



THE KENDALLTM GENTLEMAN

AUGUST 2026 | ISSUE 8 :: VOLUME 2

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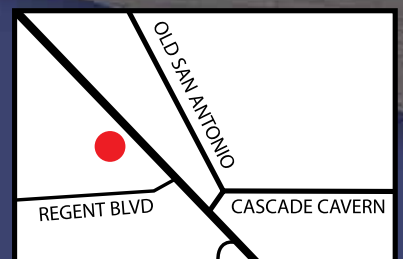
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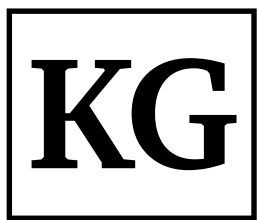
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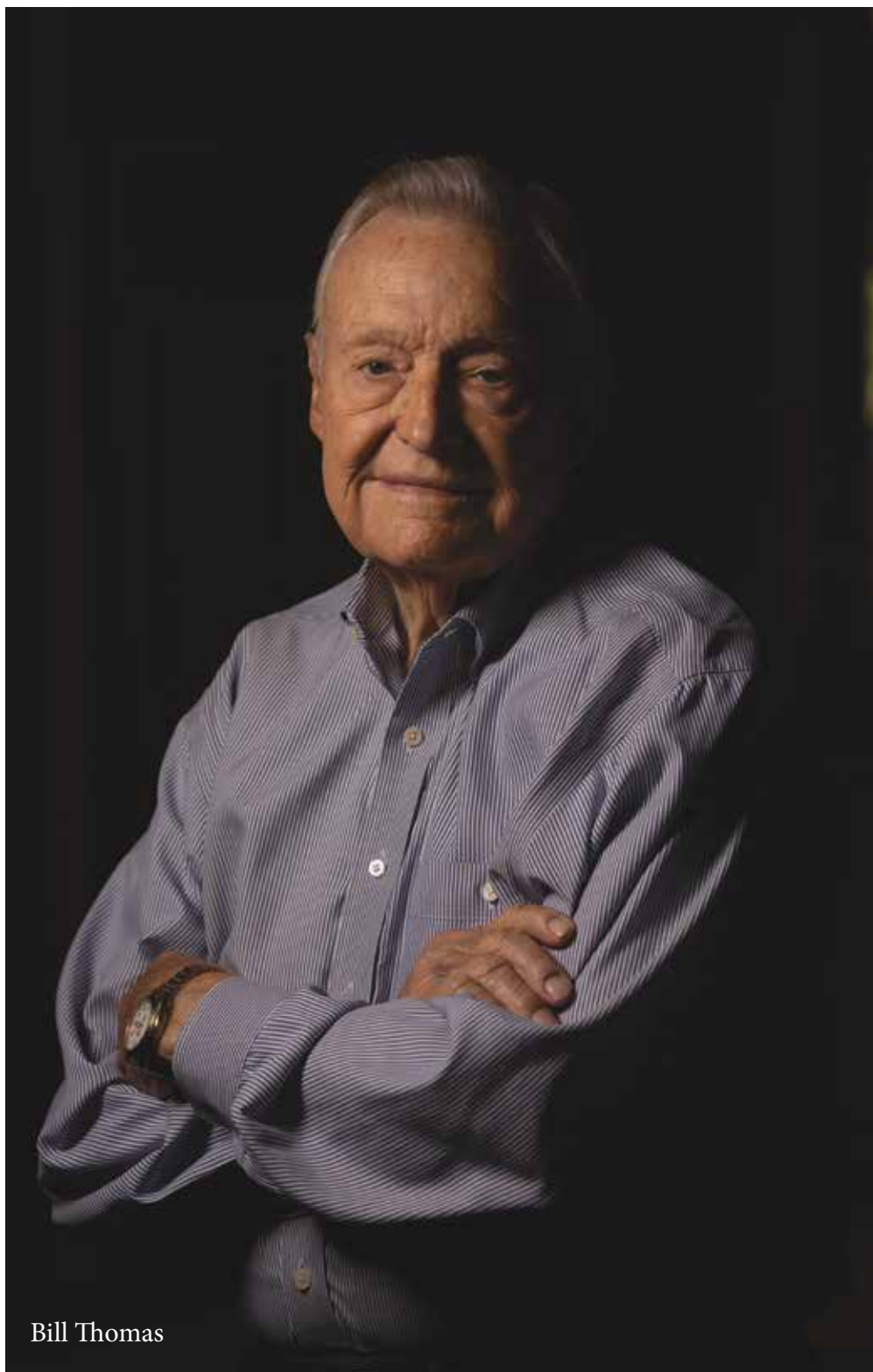
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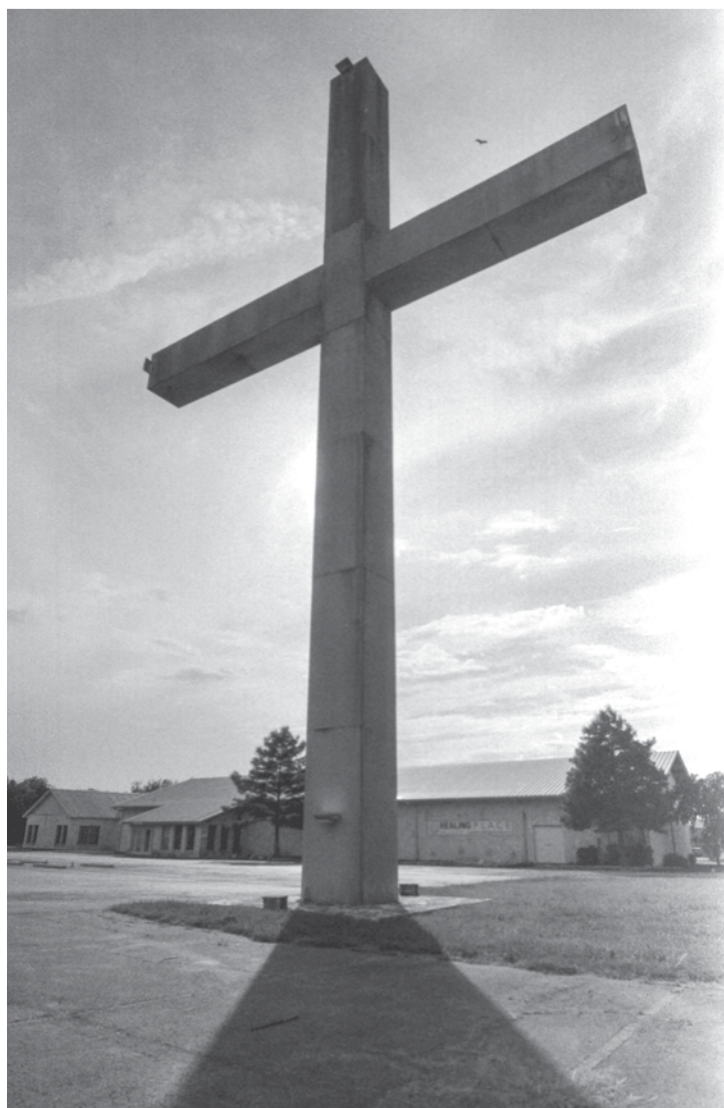


