2025 is more than has happened in the past twenty years of this project hanging fire. If there is any low hanging fruit among all of the projects discussed here this is it. There is somewhere between \$650,000 and \$2.5 million available in old bond money (depending on who you talk to) to pave the parking area under and around the bridge which in either case is enough to make a significant difference. In late 2025 the city staff presented a schedule to the Island Strategic Action Committee that calls for construction to begin in May 2026. This is a case where just a little work could go a long way toward shoring up the infrastructure around businesses there that have been paying city taxes for decades while their patrons park in the mud. Maybe 2026 will be when the talking stops and work begins. We'll see.

Island Mobility Plan. When the Don Patricio Bridge was finished two years ago it was designed to be the lynchpin in the Island Mobility Plan which will connect the cart and pedestrian paths along the new canals west of SPID to the area around Lake Padre and the gulf beaches. That plan made some good strides in 2025 and as 2026 arrives is now headed to the Corpus Christi City Council where approval would be the culmination of decades of planning work and would free up \$14 million in state funds to get construction of new paths along the SPID corridor underway. The plans for those paths have been the subject of several public hearings in recent years which led to the plan's completion and brought us to where we are.

As currently scheduled the Mobility Plan should be approved by the council, likely

in early 2026, and by year's end we could see some real progress. As we look decades down the Island road this plan is the blueprint for our future as it will make getting around The Island by foot, bike, or cart possible without relying solely on streets. As the city elections approach in November this is an issue we Islanders need to put on the campaign agenda.

Hurry up and wait

Lake Padre. Probably the most visible project that showed no progress in 2025 is the development around Lake Padre. As 2025 began the infrastructure at this privately funded project was in place but nothing was going vertical and as 2025 ends that is where things still stand. The tax incentives are in place for the project which remains in the planning process. Currently there is no indication the project will begin to move forward in 2026.

Island Seagate. The idea to rebuild a seagate between Packery Channel and Lake Padre began at the Padre Isles Property Owners Association in 2025 but at year's end no progress has been announced for funding. If the seagate is placed at that location on city-controlled property it will almost certainly have to go through the city's procurement process which includes funding for design, engineering, and construction and even if the project were to receive city funding, and there is no indication at this point that is a plausible possibility, the process normally takes four years; two years for design and followed by two years of funding for construction. If there is anyone who wants to wager this project will be under construction by January, 2027 I'm taking bets.

Encantada culverts. This project is a unicorn among Island projects in that it had a solution, then it fell off the radar, then it came back on the radar, then it stalled which is where it is now.

The original plan called for the construction of a bridge over the canal under Encantada Ave. with design and funding to come through the Public Improvement District at the Whitecap NPI project. This made sense a few years ago when a series of bridges were planned there and the crews with the equipment and knowhow would already be present but when early design began it was quickly discovered that a bridge was not a possibility due to the lack of easements for turning lanes leaving no one in charge and no funding source.

In mid-2025 three alternatives were presented to the Island Strategic Action Committee (the area is outside the boundaries of the TIRZ so funding from that source is not an option) and the one that was chosen was to place box culverts there to allow for the free flow of water...and that's where things stalled. As reported in this space some weeks ago the city has made it clear that it will not place box culverts with their bottom below the mud line on the canal floor, they will move forward when the PIPOA dredges their canals approaching the roadway. At their last meeting of 2025 the PIPOA board indicated they will not dredge the canal until the box culverts are in. If that logjam breaks we will let you know.

If I were a betting man I would say that water will begin to flow through Island canals in 2026 and it will be moving through the sand-filled culverts that have been in place under Encantada since Richard Nixon was President.

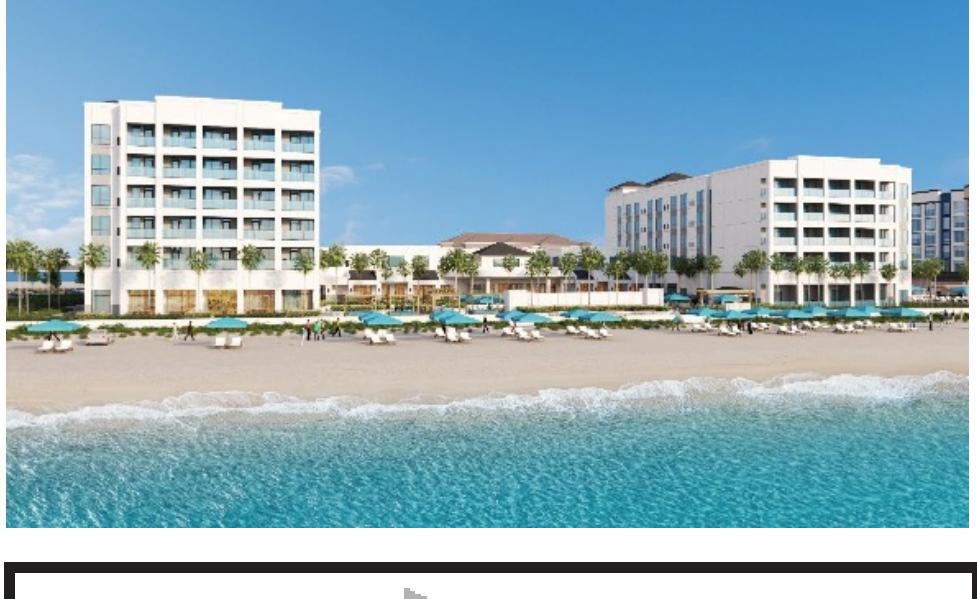
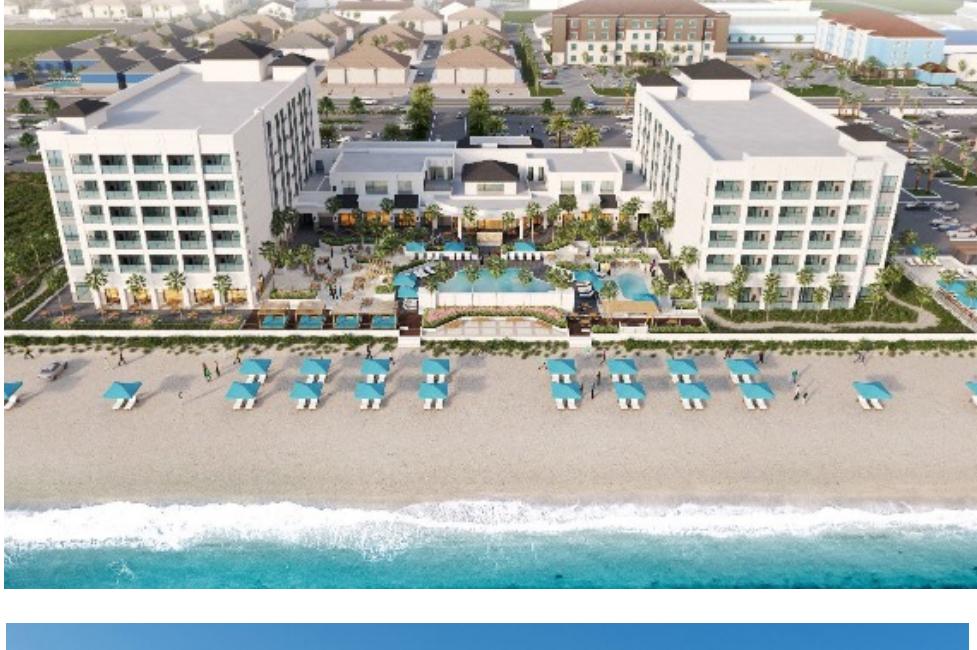
State Highway 361/new bridge to The Island. While these are two separate projects as far as the planning process goes they can't be separated due to geography and no matter how you slice it they must intersect at the Commodores/SPID/SH 361 intersection and that's where things get complicated.

The Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the new bridge across the Laguna Madre is set for completion in 2026 and that will set the route for the new bridge and allow for planning and permitting to move to the design stage. That could happen by the end of 2026 and take two to three years.

But that bridge only delivers traffic to the crucial three-way intersection where an alphabet soup of agencies converge. The SH 361 project falls to the Texas Department of Transportation which has held public hearings putting it ahead of the other agencies involved. An unsolved problem is that the intersection of the new Sand Dollar Ave. with SH 361 west of the Packery Channel Bridge is too close to the SPID/SH 361 intersection for a traffic light to be placed there. Moving the route of Sand Dollar Ave. to correct that problem involves a

Hotel and Conference Center coming to the Island

A new hotel, the Seawall Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, a \$34 million investment is scheduled to begin construction in mid-2026. The 107 room Courtyard by Marriott Hotel and 98 room Residence Inn by Marriott will include 9186 square-foot conference center.



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coordinated plan between the city, TxDOT and several nearby private property owners. Further, the widening of the Packery Bridge is going to be required when the new highway is built and that brings in federal permitting. This is going to be a long process and won't happen in 2026. I spoke with officials from the Speedy Stop store that is set to begin construction in 2026 and the opening of the access road there onto SH 361 may force the issue but this one is going to be a long slog.

In a side note, the oft-heard suggestion to build a flyover from Laguna Shores Road, along the JFK Bridge right-of-way to SH 361 does not relieve the traffic load on SPID from Laguna Shores to the Cross-town Expressway which is the stated goal of the second bridge to The Island making it a non-starter. That Rubicon was crossed when the EIS for the new bridge was

funded in 2024. The traffic on the new bridge will cross the Laguna Madre onto the Nueces County-owned land in Kleberg County and run through the SPID/SH 361 intersection unless there is a drastic change in plans which is highly unlikely. The best we can hope for in 2026 is that a plan for the crucial stretch of SH 361 between SPID and Packery Channel might begin in 2026 as the design for the new Laguna Madre Bridge moves to the next stage.

I end 2025 with a reminder that almost all of the projects listed here passed through the Island Strategic Action Committee and there are going to be appointments made to that committee in March. If you have an interest in the future of The Island apply and engage with this crucial organization.

On to 2026...

\$3.4 million in Commodores Park Improvements approved

Construction on pickleball and tennis courts, covered basketball court to start in 2026



The City of Corpus Christi approved \$3.4 million in funding for Phase I of improvements at Commodores Park in 2025 with construction set for 2026. Funding came primarily from city bonds with some design money from the Island Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone #2.

The Corpus Christi City Council on Tuesday approved \$3.4 million in funding to begin work on Phase I of improvements to Commodores Park on Padre Island which include pickleball and tennis courts, a covered basketball court, walking trails and a playground.

Funding for Phase 2 of the plan may be included in a city bond package in 2026.

