

# Have fun without leaving the state

Can anyone remember a summer when rain caused so much havoc on summer time traditions in Texas?

With lakes in the area shut down and boating forbidden on area lakes, for instance, it appears to be a good time to rethink our summertime plans. Central Texas also has had their share of lake closures with lakes around Austin closed for the 4th of July celebrations due to too much water.

The rain situation is a great excuse to try out some new ideas for family fun.

What child can argue with being inside a museum when there are thunderclouds threatening to ruin outdoor fun, anyway?

Especially in this case when the museum is the Bob Bullock Texas History Museum, filled with interactive exhibits and films that are so entertaining the children won't know they are getting an education.

Of course, there are some folks who will be hoping the sun breaks through the clouds so water can once again mean lake and beach fun, rather than rain.

Fortunately for folks in East Texas, in Austin, and all around our beautiful state, there are so many fun things to do that you don't even have to leave Texas.

Here are some of my favorite things to do in Texas.

For optimists, some of them involve sunshine and water.

■ Rain or shine, the State Capitol (www.tspb.state.tx.us or 512-463-0063) and the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum (www.thestoryof-texas.com or 512-936-8746) pair up to be one of the best things to do in Texas.

The pink granite capitol building with the beautiful rotunda and the oak-walled chambers, not to mention Elisabet Ney's sculptures of Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin, is an educational experience that begs to be repeated often.

The Texas State History Museum, just three blocks from the capitol building, is one more of the innumerable reasons to include Austin in your family vacation plans this summer.

On a local note, the names of Tylerites, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Herd, are included in a bronze plaque acknowledging patrons at the entrance of the museum near the terrazzo mosaic on the floor depicting the cultures of Texas converging around a campfire.

■ Make this the summer your family rides a train. The Texas State Rail Road (www.tpwd.state.tx.us or 1-800-442-8951 or 903-683-2561), running between Palestine and Rusk, has been in the news this legislative session with a last ditch effort to save it.

Their website states "All future train runs are scheduled to stop by August 31, 2007."

Steam locomotion is a unique experience, and like so often happens with history, it may soon be a thing of the past.

By the way, each paying adult gets to bring up to five kids free this summer.

No time like the present to enjoy a little history right here in our own neighborhood.

■ Always on the lookout for cheap family fun, who can resist the idea of a free ferry ride?

Galveston's Harbor Authority runs ferries about every 20 minutes from the island across to Bolivar's

CATHY KAFRVE



Bullard Banner News

Peninsula. Travel by car onto the ferry or walk.

It takes about fifteen minutes to cross, which is about right for even the smallest traveler's attention span.

Occasionally, dolphins are spotted off the boat and sea gulls are always a certainty. The round trip can be made in less than an hour when there is no traffic.

It is especially fun to ride at dusk and come back after dark when the lights change the look of the bay. Oh, the joy of cheap thrills.

■ Visit Caldwell Zoo (www.caldwellzoo.org or 903-593-0121). Who can argue with a day trip to one of the best zoos in Texas, right here in East Texas?

■ Visit the Alamo (www.thealamo.org or 210-225-1391).

No explanation necessary.

■ Visit McDonald Observatory (www.mcdonaldobservatory.org).

It is a haul to West Texas, but Fort Davis (www.fortdavis.com or 432-426-3224), home of a history museum that includes an actual frontier fort, is also one of the coolest, literally, Texas towns in August due to the higher altitude. Plus, the stars at night are extra bright because of the elevation.

■ Visit Fredericksburg. While mom shops, the rest of the family can take in the National Museum of the Pacific War (www.nimitzmuseum.org or 830-997-4379) where docents walk you through simulated attacks on beaches in the Pacific, followed by an exhibit depicting the way portable hospitals were set up to take care of the high number of casualties during that war.

Anyone under sixty-five can count on coming away with a whole new understanding of the War in the Pacific.

■ Spend the day on a town square. Denton and Nacogdoches both have plenty of old-fashioned shops, friendly folks, and architecture from a long time ago. Both are an easy day trip from here.

■ When it quits raining, get wet in a river. Float the Comal River or the Guadalupe River in New Braunfels one day and hit Schlitterbahn Water Park (www.schlitterbahn.com or 830-625-2351) the next day. Be sure to go on a weekday because weekends are too crowded to be fun.