Bill Thomas



THE KENDALL™

G E N T L E M A N



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Stan Leech
John Eddie Vogt
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Addison Schuepbach

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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A Man's Word

There are a few things a man can lose and still recover. Money can be made again. A job can be replaced. A bad season can pass. Even a reputation, if the damage wasn't too deep, can sometimes be rebuilt with enough time, humility, and proof.

But integrity is different.

When a man loses that, he doesn't just lose what other people think of him. He loses the part of himself that lets him stand straight when nobody else is in the room. He loses the quiet assurance that his name means something. He loses the ability to look another man in the eye without wondering what that man knows, suspects, or has heard.

I've been thinking about that a lot lately. This month's cover feature, Bill Thomas, said something during our interview that stopped me in my tracks. We had talked about his childhood in Burleson County, his time in the Air Force, his years in business, cattle, family, church, and the long road of a life that has now stretched across 95 years. Then, almost like he was stating something too obvious to decorate, he said, "Integrity is the bottom line, the middle line, and the top line."

That'll preach. And he's right.

A man has nothing if he doesn't have integrity. Not really. He may have money. He may have property. He may have a title on a door, a nice truck in the driveway, and people who laugh at his jokes and take his calls. But if his word cannot be trusted, all of that is sitting on rotten boards. Sooner or later, something gives.

Integrity is one of those old words that still matters, even if the world has tried to sand the edges off of it. It means you are who you say you are. It means your yes means yes, and your no means no. It means the man people see in public is not a costume you take off when you get home. That sounds simple enough, but every honest man knows it isn't. Integrity gets tested in the small places first. Not usually in some dramatic courthouse moment or public scandal. Most of the time, it starts quietly. A promise you made when it was easy, but now keeping it is inconvenient. A bill you owe. A mistake you could hide. A story you could shade just enough to make yourself look better. A conversation you avoid because telling the truth might cost you peace for an afternoon.

That's where the line is, and every man knows when he's stepped over it.

We can lie to other people for a while. We can dress things up, explain them away, blame circumstances, blame stress, blame how busy we are, blame the other guy. But deep down, a man knows. He knows when he kept his word and when he didn't. He knows when he did the right thing and when he chose the easy thing. The trouble is, the easy thing usually comes with a payment plan.

You don't always feel the cost at once. That's what makes it dangerous. A little dishonesty here. A little compromise there. A little excuse that doesn't sound so bad in the moment. Nobody notices. Nothing falls apart. The sun comes up the next day, and life keeps moving. But something has shifted. A man becomes a little easier to bend the next time.

That's how integrity is lost. Not usually in one great collapse, but in small trades. A man trades truth for comfort. He trades responsibility for convenience. He trades a hard conversation for a softer lie. He tells himself it's not a big deal, but those little deals have a way of adding up until one day he looks around and realizes he has become someone he would not have respected years ago.

That line stings because I know I'm not above it.

I don't write this as a man who has always gotten it right. I haven't. There have been seasons in my life when I was more concerned with surviving the moment than standing as firmly as I should have. There have been conversations I should have had sooner, apologies I should have made faster, responsibilities I should have carried better, and moments when I let pride or fear do too much of the talking. I can dress that up if I want to, but there's no point. The truth is plain enough.

And maybe that's why this matters so much to me. Integrity is easy to admire from a distance. It is harder when it starts asking something of you personally. It asks whether you are willing to go back and make something right. It asks whether you can admit fault without turning your apology into a closing argument. It asks whether you can take a hard look at yourself and say, "That wasn't the man I'm called to be," then do the work to become him.

There's grace in that. Thank God there's grace in that. But grace was never meant to be an excuse for staying crooked. It is the hand that helps a man stand back up, not permission to keep crawling in the wrong direction. Kendall County still remembers a time when a handshake meant something. Plenty of

“... some things are only called old-fashioned because they lasted long enough to outlive the fads.”

folks here still live that way. You can see it in the way business gets done, in the way neighbors help neighbors, in the way old men talk about other old men they respected. They may not tell you the man was rich or impressive. They'll say, "He was solid," or "He did what he said he'd do."

That's about as good an epitaph as a man can earn.

Solid. There's strength in that word. No flash or performance; just weight. A solid man may not be the loudest voice in the room. He may not be the most polished. He may not be the one everybody notices first. But when he speaks, people listen because they know he means it. When he commits, people trust it. When trouble comes, people look for him because they know he won't disappear. That kind of man is hard to fake, and boys need to see him.

