WHEN DINOSAURS (AND MAMMOTHS) ROAMED

TEXT BY **KATHRYN JONES**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WILL VAN OVERBEEK**

JOURNEY 100 MILLION YEARS THROUGH TEXAS' PAST FROM WACO TO GLEN ROSE

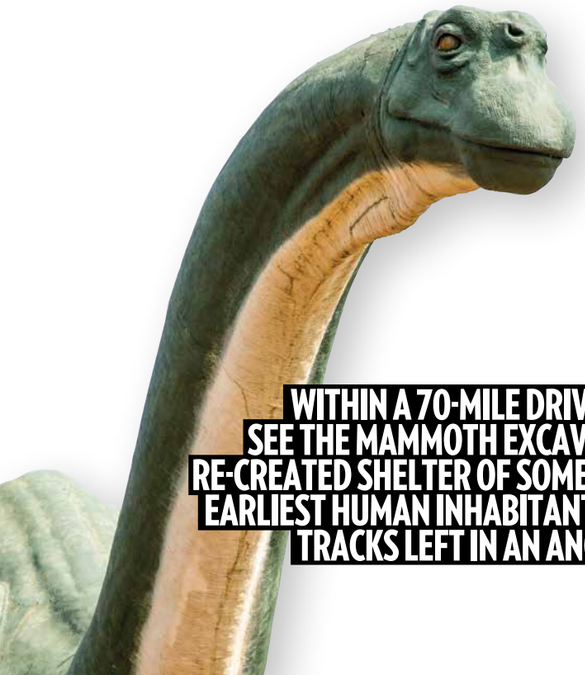
DINOSAUR VALLEY STATE PARK, GLEN ROSE

CURVED TUSKS

jut out of red sandy soil. Massive bones scatter around them in the prehistoric burial ground. These are the remains of Columbian mammoths, a rare "nursery herd" of mother mammoths and their offspring that lived about 65,000 years ago near what is now Waco.

Inside the Dig Shelter at the Waco Mammoth Site, my husband, Dan, and I stand on a viewing platform overlooking the excavation site. Natural light streams in from the windows, illuminating where the mammoth bones lie *in situ*—in position in the original place where they were found. A mural overlooking the dig site depicts how the mammoth herd may have looked in the Ice Age—the mothers touching their young with their trunks against the backdrop of an ancient river with groves of trees.

WACO MAMMOTH SITE, WACO



WITHIN A 70-MILE DRIVE, VISITORS CAN SEE THE MAMMOTH EXCAVATION SITE, A RE-CREATED SHELTER OF SOME OF THE AREA'S EARLIEST HUMAN INHABITANTS, AND DINOSAUR TRACKS LEFT IN AN ANCIENT SEABED.

"They're so well preserved," Dan says, and I nod. I've only seen part of a mammoth tusk before, embedded in a creek near Glen Rose. That one appeared rough, ragged, and woody, like a giant root. These tusks looked like elegant spears of ivory.

Before this experience, I had viewed the remains of such prehistoric creatures in museum display cases. Peering through glass at the skeletons of ancient animals and then reading an exhibit description can be interesting, but also impersonal and passive. But standing so close to where the mammoths died, and seeing their bones just a few feet below, in the exact place they were discovered, is a different experience altogether. It feels vivid, even emotional—surreal in one sense and quite visceral in another.

That could describe the rest of the "prehistoric trail" between Waco and Glen Rose, as well. Within a 70-mile drive, visitors can see the mammoth excavation site, a re-created shelter of some of the area's earliest human inhabitants, and dinosaur tracks left in an ancient seabed.

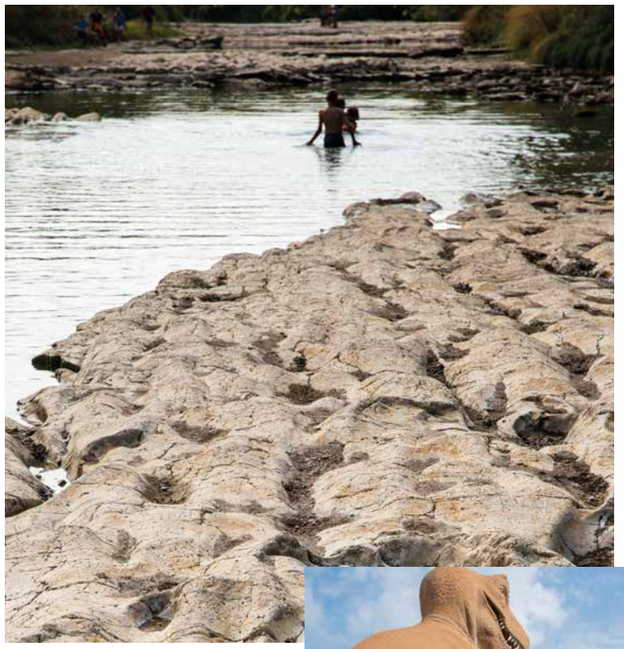
In Waco, the mammoths might have

RARE FINDS

Clockwise from left: At the Bosque Museum in Clifton, a depiction of the Horn Shelter Man, a case containing bones and other burial goods, and a re-creation of the burial site found in 1970.

LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS

Clockwise from below: The Paluxy River in Glen Rose, dinosaur tracks in the riverbed, and whimsical dinosaur models at Dinosaur Valley State Park.



ADULTS AND CHILDREN ALIKE CLIMB OVER THE ROCKS, LOOKING FOR TRACKS AND EXCLAIMING WHEN THEY FIND THEM.

stayed buried if Paul Barron and Eddie Bufkin, two local teens, hadn't been searching for arrowheads in a ravine near the Bosque River in 1978. Instead of arrowheads, they spied a leg bone sticking out of the ground.

The boys took the bone to Baylor University's Strecker Museum, where experts identified it as belonging to a Columbian mammoth (*Mammuthus columbi*), an herbivore similar to the modern African elephant that became extinct some 10,000 years ago.

Museum staff, students, and volunteers soon returned to the ravine with brushes and bamboo scrapers and began a slow, careful process of excavation, eventually uncovering the remains of 16 Columbian mammoths. Later they found six more mammoth skeletons, along with the remains of a prehistoric camel and the tooth of a young saber-tooth cat.

After analyzing the remains, researchers have pieced together a hypothesis about how the nursery herd perished, and it's tragic: As water from what is now the Bosque River flooded a steep-sided channel, a massive mudslide trapped them. Some experts think that the adult females formed a defensive circle around their young, became stuck in the deep, wet clay, and drowned standing up. (The other mammoth skeletons at the Waco Mammoth Site are believed to have died years later in another flood event.)

In 2006, interested citizens began discussing how to turn the site into a public park. The nonprofit Waco Mammoth Foundation took shape, and supporters raised some $4 million to build the viewing pavilion, accessible sidewalks, and a small welcome center and gift shop. The site opened to the public in late 2009, and today employees and docents lead guided tours of the site throughout the day.

Dan and I live in adjacent Bosque County on a ranch with several limestone overhangs. We've often wondered if ancient people ever used them as a shelter. Certainly some did elsewhere in the county, as proven by the 11,200-year-old Paleo-American archeological site known as the Horn Shelter.

To learn more, we drove 40 minutes northwest from the Waco Mammoth Site to Clifton, where the Bosque Museum showcases the Horn Shelter people and a re-creation of the famous Horn Shelter Man.

As archeologists Albert Redder and Frank Watt evacuated a shelter above the banks of the Bosque River in 1970, they discovered a burial site containing an adult male and a child. Douglas Owsley, an anthropologist from the Smithsonian Institution, examined the remains and concluded—based on the skulls and dental evidence—that the Horn Shelter people were likely not related to American Indian tribes.