By the numbers

Commodores Park Improvements

\$4.45 million total construction in fiscal year 2026 (including \$1.2 million already spent)

\$1.2 million design cost already spent (\$400,000 from Island Tax Incremental Reinvestment Zone #2)

Funding sources

\$5 million 2024 city bonds

\$1 million 2022 city bonds

\$400,000 TIRZ #2

\$6.4 million total allocation for project through fiscal year 2028



Rendering of the basketball court and covered pavilion

Commodores Park Improvements Phase I

Covered Basketball Court Pavilion: Providing a year-round sports venue.

Tennis and Pickleball Courts: With two tennis courts and four pickleball courts.

Playground: A fenced-in, shaded area with poured-in-place surfacing for safety.

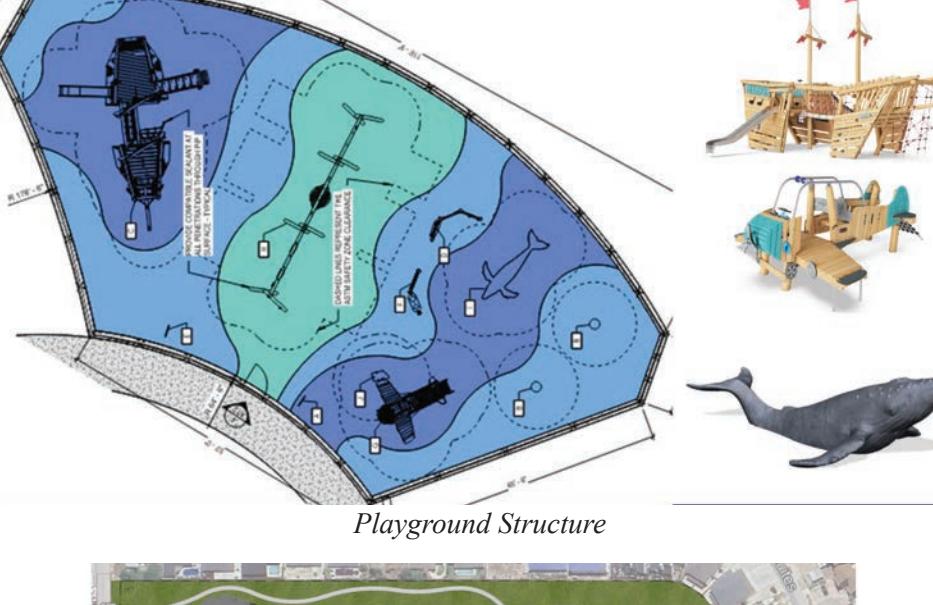
Bird Observation Blind: Encouraging wildlife appreciation and education.

Concrete Walking Trail: For strolls and exercise.

Picnic Area: Designated space for family and community gatherings.

Parking and Accessibility: A concrete parking lot with golf cart accommodations and ADA accessibility throughout.

Park Lighting: Ensuring safety and extended use during evening hours.



Playground Structure



Aerial Plan

Beachcombing Report

By Jace Tunnell

Five Keyhole Sand Dollars



Jace Tunnell showing the bottom of a sand dollar

Beachcombers along the Texas coast were treated to an unexpected treasure this past week: sand dollars — lots of them — scattered across the shoreline like nature's own currency. These fragile, round wonders have long captivated collectors, whether found alive in the gentle surf or discovered as sun-bleached skeletons, known as "tests," nestled in the sand.

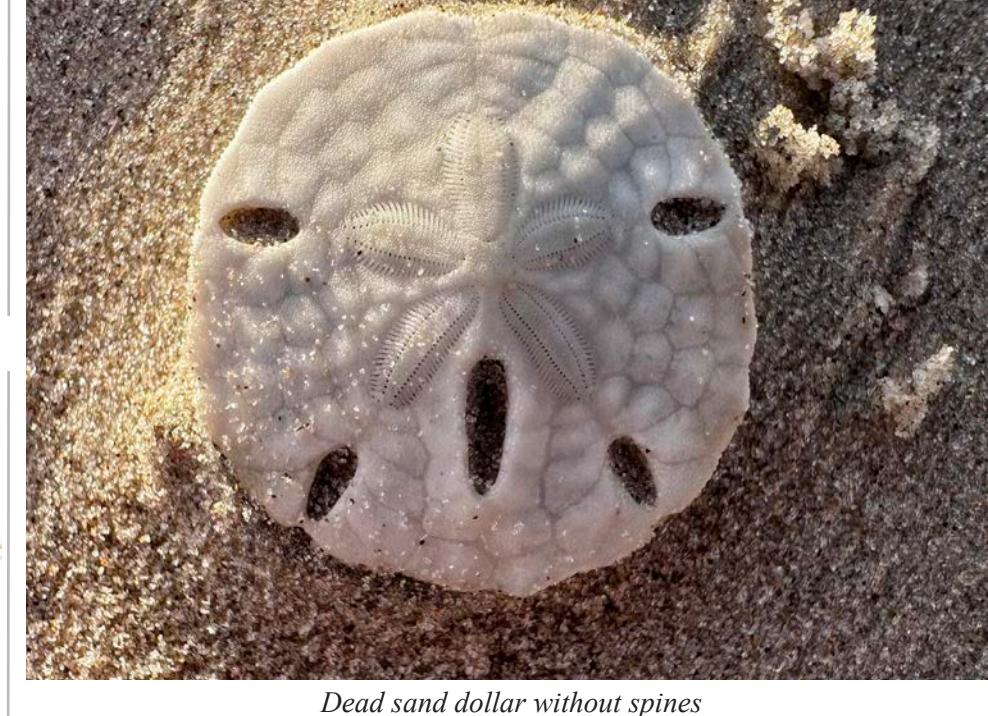
Sand dollars are a type of burrowing sea urchin, living just beneath the sandy seafloor. Using thousands of tiny, hair-like spines, they inch along the bottom and sift through the water for organic particles to eat. When alive, they're a deep purple or reddish-brown and feel velvety thanks to their dense covering of moving spines. But once they die, their soft tissue breaks down, revealing the smooth, white exoskeleton beachcombers know and love.

So why were so many turning up on the beach? Recent strong tides and churning waves likely stirred up the seafloor, dislodging live and dead sand dollars and carrying them ashore. If you come across a live one, it's best to return it to the water, they play an important role in the marine ecosystem.

Not sure if it's alive? Gently place it in your palm. If the tiny spines wiggle, it's still very much alive.

Dead sand dollars, however, are fair game for souvenirs. Many people cherish them for crafts, home décor, or simply as a keepsake from a memorable day by the water. And here's a fun bit of lore: when a sand dollar breaks, it reveals five small, bird-shaped fragments inside — often called "doves of peace."

This week's shoreline surprise offered a rare glimpse into the hidden world of these fascinating creatures. Whether you're carefully returning a live sand dollar to the waves or pocketing a smooth, white test to take home, stumbling upon one is a little moment of magic every beachcomber remembers. Jace Tunnell is the Director of Community Engagement for the Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. His Beachcombing series appears on YouTube and you can follow Jace at harteresearch.org, or Facebook (facebook.com/harteresearch), Instagram (@harteresearch) and X (@HarteResearch) (the platform formerly known as Twitter).



Dead sand dollar without spines

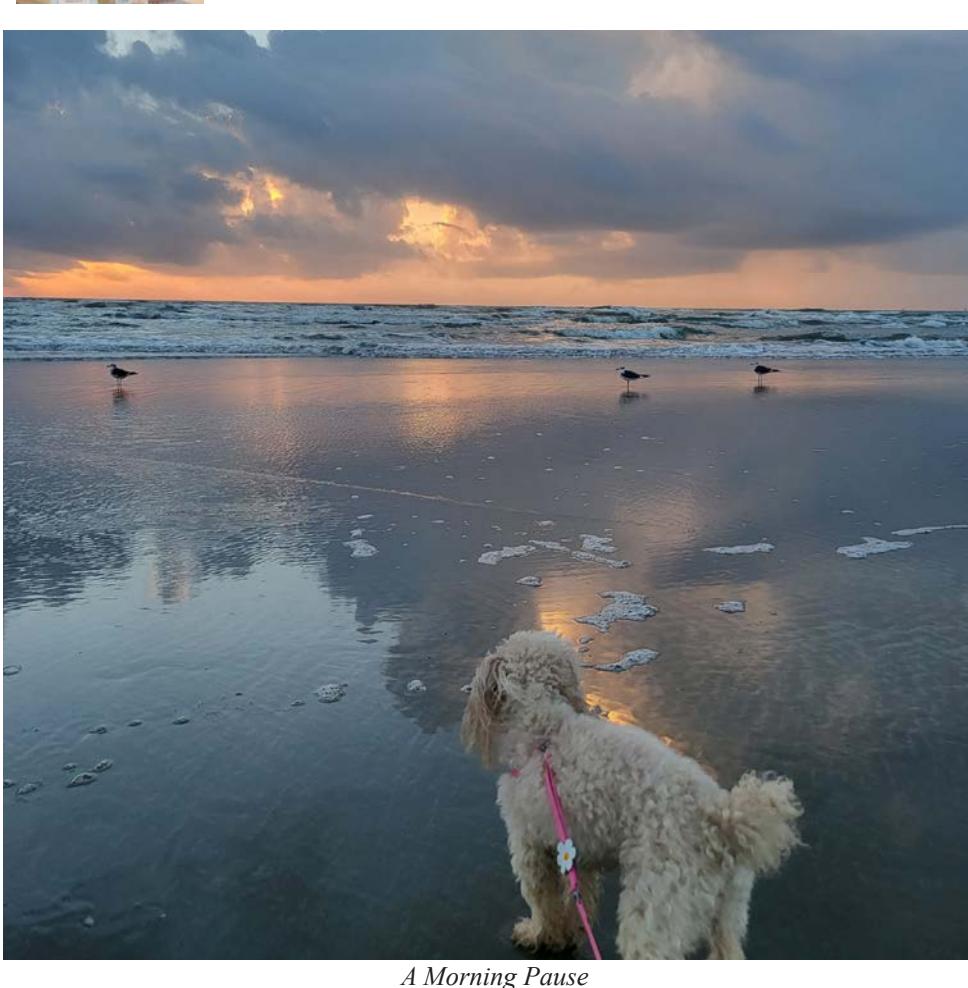


Top of a live sand dollar

The Art of Island Life

The Sweetest Kind of Holiday Tradition

By Melissa Mitchell



A Morning Pause

The pressure to reinvent ourselves in January has always felt a little loud to me. New goals, new habits, new versions of who we're supposed to become—often before we've even caught our breath from the year we just lived. We're encouraged to take stock of our emotions, our careers, our relationships—where we've been and where we think we should be headed next.

When we talk about "taking stock" in January, it's often framed in big, intangible ways—how we feel, where we want to be, what needs fixing or improving. We look at our energy, our priorities, our relationships. We take note of what feels heavy, what feels unfinished, and what we hope might look different in the year ahead.