They need to see fathers, grandfathers, coaches, teachers, pastors, bosses, and neighbors who still believe a man's word should cost him something. They need to see men who don't wiggle out of responsibility with clever language. Men who apologize without turning the apology into a defense. Men who pay what they owe, tell the truth when it hurts, and keep showing up after the excitement is gone.

That may sound old-fashioned, and I suppose in some ways it is. But some things are only called old-fashioned because they lasted long enough to outlive the fads. Integrity is one of them. It was true when men built fences, barns, churches, businesses, and families across this county. It was true when a man's name was the only credit he had. It was true when our grandfathers taught us to look people in the eye and tell the truth. And it is still true now, even in a world that seems more interested in image than character.

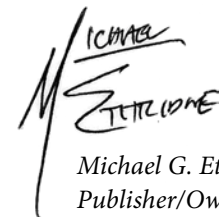
The world can reward the appearance of integrity for a while. It can reward confidence, charm, cleverness, and the ability to talk a good game. But eventually, life asks for proof. Marriage asks for proof. Fatherhood asks for proof. Business asks for proof. Hard times ask for proof. And when the test comes, a man either has something underneath him or he doesn't.

That's why integrity has to be built before the storm. You don't become honest because the moment demands it. You become honest in the ordinary days when nobody is making you. You practice it in the small things until it becomes part of your frame. You tell the truth. You keep the promise. You make it right. You own your part. You do the job the right way, even if nobody would know the difference.

That's not complicated, but it is costly. Which is probably why it's rare.

As you read Bill Thomas's story this month, I think you'll see a man who has lived long enough to know what matters and what doesn't. At 95, he's not trying to impress anybody. He's just telling the truth as he sees it. And when a man like that tells you integrity is the bottom line, the middle line, and the top line, it's worth paying attention. Because in the end, a man's life will always come back to that. Not what he owned. Not what he claimed. Not what he could get away with. His word. His name. His integrity. Everything else is just weather.

I'll see you down the road,



Michael G. Ethridge
Publisher/Owner

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

7/25/26

End of Summer Concert

Tapatio Springs Hill Country Resort
1 Resort Way, Boerne, TX 78006

www.tapatiosprings.com

Catch the timeless sounds of summer at this Beach Boys Tribute Concert! Relive the iconic harmonies and feel-good hits that defined a generation, from "Good Vibrations" to "Surfin' USA." It's a night of sun-soaked nostalgia, perfect for music lovers of all ages.

7/28/26

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.

8/1/26

Veterans Coffee

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

8/8/26

Cars, Coffee, & Cigars

The Oak of Boerne
605 S Main St, Boerne, TX 78006

www.theoakofboerne.com

Classic cars, coffee, and conversation come together during Cars, Coffee, & Cigars at The Oak of Boerne. Held on the second Saturday of each month, this laid-back gathering welcomes automotive enthusiasts to enjoy an eclectic showcase of vehicles ranging from American muscle cars to European imports and custom builds.

8/10/26

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/potluck hour from 5:30 PM to 6:30 PM)

8/11/26

VFW Business Meeting

VFW Post 688
Kendall Masonic Lodge
897 E Blanco, Boerne, TX 78006

www.vfw688.org

8/12/26

Steak Night

Joshua Creek Ranch
132 Cravey Rd, Boerne, TX 78006

www.joshuacreek.com

It's Wednesday Steak Night! We're taking reservations until 2 PM for the "Best Steak Night in the Texas Hill Country!"

8/15/26

Big Shot - A Billy Joel Experience

Singing Water Vineyards
316 Mill Dam Rd, Comfort, TX 78006

www.singingwater.com

The music of Billy Joel comes to life during Big Shot - A Billy Joel Experience on Saturday, August 15, at Singing Water Vineyards. This outdoor summer concert will feature a high-energy tribute performance celebrating decades of Billy Joel's greatest hits, from "Piano Man" and "Movin' Out" to "Uptown Girl" and other fan favorites.

8/17/26

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

8/22/26

Open Bowling

Boerne Turn Verein
221 E. Theissen, Boerne, TX 78006

www.boerneturnverein.com

Tuesdays

Trivia Night

Free Roam Brewing Company
325 S Main Street, Boerne, TX 78006

www.freeroambrewing.com

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Boerne Farmers Market

Old City Hall
402 E Blanco Rd

www.boernefm.com

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Wednesdays

Men's 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

Karaoke every Thursday night at Salvador Dobbs from 8:00-Midnight, with fabulous drink specials and the friendliest bar in town.

Sundays

Community Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Class

140 Industrial Dr, Ste 100, Boerne, TX 78006

www.bdmaboerne.com

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KG

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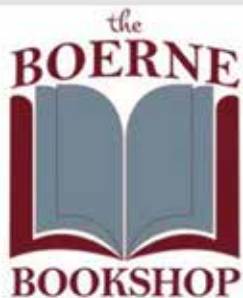
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July 25	The Texas Eagles: An Eagles Tribute	Sept 12	Vic Vaga, That Rod Guy: A Rod Stewart Tribute
		Oct 3	Dreams: A Fleetwood Mac Tribute
		Oct 17	Greggie and the Jets: An Elton John Tribute
		Oct 24	Lost Shaker of Salt Band: A Jimmy Buffett Tribute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



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Ask That Girl to Dance

by Addison Schuepbach

There's a place, west of Kendall County, where boots clack on concrete, and necks sweat from the heat of dancing. Every summer, at Garner State Park, up the bending hill and past the stretch of construction, there's a dance at the CCC Pavilion.

The pavilion is older than anyone dancing in it. Limestone and bald cypress, built in the 1930s, set on a perch over the Frio River. The dances have run every summer for so long that nobody questions them anymore.

You just go. The heat wiggles into the room between your shins and boots, across your back, into the clamped hands of a couple already out on the floor. You haven't really experienced Texas until you've danced at Garner on a Saturday night.