The Horn Shelter turned out to be one of the rare Paleo-American sites to contain skeletal remains and burial goods—turtle shells, deer antler tools, bird and animal claws, coyote teeth, and bird eggshells. Not only does this indicate that the people had a concept of the afterlife, but the presence of so many items suggests a ritualistic burial, one that might have been afforded a shaman or other highly respected person.

At the museum, we peruse a replica of the burial site, which shows the man and a small girl draped in a deer skin, with a third person present in the background. Along with actual rocks and dirt from the site, reproductions of the burial goods also are on display, as is a bust of what the adult might have looked like, with sculpted high cheekbones being the prominent feature. The remains and original artifacts have been placed for safekeeping and research at the Smithsonian.

The representation of the Horn Shelter Man looks so real that it startles me. How did this ancient Bosque County resident get to this part of the world, I wonder? Anthropologists are still searching for the answer. Some scientists have hypothesized that since the man's skull resembles that of the Ainu people of northern Japan, perhaps he was part of a group that made their way here during the Ice Age, perhaps on a boat or via an ice float. The Smithsonian is currently working on a complete genome of the skull, which may provide answers in the future.

We drive deeper into Texas' prehistoric past as we leave Clifton, turn off Texas 6 at Meridian, and head north on Texas 144 toward Glen Rose.

Longtime friends Carl and Gayle from Dallas join us for an excursion at Dinosaur Valley State Park, a National Natural Landmark where, some 113 million years ago, plant-eating creatures called sauropods left their saucer-shaped footprints in the soft mud of what is now the Paluxy River bed. We grab a map from the visitor's center and head to the major track sites.

Gayle, Carl, and I climb down a flight of steep rock stairs to the riverbank, then hop across boulders to the other side of the Paluxy. The tracks make a trail between the boulders, in the shadow of the riverside cliffs.

"Look at that!" Carl exclaims, pointing to a three-toed track. "It's really clear."

Adults and children alike climb over the rocks, looking for tracks and exclaiming when they find them. A local boy, nine-year-old George Adams, is credited with finding the three-toed tracks in 1909. Around the same time, a moonshiner named Charlie Moss discovered more tracks while looking for his still. Then, in 1937, Ronald T. Bird, a paleontologist with the American Museum of Natural History in New York, visited Glen Rose and made his big discovery of a sauropod trackway.

Recent paleontological analysis has suggested that this sauropod was not—as previously thought—a member of the species *Paluxysaurus jonesi*, the state's official dinosaur, but rather a related species, *Sauroposeidon proteles*. An herbivore, the *Sauroposeidon* weighed 20 tons, stretched 60 to 70 feet, stood 12 feet tall, and used its 26-foot-long neck to help it reach food.

Travelers could expand on our prehistoric trail trek with visits to other nearby museums, including the Bell County Museum in Belton, which houses exhibits about the excavation of Clovis-culture people at the Gault Site; the Mayborn Museum Complex in Waco, which uses interactive exhibits to tell the history of the Tertiary Period; the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, which presents full dinosaur models, including a partial re-creation of *Paluxysaurus jonesi*; and the amazing displays at Dallas' Perot Museum of Nature and Science.

But we're content to explore the prehistoric world closer to home, where the rocks of ages have so many stories to tell. ★

Kathryn Jones likes to hunt for fossils on her family's ranch south of Glen Rose. TH staff photographer Will van Overbeek enjoys exploring Texas' paleontological history with his kids.

ESSENTIALS

MAMMOTHS AND MORE

The Waco Mammoth Site is at 6220 Steinbeck Bend Rd., Waco. Call 254/750-7946; www.wacomammoth.com.

The Bosque Museum is at 301 S. Ave. Q, Clifton. Call 254/675-3845; www.bosquemuseum.org.

Dinosaur Valley State Park is at 1629 Park Rd. 59, Glen Rose. Call 254/897-4588; www.tpwd.state.us.

BIG LUXURY IN THE BIG BEND

EXPERIENCE LUXURY AND HISTORY AT THESE BIG SKY STAYS

text by KATHRYN JONES
photographs by AL ARGUETA

When I first began traveling to Big Bend

in the late 1980s, my introduction to lodging—other than a tent in the Chihuahuan Desert—was a room at the Gage Hotel in Marathon. Quiet, rustic, and largely undiscovered back then, the yellow-brick hotel stood as an outpost of civilization on the edge of Big Bend National Park's vast wildness.

The vintage hotel offered a chance to sleep in a comfortable bed and take a hot shower before I headed to the national park for a week of backpacking with friends. I rocked in the chairs on the front porch, gazed at the blue mesas where the ribbon of highway disappeared, and felt like I had found nirvana. I vowed to return to the Gage and get to know Marathon better.

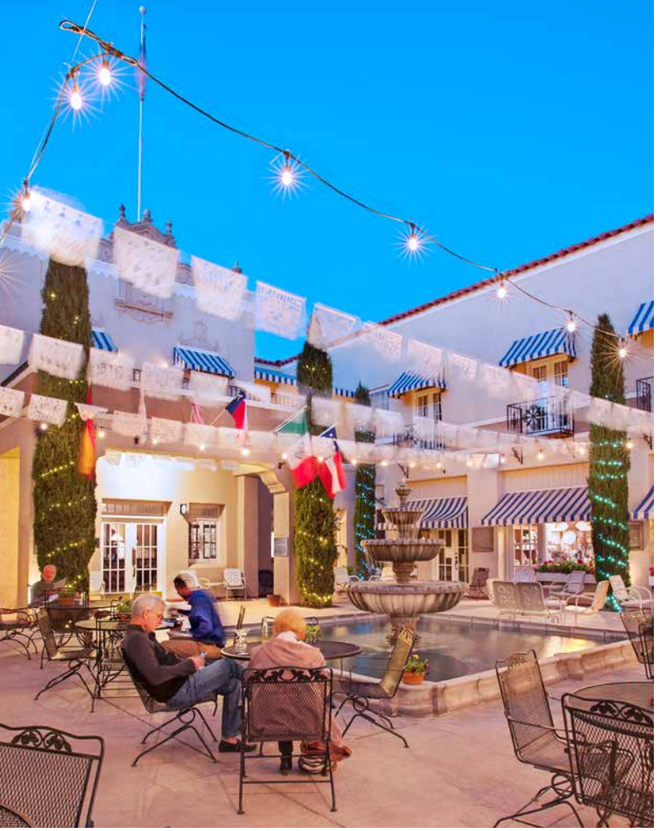
Return I did with my husband, Dan, year after year. Marathon and the Gage became our standard first stop on our travels around the region. Over time, we discovered other historic lodgings and watched them take shape into worthy destinations in their own right, particularly the Holland Hotel in Alpine, The Hotel Paisano in Marfa, and Hotel Limpia in Fort Davis.

To find these four preserved and fashionably updated hotels in such a remote region continues to delight and surprise us. Each hotel looks and feels different, reflecting its hometown's individual ambiance. And now there's another attraction for foodies like us—on-site

EN-*GAGED*

Opening Spread: The dining patio at the 12 Gage Restaurant in Marathon. This spread: The Gage Hotel's pool, lobby, and historic entryway.

Alfred S. Gage, a West Texas cattle baron and San Antonio banker, built the Gage in 1927, wanting a comfortable place to stay while tending to his regional ranching interests. He hired the prolific El Paso architect Henry Charles Trost, who would also design the Paisano, the Holland, Hotel El Capitan in Van Horn, and dozens of El Paso buildings.