■ Last, but not least, head to the best beach in Texas, South Padre Island. Beautiful beaches, not too many condos yet, and only a few miles from an afternoon spent across the Mexican border; what could be better?

The clock is ticking until school starts again. Now is the time to plan a quick getaway with your family.

Whether you have a few hours or a few days, there is sure to be something on this list to entertain the whole family.

With so many great options, the real question is why Texans ever travel past the state line at all.

■ Cathy Kafrve, aka Checklist Charlie, lives with her family in her favorite part of the state, East Texas. If you would like to comment on your favorite place in Texas, contact her at features@bullardnews.com.



## COLUMN

# Grandma was always on the go

ANTONETTE JACKSON



Mangia!  
Mangia!

She was always on the go, or at least that's what it seemed like to me. When she wasn't sitting in her big chair by the window, Nonna Providenza was off visiting family and friends. Mom said it was because she had Gypsy blood in her. I thought she really meant it until I was old enough to realize that was just another expression from the Old Country.

It didn't matter where she went, just so she went somewhere. It was an hour-long trolley ride to visit the old neighborhood on the North Side. Even if she could have gotten up and down the tall steps, Grandma didn't feel comfortable traveling by herself.

That left her dependent on my father. So throughout the week, Grandma waited impatiently until the whole family could go somewhere in my father's car. A family picnic, a drive to the Cemetery or a visit to the North Side to see my Uncle's, it didn't matter where.

"Let's go" was all Daddy ever had to say. And, as Mom teased, "Your Nonna is ready to go at the drop of a hat".

One Sunday afternoon, as we were leaving for the hour-long ride to Uncle Frank's house, Grandma decided she had better use the bathroom before we left. Mom told her we would wait for her in the car. We all piled into Daddy's 1937 Plymouth parked at the front of the house. A few minutes later, Grandma appeared on the front porch. As she started to descend the steps, my brother John shouted, "Look at Grandma!" She was dressed in her Sunday best, holding her purse and gloves in one hand and reaching for the handrail—with her dress stuck up in her corset.

"Stop, Ma," my mother shouted and pointed for to her to look down.

Horrified, Grandma turned around to go back into the house, giving the neighbors an even better view of her girdle, bloomers and slip. In the car Johnny, Mom, Dad and I laughed even harder at Grandma's most embarrassing moment.

Tall steps and traveling alone didn't stop my grandmother from going to Long Island, New York to visit Aunt Frances and Uncle Nick. When their dry cleaning business was good, they sent her a train ticket to visit them for a couple of weeks. Nonna rode the train two days and overnight from Chicago Union Station to New York Central Station.

One time as Uncle Gene was bringing her home from Union Station, she walked in with a bunch of bloody handkerchiefs. Her blood pressure acted up and her nose wouldn't stop bleeding. A trip to Dr. Golub's office and Grandma was off and running again.

I was 18 years old when the travel bug bit me. After my first train trip to California, I discovered I had inherited Grandma's penchant for going places. From that point on I kept an overnight bag packed and, as Mom would say, ready to go at the drop of a hat.

On my trip back to Chicago last year for the Taddeo family reunion, I mentioned Grandma's gallivanting to cousin Annie. "I guess I'm just like my Nonna Providenza—always on the go," I said.

"That's funny," she answered. "All I remember is that Zia Providenza sat in her big chair by the window all the time."

Go figure. Cousin Annie's Artichoke Frittata Cousin Annie did remember that when Grandma wasn't sitting by the window, she was at the stove cooking.

Typically Sicilian, a frittata is like an omelet. You can use fresh, canned or left-over vegetables and serve it for lunch or as a side dish.

The fun of a frittata is flipping it over successfully, a trick I am still trying to master.

6 eggs  
1 / 4 cup half and half  
1 / 4 teaspoon garlic powder  
1 / 2 teaspoon basil  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 8 oz. can artichoke hearts  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 teaspoons butter  
1 / 4 cup grated Romano cheese  
Beat eggs until foamy. Add milk, garlic powder, basil, salt and pepper, mixing well. Add drained unseasoned artichoke hearts to egg mixture and mix.

Heat oil and butter in a 10-inch frying pan. Add egg mixture and cook over medium heat until eggs are set. Put a plate over the pan and quickly invert the pan and plate upside down. Slide the loosened frittata back into the pan and finish cooking. When done, turn out onto a clean plate and let it cool for two minutes to set before serving.  
Serves 4.

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