Grandparents line the walls in faded folding chairs, fanning themselves as they watch. Parents two-step with toddlers balanced on their boots. Little girls spin with their dads while married couples who've probably

danced here for decades wait for the next song. It's one of the few places where every generation shares the same dance floor.

Chairs get camped out hours early, front row seats to the headliners of the night: teenagers. We gather around The Bar, the understood place to stand if you want to be asked to dance. A broad tree splits it down the middle. Little kids on the left. Teenagers on the right.

I stand to the right when I'm there with my family. Skin itchy from sweat, trying to find a casual way to stand. So I wait. And I watch to see if a boy will walk over.



“The screen feels like the safe choice, and it isn’t. The dancefloor feels like the scary one, but it isn’t either.”

Here’s what I figured out standing at that bar. The screen feels like the safe choice, and it isn’t. The dancefloor feels like the scary one, but it isn’t either. At Garner, I’m dancing with boys I’ll never see again. He doesn’t know my friends. There’s no group chat tomorrow, no screenshot, nothing on the line. That’s exactly why it works. When there’s nothing to lose, a boy can just be brave. He crosses the floor, puts his hand out, and the worst thing that happens, which never really does, is a polite no and a song he sits out. I’ve never known a dating culture like it anywhere else.

So they ask. And we say yes. Every boy asks a new girl each dance, and every girl takes his hand. You don’t wait long.

The boldest ones out there are the little boys. My ten-year-old brother marches straight up to a teenage girl twice his height and asks her to dance, and she always says yes. So do all the other little boys, a whole crew of them, leading girls who tower over them around the floor, steering with total confidence like the height difference is the girl’s problem to sort out. They haven’t learned to be scared yet. Nobody’s told them a ten-year-old can’t ask a sixteen-year-old to dance, so they just do it, and it works every single time. Watch them long enough, and you start to wonder what happens to a boy between ten and seventeen that makes the walk across the floor feel impossible. The fear isn’t natural. It’s learned somewhere along the way.

It’s loud, so you yell into each other’s ears. You ask the normal things. What sports do you play? Where are you from? How long are you here? He says a town you’ve never heard of and a date he’s leaving, and you know the whole time that this is all you get. Then the song ends, he spins you, and you part ways. When the heat gets to be too much, there’s an ice cream shop, and a little gift shop I love to slip into for some quiet. Then you go back to the bar and do it again with someone new.

I think about those boys a lot. Not the ten-year-olds. The older ones, the ones my age,

who walk over without knowing me and ask anyway. There’s a respect in it, I don’t think they realize they’re giving. It never mattered to me whether there was some spark or whether I’d remember his name by the next song. He walked over. That was the whole thing. And every girl at that bar, sweating and pretending she isn’t watching the crowd, is hoping she’s the one he picks.

I wish the boys back home could see it. Not to feel bad, just to know it’s there. Half of them have spent so long letting an app do their talking that the walk across a room has started to feel like more than it is. But it’s the rarest thing now, a boy who can look at you and just ask. You notice him immediately. He stands out without trying, in a way no streak ever made anyone stand out.

And I don’t think it’s a Garner thing, really. I think it’s a muscle. The first ask is terrifying, and the tenth is nothing, and a summer of it leaves you the kind of person who can look someone in the eye and want something out loud. That doesn’t stay at the park. It follows you into the fall, into whatever comes after high school, into rooms full of people who’ve never heard your name. The boys who learned it will walk in easily. The ones still hiding behind a phone will stand at the edge, the way they always have.

So I think about the boy from the hallway, the one who “snapped” her for months and never said “hi”. I put him at Garner. The phone’s dead in his pocket. The song starts. She’s standing to the right of the tree, hoping. Go ask that girl to dance.

KG



Addison Schuepbach is a 17-year-old senior at Boerne High School. She’s an Eagle Scout, an avid reader, and loves writing. She runs hurdles for track and enjoys playing tennis. addison@thekendallgentleman.com

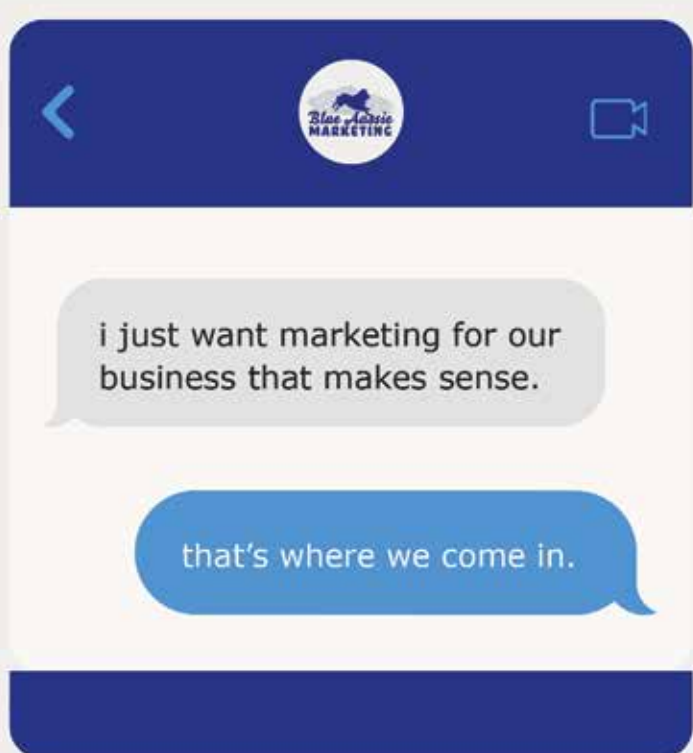
The rest of the year, I’m not at Garner. I’m at Boerne High, where the asking happens through a screen, or it doesn’t happen at all. A boy will “snap” a girl for weeks. Months, even. Selfies back and forth, a streak counting up like it means something. Then they pass in the hallway and look at the floor. Two people who’ve technically talked every day, walking past each other like strangers. I’m not above it. My phone does the same thing in my pocket. It’s easier to send a picture than to say a word.

