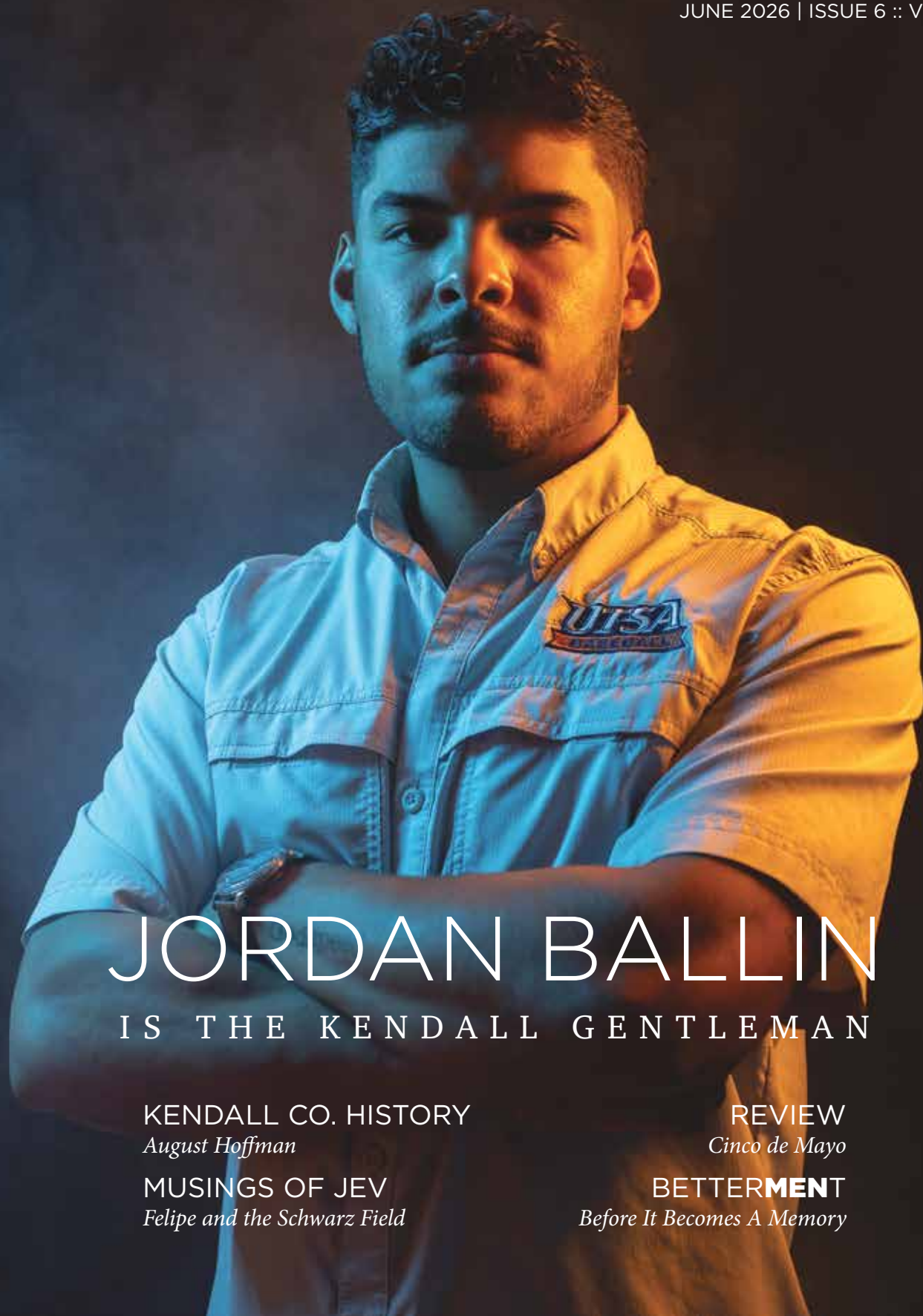




THE KENDALL™ GENTLEMAN

JUNE 2026 | ISSUE 6 :: VOLUME 2



JORDAN BALLIN

IS THE KENDALL GENTLEMAN

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MUSINGS OF JEV

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REVIEW

Cinco de Mayo

BETTERMENT

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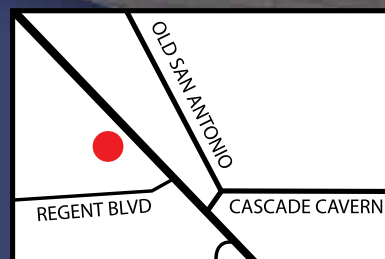
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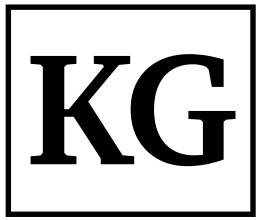
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THE KENDALL[™] GENTLEMAN



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Are you interested in contributing to The Kendall Gentleman? Do you have an interesting story to tell the men of Kendall County? Could you be considered an expert in your given field? Have something interesting to say? We're always looking for talented writers for The Kendall Gentleman. Email us at info@thekendallgentleman.com



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What You Do Next

There's a certain kind of lie a man tells himself that doesn't sound like a lie at all. It sounds responsible. It sounds patient. It sounds like he's thinking things through. He tells himself that once things settle down, once the schedule opens up, once the timing is right, that's when he'll get serious. About his work. About his health. About the way he leads his family. About the kind of life he's trying to build.

I've told myself that lie more than once.

The truth is, things rarely settle down. Life doesn't clear a path and invite you to step into order. Most days come at you sideways. There's always something that needs attention, something that feels urgent, something that can justify pushing the important things just a little further down the list. And if you let it, that pattern becomes your normal. You stay busy, you stay engaged, and at the end of the day, you can even convince yourself you worked hard. But when you take a hard look at it, not much actually moved forward.

I've felt that in my own life, especially in business. Some days start without much structure and end the same way. Plenty of motion, plenty of conversation, plenty of checking boxes, but not a lot of real progress. It's not that the work isn't getting done. It's that the right work isn't always getting done first. And that difference has a way of compounding over time.

I'm working on that. Slowly, and not perfectly.

There's been some progress. I've started putting more intention into how the day begins. Taking a few minutes before everything starts pulling in different directions to decide what actually matters. Not what feels urgent, not what's easiest to knock out, but what genuinely moves things forward. Some days I stick to it. Other days I don't. But even that small shift has made one thing clear. The issue was never a lack of knowledge. It was a lack of consistency.

Most of what we need to do is already known to us. It's not hidden behind some complex system or locked away in a book we haven't

read yet. It's simple, almost to the point of being frustrating. Get up with enough time to think clearly. Decide what matters most. Do that work before the rest of the world gets a vote. Be present with your family when you're with them. Say no to things that pull you off course. None of that is groundbreaking. But it's also the first thing to slip when the day gets crowded.

And the day always gets crowded.

If there's one thing I've learned the hard way, it's that if you don't take control of your time, someone else will. It won't even feel like a bad thing in the moment. It'll feel like being needed. Like being responsive. Like doing your job. But over time, it starts to scatter your attention. You move from one thing to the next, reacting instead of leading, staying busy but not being particularly effective. It's a subtle kind of drift, and you don't notice it until you look up and realize you're not where you thought you'd be.

That's not a failure of ability. It's a failure of direction.

And direction, more often than not, is decided early in the day.

I've had to start getting honest about that. There are things I say are important that don't always show up in how I spend my time. That gap isn't caused by a lack of opportunity or a lack of resources. It's caused by decisions, or the absence of them. Closing that gap doesn't require a complete overhaul of life. It requires something much simpler, and much harder. It requires choosing, on purpose, what comes first.

Not once. Not when you feel motivated. But every day.

That's where the real work is. Not in big declarations or long-term plans, but in the quiet discipline of doing what needs to be done before everything else crowds it out. There's nothing glamorous about it. No one sees it. No one applauds it. But it's the difference between a man who builds something meaningful and one who spends years thinking he's about to.

We've talked a lot in these pages about standards, about resolve, about holding the line when it would be easier to let things slide. All of that matters. But none of it exists in the abstract. It shows up in decisions that are small enough to ignore and important enough to shape everything that follows.

Most of life doesn't hinge on one defining moment. It hinges on a series of ordinary choices made without much fanfare. The first hour of the day is one of them. It sets a tone, whether you realize it or not. It either belongs to you, or it belongs to everything else.

I'm still learning how to get that right. Some days I do. Some days I don't. But I've come to understand that the gap between where I am and where I want to be isn't going to close on its own. It's built, piece by piece, in how I choose to spend my time when no one's paying attention.