The Inventory That Matters

And while all of that matters, there's also another kind of taking stock—one that feels a little quieter and, sometimes, a little bit kinder.

It shows up in the small, physical rituals that happen after the holidays. Putting decorations away. Reorganizing a drawer or countertop that got ignored. Noticing which serving dishes made it to the table again and again, and which never left the cabinet. Realizing which corners of the house feel most lived-in—and which ones feel ready for a little clearing or rearranging.

One asks us to reflect inward. The other asks us to pay attention to what surrounds us. And often, the two are more connected than we realize. Sometimes it looks like a small, tangible act. Choosing one drawer to clear—not the whole house. Making a cup of coffee and sitting with it a little longer before the day begins. Writing down what felt steady last year, rather than what needs fixing. Not as a checklist or a resolution, but simply as a way of giving it your attention.

These quiet gestures don't come with before-and-after photos or grand declarations. But they have a way of setting the tone—of reminding us that beginning softly can still be a beginning.

I've always appreciated the way feng shui talks about space—not as decoration, but as energy. At its heart is a simple idea: when we clear what's stagnant or damaged, we make room for fresh movement. Letting go of clutter isn't about perfection; it's about creating a home that feels supportive and welcoming—a place that helps us recharge and reflect what we want more of in our lives.

The things we hold onto—emotionally or physically—tend to tell similar stories. What we reach for often stays close. What we avoid will quietly take up space. And what no longer fits—without ceremony—can be let go.

What to Carry Forward

January gives us a little breathing room to notice these things. The rush has eased. Coffee just tastes better when it isn't rushed, and mornings feel less like something to conquer. The calendar hasn't filled itself back up just yet. There's space to move through our days with a bit more intention—without needing to label it progress or productivity.

This is the part of the year I appreciate most. Not because it promises something



The Art of Island Life

Weekly Column in The *Island Moon* Newspaper | Blog

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A moment of clarity

Port Aransas named official Fishing Capital of Texas!



A group from Port Aransas went to Austin to meet with Todd Hunter to accept the proclamation from the State Legislature.

As the 2025 session of the Texas Legislature was winding down lawmakers took time out to approve a House Continuing Resolution sponsored by State Representative Todd Hunter names in Port Aransas as

the official Fishing Village of Texas. A contingent of Port Aransas residents, including legendary captain Dee Wallace, traveled to Austin for the occasion.

Island seagate An idea without funding

By Dale Rankin

The push to install a seagate on Padre Island that could be opened and closed during storm events was hatched by the Padre Island Property Owners Association in 2025 but has made little progress toward moving forward as the year ends.

First came a request to the Island Tax Incremental Reinvestment Zone #2 (TIRZ #2) for a \$250,000 study of the 32 miles of aging bulkheads on Padre Island and potentially the location and construction of a sea gate to regulate flow through canals during storms. That request was sent to the Island Strategic Action Committee in 2025 where the vote was 6-1 against using city TIRZ #2 funds for the project and it stalled. On a second and separate vote ISAC members voted 8-2 to recommend to the Corpus Christi City Council that a study of Island bulkheads be done, but did not recommend

a funding source. The PIPOA board subsequently issued a request for proposals for a \$50,000 study for a location of the seagate but no contract was issued.

At the last 2025 meeting of the PIPOA board a white paper was released calling for a seagate and a second structure that would be located on private property near the Don Patricio Bridge to regulate water flow. A meeting between city and PIPOA officials in mid-November failed to produce a plan for funding for a study of the project and a clear path for moving toward subsequent design and construction. City officials after several meetings with PIPOA planners in 2025 have tentatively agreed to alter a city lease on an easement owned by the Texas General Land Office at the entrance to Lake Padre from Packery Channel for construction of a seagate there but as 2026 begins the addition of a seagate is still a project in need of funding to move forward with design.



The old Island Seagate that was never used.

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By the numbers

The new Bob Hall Pier

Costs

The following numbers come from the firm of Lockwood, Andres and Newnam (LAN) who were hired by Nueces County to review the numbers for the Bob Hall Pier reconstruction project.

\$22.7 budget for pier

\$3.7 million budget for new concession building

\$2,691,151 Spent on demolition

\$2,851,221 Committed to professions ser-

vices

\$2 million for restaurant building

\$20,787,815 Remaining for base bid construction

\$22,250,645 Callan Marine, LLC costs for base bid

Dimensions

1253 feet long

18.5 feet above the water

20 feet wide

Bob Hall Pier Restaurant & Concession



Exterior View 1

Plans for a new Briscoe King Pavilion

Nueces County Commissioners approved plans in 2025 for construction of a new \$8 million Briscoe King Pavilion at Padre Balli Park set to begin in 2026. As 2025 winds down the plans are at 90% completion and final engineering work underway.

One of the key elements of the new 6730 square-foot pavilion will be the addition of much needed meeting space on Padre Island. Once work begins it is expected to take about fourteen months to complete placing its opening sometime in 2027.



The current state of the Briscoe King Pavilion

Around cont. from A1

Fourth of July Fireworks

We would be remiss not to mention all the work and contributions that go into the Island Blast Fourth of July Fireworks Show. Nick announced last week that Valero Energy is contributing to the 2026 show which marks the first time a sponsor has stepped up to the plate and opens new possibilities to make the show bigger and better. Only half the money has been raised at this point and we will continue to remind Islanders to help out as 2026 rolls on but we're going to put some fire in the sky on the Fourth of July for what has become the highlight of the summer *Around The Island*.

Barefoot Mardi Gras

The fifteenth running of the Barefoot Mardi Gras parade in 2025 marked the first time it snaked its way in front of the Michael J. Ellis Seawall and took that event to the next level with record crowds. The only reason this event is not televised is that Saturday morning viewership is not large enough to draw sponsors but the exposure it brings to The Island grows each year. Like the boat parade more, elaborate floats are always needed. The parade is late this year due to high tides on the actual Mardi Gras weekend making it the only parade in the United States that had to be rescheduled due to high tides! Sounds like a marketing opportunity to brag about *Around The Island*...

Election time

As we looked back on 2025 in preparation for this issue of the Island Moon it became clear that it was a year of change and one of the biggest changes was a shift in our U.S. congressional district as we became the northern-most piece of a district that stretches south into the Rio Grande Valley. Come November we will have a new representative in Washington as we will no longer be in the district represented by Michael Cloud. When the redistricting took place in Austin in 2025 the lines were drawn so that the 8400 voters on Padre Island were a key part of deciding who will represent the new district starting in 2027. The March Primaries, a likely runoff on the Republican side, and the November General Election will be three of the most important votes ever cast by Island voters. We can be the difference in deciding who represents us in Washington... and all that implies. Vote early and vote often...

That's all for now everybody. 2026 dawns with great promise here on our little sandbar. Have a Happy New Year and say hello if you see us *Around The Island*...we'll see you on the other side.

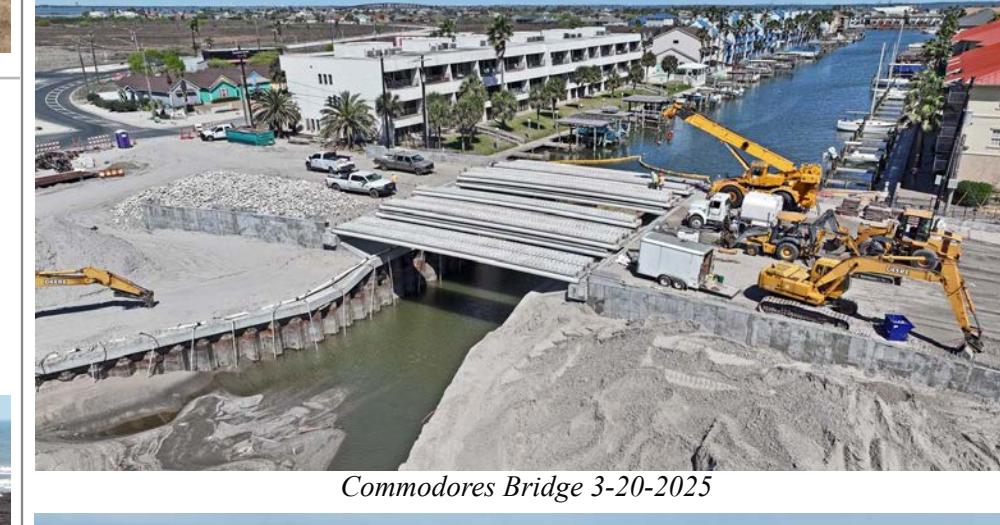
Commodores Cont. from A1

Bridge, but with water flow under them into the Island canal system blocked by the sand dam between Lake Padre and the Don Patricio Bridge. As 2026 begins plans call for the dam to be removed in conjunction with the opening of the canal under the Commodores Bridge and while no date has been announced as 2025 wound down progress was made toward an opening of the canals by spring 2026.

A related push to install box culverts under the roadway on Encantada Avenue to provide a third water passage stalled in late 2025 with little indication for progress between city officials and the Padre Island Property Owners Association as 2026 begins.



Commodores Bridge 1-29-2025



Commodores Bridge 3-20-2025



Commodores Bridge 5-8-2025



The open Commodores Bridge in July

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Bulkheads cont. from A1



Work to stabilize the damaged bulkheads after TS Alberto.



Bulkheads under rebuild in 2025.



The new repaired bulkheads.

In July of this year we expanded our normal Thursday radio show to include live video streamed on YouTube. We have had an enormous amount of different friends and guests, telling stories about how the Island used to be, and where we are heading. All of the videos are free to watch, and can be found on YouTube at Island Moon Live, or via these links. We record the show on Thursdays live at Doc's from 7 to 9 am.



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Island Outdoors

On the Rocks

By Jay Gardner



I was afforded the opportunity to watch the vegetational zonation change from the back seat of the truck on our way out here to Big Bend. Yes, I snuck out with Jeff and Jake and Henri last week to go on a camping adventure. It seemed like a good idea to head out to the desert during the winter break. While I've done work out in Fort Stockton over the years, I hadn't been past Paisano Pete in quite some time.

But yes, the zonation of the plants changes dramatically from the coast to the chihuahuan desert, and I enjoyed pointing out the changes to my fellow riders (although their enthusiasm waned and waxed). You loyal readers can look around and see our native beach and Dune system change to oak trees as you move toward Austin. Then, the stupid cedar trees and the allergies they spawn start bleeding in as you move through the hill country (side note: was unaware of all the vineyards and wineries around Johnson City). The oaks start to become smaller and the cedar takes over as the dominant towards Junction, and you start to notice small yucca (spanish dagger) bleed in. The stretch of I-10 of the Texas Hill Country from there through Sonora and Ozona is about as fun as getting your eyes dilated for an eye exam, but approaching Fort Stockton you notice that the cedars even start to become diminished and become less dense.