MADE IN MARFA

Scenes at The Hotel Paisano, which opened in Marfa in 1930: The courtyard, the chile relleno plate at Jett's Grill, and the hotel lobby. The hotel, which has 41 rooms, provides a comfortable base for exploring the Big Bend region and Marfa's art scene.

restaurants employing chefs who put a fresh regional spin on their menus with locally sourced ingredients.

The Gage no longer functions simply as our overnight station on the way to somewhere else. Ideally, we like to stay a few days, explore Marathon's art galleries down the main street (US 90), sample a fried pie at Burnt Biscuit Bakery, swim in the Gage's heated pool, and enjoy a good meal and a glass of wine.

Alfred S. Gage, a West Texas cattle baron and San Antonio banker, built the Gage in 1927, wanting a comfortable place to stay while tending to his regional ranching interests. He hired the prolific El Paso architect Henry Charles Trost, who would also design the Paisano, the Holland, Hotel El Capitan in Van Horn, and dozens of El Paso buildings, including the 1912 Camino Real Hotel.

The Mission-style Gage sparkled as the town's social center where locals dined, danced, and cut business deals. By the 1970s, though, the once-grand Gage had been remodeled so many times that its linoleum floors cracked and layers of paint had built up on the woodwork. In 1978, Houston businessman J.P. Bryan and his wife, Mary Jon, who own the sprawling Chalk Draw Ranch on the edge of the national park, bought the hotel for a mere $30,000. Bryan tracked down the Gage's original plans and embarked on a restoration project.

El Paisano is renowned as the lodging for the roughly 150 cast and crew members who lived there during the 1956 filming of the classic film Giant. Director George Stevens set up a projector in El Paisano's ballroom to watch the daily footage along with the stars, including Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and James Dean.

More than three decades later, the Gage again bustles with people. "The hotel continues to evolve—you have to do that if you want to continue to attract greater numbers of people and keep up their enthusiasm," Bryan explains. "In recent years, we wanted to give it more of a feel of a resort. But we also want guests to share in the mystery and adventure of the country that surrounds the hotel. That's why they keep coming back."

The Gage includes the original hotel and its 15 restored rooms, which feature refined Western furnishings; Los Portales—our favorite spot—20 adobe-brick rooms added in 1992 that open to long covered porches arranged around a landscaped interior courtyard; three stand-alone casitas; and Captain Shepard's House. Built in 1890 by town founder Capt. Albion Shepard, the two-story, Colonial-style home features five bedrooms and a two-room carriage house.

Along with the 27 acres of native landscaped gardens, and plans for a new Visions of the West Museum scheduled to open in 2016, the Gage also offers a fabulous setting to unwind with dinner and drinks. We peruse the menu at 12 Gage, headed by chef Brandon Waddell, and start with Texas quail with a blue cheese, almond, and cherry stuffing, port wine reduction, and sweet corn fritter. Entrées such as beef tenderloin and honey Dijon-marinated white rabbit tempt, too, but the tenderloin of hazelnut-crusted elk with a pinot noir reduction and parsnip maple purée reigns as the must-have dish for carnivores, in my opinion.

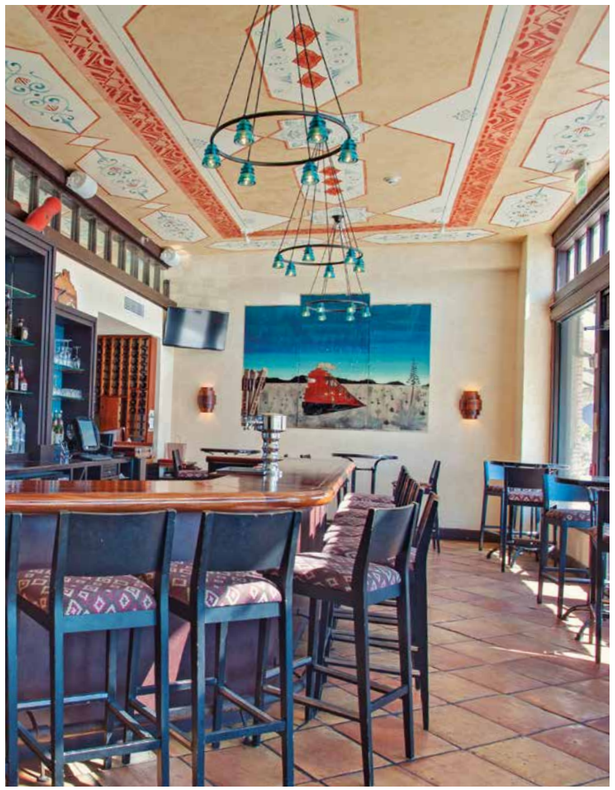
After dinner, we cross the courtyard to the White Buffalo Bar—named for the head of a white buffalo mounted on a wall—with its leather seats and viga-post ceiling. The bartenders pour Texas tequila and wines, beer, cocktails, and such signature drinks as the Texas Martini with Tito's vodka, jalapeño, and olive juice.

We find this same strong sense of place when we arrive at the Holland Hotel in downtown Alpine, about 30 miles west of Marathon. Another Trost architectural masterpiece, the Holland was built in 1928, one year after the Gage. Trost wanted his hotels to blend into the landscape and called the desert buildings his "Arid America" style. The Holland certainly looks like it belongs in Alpine with its Western flavor—arched doorways, wooden beam ceilings, stucco walls, and stone fireplaces. A 2011 restoration of the Holland's 24 guest rooms stayed true to the theme, as represented by the rooms' warm colors, custom bedding, and paintings of West Texas scenery.

The restored Century Bar and Grill features an airy and intimate space in the main dining area, the Rio Grande Room, with a tile floor and wrought-iron chandelier. The bar, its ceiling painted colorfully with Western patterns, features broad windows looking out over the action on Holland Avenue and the railroad tracks.

When the weather is mild, the hacienda-style courtyard beckons with potted cacti and a burbling fountain. The menu ranges from salads—go for the eight-ounce rib-eye steak salad garnished with Texas goat cheese and dressed in a tangy, roasted red onion vinaigrette—to entrées like burgers, beef tenderloin, and pan-seared rainbow trout. In late 2014, the restaurant hired a new executive chef, Amaury Torres from Santa Fe; we look forward to returning and sampling his cuisine.

Another Trost-designed hotel awaited us in Marfa, home to the Big Bend's most dynamic art scene, one of the world's largest art installations at the sprawling Chinati Foundation, and the ever-mysterious Marfa Lights. Designed in Spanish Revival style, El Paisano opened in 1930 and drew cattle ranchers buying and selling herds, as well as tourists seeking the dry desert air.



NEW OLD WEST

Clockwise from left: The Century Bar at the Holland in Alpine; the Victorian-era styling of the Hotel Limpia in Fort Davis; and the view from one of the Limpia's porches.

Now called The Hotel Paisano, the hotel is renowned as the lodging for the roughly 150 cast and crew members who came to Marfa for the 1956 filming of the classic film *Giant*. Director George Stevens set up a projector in the hotel ballroom to watch the daily footage along with the stars, which included Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and James Dean.

The hotel changed hands over the years, and was eventually abandoned. Joe and Lanna Duncan bought the hotel in March 2001 in an auction on the steps of the Presidio County Courthouse, and embarked on a restoration project, completed in time for the hotel to reopen in November of that year. The original 65 rooms have been converted to 41 larger rooms, which recall as much as possible the original fixtures.

With its long porches and backdrop of rugged cliffs, the Limpia looks like an extension of the nearby Fort Davis cavalry outpost. Blue Mountain Bistro, the hotel's restaurant, offers casual dining with European influences.