That's true for me, and it's true for you.

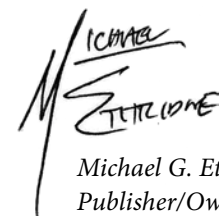
So if there's a place to start, it's not complicated. Tomorrow morning, before the noise sets in, decide what matters most. Write it down if you have to. Then do that work first. Not after the emails. Not after the distractions. First.

Then do it again the next day.

It won't feel dramatic. It won't feel like a breakthrough. But over time, it becomes something far more valuable than that. It becomes direction. And direction, carried out consistently, has a way of building the kind of life most men say they want but never quite get around to creating.

It all comes back to a simple question.

What do you do next?



Michael G. Ethridge
Publisher/Owner

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

5/25/26

Memorial Day Ceremony

VFW Post 688

Boerne Cemetery - By The Flagpole
820 N School St, Boerne, TX 78006

Join us this Memorial Day at 11:00 AM as we gather to honor the men and women who gave everything in service to our country. This is a time to slow down, stand together, and remember that freedom has never come free. Bring your family, take a moment, and pay respect to those who never made it home.

6/1/26

Military Monday Sporting Clays

Joshua Creek Ranch

132 Cravey Rd, Boerne, TX, 78006

www.joshuacreek.com

Military Monday Sporting Clays at Joshua Creek Ranch is part of the ranch's Summer Days sporting clays program, offering a special discount for those who serve the community.

6/2/26

Abendkonzerte

Boerne Village Band

Main Plaza

101 S Main St, Boerne, TX 78006

www.boernevillageband.com

The Boerne Village Band, founded in 1860 by German immigrant Karl Dienger, is the oldest continuously active German band outside of the Republic of Germany.

6/6/26

Aid the Silent 5K Run/Walk

Main Plaza

101 S Main St, Boerne, TX 78006

www.aidthesilent.com

Participants can take part in this community-driven event to raise awareness and support for Aid the Silent, a nonprofit organization providing resources and empowerment for deaf and hard-of-hearing children and teens.

6/6/26

Veterans Coffee

Ford of Boerne

Black Rifle Coffee Company

101 S Main St Ste A, Boerne, TX 78006

Enjoy a cup of coffee and camaraderie with other veterans on the first Saturday of each month at Boerne's Black Rifle Coffee Company. 8:00-10:00am

6/8/26

American Legion General Membership Meeting

American Legion Post 313

Kendall County EMS Bldg

1175 North Main Street, Boerne, TX 78006

www.alpost313boernetx.org

We meet every second Monday of the month from 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM (with a social/pot luck hour from 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM)

6/9/26

VFW Business Meeting

VFW Post 688

Kendall Masonic Lodge

897 E Blanco, Boerne, TX 78006

www.vfw688.org

6/15/26

Masonic Lodge Stated Meeting

Kendall Masonic Lodge No. 897

897 E Blanco, Boerne, TX 78006

www.kendalllodge897.org

Monthly Stated (Business) Meeting at 7:30; Supper at 6:30

6/19-21/26

Das Festival

Das Festival of Kendall, Inc.

Main Plaza

101 S Main St, Boerne, TX 78006

www.dasfestival.org

Celebrate Father's Day weekend at Das Festival, June 19-21. This annual event honors the rich German heritage of Kendall County with live music, great food, cold beer, and family-friendly fun. Come out and experience one of the Hill Country's most meaningful traditions, all while supporting local nonprofits.

6/27/26

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www.boerneturnverein.com

Tuesdays

Trivia Night

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Boerne Farmers Market

Old City Hall

402 E Blanco Rd

www.boernefm.com

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Wednesdays at 6:30PM

Mens Bible Study

First Baptist Church of Boerne

631 S School St, Boerne, TX 78006

www.fbcboerne.org/men

Join FBCMen for a Bible study on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 PM in the Family Life Building during the school year.

Thursdays

Karaoke Night

Salvador Dobbs

512 River Rd, Boerne, TX 78006

www.salvadordobbs.com

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www.bdmaboerne.com

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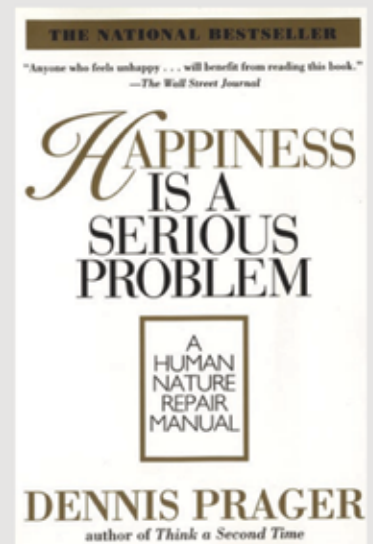
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July 25	The Texas Eagles: An Eagles Tribute	Sept 12	Vic Vaga, That Rod Guy: A Rod Stewart Tribute
		Oct 3	Dreams: A Fleetwood Mac Tribute
		Oct 17	Greggie and the Jets: An Elton John Tribute
		Oct 24	Lost Shaker of Salt Band: A Jimmy Buffett Tribute
		Oct 31	Flower Power Costume Party: The Fab5 (Halloween)
		Nov 27	Band of Confusion: A Genesis Tribute (Thanksgiving Fri.)



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Before It Becomes *a* Memory

by *Brayden Church*

It's strange how life speeds up without asking for permission. One moment, I was a freshman walking into high school for the first time, unsure of everything, where my classes were, who I would sit with at lunch, or even who I was going to become. I remember standing in the hallway, trying to act like I knew where I was going, even when I didn't. Everything felt new and unfamiliar, and every decision, no matter how small, felt important. Now, I'm a senior with less than a month left until graduation, and I can't help but wonder where all that time went. It doesn't feel real. It feels like it all happened overnight.

Back then, everything felt slow. Each day seemed long, and four years sounded

like forever. I remember thinking about graduation as something distant, something I didn't need to worry about yet. It was just an idea, not something real. I thought I had all the time in the world to figure things out, to grow, to become who I wanted to be. But somewhere along the way, time picked up speed. Weeks turned into months, and months turned into years before I even realized it. Now I'm here, looking at the end, wishing I could slow things down just a little, even if only for a moment.

When I look back, I realize how much I've changed. As a freshman, I was different, less confident, still trying to figure out where I fit in. I cared about things that don't matter to

me anymore, like what other people thought of me or whether I was doing everything right. Over time, those worries started to fade, replaced by a better understanding of who I am. I've grown, not just physically but as a person. I've learned how to handle challenges, how to deal with failure, and how to keep going even when things don't go the way I planned. I've learned that mistakes do not define you; they teach you.

One of the biggest changes has been the people in my life. There were people I used to talk to every single day, people I thought would always be there. We had inside jokes, routines, and conversations that felt like they would never end. Now, we barely speak. Not because

anything bad happened, but because life just moved on. Schedules changed, priorities shifted, and slowly, without even noticing, we drifted apart. At the same time, there are people whom I never expected to get close to, but now they are the ones I cannot imagine my life without. It is funny how that works. Friendships change, grow, and sometimes fade, but they all leave some kind of impact. Each person, whether they stayed or not, helped shape this experience in some way.

Lately, during hangouts with my friends, I have started to notice things more. The jokes feel funnier, the conversations feel deeper, and even the quiet moments feel important. Sitting around doing nothing does not feel like nothing anymore; it feels like something I will miss. It is like I am more aware that these moments will not last forever. There is a different kind of appreciation now, a sense that time is limited. We are all about to go our separate ways, different colleges, different paths, different lives, and there is no guarantee things will ever be the same again. That realization makes everything feel a little more meaningful.

There are so many small memories that stand out when I think about high school: walking into class half asleep, laughing at things that did not even make sense, stressing over tests that seem so unimportant now, and just the everyday routine that once felt boring but now feels special. At the time, it was just normal life. It was something I did not think twice about. Now, it feels like something I wish I could go back and relive, even just for a day. Not because it was perfect, but because it was simple, and I did not realize how much it mattered while I was in it.

I have also started thinking more about the little things I used to overlook. Sitting in the parking lot after school, music playing, while nobody wants to leave yet. The feeling of Friday nights, whether it was games, hanging out, or just knowing there was time to relax. Even the walk between classes, seeing the same people every day, exchanging quick conversations that did not seem important at the time. Those moments did not feel significant back then, but now they feel like everything. They were the parts of life that made everything else feel normal.