What starts to take over the Land of The Mesa's is creosote bush and cenizo. Sure, there's some small, weak mesquites in the ditches, but they don't blot out the landscape. You can see farther than as if you had climbed Green Hill at the 26 mile marker down the Seashore.

The landscape also gets dotted with white brush and few specialists like all thorn. The mesa's diminish into flat land, and you start to see the Chisos mountains appear in the distance. As I'm writing this, we are descending into the valley before we hit the range and about to pull into Marfa and get final supplies. Y'all are going to have to wait till next week to find out what happens because I'm about to lose service as well. Oops

Well loyal readers, it's been a heck of a year. Sorry to leave you with the edge of a new adventure instead of a recap of the past year. We got a lot done last year, but we need to buckle down and start turning dirt, building pickleball courts, trails, a skatepark, and opening bridges this next year. Drop me a line at jaygardner1032@gmail.com and we'll see you next week In the Desert, err, On the Rocks.



Big winter trout can be caught drift fishing in 2 to 3 feet of water while the sun is warming those shallow sand pockets. Photo by Farah

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By Joey Farah

Backwater Adventures

Fresh Start



On the not so favorable days on the water we switch gears and catch drum and redfish in the wind. Live shrimp double drum hookup in Baffin Bay.

everyone the most productive rhythms and actions but then change things up. I rotate each combination of lure size, weight, and rigging then let everyone work on those skills for those set ups. On your own it is good to have two or three rods rigged with contrasting different choices to easily pick up and make a few casts into good looking fishy water. Rod action is another way to change up your presentation. Stiff rods may work well for fast action and darting baits but most often you will find yourself catching more on a soft action rod while using braided line. Old school monofilament anglers still may use a stiff action rod to be able to catch up on the line slack and be in touch with both fish and lure since mono has more stretch.

Lunar feeding tables

As your fishing day flows along so does the lunar feeding tables. At the start and finish of each 2hr time period on the charts I often change my presentation of fishing. I may vary my jig head size, rate or pattern of rod action and retrieve, or color or pattern of lure I'm using. Same with bait fishing, you may move to lighter weights, different hooks, or even ways to hook your bait. Changing your presentation during the natural change of conditions will help you find yourself catching fish rather than just fishing.

I usually start off my day having clients throw a heavier 1/4oz jig head with some rods using a bright color, and others with a natural color/bright pattern. This presents something that gamefish can see better during the changing light conditions. Their eyes are going through adjustment just like ours. The heavier jig head helps get everyone casting well, far and feeling their bait. As the sun rises and everyone starts to build back their skills of casting and start to become the bait on the end of their line, we start moving to lighter jig head sizes and varying color. At times the sound of a lightly weighted bait hitting the water triggers fish to get up and move towards your cast, but it is only effective if the angler learns to pad the spool on the decent so the bait falls on the water with a SPLAT, then twitch and dart the bait as if it's confused and injured, just after getting away from a strike from a predator. Larger soft plastics are good for this presentation because of their added weight for casting, with a light jig head. The buoyancy of the larger plastic gives you a softer fall in the water column. Totally opposite of that I may switch things up to a heavier jig head with a smaller soft plastic and use a faster retrieve and action. This often creates a reaction strike from fish that see or hear it buzzing by. Using the changes in lunar feeding periods, new spots fishing or even just to change your luck can be something small or drastically different.

Lures matter

With multiple anglers on the boat I usually start off with similar set ups teaching

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Weather changes are coming for sure! The months of January and February are our coldest of the year. When it's bad outside, you can bet that it won't last long, so pick up the phone and give me a call when good conditions are ahead, I might just have a spot open, last minute trips are easy this time of year. Start your NEW YEAR off with a NEW AND FRESH way of reading and understanding the Laguna Madre and Baffin Bay areas, and techniques to consistently be successful in fishing! Follow all of our fishing on FACEBOOK AND TICK TOCK AT JOEY FARAH'S BACKWATER FISHING, 361-442-8145. Happy New Year Everyone! Thank you for a great opportunity to share and give some excitement in fishing. I am always trying to get you out of the house and close to the water.



By Chris Jordan

Simply leaving Port Aransas via ferry early on a Saturday morning sets the stage for adventure. The sun, still lowish in the eastern sky, was already dazzling the water with golden laser light. There was very little traffic for the ferries to ferry. Not many cars going either direction, but the ship channel was a super highway of fishing boats; bows up, bounding over the water, casting spray, racing to claim a spot.

My travel companions Lacy and Angeline had our first stop planned already. Turns out Buck's Phillips 66 station and convenience store in beautiful downtown Estes, Texas has pretty good breakfast fare. Our potato, egg, and cheese tacos were freshly made, steamy and moist. The flour tortillas were supple and just the right amount of stretchy. Bonus points to Buck: both the red and green salsas were made in-house and tasty. Belly full, I stretched out in the back seat with a vague plan to nap, dream about Chinatown, and maybe wake up briefly as we passed through Refugio. We were on our way to Houston.

But I didn't dream about Chinatown. Instead, only moments later, I drifted off and began to dream of a little out-of-the-way village we were approaching on Copano Bay. There's a fishing lodge or two, an RV park, and a few houses. It's quaint. But there is a big empty place in Bayside—and in the hearts and stomachs of passersby. Crofutt's Sandwich Shop was claimed by Hurricane Harvey. They tried to make it. Hell, they stayed open into the day Harvey hit and only closed to run for their lives. My dreamscape was populated with dark skies, howling winds, loosening shingles, and sandwiches. I came-to and lifted my head just in time to catch a glimpse of the place where Crofutt's used to stand. Goodbye, hot roast beef. Goodbye, flounder po'boy. Goodbye, Bayside. For now.



A while later, a second groggy peek out the window supplied me with an indelible snapshot of the Refugio County Courthouse. As if I needed another. If you know, you know.

I didn't wake up again until I was struck with the distinct subconscious sense that we were going 90 miles-an-hour on a highway, freeway, beltway, or tollway. And we were indeed. We'd made it to Houston. Sort of. We had at least entered the sprawl. I was born here, but it won't do me any good. My folks left when I was eighteen months old. Then, I even lived in Houston a little while twenty years ago. That was a blurry time and wasn't going to help either. But here I am, a battle-scarred adult salmon, driven by instinct, returning to a surprisingly specific spawning place: Bellaire.

By now we are good and hungry again. Lacy has actually lived in Houston and knows her way around. There is an unwritten rule that if you're going to properly make the scene in H-town, you gotta drive a BMW. We are in compliance. We swing on to Bellaire Boulevard and there it is: Bellaire Food Street, a fourteen-restaurant stretch of various Asian offerings. We walk the length to get a sense of what our options are. The three of us are in unanimous agreement: we will have lunch at B2J Suancai Fish. Our waiter does not speak English, we do not speak Chinese. With a little help from Google Translate, we order a giant bowl of poached fish soup with sauerkraut, enoki mushrooms, and cloud ear fungus.

Tilapia gets a bad rap, but that ain't right. The fish is quite good for you: low in fat, high in protein, and chock full of all the good fishy stuff. Farming enterprises like Regal Springs do it right. The fish are raised in pristine, oxygen rich lakes and fed a plant-based diet. Good tilapia is wonderful to eat: succulent, plump, tender and tasty. And this wonderful soup was full of just such tilapia, obviously of the highest quality. The broth was spicy and complex with a few Tien Tsin peppers floating about. The "sauerkraut" was made from napa cabbage. It was bright and induced a pleasant pucker.

The Chef Imposter

The enoki mushrooms were even more slender than usual and a whole bunch of them floated in dense clusters in our bowl. The cloud ear fungus, sometimes called simply "black fungus", really brought the funk. It has a gelatinous tooth to it and might remind you of some kinds of seaweed. Our suan cai yu was delicious and transported us to a place we've still never been.

How often do you get to tell your friends "save room for cream puffs"? Beard Papa's is just a few doors down from the fish soup joint and they sell one thing: you guessed it, cream puffs. Beard Papa's original location opened at the tail-end of the last millennium in Osaka, Japan but they now have hundreds of locations worldwide. Their pastries have various fillings inside pâte à choux wrapped in pie crust. Think of a crunchy cloud with an ooey-gooey center. We tried the lemon and the crème brûlée and they were both amazeballs. Time to leave Bellaire Food Street; on to the next stop.

There are numerous worthwhile food shopping pursuits in Houston, but we decided to stick with the tried-and-true. H Mart was established in Woodside, New York in 1982. This grocery store was originally called Han Ah Reum which is a Korean phrase that roughly translates to "groceries under one arm" but was later renamed simply H Mart. They've got it all: exotic produce galore, many types of fish, live tanks for shellfish, every conceivable Asian pantry item, and of course the ubiquitous Spam aisle. I effed-up and didn't bring an ice chest, so our purchases were limited to some fruit and dry goods.

An hour later we were shop-weary, had checked-in to our hotel, and had one eye on dinner. Indian food in a fine-dining setting sounded good when Lacy suggested it and Kiran's was nearby. We let the valets park the Bimmer and—just like VIP's—we swooshed past all the people waiting, wound our way through the dining room, and took-up residence at the bar. We ordered cocktails to start: I, my signature martini, Lacy, a Mumbai Mule, and Angeline, a gin-based concoction with tropical fruit juices, cilantro and mint. Sips were shared and jealousies were expressed.



The Tandoors at Kiran's, photo credit Ace. M.

We were keen to nosh on a naanizza (naan pizza, get it?) so we ordered The Smokin' Duck: duck confit, duck bacon, wild mushrooms, buffalo mozzarella, truffle oil, candied orange peel, baby arugula, and parmesan. My companions ogled other appetizers while I perused the impressive wine list. As the ladies narrowed-down their app choices, I settled on red burgundy and ordered a bottle of Domaine Duroche Gevrey-Chambertin 'Champ'. The wine delivered a perfectly musty, subtle complexity while the light body, hazy fruit, and almost non-existent tannins didn't get in the way of the food. The Lobster Shorba had the poached crustacean swimming in truffle-sherry beurre blanc. The Lamb Belly came braised with jalapeño jelly and mint on rustic hummus. The last small plate to arrive featured Foie Gras with port reduction and chutney on brioche. It was all scrumptious, and you'd think it would be enough food... but you'd be wrong.

It was hard to choose entrees. In the end, we decided to share two between the three of us. I was in sensory overload by this point so it was a good thing that my misguided suggestion of another bottle of wine was shot down. The Fish Curry was everything you'd want it to be and our spicy vegetarian curry, Aloo Gobi Matar was on point. We were beyond satiated and ready to be at the hotel.

If you think Houston is an endless concrete metropolis of roadways and road-rage, you're right. But I think of it as a reasonable drive for an international travel experience. And I might just be righter.