But at Garner, the phone goes quiet. No service in the canyon, no buzz, no streak about to die. The data there is bad, and somehow everything else gets better.



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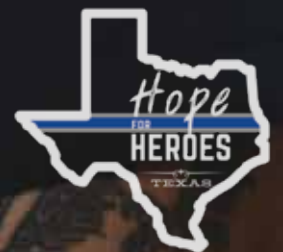


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**SERVING THOSE
WHO GO FIRST**

Serving *the* Community He Calls Home

By Jonathan R. Mallard

For Officer Christian Lockwood, the path to law enforcement began long before he ever put on a police uniform. It started with military service, a willingness to embrace change, and a desire to build a meaningful life rooted in community.

Lockwood grew up in Camarillo, California, in Ventura County, just inland from Malibu. At 17 years old, immediately after high school, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps.

Over four years of service, Lockwood worked as a mechanic supporting Marine Corps operations at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. “We had a bunch of cool toys,” Lockwood said with a laugh. “Boats were primarily what I did.”

After leaving the Marines in 2017 as a corporal, Lockwood returned to California, attended Moorpark College for criminal justice studies, and reconnected with the woman who would later become his wife. But both of them were looking for a new chapter beyond California.

“We looked at Arizona, Idaho, Tennessee, a bunch of different places,” Lockwood said. “But we loved the Texas Hill Country.”

Visits to Kerrville and Boerne quickly stood out.

“Boerne was kind of the perfect middle ground,” he said. “Close enough, but not too close. It’s just a cute little town.”

Shortly after relocating to Texas, Lockwood attended the regional police academy before beginning his law enforcement career with the Universal City Police Department. He joined the Boerne Police Department just over a year ago.

For Lockwood, serving in Boerne feels different from larger urban environments.

“It’s being a part of the community and then getting to serve and help the same community that I live in,” he said.

That connection matters deeply in a growing Hill Country town where trust between officers and residents is still highly visible.

“We do a lot more with the community here,” Lockwood said. “It feels like there’s more support from the community.”

He pointed specifically to the role school resource officers play in building relationships with students and families, noting that events, graduations, and community gatherings help humanize law enforcement beyond difficult interactions like traffic stops or emergencies.

“They see us not just as the mean guy pulling them over,” Lockwood said. “They see that we’re also part of the community and want the best for everybody.”

Like many officers, Lockwood says the emotional weight of policing comes from constantly stepping into moments of crisis. “Our normal day at work is everybody else’s worst day,” he said.

Balancing that responsibility alongside family life can be challenging, especially working difficult schedules while raising children at home.

“There’s definitely strain on personal life,” he said. “You’ve got to balance being there for work and being there for your family.”

Outside of work, Lockwood spends much of his free time with his wife and two children. When he does get a rare moment to himself, it usually involves exercising or shooting at the range.

Lockwood first encountered Hope for Heroes Texas during field training after joining Boerne PD. At first, it was simply another event on the schedule, but he quickly realized how deeply connected the organization was to the community.

“It’s cool to see people getting recognized and supported,” he said. “It definitely makes you feel like this community has your back.”

What stands out most to him is the organization’s welcoming and encouraging atmosphere.

“Hope for Heroes Texas is friendly and open,” Lockwood said. “It’s lighthearted compared to some places that are super hardcore all the time. It feels like people genuinely want to be there for you.”

For Lockwood, that kind of support matters more than many people realize.

“It’s nice to know there’s support there,” he said. “It does make a difference.”

When asked what he hopes fellow officers will someday say about him, Lockwood’s answer reflected the kind of steady leadership he values most.

“I hope they think of me as dependable,” he said. “That I always had their back, was encouraging, and made work not suck when I was there.”

Brad Cornell, founder of Hope for Heroes Texas, says stories like Lockwood’s reflect the heart of what the organization hopes to support across Kendall County.

“Christian represents a generation of first responders who are balancing service, family, and community all at the same time,” Cornell said. “He served his country as a Marine, chose to continue serving through law enforcement, and now helps protect the same community his family calls home. At Hope for Heroes Texas, we want officers like Christian to know they are supported not just professionally, but personally, by the people around them.”