Even the challenges have a different meaning now. The stress, the early mornings, the pressure to figure out the future, it all felt overwhelming while it was happening. There were moments where everything felt uncertain, where I did not know what I was doing or where I was headed. But looking back, those were the moments that helped shape who I am. They forced me to grow, to adapt, and to keep going even when things felt difficult. Without those experiences, I would not be the same person I am today. The struggles were not just obstacles; they were part of the process.

The truth is, life does not slow down. If anything, it keeps moving faster. That is what makes this moment so important. Being a senior right now is not just about finishing school, it is about realizing how quickly everything can change. It is about understanding that the present moment will not last forever, and that one day, this will all just be a memory. That realization can be a little overwhelming, but it also makes everything feel more valuable.

I do not know exactly what is coming next, and that uncertainty is a little scary. There is comfort in the routine I have known for years, in the familiarity of the same hallways, the same schedule, the same people. Stepping into something new means leaving all of that behind, and that is not easy. But at the same time, it is exciting. There is something about the unknown that feels full of possibility. If these past four years taught me anything, it is that change is constant, and growth comes whether you are ready for it or not.

As graduation gets closer, everything feels more real. The countdown is no longer just a number, it is a reminder that this chapter is ending. Soon, the routine I have known for years will be gone, replaced by something completely new. There is a mix of excitement and nostalgia that is hard to explain, like being ready to move forward but not wanting to let go at the same time. It is a strange feeling, standing between what was and what is next.

In these final days, I find myself paying attention to everything a little more. The sound of laughter in the hallways, the

conversations that do not have a clear ending, and the feeling of being surrounded by people who have been a part of my life for so long. I am trying to take it all in, to remember it as it is right now, not just how I will look back on it later. I know these moments are temporary, but that is exactly why they matter so much.

I have realized that growing up is not just about getting older, it is about understanding more. Understanding people, understanding yourself, and understanding that not everything lasts forever. And maybe that is what makes it all so meaningful. If everything stayed the same, none of it would feel as special as it does now. The fact that these moments are temporary is what gives them value.

Right now, I am just trying to hold onto these last few weeks. To be present. To enjoy every hangout, every laugh, every moment with the people around me. Not to rush through it, not to get too caught up in what is next, but to really be here while I still can. Because if high school taught me anything, it is that time does not wait.

Life moves fast, faster than you ever expect. But maybe the point is not to slow it down. Maybe the point is to be fully there while it is happening, to take it all in while you can. Because one day, this will all just be memories, stories you tell, moments you wish you could revisit. And when that day comes, I want to be able to look back knowing I did not take it for granted, that I was there for it fully while it was still mine.

KG



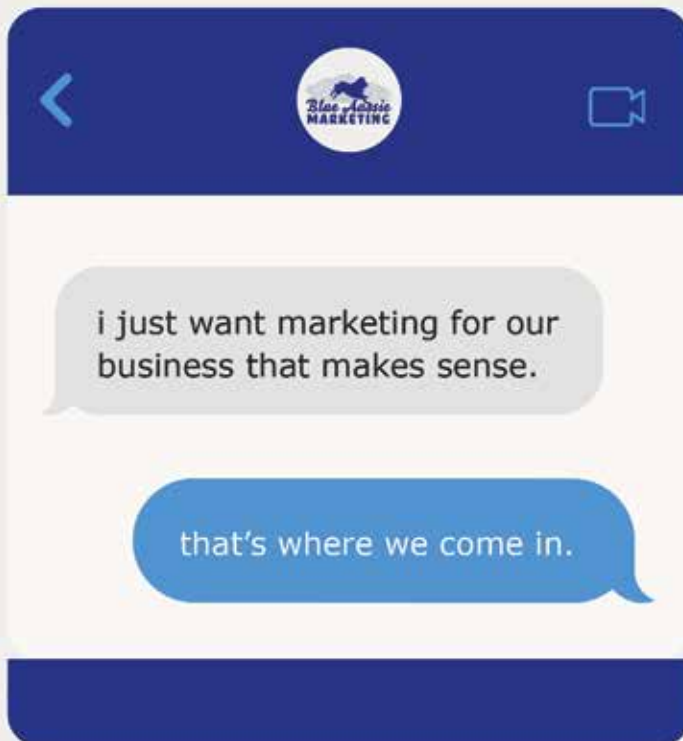
Brayden Church has called Boerne home for seven years and attends Boerne - Samuel V. Champion High School, where he plays football. When he's not on the field, you'll find him outdoors or fishing with friends. Brayden values hard work, teamwork, and the friendships that make life in Kendall County special. We're proud to have Brayden serving as our intern at Oakridge Media!
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SERVING THOSE
WHO GO FIRST

Finding Home Through Service

By Jonathan Mallard

For Officer Eduardo Murillo, service has always been tied to responsibility. Long before he wore a badge in Kendall County, he was learning what it meant to protect and serve through military service, volunteer work, and helping people in crisis.

Murillo was born in San Pedro, Mexico, before his family relocated to Del Rio, Texas when he was still an infant. He became a United States citizen as a teenager and later joined the U.S. Army at 18 years old, following the example of his stepfather's military service. Over the next several years, he served on active duty as a forward observer before transitioning into Army Reserve counterintelligence work.

While serving, Murillo also pursued higher education, often balancing coursework alongside demanding field exercises.

"I remember nights we'd be in the field, negative 14 degrees, snowing, trying to complete assignments in the tent," Murillo said. "My supervisors saw how dedicated I was and pushed me to continue school."

That discipline eventually led him to earn both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of the Incarnate Word before attending the police academy through San Antonio College.

Before entering law enforcement full time, Murillo worked in the medical field as a surgical technician and later with Child Protective Services. Those experiences shaped how he viewed service and strengthened his desire to directly help vulnerable people.

"I felt like there was more that could be done," he said. "Law enforcement gave me the opportunity to do more for the community."

Murillo joined the Boerne Police Department three years ago after discovering the Hill Country during visits to Boerne Lake. What began as an appreciation for the outdoors quickly became something deeper.

"It reminds me of home, but it isn't home," Murillo said. "It's like a new home for me."

Today, Murillo serves primarily on night shift patrol, where much of the work happens while the city sleeps. He says many residents never fully see the realities officers encounter overnight.

"They don't see the officers in the middle of the street at night dealing with situations behind the scenes," he said. "There's a lot that happens when the city is asleep."

For Murillo, the work became deeply personal during a case involving a child he had helped earlier in his career. Months later, while working Dickens on Main, the child recognized him in a crowded event and approached him directly.

"She told me, 'Thank you for rescuing me,'" Murillo said. "Those words just cut through my heart."

That moment confirmed for him that the difficult work mattered.

"It reminded me why I started," he said.

Outside of work, Murillo finds ways to decompress through painting, drawing, cooking, fishing, and spending time outdoors. The slower pace of creative hobbies helps balance the intensity of patrol work and allows him to reset after long nights on duty.

Murillo first encountered Hope for Heroes Texas while training as a younger officer. At first, he assumed the organization's support events were occasional gatherings. Over time, he realized the support was consistent and deeply intentional.

"I thought it was just a special event for that day," Murillo said. "But then I realized this was constant. It's a reminder to keep pushing forward and that you're appreciated for what you do."

Working nights has limited his ability to attend many of the organization's daytime luncheons, but he says the impact is still visible throughout the department.

"It gives officers the feeling that there's a community out there ready to help," he said. "It creates an open door."

Murillo also believes organizations like Hope for Heroes Texas help strengthen relationships between first responders across Kendall County by creating opportunities to connect outside of emergencies and stressful calls.

"It's good to have that interaction in a capacity that isn't work," he said. "You get to actually talk to each other and catch up as people."

For Murillo, support from the community often comes in simple moments. A handshake, a thank you, or someone saying "God bless you" during a long shift can go a long way.

"It reminds you that you're doing the right thing," he said.