Senior Moments Special to the Island Moon

1951 Operation Buster-Jangle



By Dotson Lewis

Dotson's Note: Operation Buster-Jangle was a series of seven (six atmospheric, one cratering) nuclear weapons tests conducted by the United States in late 1951 at the Nevada Test Site. Buster-Jangle was the first joint test program between the DOD (Operation Buster) and Los Alamos National Laboratories (Operation Jangle). As part of Operation Buster 6,500 troops were involved in the Operation Desert Rock I, II, and III exercises in conjunction with the tests. The last two tests, Operation Jangle, evaluated the cratering effects of low-yield nuclear devices. This series preceded Operation Tumbler-Snapper and followed Operation Greenhouse. Thanks to friends of mine who were in the 11 Air Born and Weaker for the facts and photos contained in this report.



Exercise Desert Rock I During The Buster Dog Test

US Ground Forces Involvement

Four U.S. Army units took part in the Operation Buster-Jangle «Dog» test for combat maneuvers after the detonation of a nuclear weapon took place. These units consisted of:

- 1st Battalion 188th Infantry Regiment 11th Airborne Division
- 3rd Medical Platoon 188th Airborne Medical Company
- Platoon Company A 127th Engineer Battalion
- Battery C 546th Field Artillery Battalion

Personnel were instructed to create foxholes and construct gun emplacements and bunkers in a defensive position 11 km south of the detonation area. After the nuclear bomb was detonated, the troops were ordered to move forward towards the affected area. While traveling closer to ground zero, troops witnessed the nuclear weapon's effects on the fortifications that were placed in the location in preparation for the tests.

The ground troops got as close as 900 meters from ground zero before they were instructed to move out of the area. The Human Resources Research Office was tasked with gathering data on the psychological experiences of the troops after witnessing such a detonation and moving closer towards the affected area.

Radiation protection standards

For the Operation Buster-Jangle series of tests, the Atomic Energy Commission created a set of criteria that must be followed if exposing armed forces, or civilians to the harmful effects of ionizing radiation.

- Orientation and proper radiological training
- Dispersion of dosimeters amongst personnel
- Utilization of radiological protective equipment and clothing
- Active monitoring of radiological levels
- Briefing of personnel taking part in the exercise
- Decontamination of radioactive debris

A majority of the personnel that took part in the exercise received around 3 R, with pilots receiving an average of 3.9 R. These estimates vary given the differing data pro-

vided by the Department of Defense over the years.

In order to interpret the data tables, a person must know the following:

1. The U.S., France and Great Britain have code-named their test events, while the USSR and China did not, and therefore have only test numbers (with some exceptions – Soviet peaceful explosions were named). Word translations into English in parentheses unless the name is a proper noun. A dash followed by a number indicates a member of a salvo event. The US also sometimes named the individual explosions in such a salvo test, which results in "name1 – 1 (with name2)". If test is canceled or aborted, then the row data like date and location discloses the intended plans, where known.

2. To convert the UT time into standard local, add the number of hours in parentheses to the UT time; for local daylight-saving time, add one additional hour. If the result is earlier than 00:00, add 24 hours and subtract 1 from the day; if it is 24:00 or later, subtract 24 hours and add 1 to the day. Historical time zone data obtained from the IANA time zone database.

3. Rough place name and a latitude/longitude reference; for rocket-carried tests, the launch location is specified before the detonation location, if known. Some locations are extremely accurate; others (like airdrops and space blasts) may be quite inaccurate. "—" indicates a likely pro-forma rough location, shared with other tests in that same area.

4. Elevation is the ground level at the point directly below the explosion relative to sea level; height is the additional distance added or subtracted by tower, balloon, shaft, tunnel, air drop or other contrivance. For rocket bursts the ground level is "N/A". In some cases it is not clear if the height is absolute or relative to ground, for example, Plumbbob/John. No number or units indicates the value is unknown, while "0" means zero. Sorting on this column is by elevation and height added together.

5. Atmospheric, airdrop, balloon, gun, cruise missile, rocket, surface, tower, and barge are all disallowed by the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Sealed shaft and tunnel are underground, and remained useful under the PTBT. Intentional cratering tests are borderline; they occurred under the treaty, were sometimes protested, and generally overlooked if the test was declared to be a peaceful use.

6. Include weapons development, weapon effects, safety test, transport safety test, war, science, joint verification and industrial/peaceful, which may be further broken down.

7. Designations for test items where known, «?» indicates some uncertainty about the preceding value, nicknames for particular devices in quotes. This category of information is often not officially disclosed.

8. Estimated energy yield in tons, kilotons, and megatons. A ton of TNT equivalent is defined as 4.184 gigajoules (1 gigacalorie).

9. Radioactive emission to the atmosphere aside from prompt neutrons, where known. The measured species is only iodine-131 if mentioned, otherwise it is all species. No entry means unknown, probably none if underground and "all" if not; otherwise notation for whether measured on the site only or off the site, where known, and the measured amount of radioactivity released.

Dotson's Other Note: Don't forget to visit the Veterans Round Table on Thursdays mornings 9 to 11 AM at DMC CED 3209 South Staples. Also the Radio Show, Saturdays, 8-10 AM on 1440 KEYS AM.

Thanks For Reading

Gene's Corner

A Good Writers Daily Routine

By Gene Saegert

Interestingly enough, someone asked me, "What is a good writer's daily routine?" I replied, well I don't know you will just have to find a good writer and ask them. Ok here goes, if you don't mind being bored then keep reading, otherwise you probably should stop reading here.

My daily routine is chock full of "important" decisions. Here goes. Wake up, blink a few times to clear my eyes, when that doesn't work, then I remember I don't have my glasses on. I put on my glasses, ahh now I can read the numbers on the clock. 6:00 says the clock. Now I try to remember about what time I went to sleep and calculate (if my brain co-operates) at what time did I go to sleep, and did I sleep long enough. I remember waking up at 2:00 AM and trying to figure out how much longer I have to sleep to get "enough sleep" can't remember the sleep requirement amounts and too sleepy to figure it out anyway. Brain cuts in and says remember when you made that mistake on the....Shut up brain, I don't care; I am going back to sleep, brain not giving up, says "did you remember to lock the shop door?" Finally get the brain to shut up and I go back to sleep. Yet I digress. Back to now. I just don't know if I should get up yet so I reach for the snooze button, brain says no, time to work the Wordle and get a handle on the day. Ok did the Wordle, got it on the last line, just barely.

Now the real decisions start. First make the bed. Start with top sheet, blanket, and bedspread. That part is easy, but I have 4 pillows. Should I put the solid color pillows

on the top or the ones with the floral print. How many days did the solid colors get to be on top? Can't remember, guess I will have to start writing it down. Solid wins.

Shower, brush teeth, then notice that the bathroom trash can is full. Now I will have to decide if I should use the Walmart plastic bag or the HEB plastic bag for the trash liner. Is today garbage day? I guess I can look out the window and see if the neighbor's trash can is out. Ok, time to get dressed. Should I wear jeans or shorts today? Decisions, decisions. Guess I can look at the weather on the phone, although don't always trust that, I will just put on some "temporary" pants and go outside to check, it's a neighbor courtesy thing developing from an incident earlier in the year, don't want to start the new year, with that being brought back up again. Ok, time to take the morning pills and vitamins and refill the weekly pill container. I pour some pills into my hand and fill the vacant spaces and eureka! It is the exact right number! I love it when that happens it gives me such a feeling of accomplishment. Maybe it's just a kind of guy thing that it is amusing, like when your car odometer rolls over to one number and a bunch of zeros. I don't think gals ever get much excited about that. Well I have bored you long enough, it will just have to be continued next week unless the editor says "Please don't continue this line of thought, there are other writers you know."

Thought for the day: Is the s or the c silent in scent?

County considers selling Island land

A cash strapped Nueces County took steps in 2025 to sell some of the 249 acres valued at \$86 million on The Island but by years' end the only major parcel still under

consideration for sale is the 210-acre tract at Newport Pass on Padre Island valued at \$22 million by the Nueces County Appraisal District. No final sale has been announced as 2025 ends.



Newport pass looking south to Packery channel



The Island got a dusting of frost in mid-January. Evelyn Pless-Schuberth

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Thoughts from Reverend Ken

By Rev. Dr. Ken

What lies ahead in the new year? This is a weekend when so many will be looking back and looking forward. A few of us will be wondering how another year went by so quickly.

January gets its name from the Roman god Janus. Janus presided over beginnings, endings, doorways, transitions, and time. Janus is usually depicted as having two faces looking in opposite directions. One faced looked to the past. The other face looked to the future.

The Bible teaches us to look back at the deeds of God as a source of faith in the present and for the future. Many of the psalms in the Bible give voice to this gratitude. Last week we looked back at the birth of Jesus. In a few months we will look back at the death and resurrection of Jesus. Neither one do we want to pack away in our tubs of storage.

Yet, looking back can also be dangerous and even destructive. Lot's wife famously looked back and became a pillar of salt. Jesus made the enigmatic statement, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Brooding about failures and mistakes, missed opportunities and regrets is not healthy for our lives, our relationships, or our communities. This is how bitterness takes root. Likewise, dwelling with fixation on what once was does not help us get to what might be.

The turning of a calendar page does nothing to remove the pain of the past. Letting go helps to move beyond the pain. The arrival of January is a reminder of the promise of what can lie ahead. Letting go is also a part of looking to the future.

Cultural theorist Lauren Berlant talks about the notion of "cruel optimism." She understands this to be a situation in which something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. For Berlant, the prime example is the American dream. The American dream story is an optimistic narrative that suggests that anyone, with sufficient effort, can go from rags to riches. It implies success can happen for anyone because we falsely assume we are all the same and have the same opportunities.

However the dream can be cruel, because it can set us up to fail. If we don't succeed, then it must be our fault. The attraction of the story is that if we work hard enough, we will have a better life. Yet, that very attraction can become an obstacle to human flourishing when individual realities don't align with the promise.

Christianity can fall prey to its own version of this story. Faith becomes transactional. If I offer my life to God, my soul, my tithe, my presence at worship, then I will be blessed with long life, prosperity, and happiness. This is chasing an idealized version of faith that isn't real. Maybe we can call this cruel spirituality.

Christian faith is based in hope, not optimism. Hope is the work of letting go in vulnerability. We trust in the story that God is unfolding and has chosen to draw us into. It is to enter that story of a humble baby born to peasants in an irrelevant part of what was then the world's greatest empire.

Trusting in this gift of hope can help us let go of the illusions of success, achievement, power, control, domination. This hope is not sentimental. Yet, it is the way of life for those who must traverse through the valley of the shadow of death. Joy is found not in having to achieve something or being anything more than the less than perfect person one actually is. It is found in living deeply in God's love.