A *Giant* memorabilia room sells Dean T-shirts, copies of the Edna Ferber novel that inspired the film, and re-creations of original key tags with the actors' names and room numbers. You can even sit down and watch the movie. The *Giant* theme continues at the restaurant, Jett's Grill, where beef stars on the menu. Try the pistachio-fried sirloin with jalapeño gravy or the 12-ounce Black Angus burger, called the Giant.

Dan and I have spent many pleasant evenings camping in Davis Mountains State Park with deer sleeping around our tent and javelinas rustling in the grass. But we often get our fill of roughing it and end up at Fort Davis' Hotel Limpia, the end of the trail for this Big Bend jaunt.

With its long porches and backdrop of rugged cliffs, the Limpia looks like an extension of the nearby Fort Davis cavalry outpost. Campbell and Bance Contractors built the hotel in 1912 of locally quarried igneous rock and white wooden trim.

As with the other historic hotels in the region, the Limpia eventually grew outdated and needed a boost. David and Ana Schreiber, who already owned the restored 1883 Veranda Inn down the street, bought the Hotel Limpia in 2011 and continued restoring the hotel to its Victorian roots. They installed real wood floors, tore off old wallpaper, and returned the walls to stucco. The original main building, with 13 rooms and suites (the Limpia complex has 31 rooms total), takes guests to a bygone era with 12-foot-high ceilings of ornamental pressed tin and elegant furnishings, such as silk curtains, gilt-framed mirrors, and four-poster beds.

Dan and I like to sit in the courtyard garden, which in the spring and summer smells of roses and herbs, or in the rocking chairs on the hotel's expansive porches. "It's a peaceful, tranquil place to enjoy nature and still have a comfortable bed in a funky little old Victorian hotel," David says. "You don't have to rough it if you want to experience wilderness."

The Schreibers opened the hotel restaurant, the Blue Mountain Bistro, in 2012. David functions as executive chef and wanted to create a casual dining experience that also incorporates some of the influences from the couple's travels around Europe. The bistro serves tapas and "basic, simple French country fare," such as the popular beef bourguignon. Locally sourced food comes into play, too. Village Farms greenhouses grow the tomatoes in Fort Davis, and apples come from the hotel's own trees. The restaurant's cheese board also features goat cheese from the Marfa Maid Dairy, when it's available. "Sometimes the goats have to take a vacation," David says with a laugh.

So do we all, and discovering an oasis of laid-back luxury in the midst of such wildness makes us appreciate it all the more. We sleep in these places steeped in history and wake up knowing that the adventure and mystery of this country lie just outside the door—and will draw us back again and again. ★

Kathryn Jones, a writer who lives on a ranch south of Glen Rose, plans to return to Big Bend to explore yet another form of historic lodging there—tourist courts. Austin-based photographer Al Argueta says he enjoyed this opportunity to shoot some of his favorite elements of travel: "amazing scenery, tasty grub, and stylish hotel digs."

ESSENTIALS

BIG SKY STAYS

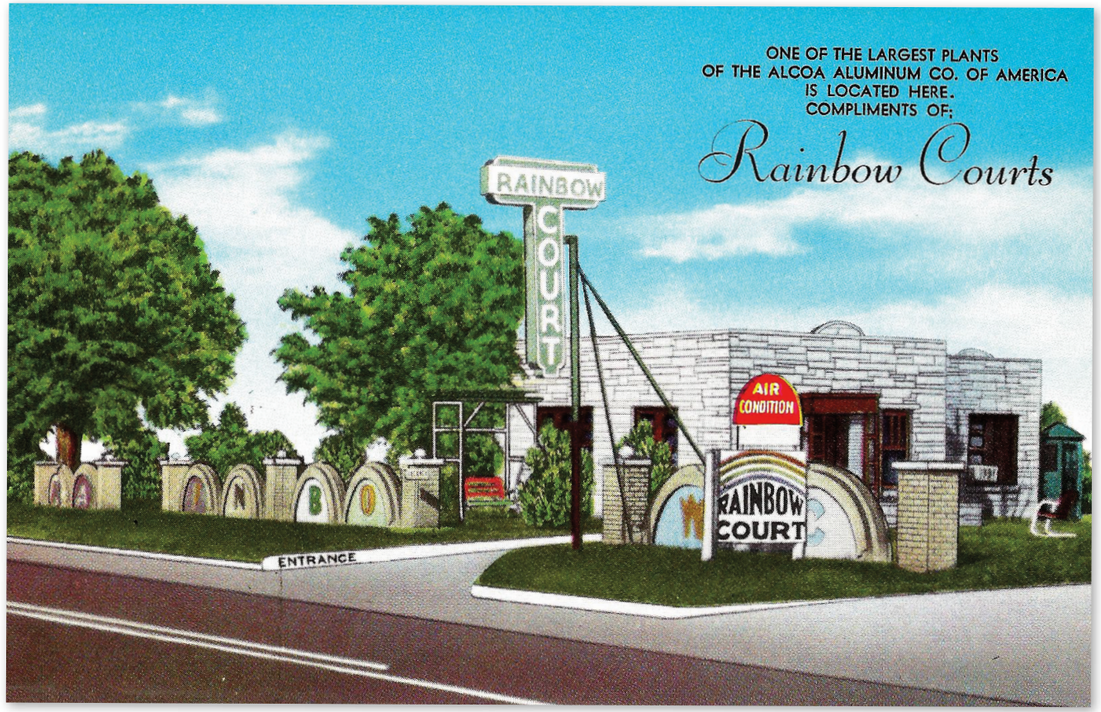
Because these hotels are relatively small, we recommend that visitors book rooms in advance, especially if your trip coincides with a festival or other special event. Here is information for sites in the story:

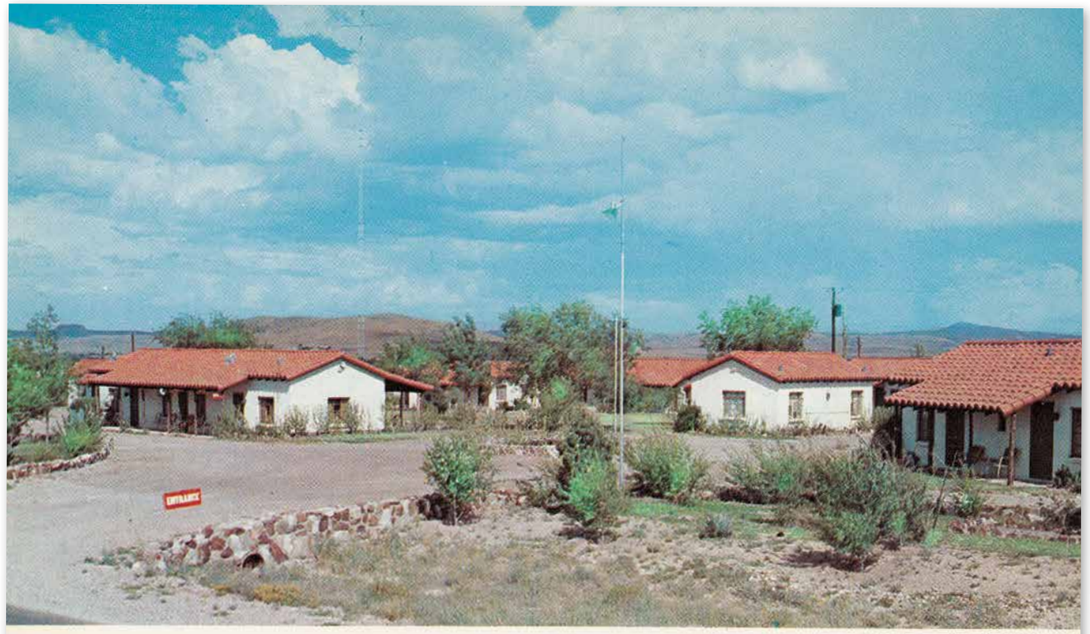
The Gage Hotel is at 102 N.W. 1st St. (US 90 West) in Marathon. Call 432/386-4205; www.gagehotel.com.