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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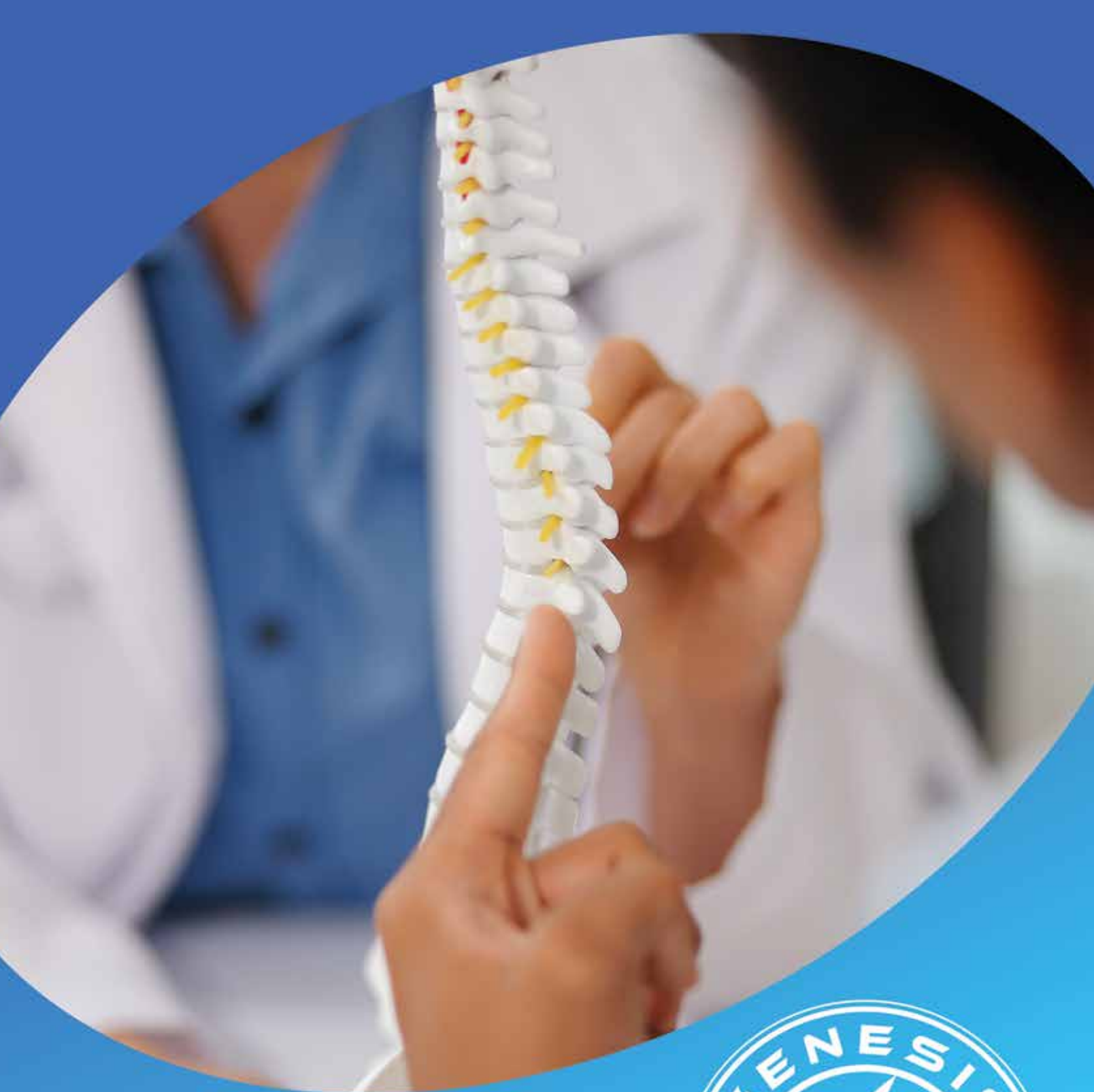


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The Perfect Weekend in Boerne, Texas

By *Jed Mazour*

Boerne is getting bigger and drawing more attention each year. People flock to our town on the weekends from all over the country - and even the world - making their way down the Hill Country Mile and stopping at the local watering holes and eateries. Denise and I often sit on the porch swing at Cibolo Creek Brewing Co., just watching people come and go. There really is a charm to this town. Events like Dickens on Main, the Hill Country Rod Run, and Das Festival can make it feel like a Hallmark-card town.

All of the businesses and events we have to offer are the fruits of the labor of hardworking local Boerne citizens - people who have chosen to stay here and raise their families, investing their hard-earned money and time back into the community. Folks on the outside see this and admire it, as they should. I cannot count how many times I have heard, "So, you are actually from here?!" from tourists. Sometimes it seems a little funny, but if you stop and really think about it, where else have you found a community like this? The cleanliness, the friendliness, the true sense of a small, local community, and a place that still has old-timers with family names on buildings and street signs. Welcome to Boerne, Texas, folks. This is small-town USA.

Wondering What Visitors Actually Do Here?

Watching people walk up and down Main Street has made me wonder: What does their agenda look like? Did they plan anything, or are they just taking it step by step (pun intended)? If you are arriving in the summer, what do you do to cool off? Where do the locals eat breakfast? Where are the hidden gems of the Hill Country?

When in Rome, do as the Romans do, right? I cannot tell you how many times while traveling we have searched for the "local spot." People want to experience a place with all their senses. They do not want the cruise-ship experience; they want the VRBO experience. They want to know what it is like to live in

a different cultural area from their own. It is fun to see the pace of life from another perspective. Try to put on that shoe and walk a mile. Pretend you are not who you are because of where you are from. In fact, that is an important lesson everyone can learn.

After watching this for years, a question crossed my mind: What does the perfect Boerne, Texas weekend look like? While I cannot answer that for everyone, I can share what I consider the best experience from my local perspective - through the eyes of a man raising his family in Boerne and taking full advantage of the amazing natural resources we have. So saddle your ponies, and let's ride.

Saturday Morning: Tacos and Traditions

Denise gets up and goes straight to feeding the dogs, the chickens, and Chuck the pig. I can already smell the coffee. Thankfully, we spent a few hours on Friday night getting the boats strapped down, counting life jackets, sorting fishing tackle, and prepping food and ice chests. It makes for a smooth start to the day and has become somewhat procedural for float-trip weekends.

Meet-up time and location is usually 10:30 AM at Mague's Café. There seems to be some confusion in town about where to get the best breakfast tacos, so allow me to clear this up. There is only one place the true locals go, one place that has been open for generations, and that is Mague's Café. Randy's with beans, verde and rojo sauce, and a pile of pico - same order every single time, just the way we like it. I call these "tailgate tacos" because we are usually eating them in the parking lot while double-checking gear and waiting on a straggler or two to arrive. I will not name any names, Tom... From there, we head to the launch location (secret spots).

Midday on the Guadalupe: Rapids, Wildlife, and Relaxation

For the rest of my life, pulling up to the bald cypress trees that line the banks of the Guadalupe River will never get old. It feels



like I am the only one aging while the river renews its youth each spring. Once we arrive, everyone knows the tasks at hand. We unload all the boats and gear and drag everything to the water's edge while the drivers deliver the vehicles back to the pick-up location.