The promise of hope is not a promise of pleasure or the good life. It is the progressive exposure to the reality of God's love and deliverance, in God's choice to be in solidarity with us. As we look forward then to the coming year, we can let go of those perfect notions of life that are actually forms of cruel optimism. We can live deeply in the love of God.

Each Sunday a bunch of humans gather to worship God in community at Island Presbyterian Church, giving thanks for grace, love, healing, and hope, working for peace, justice, and reconciliation. There is always room at the table for you! Join us on Sundays at 10 a.m., 14030 Fortuna Bay Drive, or on our Facebook page.

Choose kindness, compassion, and love; do justice and make peace; welcome the stranger.

pastor@islandpresby.com

Weekly direct flights from Corpus Christi to Denver

Frontier Airlines began two weekly direct flights from Corpus Christi to Denver after a \$1.2 million incentives package to guarantee revenue was approved by the Corpus Christi City Council in 2025.

In return for the guarantee Frontier Airlines agreed to schedule two weekly round trip flights from Corpus Christi to Denver on Thursday and Sundays arriving from Denver at 6:30 p.m. each of those days, leaving Corpus for Denver at 7:30 p.m.

Officials with Corpus Christi airport said tracking of cell phones indicates that 87 people per day fly from Corpus Christi to Denver but only 27 fly from Corpus Christi International Airport with the remainder driving to other cities to catch flights. They said cell phone tracking shows that about 63,000 travelers move between Denver and Corpus Christi each year, including those who drive.

Billish Skatepark funding approved

The fourteen-member board of the Island Tax Incremental Reinvestment Zone #2 in 2025 approved up to \$850,000 to fund a skatepark for Billish Park.

The money comes from a redirection of funds for the building of Crowsnest Street, a paper street south of Whitecap Blvd. which has existed only on paper for three decades. The funding hurdle clears the way for the design phase of the skatepark to move forward. As the year ends the design is nearing completion. A couple of existing skateparks



West Guth skate park

Sports Talk Special to the Island Moon



Top quarterbacks of all time-

Part 7

By Dotson Lewis

Dotson's Note: Who is the greatest quarterback of all time? It's a question that has been posed countless times. You might have a good idea on who is No. 1. But what about Nos. 2-25? Now those are the spots in the football universe where the QB debate gets pretty interesting. Makes for good conversation, too. I thought it would be a good time to discuss the game's most exalted position, and to contrast the most celebrated players that played it. It's always best when composing a list like this to allow some time to have passed since the most recent triumphs and victories. Otherwise, those achievements may seem greater than they will be after the passage of time. Therefore, we are going to only going to look at the quarterbacks who were playing through 2019. We're not considering anything that has happened in the 2020s. Patrick Mahomes won his first Super Bowl in 2019 so he, and all the newest "crop" of quarterbacks, can't enter the conversation at this point. Thanks to the late Bill Morgan and to Elliot Harrison for many of the facts contained in this report and to the late Bill Morgan for the graphics and photos.



4) Johnny Unitas

Baltimore Colts, 1956-1972; San

Diego Chargers, 1973

The innovator of the group, Johnny Unitas altered the way the quarterback position was played in a similar manner to another Colt some four decades later. Much of what you see in the passing game today can be attributed to Unitas. He morphed the disorganized approach losing teams used to make a comeback late in a game into the routine two-minute drill we know today. Before this monumental shift in strategy, offenses ran their normal attacks, clocks be damned, and more often than not, ran out of time (only Bobby Layne achieved regular success with this inefficient approach). With Unitas' late-game heroics came clock management and precision passing. The timing he developed with fellow Hall of Famer Raymond Berry is represented in every prolific combo since, be it Joe Montana to Jerry Rice, Troy Aikman to Michael Irvin, or Matt Ryan to Julio Jones. He achieved this breakthrough early in his career. Not coincidentally, Unitas led the Baltimore Colts to back-to-back championships in his third and fourth seasons. He would later guide them to a championship game appearance in 1964 and a Super Bowl V title following the 1970 campaign.

Like Peyton Manning, Unitas won a ring on a team ('70) that didn't need to lean on him as in years past. But, also similar to Manning, his individual ascendancy as a player made him worthy of being leaned on, as supported by three league MVP awards. Manning, of course, won five, but believe it or not, the MVP was as likely to go to a running back as a quarterback in the late '50s and '60s. From 1956 to 1967 -- Unitas' rookie year to what was essentially the tail end of his prime -- he was the top quarterback in pro football. Unitas was named first-team All-Pro five times and made the Pro Bowl in 10 of those 12 seasons. He led the league in both passing yards and touchdown throws three different times during that span. He was never quite the same player after injuring his elbow in 1968, and it's worth recalling that surgical techniques 50 years ago didn't always get players back on the field in perfect operating condition as they do now. Even when his physical game deteriorated, Unitas' mind was still able to beat defenses. He called his

own plays even when other teams started to give the head coach that responsibility. It's a huge reason his career record (including the postseason) was a sterling 124-65-4. Maybe we can pretend that 1-3 season as a 40-year-old in San Diego never happened.

Stat you need to know: Unitas is the only player to lead the league in passing touchdowns four straight years, a feat he pulled off from 1957 to 1960. During that time, he also completed a streak of 47 straight games with at least one touchdown pass. Drew Brees beat it in 2012, some 52 years later. However, when Unitas produced his record streak, he was throwing the ball fewer than 29 times per game. Brees? Nearly 40. Huge difference. Moreover, while Brees tossed a touchdown on 6.2 percent of his passes during his span, an excellent number, Unitas did the same on 7.6 percent of his attempts. That Unitas streak from the late '50s is every bit as golden as Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak.

3) Peyton Manning

Indianapolis Colts, 1998-2011; Denver Broncos, 2012-15

What can you say about Peyton Manning that hasn't already been said? Not much. The key with Manning is pointing out how he changed the way the position was played. Lost in all of the passing yards and passing touchdowns (he ranks third in both, behind Brady and Brees), and those five MVP trophies lies the undercurrent of innovation. By the time he was drafted in 1998, quarterbacks had long ceased calling their own plays. The Raiders were the last holdout. They quit the practice in the mid-1980s. Sure, Dan Marino called many of his own via audible as he got more experienced. Jim Kelly called them on the reg out of the K-Gun, the Bills' rip-off of the Bengals' no-huddle offense that befuddled the AFC in 1988 (so Boomer Esiason should be mentioned here, too.) Manning began calling plays at the line constantly in the mid-to-late 2000s, but his approach was different. He would identify defensive formations at the line, choose the best play to counter what he saw and routinely yell out dummy calls more than anyone else. Opponents would do their best to match wits and identify keys, only to have Manning switch the play up, or shift it to the opposite side, seconds before snapping the ball. Only veteran middle linebackers or defensive play-callers, such as a Ray Lewis or the too-often forgotten Zach Thomas, could even attempt to keep pace with Indy's Hall of Fame quarterback.

Manning's wobbly throws often resembled some Dan Fouts specials, but like the phenomenal Chargers quarterback, the ball always got there. At times Manning was more like a veteran pitcher than quarterback (think Jack Morris in Game 7 of the 1991 World Series), mixing it up and confusing hitters even when his fastball was 10 years in arrears. Back to those MVPs for a moment. To be considered the most important player at the highest level of pro football is special. But five times! Good grief. Someone on here will be a snob about Manning not winning more "big games." First, someone please define big games, because based on the media blanket which exists today, they all seem rather big. Second, look at some of the ways his teams lost. Was he perfect? No. But if Mike Vanderjagt doesn't slice that field goal in the 2005 Divisional Round, Indy would have gone on to win that Super Bowl. They were the best team in the league. Either way, two rings ain't bad, right? Don't forget a few of the clutch throws he made in Super Bowl 50 either, even if he was clearly past his prime at that point.

To be continued

By the Numbers

\$193,508,510 in Flour Bluff School Bonds approved

Voters went to the polls in 2026 and approved \$193 in bonds.

Proposition A

\$110,853,550 total

\$52.6 million Campus and District Infrastructure

Roofing & HVAC updates

- Interior Modernization

- Comprehensive plumbing, electrical, & lighting upgrades

- Resurfacing Parking Lots

- Varsity Gym

- High School, Central Kitchen & Central

- Elementary Campus Renovations

- Junior High Locker Room Renovations

- SPED Office Renovations

- \$13.2 million Districtwide Utility Plant (HVAC)

- New District Wide Utility Plant (HVAC)

- North of existing location

- New Equipment:

- Chillers, pumps, & associated mechanical room piping

- Connect new equipment to existing plant piping network

- Removal of existing plant

- \$19 million Campus Additions and Renovations

- Early Childhood Center – PreK, K, & 1st Grade

- Additional Classrooms

- Expand Library

- Expand Cafeteria

\$4.6 million Safety and Security

- Intercom systems – High School & Intermediate

- Access controls at all campuses

- District-Wide: Exterior lighting

- District-Wide: Replace doors

- ECC - Extend vestibule

\$2.5 million Technology Infrastructure

- District-Wide Upgrade: Wireless & Wired Infrastructure

- District-Wide: New Phone System & Intercom Infrastructure

- Battery Backups for Networks and Intercoms

- Pk-6th: Interactive Instructional Displays

\$2.5 million Replace buses

New Buses at \$150,000 each

- Purchase 7 buses immediately

- Purchase in phases

\$1 million increase High School cafeteria capacity

Additional covered outdoor seating

- Enclosed outside courtyard

- Multipurpose Use

\$7.4 million Physical Education and playground upgrades

Upgrade and enhance playgrounds and outdoor areas across campuses, incorporating bike paths and softer, more durable surfaces for improved safety and usability.

- PK-6 grade PE Facilities.

- Construct covered walkways leading to play areas.

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Sudoku

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Going Easy On You...

5				1	6
1	6		5		3
9	3	2		7	
	5	1		3	7
6	7	3	2	9	1
3	1		6	4	
	8	5		6	9
7		8		5	2
5	2				1

Knuckle-Cracker

		1	3
	5	9	4
5	3		2
7	9	6	5
		4	
4	3	9	
6	8		9
	9	4	7
1		9	

Mind-Numbing Frustration

9		8	4		2
3				1	
1	2	6			
		7	9	4	3
6					9
5	9	3	6		
			3	8	9
	1				7
4		5	8		6

Brain-Buster

6	8	5	1	4	7
7		6	4		
2	1			8	7
7	9			1	2
	7	2			3
4	9	3	8	7	6



New bridges at Whitecap NPI. By Debbie Noble.