The Holland Hotel is at 209 W. Holland Ave. in Alpine. Call 432/837-2800; www.thehollandhoteltexas.com.

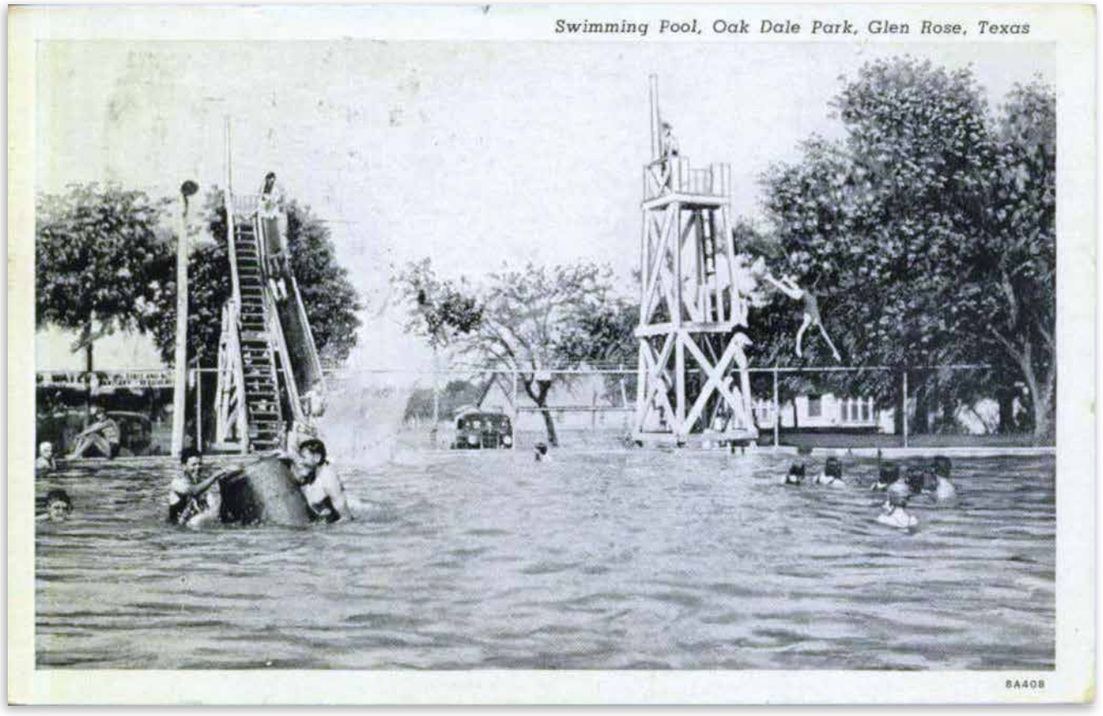
The Hotel Paisano is at 207 N. Highland Ave. in Marfa. Call 432/729-3669; www.hotelpaisano.com.

The Hotel Limpia is at 100 State St. in Fort Davis. Call 432/426-3237; www.hotellimpia.com.





Antelope Lodge Motel



Courtesy Rainbow Courts, Rockdale (1950s); Oakdale Park, Glen Rose (1925); Antelope Lodge, Alpine (1962)

Retro RETREATS TX USA

Tired from a long day of driving,

we pulled up to the Antelope Lodge in Alpine and were transported into a 1940s-period postcard. White stucco cottages with covered porches and vintage metal lawn chairs framed a grassy courtyard studded with picnic tables. The foothills of the Davis Mountains loomed against a big blue sky behind the retro red-tile rooftops.

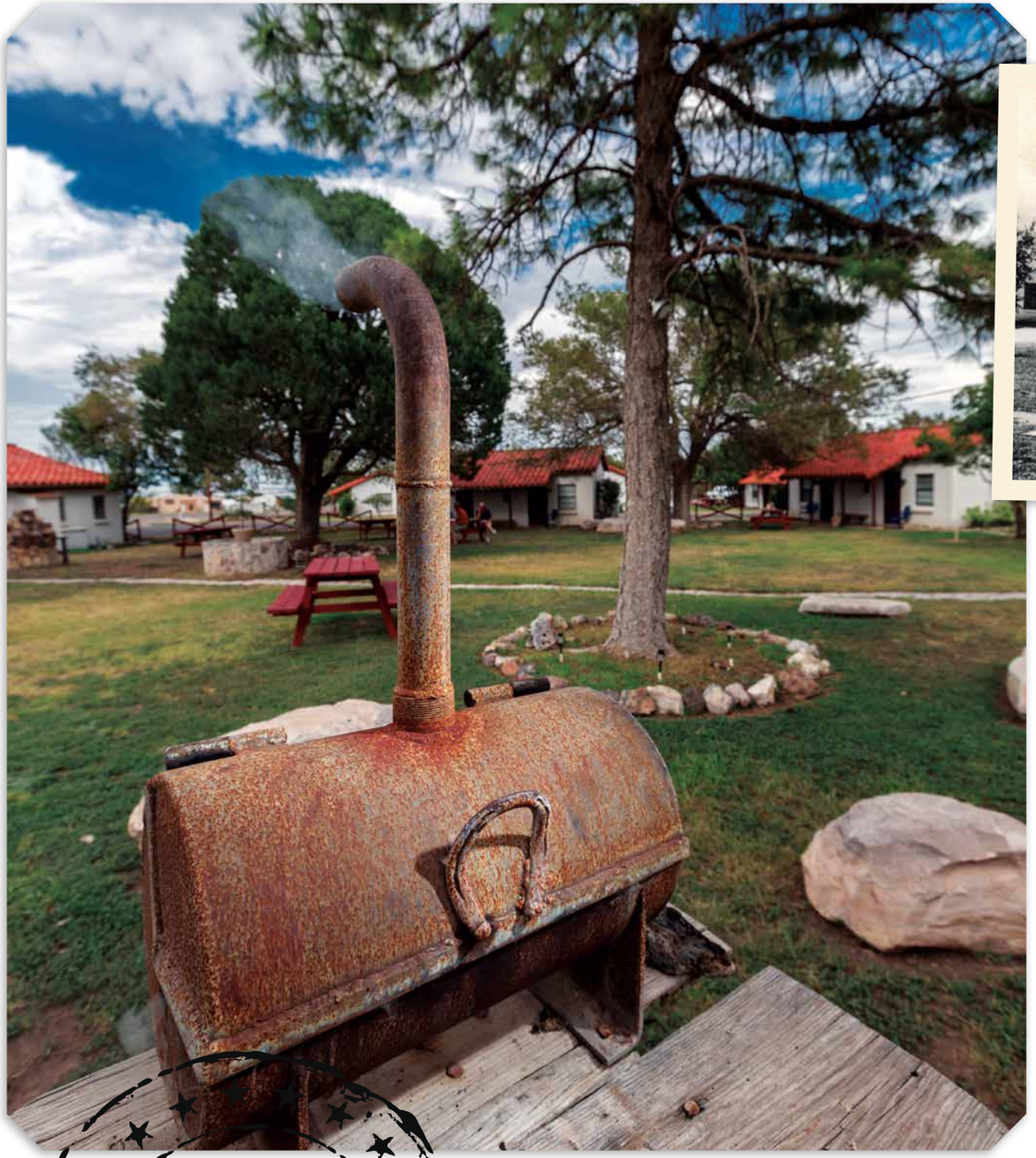
My husband, Dan, and I had driven eight hours from our home near Glen Rose to Big Bend for a getaway from the 24/7 wired world. We wanted to unplug in a place where time seems suspended and immerse ourselves in Big Bend's vintage vibe.