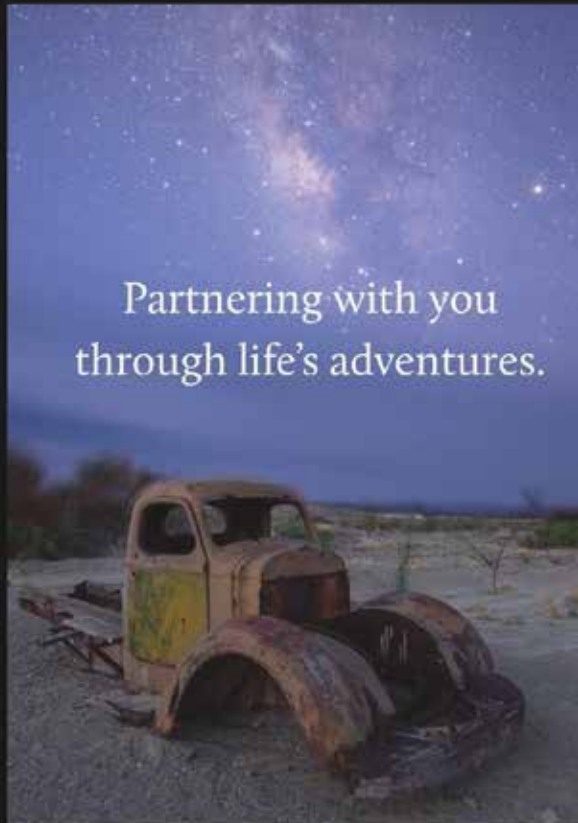
Brad Cornell, founder of Hope for Heroes Texas, says Murillo's story reflects the kind of commitment that defines many first responders across the Hill Country.

"Eduardo represents what service looks like when it becomes part of a person's character," Cornell said. "Whether through military service, volunteering, protecting children, or serving the Boerne community, he has consistently chosen a life centered around helping others. At Hope for Heroes Texas, our mission is to make sure first responders know their sacrifices are seen, appreciated, and supported by the community they serve."

KG



Jonathan R. Mallard is a retired U.S. Army Sergeant and Combat Medic who served with the 772nd Forward Surgical Team, 101st Airborne Division, providing lifesaving care in Iraq and Afghanistan. After more than a decade with the 36th Infantry Division, he now captures stories of faith and community through photography across the Texas Hill Country while pursuing a Theology degree at Grand Canyon University. jonathan@thekendallgentleman.com



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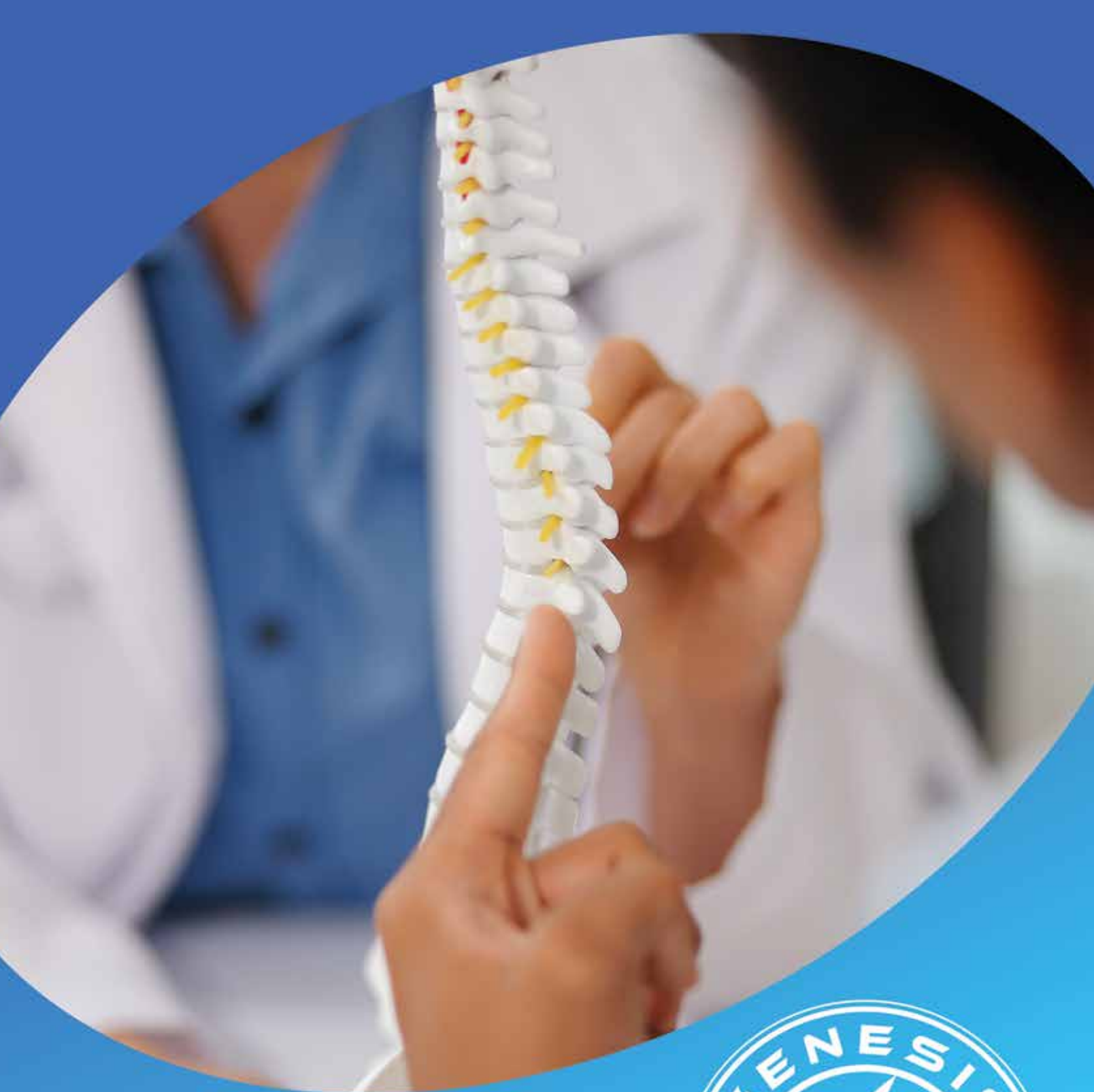
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The Pecos River *and the* Starlight Canvas

By Jed Mazour

I have done my best to explain how unforgiving the terrain is. I have emphasized the uncomfortable fact that there is only one way in and one way out. Rain or shine, cold northern winds or hot, stale summer air, we have no control. The realities of an excursion like this have been conveyed to the best of my abilities. No one can say, "I didn't know!" - that's how clear this has to be. In my experience traveling these rivers the way we do, most people will not commit. They make excuses often disguised as reasons, like a recent family situation, a sudden health concern, or a last-minute work conflict. Whatever the reasoning, the group whittles away little by little until there is only a fraction left. I know life interferes, but what I am trying to say is that the average "outdoorsy" guy will almost always cancel his commitment. This time, however, is much, much different.

It's about 5 p.m., and we are just rolling into Marlene's place outside of Del Rio, Texas. It's been a little while, and I was excited to introduce Marlene to everyone. The first things people notice are her pet turkeys, guineas, and strangely large roosters. They are really cute - until around 4 a.m. Soon enough, Mike Naccarato with Far West Texas Outfitters makes his way over to introduce himself. Although Mike and I have never floated together, we have been brainstorming this trip for a while. Mike is a character blend of East Austin and Alpine, West Texas: cool and slightly trendy, but rough and resourceful - definitely a guy you want to befriend. Adam works for Far West Texas Outfitters and joined our trip as well. He is a much quieter, but extremely knowledgeable and calculated guy. When he talks, you'd better listen, because you are probably about to learn something.

With the sun setting behind the mesquite trees and pila, you can smell the smoke from the BBQ pit. The next handful of hours are spent cooking fajitas, prepping our gear, storytelling, and calming any nervousness you might still have. There is really something special about the evenings at Marlene's. Sometimes I get a sense this is one of those moments in life I captured at just the right time. Things come and go, people

move on, times change, and so does our environment. But today, things are perfect.

Me, Denise (my wife), Matt Riebel, Erin Smith, Hunter (my son), Chad Sill, and Rusty Chiles: The Rough Riders. Well, not quite, but for the sake of this story, let's go with it. Seven canoes and one kayak. About 3,500 pounds of gear, people, and boats. We are embarking on a four-day voyage into unknown territory - at least as far as we are concerned. From Marlene's to our drop location is about a two-hour drive. It's not the distance, but rather the ranch road conditions that make the trip so time-consuming. As we make our way across the dusty desert, you can start to see what looks like a drop in the landscape. I knew exactly what was coming, so I made sure everyone was ready to soak in what was about to appear. If you've ever seen an old western movie where a cowboy and his horse are at a full gallop and suddenly pull the reins just before running off a cliff - well, this is it! At the bottom of this three-hundred-foot cliff is a secret oasis. It is almost like an artery that pumps just enough to keep its dependent wildlife alive in a volatile environment. The water is a rich emerald green that strikes a beautiful contrast against the aged, gray rocky cliffs that line the banks. Above the gray is the vast, endless bluebird sky. You don't have to be an artist to imagine this scenery, but you might wish you were one so you could paint the memory.