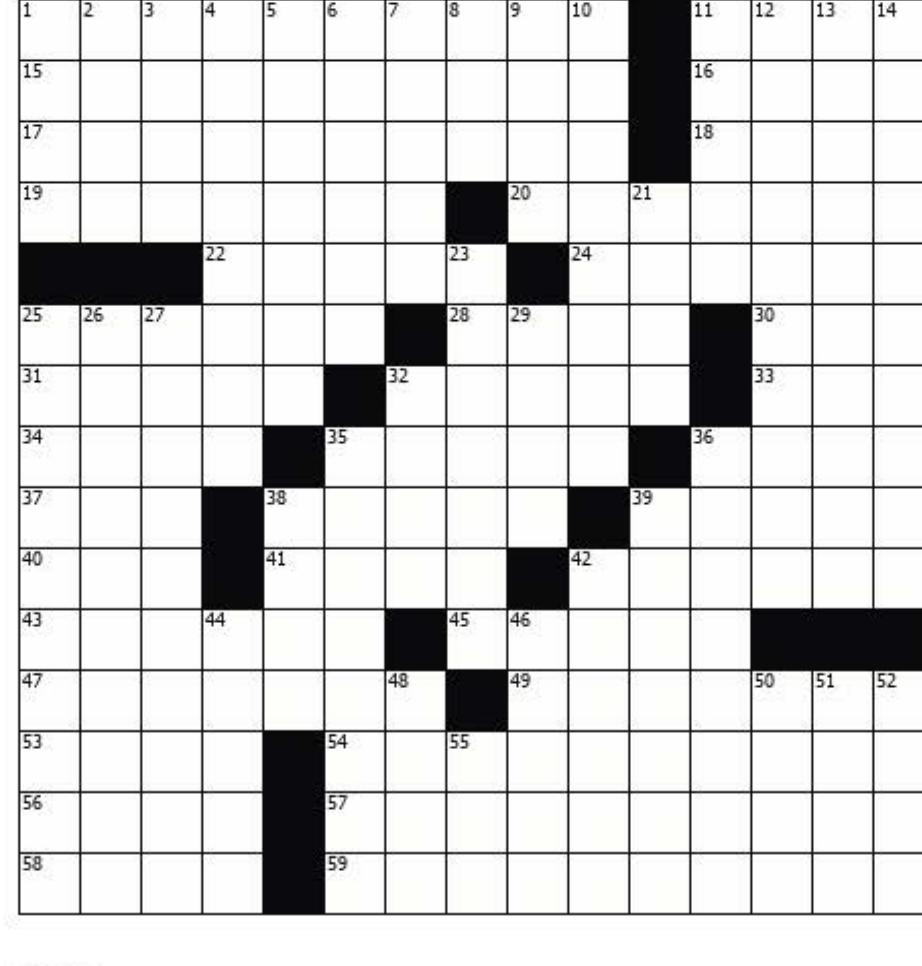
New walking trails were built at Whitecap NPI in 2025. By Debbie Noble.

Island Crossword

Crossword Solution on classifieds page

Across

- Move
11. Splatter protectors
15. Royal, e.g.
16. Novel subtitled "A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas"
17. More than is wise
18. Foreign dignitary
19. Public face
20. Football helmet feature
22. Chronic butterflies
24. Former Couric partner
25. Hearths
28. Garden party
30. Line before a reception
31. Talked romantically
32. Fragrant root
33. West side of L.A.?
34. Conduit fittings
35. Star in astronomy
36. Collapse
37. Pea holder
38. Jeff of "The Lawnmower Man"
39. One having good looks
40. "___ fallen..."
41. Neighbor
42. Rising stars
43. Switch handles
45. Ticket
47. Former Barbary State
49. "Say something funny!"
53. Hopper
54. Skipper
56. It is in Mexico
57. Certified
58. Uzi predecessor
59. Pryor Mountain Preserve wanderers

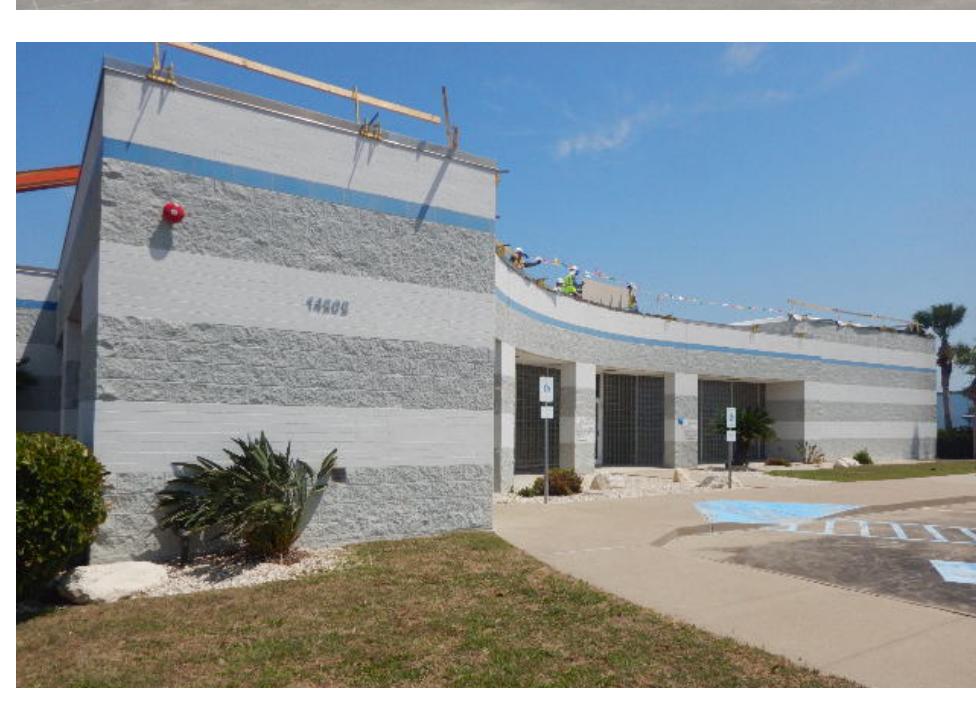


Down

1. 1978 Mustang II option	12. Hold still	36. High roller
2. Former Cub Sandberg	13. Blew one's top	38. A place in the sun
3. Imitator	14. Spoilsports	39. Reached
4. Income component	21. Island spirits	42. Lily plant with
5. Went limp	23. Things to shoot for	edible bulbs
6. Fine points	25. 1984 Robert Urich	44. Quinn of "Benny
7. Succotash staples	sci-fi spoof, with "The"	& Joon"
8. ___ venture: by chance	26. Ill feelings	46. Tied up
9. 32-Down sight	27. Art Deco-esque	48. "The X-Files" org.
10. Persist	span	50. St. Louis bridge
11. German flute innovator Theobald	29. Load hauler	architect
	32. NFL Pro Bowl	51. Tiny bit
	setting	52. Mercury-Atlas 5
	35. Portable cutter	chimp
		55. '95 World Series
		champs: Abbr.

Spohn returns

Spohn opened a new clinic on Padre Island in 2025 in a renovated building which had formerly been a clinic but had been vacant for more than a decade.



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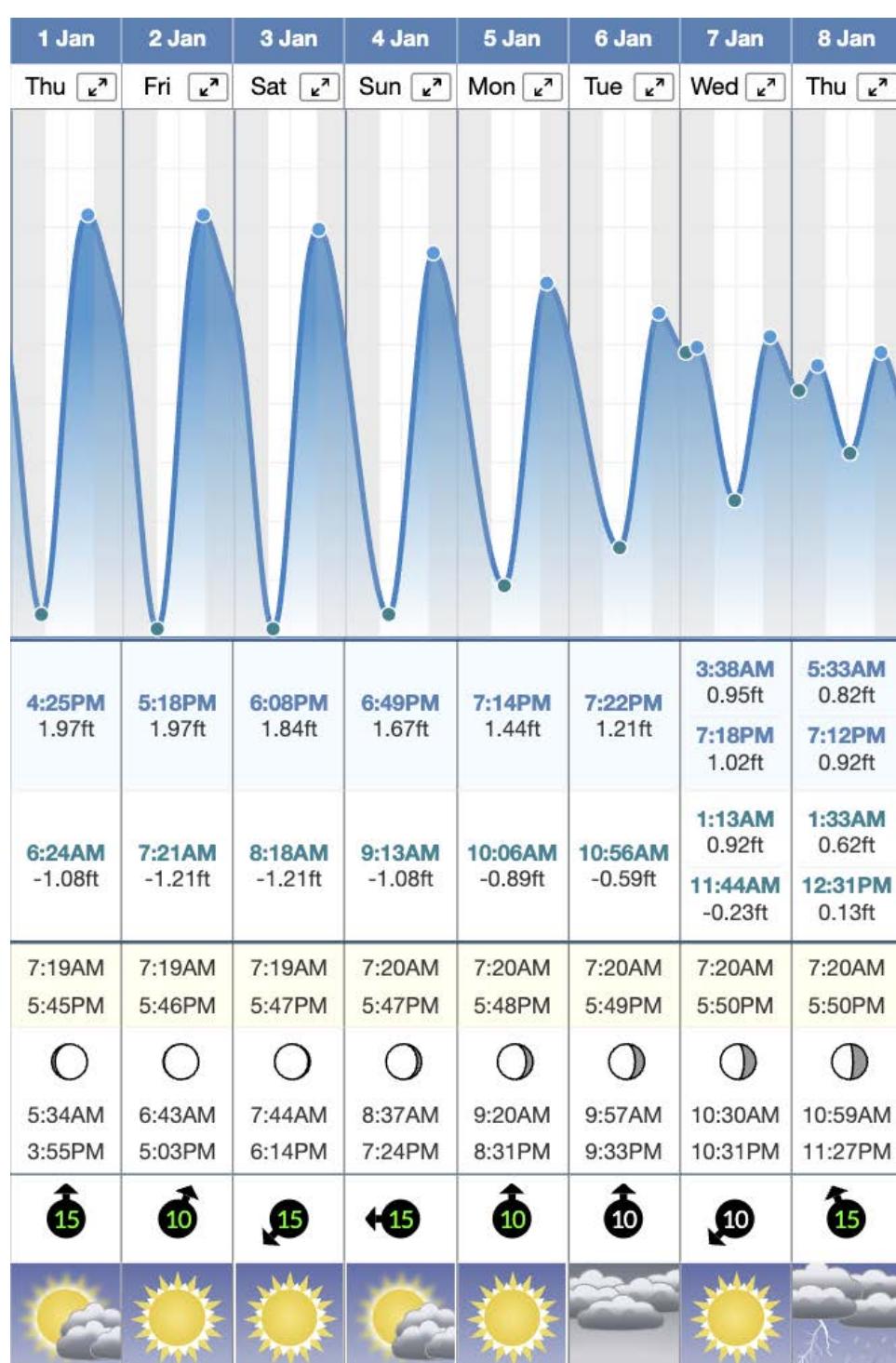
available



Double hookup! With dropping temperatures gamefish will all fall together in areas with a soft bottom. Come back to family traditions with friends and family to start your New Year. Photo by Farah



Tides of the Week



Island legend gets his own movie!