This usually lets us push off from the riverbank around 11:30–12:00. Perfect timing. We crank the Turtleboxes up and thank the Good Lord for the blessing of another day. Paddle in hand and free-floating. Today we have a pretty good-sized group: me, Denise, Hunter, Ellie, Ty, Karlee, Matt, Erin, and Evan, with five kayaks and two canoes. Our journey is a short one at 3.8 miles, but the pace will be slow.

Right away, we encounter our first set of rapids. Denise and I are the first ones down, turning around at the bottom of the eddy to watch everyone else pass through safely. It is not a dangerous rapid, but it is a little

deceiving. Ty immediately turns his boat over and spills every piece of gear he has into the fast water. No injuries - maybe just a tiny hit to the pride - but Ty is a good man and laughs it off right away. I think the river wanted to show off a little for the rookie.

As we make our way slowly downriver, I lean my head back to look up at the canopy of bald cypress trees arching overhead. Ducks fly up from the timber, and cranes pace the shallow water as they stalk the banks for a bite to eat. Schools of threadfin shad and common carp swim under the boats like our own river entourage. Every single time we do this, we ask ourselves, how is it that we are the only people out here? I am still working on my theory.

You are free to choose your own adventure along this stretch. No surprise, I like to fish the entire way, challenging myself to catch a bigger fish each time, and this time did not disappoint. I landed a 3-pound largemouth on the edge of a deep bank shaded by a low-hanging tree - a perfect spot for a healthy fish.

About 1.8 miles into the trip, we pull ashore at a beautiful spot with two giant cypress trees on both sides, a mild rapid, and a good, clean eddy below. These are ideal places to stop for a swim, relax, and fire up the grill. Luckily for everyone, Denise and I prepped some food the night before. I like to travel with a small 12-inch Weber grill; it is easy to fire up, clean, cool down in the water, and stow behind my seat.

By now, you are probably dying to know what is on the menu: mushrooms marinated in Italian dressing and balsamic vinegar, stuffed with cream cheese and pickled jalapeños, and wrapped in bacon. It is a fan favorite every time and pairs beautifully with an ice-cold Lone Star beer. Honey, my daughter's lab, came along this time. She loves swimming and letting the current carry her just far enough downstream to make her mom a little nervous.

While I am cooking, I like to scan the shore and shallow water for Indian artifacts like points or tools. You never know what you might find if you spend a little time looking. This time, as I was studying the ground, I noticed a piece of flint shining back at me in about six inches of water. I grabbed it, gave it a quick rinse, and realized it was an unfinished point - an arrowhead about five inches long. What a day!



We saddle back up and enjoy the remaining two miles of river just how we started: at a nice, slow pace.

Late Afternoon: Comfort Pies And Blue Skies

When we hit the bank, everyone knows their part. We break the boats down, load the gear into the truck bed, and strap everything down for a safe haul. Next stop: Comfort Pizza.

We call our order in two days ahead of time to secure the dough (if you know, you know) and have the pies ready almost exactly when we arrive. If someone asked me for a hidden gem in the area, Comfort Pizza would be at the top of my list. The place used to be an old filling station - probably from the 1950s - now converted into the best pizza stop I have ever found.

There is a large selection of craft beers and wines from around the world, plus gelato and salads. Sitting on the shade-covered patio with misters, fans, and friendly people, it is hard to imagine feeling more welcome or more comfortable than you do right there. It is always a great time to refill the tanks and hit level five on the relaxation scale.

Saturday Night: Y'all Come On In And Pull Up A Chair

After a quick stop at the house for a shower and to drop off a very tired white lab, we head back to Cibolo Creek Brewing Co. If we are lucky, we snag the porch swing and a handful of chairs out front.

On Saturday nights, there is live music out back, a packed house, some spectacular people-watching, and the best food and beer in town. This is where locals gather to tell stories, toast to good times, meet new friends, and enjoy home-cooked food and house-made beers. I cannot tell you how many friends we have made sharing a table here. In my opinion, it is the welcome gate to Boerne, Texas.

If you are coming with a big appetite, I recommend the goat burger or the fried chicken sandwich tossed in buffalo sauce. Pick your poison to wash it down, but in the summer heat, I am leaning toward the lighter lagers and pilsners. We spend the rest of the evening telling stories from our day and planning new adventures. As the night goes on, more people join us on the porch, and the laughs get a little louder right before closing time.

An Idea Taking Shape: Mazour Outfitting Co.

There it is, in black and white: the perfect weekend in Boerne, Texas - at least in my family's opinion. You will leave tired but certainly not disappointed.

We have been tossing around an idea, and here is the pitch: Mazour Outfitting Co., an all-inclusive guide service for the upper Guadalupe and Llano rivers. Let us handle all the gear and logistics so you can relax and soak it all in. We believe there is an audience for the things we enjoy as a family, and we would love to share them with you. Shoot me a message if you are interested in a trip down the river with us.

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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The '64

By Clay Smoot

A few months back, I wrote a piece about the launch of my new brand, Los Vista Cigars. This month I'm going to do a review of one of our cigars, The '64. The '64 is a bolder version, but still light, of the cigar I do for weddings and other events. I felt the Los Vista line needed a light to light-medium cigar for a daily smoke type of stick, novice smokers, and the bridesmaids who, after four glasses of wine, decide it's a great time to smoke and inhale their first cigar.

But first, I'll give you a recap of how I got the name of the cigar. The Los Vista Cigar name came from two very small colonias just south of San Antonio. Losoya and Buena Vista. My paternal grandparents owned a ranch between the town communities, so I called the area Los Vista. The name of The '64 cigar came from the year my grandparents' plantation-style home was built in 1864. Needless to say, the name of the company and the name of the cigars have a very special meaning to me. I may live in Boerne, but I'll always love and embrace my South Texican roots. Sidenote: at the time of this writing, it is the anniversary of the bloodiest battle in Texas history - The Battle of the Medina. My family has found artifacts from that battle on my grandparents' ranch.