Due to our arrival time, the decision was made to set up camp at our drop location and push off in the morning. This wasn't bad news. Right above our camp is an area the size of a football field covered in petroglyphs (images carved in the limestone) and about a mile or so of cold, clear, deep water. This was my second time investigating the petroglyph site. It's puzzling staring at so many drawings and not being able to understand exactly what they are trying to communicate. Some are obvious - arrowheads, bows, handprints, and such - but the amount of random circles, connecting lines, and shapes will certainly leave you perplexed. I'm beginning to think I have a reasonable idea of what they mean, though. I will tie that in later in my story.

The next morning, we were eager to push off and get started on our 23-mile expedition. Right away, we hit our first set of rapids. They were fairly easily negotiated, but a few people took the high route and portaged. If you don't kayak much, I should explain: after each rapid, the water dumps into an eddy, or a deep pocket of water. This is always a prime location to stop and spend some time fishing or swimming. Making our way slowly downriver, we frequently came across this pattern of rapids and eddies. You start to know what to expect pretty quickly. Although you never knew just how big and fast-moving the next set of rapids was going to be, that was part of the excitement!

On day two, our guide, Mike, log-jammed his canoe in some pretty serious water but was able to retrieve it without any major issues. I am not sure why, but after I saw that, I decided to give it a try myself. It was not a normal decision for me, as I typically lean toward caution. As soon as I committed downward, I'll be honest, I was doubting myself. But there was no time for that! Heading straight for the same rock Mike jammed on, I put my leg out and kicked off to change my direction just in time, sending me perfectly down into calmer water. Whew! That was a close call, and I knew it. It was time to focus a little more on my decision-making.

Each day was a new episode, and each episode was filled with bass fishing. The water clarity was a concern of mine coming into the trip. If you can see them, they can see you, and that typically means easily spooked fish. That is not applicable on the Pecos. This place is so remote and unpressured that the fish have absolutely no idea what to think about you or the tackle you are using. Translation: excellent fishing! I would estimate the total number of bass caught on this trip to be somewhere in the 150-200 range. The best part was that it became normal to catch fish in the 3-to-5-pound range as we progressed downriver.

On day three, the canyon walls started to close in, making it much easier to look for pictographs and cutting down some of the north wind. This really made things



feel surreal. I began to imagine that this might have been a vulnerable feeling for the Indigenous people walking the riverbed. As you lift your chin to see the tops of the cliffs, you can sense that danger from above was surely an instinctual concern.

As we drifted ashore to portage around a rapid, we noticed what I can best describe as a grotto at the base of a small tributary leading into the river. It was a perfect circle of calm, clean, deep water. This MUST have been where they leisurely swam or bathed; you couldn't possibly find a prettier or more convenient spot! Naturally, we made a few casts in the pool before swimming. Some of our biggest bass were caught in and around this area.

Mike let us know that if we climbed up about 30 yards, there was a large painting in a cave just above the kayaks. As we reached the cave entrance, you were immediately face-to-face with a 15-to-20-foot-long painting. To me, it appeared to be some sort of calendar. These pictographs that line the Pecos River for miles and miles are as old as 5,500 years - some of the oldest paintings in the entire United States. Against the wall, you can still see where they burned their fires, leaving the stone black from the smoke. A large pile of flint tailings filled the edge of the cave. Standing there, you could close your eyes and imagine a family thousands of years ago tending a fire, working on arrowheads, and children swimming in the grotto below. From this position, they could work, cook, and watch anything approaching from up or downriver. I got the feeling that tribes would make long, tortuous journeys to get to these cave locations, maybe seasonally or for ritual reasons. But the fact that they returned for thousands of years, leaving their stories in paintings on top of paintings from thousands of years prior, means this place was important. Eventually, we all found



ourselves on our hands and knees, sifting our fingers through the cool, powdery, dry sand, hoping to find some kind of artifact. Then it happened. I noticed a sharp angle on a small stone. I reached down and slowly picked it up. It was a small arrowhead, about the size of a woman's fingernail, in almost perfect condition! It was so small I could only imagine it was used for birds or tiny rodents. What an incredible moment!

At night, we shared stories, passed around good whiskey, and watched Hunter tend to his lines for catfish. The campfire illuminated the canyon walls with a beautiful, deep orange. The dark silhouette of the rocky riverbed flickered in the light. Steep walls on both sides of the river provide a window to the galaxy above. Lying there on your back, you can watch the constellations move across the night sky with the Earth's rotation: the handle of the Big Dipper pointing to the North Star, Orion with his mighty saber, and countless others. It is a live view of an endless universe. Then I realized: the circles, connecting lines, and characters at the petroglyph site are images of what the Indigenous people saw in the starlight canvas. At least, that's my take.

I've enjoyed writing these articles and telling some of our stories. It always makes me smile when someone says they took the time to



read it, but I think the most enjoyable part has been exploring ways to explain it in my own words - not for creative reasons, but in hopes that someday my grandchildren, and maybe their kids, will enjoy reading the stories of our lives. Maybe it will feel a little familiar to them the next time they pick up a fishing rod and gather around a campfire.

KG



Jed Mazour has lived in Boerne for over 30 years with his wife, Denise, and their two kids. An avid outdoorsman, he leads the faith-based Boerne Bass Club, helping youth anglers in grades 6-12 compete in bass fishing while sharing his passion for the area's natural beauty and opportunities. jed@thekendallgentleman.com



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Cinco de Mayo

By Clay Smoot

It is that time of year, San Antonio's Fiesta has just ended, and Cinco de Mayo is upon us. This year, it lands on Taco Tuesday, which is something I think we have all been training for. So, I think now is an appropriate time to review The Cinco de Mayo Limited Edition 2026 by Rojas Cigars. So, grab a cigar, cutter, torch, y some tequila and get ready to go down the camino for this pachanga-style cigar review. Why pachanga-style? Because this cigar is a celebration of everything that blends South Texas with our Mexican heritage.

Rojas Cigars is a boutique line of cigars that is based in Richardson, Texas. The company was founded by Noel Rojas, an immigrant from Cuba, and is famous for its unique cigar line named "street tacos". The cigar line includes the always delicious barbacoa, the carnitas, and the recently introduced al pastor cigar. The barbacoa and carnitas cigars are two of The Cigar Society's most popular cigars. Most people purchase the name and the logo, then they become repeat buyers because of the flavor of these cigars. The Cinco de Mayo falls into the same category.

I was introduced to this cigar line by way of the barbacoa cigar a couple of years ago. As a lover of barbacoa tacos and cigars, I knew I had to try this cigar based on the name alone. Based on that experience, I started to try other Rojas blends, eventually trying The Cinco de Mayo in 2024. The 2024 and 2025 versions were fantastic, but the 2026 version is different than previous years. It has a unique oilier feel. It's torta (thicker), leche quemada (creamier), and Big Red (sweeter).

I poured myself a decent amount of Tierra Noble Tequila Blanco to sip on. I grabbed my cigar punch and lit the cigar, twisting it to make sure it was well lit. On my first deep draw, I immediately noticed an oilier feel to the wrapper. Typically, the oilier anything in life isn't something you want, but on a cigar, it adds a ton of character and more flavor to your overall experience. After that, I started to taste bold brown sugar, which offsets

some other notes of woodiness. I expected to taste a bit of spice or some punch, but I was surprised by its absence. To fit my mood, I grabbed the nearest sombrero I could find.

The first half of this cigar was a constant and consistent reminder of the powerful flavors that reside in it. During this time, I was met with a light berry, cedar, and sweet flavor that added more to the creaminess of the whole cigar. It was almost as good as a great piece of tres leche cake, but not soggy. At this point, I was on the lookout for a serape (yes, I do own one). Because everyone knows, a sombrero without a serape is like Pancho Villa without Emiliano Zapata. It doesn't sound or look right to have one without the other.

By the time I got to the second half of this cigar and second generous pour of tequila, I was almost as lit as my cigar and was on my second round of backyard Mariachi Karaoke, gringo style. I was singing broken Tex-Mex Spanglish with a Texas drawl, while doing a duet of "Volver, Volver" with Vicente Fernández full blast on the Turtlebox. Mexican-American Idol, here I come! The second half started to feel "thicker", like a "torta" with the addition of black pepper spiciness and a big presence of bold, earthy flavors. Then the caramelized brown sugar (no, not my wife) started to waft back onto my palate.