We arrived at the lodge along US 90 road-weary, much like the travelers in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s who relied on motor courts and tourist camps. We parked our car next to our building, walked across its stone porch, and unlocked the wooden plank door as decades of other guests had done. Inside, though, we found a mix of old and new—modern amenities such as a walk-in shower in the retro tiled bathroom; a kitchenette with Mexican-tile countertops, microwave, and a small refrigerator; and stained-concrete floors.

Antelope Lodge dates to 1949, when post-World War II travelers hit the road in search of adventure and the experience of the journey itself. But the motor court and tourist camp trend began decades earlier, in the 1920s and '30s. Thanks to Henry Ford's mass-production innovations, a car became an affordable luxury for most families, and the road trip became part of American culture.

Roadside camps popped up where travelers could stop for the night. Then motor courts arrived and later, motels. We're fortunate in Texas that some of these gems along the road remain. But others closed—such as Las Palmas Court in Laredo, the Den-Tex Tourist Hotel Courts in Denison, the petrified-wood Texas Tourist Camp in Decatur, the Pueblo Court in Amarillo, and the San Gabriel Motor Court in Georgetown—in large part bypassed by new interstates and the convenience of chain lodgings.

The lodges and camps that survived did so by evolving. Some underwent renovations and even transformations. For instance, the bungalow-style Hotel San José in Austin combines retro appeal with ultra-modern and sleek, minimalist interiors that attract a hip, urban clientele.



HOME AWAY!
Alpine's Antelope Lodge provides an excellent launch pad for Big Bend excursions, and the perfect picnic spot when you return. The historical image dates to 1950.

Others, such as the Antelope Lodge, took a "gentle" approach, as co-owner Teri Smith puts it. "We tried to do as little as possible that would change things structurally," she says. "We wanted this to be a trip back in time, back to when things were slower."

Teri and her husband, John, were living in Coppell and visited Alpine regularly in the early 1990s. Avid rock hounds, they especially enjoyed hunting for the colorful, beautifully patterned agate known as "Marfa Bouquet" on nearby ranches. They always stayed at the Antelope Lodge on their trips out west.

When the property went up for sale in 1995, the Smiths bought the lodge and began restoring the rooms, updating the furnishings, and improving infrastructure such as plumbing and air conditioning. But Teri says they didn't want to sacrifice the vintage charm to complete modernization. They retained as much of the "rustic casual" look as possible for travelers who want the motor court experience. "The rooms aren't as large as they are in the new hotels, but that's because people didn't spend as much time inside," Teri says.

Most of the cottages house two rooms for a total of 28 rooms spread through 15 buildings. Some contain the original "cowboy oak" furnishings from 1949. Each room feels different, with artworks and flooring that vary. A few rooms retain the original 1950-era linoleum tiles or original patterned cement tiles from Mexico. Benches and chairs beckon guests to sit outside, and Teri collects ceramic and metal birds to place on the eaves for a personal, whimsical touch.

The Antelope Lodge's office also houses the Last Frontier Museum of Rocks & Gems, where guests can

Roadside camps POPPED UP WHERE TRAVELERS COULD STOP FOR THE NIGHT. THEN MOTOR COURTS ARRIVED AND LATER, MOTELS. WE'RE FORTUNATE IN TEXAS THAT SOME OF THESE GEMS ALONG THE ROAD REMAIN.

PHOTO: J. Griffis Smith: Postcard Courtesy Antelope Lodge, Alpine

view native agate Teri has collected, and the Smith & Wife rock and jewelry shop. Teri says the mason who built the office's front porch wrote the name "Antelope Lodge" in stone and that some of the porches around the property also bear the letters "A" and "L."

Continuing our motor-court quest, we drove a half-hour to Fort Davis and the Stone Village Tourist Camp owned and operated by Randall and Belinda Kinzie. Randall's grandparents, Pat and Lucille Watts, once owned the motel, and Belinda manages the Stone Village Market next door, a market stocked with organic and gourmet foods, along with a deli that's a good spot for lunch or picnic supplies.

Stone Village—constructed of rock, adobe, and stucco plaster—has been in continuous operation since 1935. At the time, area tourist attractions were on the rise, including the Civilian Conservation Corps-built Davis Mountains State Park and the Pueblo-style Indian Lodge. The tourist camp has been completely remodeled. Randall unlocks several rooms to show me the updated spaces, decorated with framed vintage postcards on the walls, beds with chenille spreads, flat-screen TVs, and modern baths.

For those who want more of a rugged experience, the motor court's original garage spaces have been converted into seven small "camp rooms" with screen doors and stone walls. "These are indigenous rocks," Randall explains. The natural feel of the place continues on the long portals with ponderosa pine posts and in the landscaped area around the pool and patio, where there are more pine trees and a spectacular view of Sleeping Lion Mountain.

Back in Glen Rose, Dan and I are lucky to live near one of the state's oldest surviving motor courts and tourist camps, Glen Rose's Oakdale Park. Oakdale celebrates its 90th anniversary in May, and still draws visitors with its wooden cottages, stone cabins, RV and tent campsites, pavilions, and tree-shaded lanes. It's popular for reunions; several families have been coming back to Oakdale for more than 50 years.

On warm days we head to Oakdale's 330,000-gallon pool, called "The Plunge," one of the largest swimming pools installed in Texas at the time. Several years ago it was renovated with a new bottom and mosaic tile, lifeguard stands, and diving board and slides, plus fountains and a splash pool for kids.

In 2010, the City of Glen Rose spent $1 million to buy and renovate the park. The 25 cabins and cottages have been updated with new furniture, kitchenettes, and bathrooms, and the 104 RV spaces offer 30/50-amp service, full hookups, and WiFi.

But the place still feels like a step back in time. Kids can swing at the vintage playground while their parents pitch horseshoes. The wooden-floored skating rink has been remodeled and turned into a convention center, but the structure's rock-wall fireplace—built with fossils and stones provided by visitors from across the country—remains as a conversation piece.

"It's a laid-back, country setting, even though you can walk to downtown Glen Rose from here," says Park Manager Kelly Harris. "Families don't have to worry about their kids. They can ride their bikes around here. There is so much just in this 25-acre area that is family-friendly and family-safe."

Each spring and summer, Oakdale hosts bluegrass festivals, and bluegrass musicians show up on the third weekend of each month to jam. An annual dulcimer festival, woodcarvers festival, gospel grass festival, and fall festival keep the park bustling with campers, families, and music year-round. And Big Rocks Park on the Paluxy River is

STAY AND PLAY

Facing page and above: At Stone Village Tourist Camp in Fort Davis, a rock-covered wall in a garage space-turned-suite, and a poolside view of Sleeping Lion Mountain. At right, Glen Rose's Oakdale Park in 1925.

PHOTOS: J. Griffis Smith; Historical Photo Courtesy Oakdale Park, Glen Rose

right across the street for those who want to wade and fish.

Even older than Oakdale, Rainbow Tourist Camp in Rockdale opened in 1918 before US 79 was paved. Nathan Monroe Bullock built the Central Texas camp for migrant workers as well as tourists. Then his brother, Ira Benjamin Bullock, joined the business.