“Ullberg: Wind in the Sails”

Longtime Islander and world-renowned sculptor Kent Ullberg had a documentary made about his life and career. Called Ullberg: Wind in the Sails the film made its debut in 2024 and had its first public showing at the Art Museum of South Texas in January 2025. They had a special showing at the Performing Arts Center at Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi in September. Photos by Debbie Noble.



Kent with the filmmakers Matthew and Denise Thornton



Guy Harvey joined Kent on the question and answer panel



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T E X A S



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2025 was the year of Stage III water restriction leading many Islanders to tap into the ready supply of brackish water just below the surface. All over The Island gardeners drilled shallow wells to keep their yards green. The city's water future is still uncertain at 2026 begins.



Water woes

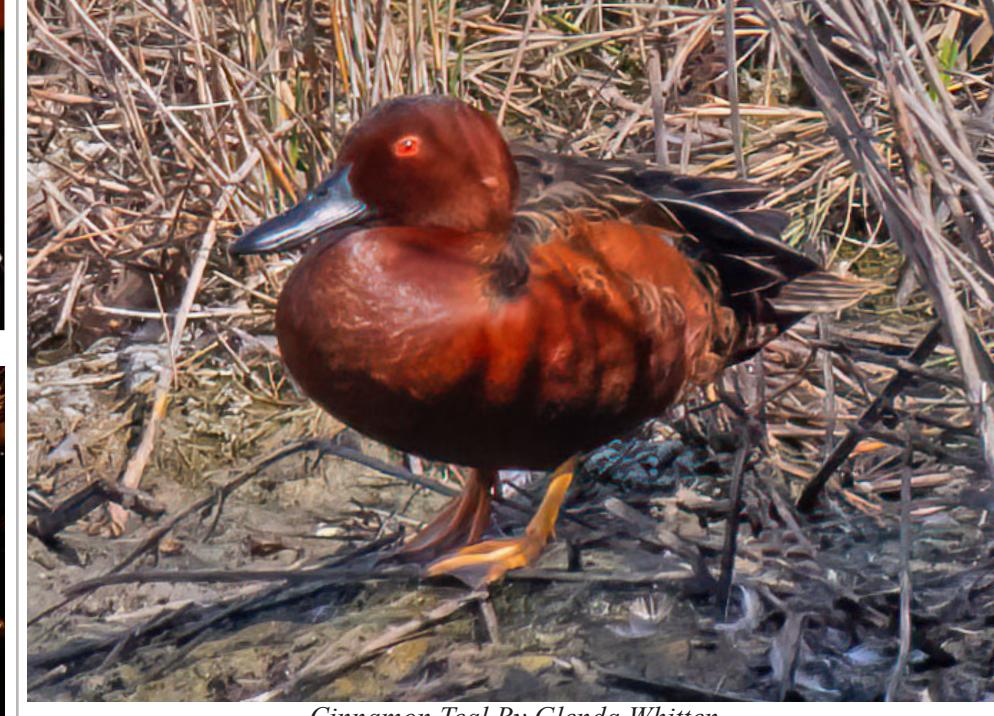
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Voters approve \$193 million in Flour Bluff ISD bonds

Voters in the Flour Bluff ISD went to the polls in 2025 and approved \$193 million in bonds. The majority of the funds were in Proposition A of the bonds at \$111 million for infrastructure around the district.

Proposition B a \$67 million included new band space, and improvements to the Theatre Arts Classroom. Other items included upgrades to the Career & Technical Education facilities.

Proposition C included \$15.4 million for improvements to the football stadium.



Cinnamon Teal By Glenda Whitten

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By Ronnie Narmour
ronnienarmour@gmail.com

Note from RN: This is the first "Three Chords and the Truth" column I wrote for the Island Moon Newspaper in 2009 when I felt like I needed to introduce myself and suggest what might qualify me to write a music column. Happy New Year's y'all!

Long ago and far away...



Muddy and Clifford

In case you've ever wondered what makes me think I'm qualified to write about Texas music, here's a quick rundown of what I've been doing for the past 50 years or so when I was growing up in the bars of Austin and found myself in the middle of a musical tsunami. When I was a young college student at U.T. in the early 70's I learned to bartend at *Montana Mining Company*, a steak and lobster joint where future poet laureate **Steven Fromholtz** played every weekend. That's where I caught the music bug. Having earned the title as a real live booze slinging bartender, the next job I got was at the *Texas Chili Parlor* in 1976. This was in the heyday of the *Cosmic Cowboy* invasion of Austin. **Kandy Kicker**, the storied KOKE-FM DJ was a good friend of mine, as was her husband, the renowned outlaw journalist, **Nelson Allen**. I did some serious growing up at the *Chili Parlor* making "mad dog margaritas" for likes of **Guy Clark** and **Hunter Thompson**. **Hondo Crouch** of Luckenbach fame and **Rod Kennedy**, founder of the *Kerrville Folk Festival*... all regular patrons. It wasn't uncommon to have a bar full of musicians, writers and artists either gathering material or polishing up their acts. Next door was the gold standard for great folk rooms, *Castle Creek*. It was right about then I learned of a new blues bar opening downtown and they were looking for bartenders. That's when I went to work for the late **Clifford Antone**.

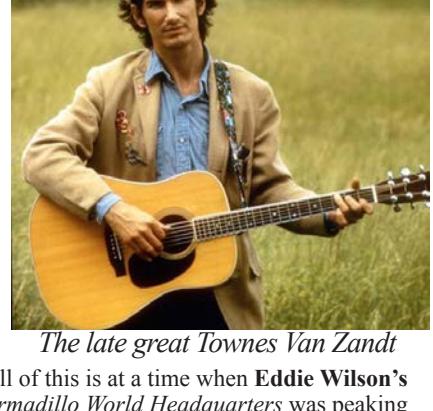
Early days of 6th Street...



RN with Lazy Lester an early pioneer of Louisiana swamp pop

Back then *Antone's* was one of only a handful of bars on Sixth Street. I ended up spending over a decade on that street, before it morphed into another *French Quarter*. Clifford would have big blues shows on the weekends with the likes of **Muddy Waters**, **Buddy Guy**, **Bobby Bland**, **Clifton Chenier**, **B.B. King**, **Jimmy Reed** and play the **Fabulous T Birds** with **Jimmy Vaughn** and **The Cobras** (with Jimmy's little brother **Stevie Ray Vaughan**) every Sunday and Monday. Stevie was the pain-in-the-rear new kid that lived across the street from me on *Jewell* and always needed a ride to go get his amp. He was a super sweet guy and we all loved him like a brother. He did pretty well for himself.

Bruce, Willie, Townes & Lightning...



The late great Townes Van Zandt

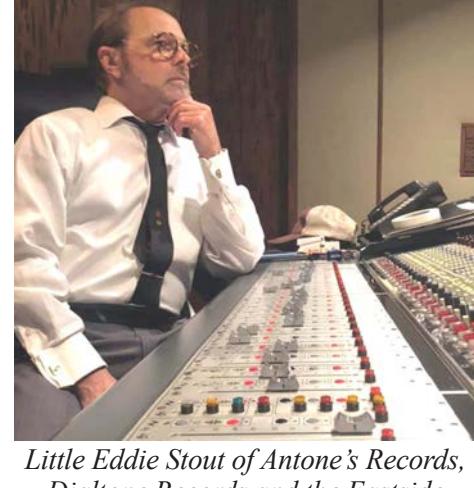
All of this is at a time when **Eddie Wilson's Armadillo World Headquarters** was peaking and doing shows like **Ray Charles**, **Bruce**

Springsteen and **Frank Zappa**, etc. They literally had everyone from **Count Basie** to **Willie Nelson**. Elsewhere, **George Majewski** over at *Soap Creek Saloon* was doing stuff like **The Meters**, **Delbert McClinton**, **Doug Sahm** and **Joe Ely** and *Castle Creek Saloon* would have the likes of **Townes Van Zandt**, **Lightning Hopkins** or **Ramblin' Jack Elliot**. Plus *Club Foot*, the *Continental Club*, *Soap Creek Saloon*, the *One Knight*, *Steamboat Springs* and *Liberty Lunch* were all making their mark. I learned from the best.

He called me Kid...

Music was a bound and I was right smack in the middle of it. I took for granted that I was living with in an entire population of musicians and artists. I guess I figured anyone could play ping pong backstage with **Boz Scaggs** at the *'Dillo* or end up in a poker game with **Albert King** until dawn at the *Driskill Hotel*. **Townes Van Zandt** taught me to play street craps at his apartment in *Clarksville* after he played a show next door at *Castle Creek* and I had a good night at the *Chili Parlor*. I can hear Townes now, "Hey Kid, you got any money?" He called me Kid. **Joe Ely** was crashing on my floor in South Austin, trying to get gigs and escape Lubbock. I got stories.

Pay attention son...



Little Eddie Stout of *Antone's Records*, *Dialtone Records* and the *Eastside Kings Festival* helped me travel the world.

I'll never forget the night at *Antones* when I was setting up the bar for a big show with **Bobby Bland** and **BB King**. The bartenders were horsing around behind the bar when **Clifford** approached us. He had a serious tone about him, "You boys need to pay attention. You think these shows happen everywhere all the time? Some day there won't be anymore **Muddy Waters** or **Jimmy Reed** shows. I just hope one of you is paying attention." Something right then and there moved me and changed me forever. So I did...pay attention. I stayed with Clifford for many years and learned much of what I know in this business from him. I consider Clifford my mentor.

Selling the blues...

As years progressed, I continued to work music venues and moved around a lot between Austin and San Antonio. I always gravitated to live music venues and eventually moved into management positions where I served as the talent buyer. In 1994 I opened a talent agency, *RNA Booking*, representing an ever changing roster of national touring acts such as **Doug Sahm**, **Tracy Nelson**, **Lazy Lester**, **Lavelle White** and **Sue Foley**, etc, etc on independent labels such as *Antone's*, *Rounder* and *High Tone*. I traveled extensively in the six years that I had my agency, promoting shows and festivals though out the US, Europe and South America. Truth be told, I owe much to the amazing **Eddie Stout**, the international rep at *Antone's Records* and founder of *Dialtone Records* who I was close to since the beginning. Because of Eddie's guidance I was able to travel the world.

This life chose me...

I've lived in Port Aransas for seventeen years now and have written 786 columns *Three Chords* columns. Hey, I never claimed I was a writer but I can type pretty good. And, if you can hear me up there, Clifford...I'm still paying attention.

♪♪♪ And, that's the truth ♪♪♪



RN & Miss Lavelle & Sugar Bear in Paris

Full of this is at a time when **Eddie Wilson's Armadillo World Headquarters** was peaking and doing shows like **Ray Charles**, **Bruce**

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