As I neared the end of the cigar, venturing into the bottom half of the tequila bottle, I tried to focus on all of the great qualities of the Cinco de Mayo 2026 version. Instead, I almost got caught up in my feelings going back and forth between Selená's "Tu Solo Tu" y George Strait's amazing twangy version of "El Rey". Yet, I kept it together in between accordion screams to relish in the smoothness, sweetness, complexity, and balance of a cigar that is solid and would brighten up any humidor with its bright blue band.

I do have to say that I do have one regret with this cigar, and that is the fact that I failed to pair it with the champagne and caviar of South Texas, two barbacoa tacos, and a Big Red.

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Yes, any and all.

Food

Chips and queso, birria, and tres leche cake.

KG



Clay Smoot is the owner of The Cigar Society, a local business dedicated to offering premium cigars for aficionados. His carefully curated selection, including the featured cigar in this issue, is available at popular Kendall County spots like Free Roam Brewing Company and Roc-N-Ritas, providing a perfect pairing for great company. clay@thekendallgentleman.com



Maybe So

By Coach Stan Leech

I was introduced to this story years ago by a dear family friend, Jackie Cargill. Jackie was one of those steady people every town hopes to have...thoughtful, respected, and committed to making things better. In Brownfield, he served in leadership in many ways, and on April 29, 1997, while serving as Development Director, he wrote a welcoming message for a Chamber of Commerce event.

Most welcome letters are read once and forgotten. Jackie's was different. He slipped wisdom into it. He told a simple story about an old Chinese farmer. It was short, humble, and easy to miss if you were in a hurry. But I wasn't in too much of a hurry that day, and the story has stayed with me ever since.

There once was an old Chinese farmer who lived quietly in a small village. He didn't have much, just a small plot of land and one faithful horse that helped him work the fields. One morning the horse was gone. The gate was open, and the animal had disappeared.

The villagers gathered quickly. In small towns, news often travels faster than truth. They shook their heads and said, "That's terrible. What bad luck."

The old farmer listened and calmly replied, "Maybe so, maybe not."

A few days later, the horse returned. Not only did it come back, but it brought with it several wild horses from the hills. Suddenly, the farmer had more help than he had ever imagined.

The villagers returned smiling. "That's wonderful news. You are so fortunate."

The old farmer simply said, "Maybe so, maybe not."

Later, the farmer's son tried to tame one of the wild horses. The horse threw him hard to the ground, breaking his leg. Again, the villagers gathered with sympathy. "That's awful," they said. "How unfortunate."

The old farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not."

Not long after, a warlord came through the village, taking every able-bodied young man to fight in a terrible war. The farmer's son, unable to walk because of his broken leg, was left behind.

The villagers returned once more. "You are so lucky," they said. "Your son was spared."

The old farmer looked across his field and said, "Maybe so, maybe not."

That story has followed me for nearly thirty years. I've shared it mostly with teams and coaches. I've told it after tough losses, when emotions were high, and everyone wanted to decide the season in one night. I've told it when a key player was lost from injury for the season and people assumed everything good had walked out the door with him.

The first narrative is always that it is bad news. Season is over. Momentum gone. Dreams crushed. But the wiser response is often simpler: we don't know yet.

Sometimes a team loses an important player and discovers toughness, depth, leadership, and togetherness it never knew it had. Sometimes a painful loss in December exposes weaknesses that can still be fixed before February and March. Sometimes the very thing that looked like disaster becomes the turning point.

I've also shared this story when teams start hot. They win early, beat good people, and everybody starts saying, "We're going to win it all." That's when the story is useful too. Slow down. We don't know yet.

A fast start can build confidence, but it can also build carelessness. Praise can distract just as much as pain can discourage. Winning in November does not guarantee winning later, just as losing now does not cancel what can still happen later.

That old farmer understood something many of us forget. He refused to let one moment tell the whole story. He didn't overreact to setbacks or celebrate success. He simply kept working and let time reveal the meaning.

There's a verse in Ecclesiastes that says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time." That verse doesn't promote instant understanding. It promises that time has a way of uncovering purpose.

I can look back now and see moments in my own life that felt like losses but became preparation. Doors that closed. Plans

changed. Seasons that ended. At the time, I would have called them setbacks. Looking back, I see they were steps.

I've also had moments that felt like victories but came with burdens I didn't expect. Success often carries responsibility. Opportunity often requires sacrifice. Even good news asks something from us.

The message I receive from Jackie's story is simple: keep moving, keep working, keep thinking. We also do too much talking. Sometimes after bad news we talk too much. Sometimes after good news we talk too much. Sometimes, the best response is not another speech, another complaint, or another celebration. Sometimes the best response is simply to move forward.

Soon enough, time will tell us what it was.

I recently reread Jackie Cargill's 1997 message and smiled at how well it still holds up. Jackie closed with these words:

"Suggestions and complaints from friends and neighbors are important and help us evaluate our perspective; however, if we all work together for one common goal, sometimes what seems to be bad luck turns out to be good."

That's leadership. That's wisdom. That's perspective.

I've learned that news is not good or bad... it's just the current step in the journey.

Maybe So.

Maybe Not.

KG



Coach Leech, now in his 40th year with Boerne ISD and 27th as Athletic Director, is a legendary high school basketball coach and a respected leader in the community. Beyond the basketball court, he has devoted over 30 years to teaching Sunday School at First Baptist Church, exemplifying his commitment to faith and mentorship. stan@thekendallgentleman.com

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FIND A WAY

The Making of Jordan Ballin

By Michael G. Ethridge

Photography by Jonathan R. Mallard

In Kendall County, people don't hand out respect easily.

They'll notice talent. They'll show up on a Friday night and watch a kid throw it, hit it, or run past everybody on the field. But respect is a different transaction. It takes time, and it usually comes down to one question that nobody asks out loud.

Can I trust him?

That's the word that keeps following Jordan Ballin around Boerne. Not in a billboard kind of way. In the quiet way people talk when they've watched somebody long enough to know who he is. Coaches use it. Teammates use it. Younger players use it.

Leader.

Not because he's been trying to be one. Because at some point he realized people were watching, and he decided to carry himself like it mattered.

At twenty years old, Jordan is our youngest cover story subject yet, which makes this feature all the more exciting. He was born in San Antonio at St. Luke's Hospital in the spooky stretch of October. His dad was working a haunted house at the time. His grandmother had to call him there and tell him to get to the hospital. He made it.

Jordan's parents were teen parents. His mom had him at seventeen. His dad was eighteen.

Both were collegiate-level basketball players in Amarillo, his dad at Caprock and his mom at Randall. Both had basketball futures lined up. Neither of those futures survived contact with a baby.

"Our joke is that we all grew up together," Jordan said. "Just the three of us."

His parents shelved the basketball plans, moved to San Antonio when his grandfather got a management opportunity, and got to work. Both eventually attended UTSA. The same UTSA Jordan now plays for. The same campus he wandered as a four-year-old, sitting in their classes, getting treated like, in his words, "a little adult." He still sits in the same classrooms his parents sat in. Some of the desks probably haven't changed either. People comment on Jordan's maturity like it's a trait he was born with. It isn't. It's a habit. The kind that gets built when your parents are still in their twenties and you're already at the table.

Jordan grew up surrounded by sports. Football, baseball, basketball, soccer, whatever was in season. There wasn't a quiet weekend in the Ballin house. There also wasn't a losing mentality. The family lived by a phrase Jordan now wears on his glove and has tattooed on his body.

Find a way.

Sophomore year of high school, Jordan was in a slump. He had come off a strong

freshman season, made varsity as a freshman, and was starting to believe he belonged. Then the hits stopped falling.

After one rough game he came home and sat with his parents on the back porch. They were hard on him. They have always been hard on him, and he says it the way a man says it when he knows it was the right kind of hard.

At the end of the conversation, his mom looked at him and said, "At the end of the day, you just gotta find a way."

Then she added the line that anchored it. "How do you think me and your dad felt when we had you? We found a way to raise the man you are today. We're not going to stop now."

A slogan changes when the situation changes. A standard doesn't. That was the moment "find a way" became Jordan's standard.

He's living inside it right now. Two surgeries in the past few months, one for a broken hamate bone in his hand at the end of last season, another for a fractured leg in the fall. Most kids would take the redshirt. Jordan was back weeks early, rehabbing and playing at the same time, and got the start on opening day.

When the press asked him about it after a recent walk-off win, he gave them a sentence he had clearly thought about a long time.

“The past brings you depression. The future brings you anxiety. So you just gotta live in the moment. Be where your feet are.”

He doesn’t describe his realization that he was a leader as a single moment. But if you press him, he’ll tell you the seed was planted when his brother Jackson was born.