By the early 1930s, the camp had morphed into a bed-and-breakfast. "They started off with four cottages and it just grew to 50," says Joan Ratliff, granddaughter of Ira Benjamin Bullock. In 1992, she and her husband, Dan, bought Rainbow Courts from her parents.

The Texas Historical Commission has accepted Joan's application to have Rainbow Courts designated as a Registered Texas Historical Landmark, and Joan says a marker may go up by the end of the year. Several structures on the 4.6-acre property date to the late 1880s, including a carriage house and a schoolhouse that was moved here from a nearby community called Talbott Ridge. Joan says that her grandfather went to school in the structure and he "was pretty sentimental about it, so in the 1940s he bought it and moved it on site."

Guests can choose from 37 rooms, suites, and corporate apartments. Most suites are equipped with a full kitchen, refrigerators, coffee makers, microwaves, cable TV, and WiFi. The lush, landscaped grounds attract weddings and family reunions, as does the vintage ambiance. Three of the original petrified rock picnic tables remain, and swings again hang from the tall oak trees.

Travelers seek out these renovated tourist courts because they "want something unique," Joan says. "They don't want cookie-cutter. Not one room is decorated the same. We're small enough that we can provide very personalized service, and we're just so homey."

And, as Joan says, these vintage homes-away-from-home offer an attraction that many people crave—something old, something new, and "something different." ★

Glen Rose-based writer Kathryn Jones recalls that her favorite family vacations while growing up in South Texas always involved a road trip and a campground or lodging steeped in history. They still do.

Web Extra
Austin's Hotel San José and Lone Star Court at texashighways.com/webextra.

COZY COTTAGES
Facing page, top and bottom: At Rockdale's Rainbow Courts, each of the rooms features a different décor. Above and left: "Nest" is among the wooden cottages at Oakdale Park in Glen Rose; the park's popular 330,000-gallon pool is known as "The Plunge."

PHOTOS: Will van Overbeek

ESSENTIALS

Vintage Stays

Contact information for sites in the story follows. For more information on area attractions, contact local convention and visitors bureaus or chambers of commerce.

Antelope Lodge
is at 2310 W. US 90 in Alpine. Call 432/837-2451; www.antelopelodge.com.

Stone Village Tourist Camp and Market
is at 509 N. State St. in Fort Davis. Call 432/426-3941; www.stonevillagetouristcamp.com.

Oakdale Park
is at 1019 NE Barnard St. in Glen Rose. Call 254/897-2321; www.oakdalepark.com.

Rainbow Courts
is at 915 E. Cameron Ave. in Rockdale. Call 512/446-2361; www.rainbowcourts.com.

WAR

★ AND REMEMBRANCE ★

A DAUGHTER CONNECTS WITH HER FATHER'S WORLD WAR II SERVICE AT FREDERICKSBURG'S **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

text by KATHRYN JONES
photographs by WILL VAN OVERBEEK

IN A DARKENED ROOM, VETERANS WEARING World War II caps embroidered with command insignia peer down at a tabletop video screen. A map of the Philippine Islands flashes on. Blue ships, representing American vessels, head into the archipelago. They encounter a much larger group of red Japanese ships coming out of the San Bernardino Strait that connects the Samar and Philippine seas.

Thus begins one of the most significant naval skirmishes of the war's Pacific Theater, the Battle off Samar, in October 1944. More than 70 years later, I watch the battle unfold like a video game at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg.

As the blue ships sail across the screen into harm's way, the realization hits me. "My gosh, my father was on one of those!" I exclaim. The veterans look up with solemn faces and nod.

I am like many visitors who come to the museum to discover or relive personal stories of the past. In my case, I want to learn more about my father, Samuel Jones, who lives in Corpus Christi. He was just 17 when he left his rural Alabama home after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and enlisted in the U.S. Navy. After training in San Diego, the boy who had plowed peanut fields with mules was assigned to a heavy cruiser, the USS *Portland*, as a second gunner.

Nine weeks after entering the Navy, young Sam found himself in the Gilbert Islands engaged in a raid at Tarawa. Then at Guadalcanal, the USS *Portland* was heavily damaged in a night battle and was towed to Sydney, Australia. "All of us guys, we never had any youth," my dad once told me. "Some of us went from being country boys to men right away."

As the war in the Pacific heated up, Sam was transferred to an escort aircraft carrier, the USS *Kalinin Bay*. When General Douglas MacArthur launched a mission to retake the Philippines, the *Kalinin Bay* was one of the ships in a Navy task unit called "Taffy 3," made up of six U.S. escort carriers, three destroyers, and four destroyer escorts. Then the Imperial Japanese Navy's Center Force surprised them. Outnumbered and facing four enemy battleships, six heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 12 destroyers, Taffy 3 fought so hard that the Japanese retreated.

As I've grown older, I've wanted to make a more personal connection with my father's war. So when he turned 90 last December, I promised him a trip to the Pacific War museum. Neither of us had been there before. I had hoped we could make the trip around Memorial Day.

Things didn't go the way I planned. A bout with pneumonia and a hospital stay in early May left Dad feeling too weak to travel to Fredericksburg, let alone stroll through the 33,000-square-foot George H.W. Bush Gallery that houses most of the museum's World War II artifacts. The museum offers scooters, but I knew my father wouldn't go for that. As the longtime curator of orchids at the South Texas Botanical Gardens & Nature Center, he takes care of thousands of orchids every day, and the center this year named its new orchid conservatory for him. He's used to being active and independent.

I decided if I couldn't bring him to the museum, I would bring part of the experience to him. A few days after Memorial Day, my husband, Dan, and I drove from our home south of Glen Rose to Fredericksburg, a town we had visited numerous times for its wineries and wildflowers. We quickly spotted the museum, a contrast to the quaint shops and gingerbread-trimmed

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
More on the National Museum of the Pacific War at **texashighways.com/webextra**.

EQUIPPED FOR BATTLE
Opening image and clockwise from left: a Vice-Admiral flag from the Battleship Nagato; the "Jeep Production" display; a five-inch dual purpose gun from a destroyer; and a Japanese two-man midget submarine used in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

buildings downtown. A conning tower of the submarine USS *Pintado* loomed in front of the modern structure.

Rather than join a group tour, we explored the Bush Gallery at our own pace (a free audio wand is available, too). We only had an afternoon to see the museum and that wasn't nearly long enough—we could have spent a day or two there (the ticket price covers 48 hours for those who want to view it at a more leisurely pace).

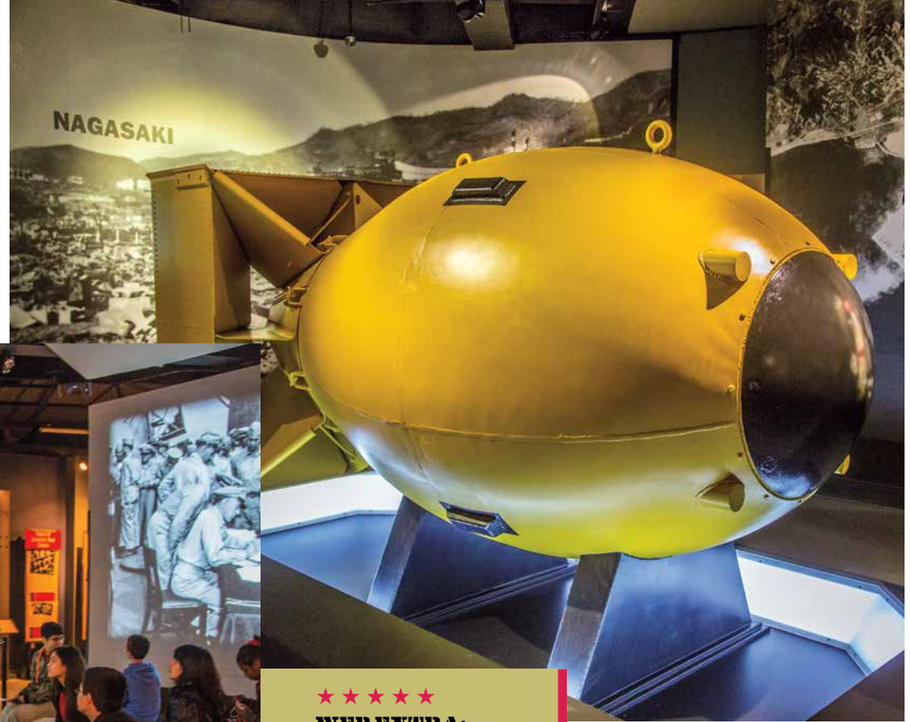
The sheer quantity of artifacts impressed us, but so did the quality. Many exhibits use interactive features, transforming the experience from passive to engaging.

The museum tells the World War II story chronologically, so one of the first exhibits depicts the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, that caused the United States to join the war. We entered a dark space with a long, narrow submarine backlit with a blue light. This was one of five Japanese "midget subs" from the Pearl Harbor attack and one of 50 built for the Imperial Japanese Navy. Images of depth charges being dropped ran on the wall behind the sub and sounds of explosions rattled my ribcage. I felt like I was there, if only for a few moments.

The sub on display, I later learned, ran aground on Oahu and was captured as a war prize. It was put on tour in the United States to help sell war bonds, then after the war spent several decades on display in Key West, Florida, before making the Fredericksburg museum its home.

AN INFAMOUS END

A multimedia theater (below) shows the ceremonial conclusion to the war. Right, the casing for the third atomic bomb, which would have been dropped had Japan not surrendered to the Allies.



★★★★★

WEB EXTRA:
Listen to Sam Jones' WWII memories at **texashighways.com/webextra**.

ESSENTIALS

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

The National Museum of the Pacific War is at 311 E. Austin St. in Fredericksburg, 830/997-8600; www.pacificwarmuseum.org. Open daily from 9 to 5; closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. Check ahead for admission prices.

As we wove our way through the collection, I gained more understanding about the Pacific War than I ever had from history books. Hopping from island to island and battle to battle, the exhibits traced the interwoven roles of the Army Air Forces, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and Texas weapons factories with text, photos, videos, and displays of artifacts, including a B-25 bomber, Wildcat fighter, and a Japanese float plane and dive bomber.

But the part of the museum I wanted to see the most focused on the Philippines. I knew I had found it when I spotted a photograph of General MacArthur covering a wall along with his famous quote, "I shall return," a pledge to come back and free the Philippines after he was forced to flee in 1942.

The Leyte Gulf exhibit described the Battle off Samar in more detail than I had ever heard in my father's stories. The *Kalinin Bay* and the rest of Taffy 3 were preparing to support MacArthur when, early on October 25, 1944, they received word that a sizable Japanese fleet was approaching. The Center Force vessels under Vice Admiral Takeo Kurita somehow had maneuvered through the narrow San Bernardino Strait and headed toward Samar. When they encountered the Taffy 3 ships, they opened fire.

The *Kalinin Bay*, the trailing ship escort carrier, took direct hits from the Japanese battleships. The U.S. destroyers returned fire. Four diving kamikaze planes attacked the surviving U.S. ships, including the *Kalinin Bay*, damaging the flight deck and the aft port stack. Five men on the ship were killed and 60 injured, and the heavily damaged *Kalinin Bay* steamed to Manus, then San Diego, for repairs before heading back to the Philippines.

I had heard my father talk about Taffy 3, but its significance didn't register until I saw the museum's dramatic display about it. Later, I read an account on the Naval History and Heritage Command website: "As one of the fearless ships of 'Taffy 3,' *Kalinin Bay* had prevented a Japanese penetration into Leyte Gulf and saved General MacArthur's beachhead in the Philippines." It went on to call the Battle off Samar "one of the most memorable engagements in U.S. naval history. Outnumbered and outgunned, the slower 'Taffy 3' seemed fated for disaster, but the American ships defied the odds and gamely accepted the enemy's challenge."

After visiting the museum, I was armed with questions and I wanted to hear my father describe the battle in his own words. Dan and I spent the night in Fredericksburg, then drove to Corpus Christi the next day. I sat down with my dad and recorded a long conversation about his war experiences.

He explained that his job as plane captain on the *Kalinin Bay* was to get the aircraft fueled, warmed up, and ready for the pilots to take off. On the morning of the Battle off Samar, the ship's aircraft had all launched, so Sam went to the mess hall to get coffee, then climbed up the catwalk back to the flight deck.

"All of a sudden on the starboard side it seemed like the whole ocean blew up," he told me, excitement building in his voice. "Big spouts of water went up and came down and wet me. I was soaking wet—and it ruined my cup of coffee." He laughed about that. "We were all looking up. The guns were all whirling around looking for aircraft because we knew it was bombers. And some guy behind me was hollering, 'Look-ee there ... my golly, look-ee there!' And there was a long gray line, all blinking."

That line across the water was the Japanese Center Force. The blinking meant the ships were firing their guns.

Sam and his friend Jack crawled on their hands and knees across the flight deck as shells whizzed over their heads. They sounded "like bacon frying," my father said. The armor-piercing shells penetrated the ship's hull, leaving jagged holes. When Sam scrambled back down the catwalk, he ripped open his elbow on the ragged metal. "Jack started hollering, 'My God, your arm's been shot off!'" Dad recalled. "Blood was all over my arm and dripping off the end of my fingers."

Jack got a bucket of salt water and washed the wound, and they found some bandages to close it. The next day, Sam went to see the ship's doctor, who chewed him out. "He told me, 'You should have come down here yesterday. That arm belongs to the Navy. You don't have any business jeopardizing it,'" my dad recalled with a chuckle.

I wanted to know how Taffy 3 defied the odds. "Did you know about all the maneuverings the Japanese were doing?" I asked. "It looked like you guys were really outgunned."

"That's not even a comparison—it was ridiculous," he responded. "The Japanese could have sent one cruiser, just one cruiser in there and come alongside of us and blew us out of the water and went on about their business. We couldn't understand why they didn't make a move. They (Navy officials) surmised later that maybe the admiral mistakenly thought he had stumbled across the main American task force and he was a little reluctant to push it too far, we put up such a fuss."

The *Kalinin Bay* was armed with only one five-inch gun. The destroyer escort USS *Samuel B. Roberts*' job was to protect the escort carriers. "The heroic part of that whole battle was the destroyers," my father said. "They would go around and around encircling us with a smoke screen, and finally the USS *Samuel B. Roberts* got shot almost half in two, but that ship still made a run on the Japanese knowing they were going to get blown out of the water."

The *Samuel B. Roberts* sank, taking 89 sailors with her. My father said he feels lucky to be alive—and I feel lucky to have him as my dad, part of the "greatest generation" of veterans.

I still hope to take my father to the Fredericksburg museum and record more conversations to share with my family. Sam's story lives at the museum, too, in those little blue ships moving around on a video screen, in the lines of history, and in me in a stronger way than ever before. ★

Kathryn Jones plans to share the interview recording with her nephew (and Sam's grandson), Andrew, who recently won an appointment to the United States Naval Academy. In 1991, Will van Overbeek met and photographed (for* LIFE *magazine) Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki, the skipper of the two-man "midget submarine" that now resides at the museum.