That was third grade. He still remembers being pulled out of Mrs. Stewart’s class, his grandmother in the front office, and the words “Jackson’s here.” Cinco de Mayo. The two of them are ten years apart, and Jordan calls his brother’s birth one of the best moments of his life.

His parents told him something that day that ended up shaping everything after. There’s another set of eyes on you now. Whatever you do, he’s going to do. So decide what you want him to see.

By middle school, Jordan had become the guy his tight friend group went to when something was breaking down. Coach Harbuk handed him an award at South that he still thinks about. The line that stuck wasn’t about his stat sheet. It was that Jordan was the kind of player who could lead from the front and still pick up the ones struggling in the back. Two skills that don’t usually live in the same body.

The leadership got tested in football. Junior year at Champion, after most of the seniors had graduated, the locker room started talking like the season was already lost. Jordan pushed back without raising his voice.

“The season hasn’t even started, and you’re saying this. Why don’t we just play? Why don’t we use what we have to our advantage?” Some guys lead by yelling. Jordan leads by

suggesting. He doesn’t tell teammates what to do. That’s a coach’s job. He offers a way to think about it, then goes and does the thing himself. When his team wins, he never says “I won the game.” He says “we won the game.” He calls it quiet leadership. You can scan the field and not pick him out as the leader at first. You’ll figure it out by the third inning.

The other defining football moment came senior year, in a game that wasn’t going Champion’s way. Jordan’s offensive coordinator, Coach Brown, was outwardly calm. Jordan wasn’t.

Brown looked at him and said, “Look at me. Do I look upset?”

“No, sir.”

“Then why are you upset?”

He waited a beat and drove it home. The leader’s demeanor sets the demeanor of the team. If the leader is mooney, the team is mooney. If the leader is composed, the team has somewhere to look.

Jordan still carries that conversation. He says it like a young man who has decided being the kind of person younger people watch is not optional.

“You gotta be the person you want your kids to be when they’re older.”

He is twenty years old when he says this.

The first college offer came his freshman year of high school. Other offers followed. None of them mattered the same way.

UTSA was already home. His parents had bled orange and blue for years before he was old enough to know what the colors meant.







His brother Jackson now serves as bat boy at UTSA games, the same role he played in high school. The family that started in a haunted house and a hospital twenty years ago all sits in the same set of seats now.

Last spring, UTSA went to a regional. Nobody picked them to. They were a mid-major in a state that worships the schools with the practice facilities and the NIL money. They beat Texas. The last pitch was thrown, the strikeout was called, and the dugout exploded.

Jordan stayed back for a moment after the celebration. He sat there and looked at the empty field, the lights still on, the scoreboard reading UTSA WINS. He says it didn't fully land until that quiet moment.

"Nobody thought we would be in a regional this year. We don't have the facilities Texas has. We don't have the NIL money some people talk about. We played for the love of the game, the love of the teammates, the love of the coaches, the love for the city."

That sentence sits at the heart of why Jordan plays the way he plays.

Jordan grew up Catholic. Confirmed, raised in the church, steered through it by parents who talked to him about God in every conversation, not just on Sunday morning. He says it didn't fully click when he was little. Most things don't.

It started clicking when life got quiet enough to hear it.

The two surgeries were the test. Long stretches of physical therapy. Long stretches off the field. Plenty of nights with the hamster wheel running in his head.

He describes a moment in bed, after he had finished scrolling, finished playing video games, finished doing all the things you do to avoid yourself. He let go.

"God, if this is what you have planned for me, please just allow me to trust you."

He prays before every game. He prays at night. He prays when things are good and when things are not. The story he relates to most is David and Goliath. He is not the biggest, strongest, or fastest. But the math changes when the right partner is in the box with you. The verse he keeps coming back to is Philippians 4:13. He sounds like a young man explaining something he has actually had to use.

When his playing days are over, Jordan does not want a highlight reel as his legacy in Kendall County. He has thought about this carefully, and his answer is one word.

Humility.

"I don't want to be a 'me guy,'" he said. "I want people to know that the tears I cried,

win or lose, are because of how much I poured into this place."

The funny thing is, he is already that guy. New families to Boerne tell him their kids picked him as their favorite player before they had even met him. He always makes time for the high fives. He remembers being the kid who wanted one.

Jordan Ballin's story isn't built on noise. It's built on repetition, on habits, on showing up the same way when it matters and when it doesn't. It's built on a teenage couple in Amarillo who decided a baby wasn't a stop sign. It's built on a brother born on Cinco de Mayo who turned an only child into a leader without trying. It's built on a porch in Boerne, where a mom said five words to her son that he never put down.

Jordan Ballin has earned his place as The Kendall Gentleman.

And if you had to sum it up the way his family does, the way his team does, the way he himself does when the inning is bad and the box looks small, you could do it in three words.

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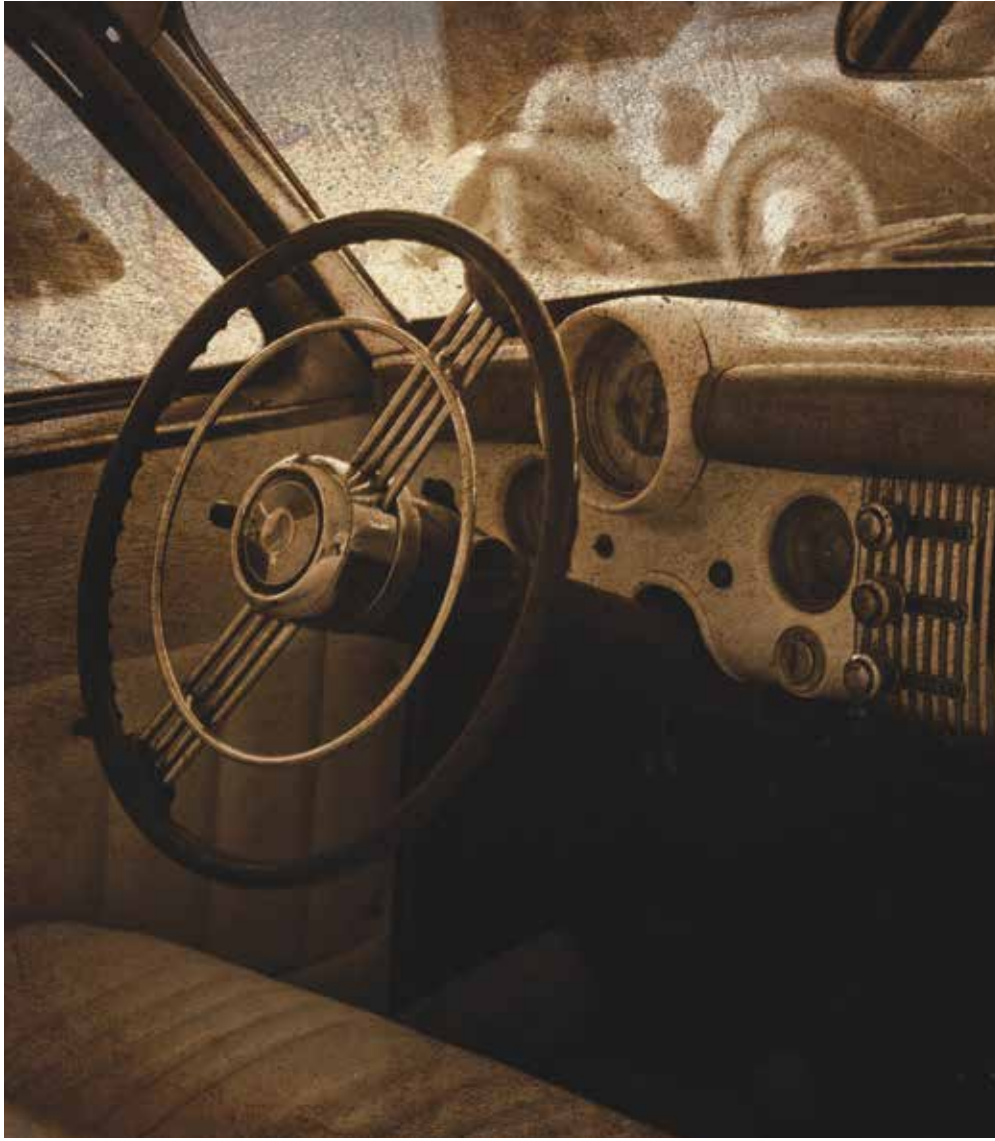
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Felipe and the Schwarz Field

By John Eddie Vogt

Published in 2011, the late John Eddie Vogt's book, Witches, Bitches, and Other Small Town Folks, brings to life the quirky, unforgettable, and entertaining tales of growing up and living in Kendall County from the 1930s through the 1960s. Thanks to the gracious permission of his family, The Kendall Gentleman is honored to share excerpts from his book for your enjoyment.

I was probably the most spoiled brat that there ever was. Felipe Leal worked for my dad and he could have verified the fact. I would call from home that I wanted to go to

my dad's store (now 152 S. Main) and Daddy would make Felipe come get me.

I remember the time that Felipe picked me up and we were driving down what is now Lohman Street. We were in an old Buick coupe, probably about a 1933 or '34. It had the throttle lever on the steering wheel and Felipe pulled the lever down and put his feet upon the steering wheel and drove down the road that way. I would have probably never remembered anything about this incident except for the fact that he told me to never tell Daddy what he had done. I never told, but I remember the happening today as clearly as if it had happened yesterday.

Something else I remember is that the road was extremely muddy and we slid all over the roadway. This was when the area between Lohman and Johns Road was only an open field called the Schwarz Field. No schools, no parking lots, no jillion kids.

Mr. Schwarz had an old steam engine tractor. It would move at about two or three miles per hour, if that fast. It was used to drive the belt that drove the thrashing machine which separated the grain from the chaff. There was a loud whistle, that was driven by the steam, that was sounded to let everyone know that Mr. Schwarz was coming (as if there was any doubt!). If he had already entered the field for the work, it was sounded to call the crew to come work. At the lunch break everyone would take a nap and the whistle would wake them from their slumber.

Mrs. Adolph Schwartz told me that at one time the Cibolo Creek came up and they had a cow tied down on the field in the vicinity of where Middle School North is today on Johns Road. She told me the water jumped over the bluff about where Schleicher and School Streets intersect and ran across the flat area to a depth of the belly of the cow. Of course the educated engineers of today would tell you this impossible because there is not a large enough area for the water to run off. Do you trust the story of an eyewitness or the knowledge of a college graduate?

I remember when the concrete sidewalk was built along the north side of Johns Road from Main Street to the front of the high school (now Middle School North). Ed Kaiser was the janitor and also the athletic coach. Yes that is a correct statement, both. He was cutting down a hackberry tree that was in the way of the sidewalk and the axe slipped and he cut his leg very severely. From that day on he would walk with a limp. This did not keep him from continuing as coach up until the mid to late forties. This was when it was customary for the linemen to chew tobacco and spit into the eyes of the opponents at the snap of the ball. Mr. Kaiser was also the lifeguard at the city swimming pool (at the far west end of the plaza area). I can remember him going to Daddy and talking him into buying me a season ticket for the pool. Dad finally gave in and paid Mr. Kaiser the unbelievable sum of \$2.50 so I could swim whenever I wished. This may sound funny to many of you today, but this was during the time when most people were paid the fantastic sum of \$1.00 per day for a full day of work.

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August Hoffman (1843–1862)

A Young Freethinker's Final Journey

By Tom Allred, Sr.

One of Comfort's Fallen Unionists

In the Hill Country town of Comfort, where German heritage runs deep and the past is never far from view, the name August Hoffman holds a solemn place in local memory. His life was brief, his story tragic, and yet his legacy endures in one of the most remarkable monuments in Texas — the Treue der Union obelisk, which bears his name among those who died for their convictions during the Civil War.

Though only nineteen when he lost his life, August Hoffman represents the courage, idealism, and moral clarity that defined the

German-Texan communities of the mid-19th century. His story is woven into the fabric of Kendall County's early history, a reminder of the sacrifices made by young settlers who valued principle above personal safety.

A Childhood in a New World

August Hoffman was born in 1843, likely in one of the German states that sent so many families to Texas during the 1840s and 1850s. His parents, like thousands of others, left behind a Europe marked by political unrest, rigid social hierarchies, and limited opportunities. Texas — with its promise of land, freedom, and self-determination —

offered a fresh start.

The Hoffman family settled in the Hill Country, where German immigrants were building new communities along the Guadalupe River and its tributaries. August grew up in or near what would become Comfort, a settlement known for its strong Freethinker identity. His childhood would have been shaped by:

Hard work on the family farm

A close-knit German-speaking community

Exposure to Enlightenment ideals

A culture that valued education, debate, and civic responsibility

Comfort was not just another frontier town. It was a place where ideas mattered — where settlers discussed philosophy, politics, and the responsibilities of citizenship. Young August would have absorbed these values from an early age.

The Freethinker Influence

The German settlers of the Hill Country were deeply influenced by the Freethinker movement, a tradition rooted in the failed democratic revolutions of 1848. Many of the immigrants who arrived in Texas were intellectuals, craftsmen, and political refugees who believed in:

Democracy and representative government

Freedom of thought and speech

Secular education

Opposition to slavery

These ideals set the German communities apart from much of the rest of Texas in the years leading up to the Civil War. When the state seceded from the Union in 1861, many German settlers — including the Hoffmans — found themselves at odds with the Confederate government.

For young men like August, the conflict was not merely political. It was moral.

A Community Under Pressure

By 1862, the Confederate government had imposed mandatory military service. For the German-Texan Freethinkers, this presented an impossible dilemma. They could not, in good conscience, fight for a cause they believed violated the principles of liberty and human dignity. Yet refusing to serve carried severe consequences.

The Hill Country became a place of tension and fear. Confederate patrols monitored German settlements. Suspicion fell on anyone who expressed Unionist sympathies. Arrests and harassment were common.

In this climate, a group of roughly sixty German Unionists — many of them barely adults — made a fateful decision. They would flee to Mexico, where they hoped to avoid conscription and eventually join Union forces. Among them was August Hoffman, just nineteen years old.

The Final Journey

In early August 1862, the group set out on horseback, traveling south through the rugged brush country toward the Rio Grande. Their journey was dangerous, but their resolve was strong. They believed they were acting in accordance with their deepest principles — principles instilled in them by their families and their community.

On the night of August 10, 1862, as the group camped along the Nueces River, Confederate forces launched a surprise attack. The German Unionists were outnumbered and caught off guard. The fighting was brief and devastating.

August Hoffman was among those killed.

Some of the wounded were executed after the battle — a grim detail that has haunted the Hill Country's memory for generations. A few survivors managed to escape into the brush and eventually reach Mexico, but most of the young men, including August, never returned home.

A Community in Mourning

News of the massacre spread quickly through the Hill Country. Families were devastated. Mothers, fathers, siblings, and neighbors mourned the loss of young men whose lives had barely begun.

For the Hoffman family, the grief must have been overwhelming. August had been a son, a brother, a friend — a young man with hopes and plans for the future. His death, like those of his companions, left a void that could never be filled.

Yet even in their sorrow, the community found a way to honor the fallen.

Treue der Union: A Monument to Loyalty

In 1866, four years after the tragedy, the people of Comfort erected the Treue der Union Monument — a simple limestone obelisk dedicated to the men who died at the Nueces. The monument's name, meaning "Loyalty to the Union," reflects the values that guided August Hoffman and his companions.

August's name is carved into the stone alongside those of his fellow Unionists. The monument stands over a communal grave containing the remains of many of the men, brought home by their families after the war.

The Treue der Union Monument is one of the only Union memorials on former Confederate soil. It remains a powerful symbol of the German-Texan commitment to conscience, liberty, and democratic ideals.

The Legacy of August Hoffman

Though August Hoffman lived only nineteen years, his legacy is profound. He represents:

The courage of the Hill Country's German settlers

The moral clarity of the Freethinker tradition

The willingness to stand by one's beliefs, even at great personal risk

His story reminds us that history is shaped not only by generals and politicians, but also by young men and women whose convictions guide them in moments of crisis.

For Kendall County and the surrounding Hill Country, remembering August Hoffman is a way of honoring the values that built this region — values that continue to define its identity today.

A Life Remembered

Visit Comfort today, and you will find the Treue der Union Monument standing quietly beneath the shade of live oaks. The names etched into its limestone surface — including that of August Hoffman — speak across the generations.

They remind us that the Hill Country was shaped not only by pioneers who built homes and businesses, but also by young men who stood firm in their beliefs, even when the cost was high.

August Hoffman's life was short, but his legacy endures. In remembering him, we honor the spirit of the early Hill Country — independent, principled, and unafraid to follow conscience wherever it leads.

KG



Tom Allred, born in 1949, has lived in Kendall County since 1993 and is a dedicated contributor to *The Kendall Gentleman*. Inspired by his great-uncle, James V. Allred, the 33rd Governor of Texas, Tom explores local history and the legacies of men who shaped their communities. tom@thekendallgentleman.com

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