This cigar was designed as an homage to the working vaqueros on my grandfather's ranch. It is intended to be another tool in the saddle bag and a companion as great as a trusty cow dog. I wanted this to be the daily smoke for the working cowboys. I wanted it to complement their way of life, and at the same time give them life. I wanted it to be as necessary for their life as their boots and spurs. The cigar needed to be something they could smoke on or chew on throughout the day, never leaving them with too much of a buzz to mess with their ability to work, especially in the heat.

The result was this: I took my events cigar, which included all Dominican tobacco for the wrapper, binder, and filler. I used that cigar as the base and swapped the wrapper with a Sumatra wrapper from Ecuador to give it a small kick. This cigar gave me exactly what I was looking for. It is earthy, spicy, has a hint of sweetness (light vanilla) and ends with a taste of complex wood.

It is now time to put some smoke in the air. I have my awesome green racecar-looking torch, with the punch attached. I use the small punch, place the cigar in my mouth, flip the top, light the cigar, and inhale to

make sure it lights properly. It is lit, and now I grab my first official draw. My first thought is, "damn, I roll a good cigar". Not really, my first thought, or taste, is earth and a small bit of vanilla. It rolls across the tongue and back of my throat like a tidal wave of immense pleasure. The earthy flavors make me think of the ranch, being outside, tasting the air, and the memories. The vanilla taste is reminiscent of my grandmother's house, always smelling so wonderful and homey.

The middle of the cigar is nothing but spice, and I love it. This part is puro vaquero. Tough, rugged, and consistently amazing. The ash is almost perfect, and the flavor is exactly what was needed for this unique blend. The final third of the cigar suddenly erupts with an absolutely intended and deliberate punch of woody complexity. It gives this stick an unforgettable finish that will have you asking for The '64.

This now completes the cigar I wanted to create. I could not be more proud or in absolute awe of this blend. I never dreamed that a kid from that ranch would one day start a cigar line named after those communities and a cigar named after the house.

The '64 is a Dominican Robusto (5 x 50) with an Ecuadorian wrapper. It is the lightest cigar of our lineup. It is very similar to cigars I've done for my events and shows. I just switched up the wrapper.

Los Vista Cigar - 64
Robusto 5 x 50
Wrapper - Sumatran (Ecuador)
Binder - Nicaraguan
Filler - Nicaraguan

Pairs well with: tequila, Tanager Cigar Blend by Still Austin, and a great pilsner that you can grab at Free Roam Brewing on Main St.

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



Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow

By Coach Stan Leech

Growing up in a solid Baptist home, dancing was never really discussed. Scottie Leech made sure piano lessons and choir weren't optional - those were settled matters. Rhythm in our house came from a hymn book, not a hardwood floor. And if that didn't shape the rest of us, my dad's reputation in Brownfield certainly did. Jack Leech was known around town as a winning Little League and later Babe Ruth coach,

the kind of coach who could size up a kid's swing, adjust a grip, and turn a two-hopper into a clean single. Between Mom's hymns and Dad's baseball diamond, a two-step wasn't exactly in the curriculum.

So, by the time I got to South Plains College, my dancing ability was generous to call undeveloped.

And it showed.

It all started in the fall of 1978 when a girl from Sundown taught me how to two-step at the SPC student union. She meant well, and in her defense, she probably thought that was enough. What she gave me was left, right, right, left - a marching pattern pretending to be a dance. Whoever taught me that is probably still smiling.



miles on a Sunday, but put me on a dance floor for a smooth three-count glide, and I turned into a February fence post - stiff because of the cold, unmoving because I didn't know any better.

The third clue - her favorite - came one night when she glanced down and noticed my jeans.

"Stan," she said, "nobody at Tarleton wears Sedgefield jeans. You need some Wranglers."

She wasn't wrong.

She had me at no Sedgefields.

But somewhere in those early dances, something else was happening. She wasn't just correcting my feet - she was steering me, gently, the way she always has. Teaching me to relax, to look up, to quit marching my way through the dance, and to trust a rhythm instead of fighting it.

She tapped my shoulder and said, "Don't look down...and don't watch your feet. Just glide. It's supposed to be slow...step, step...slow."

"No...it's supposed to be slow, quick, quick, slow."

Back then, she thought she was just making the dance easier.

But that old rhythm had more in it than either of us realized.

Life together began to fall into that same pattern. Getting married. Raising Courtney and Coby. Coaching seasons. Her thirty-one years in the classroom. Long stretches when the pace settled, followed by bursts of movement when everything seemed to happen at once. And woven through it all, the kind of strength you don't plan for but learn in real time.

In 1996, when cancer first entered our home, the rhythm slowed. Then quickened with appointments, decisions, and unknowns. And slow again as healing took root. Two more rounds would follow through the years, and she kept teaching through two of them,

never letting her students see anything but steadiness. It didn't feel heroic at the time. It felt like life - our life - finding its footing again and again. Slow, quick, quick, slow.

We didn't talk about it like a pattern. We didn't chart it or name it. We simply lived it. Seasons of calm, seasons of motion, seasons that demanded more than either of us thought we had, and seasons that gave back more than we deserved. It never lined up perfectly, never repeated neatly, but the rhythm was always there if you looked closely enough.

Carla learned early on those Tarleton dance floors that I was more goal-driven than glide-driven. A simple two-step could become a project if I wasn't careful. She never lectured me about it. She never sat me down for a conversation. She just kept quietly steering - one step, one moment, one season at a time.

Looking back, one of the first memories is of me with that old marching pattern - head down, concentrating, trying not to miss a step - wearing those Sedgefield jeans she outlawed the first chance she got. We had no idea at the time that my shaky two-step was prophetic, and she had no idea that her steering on that dance floor would be followed for over forty-five years.

But that old rhythm - simple, steady, true - kept showing up.

Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow

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

I carried that little robotic sequence into my early days at Tarleton when I first met Carla. She watched my feet long enough to be polite, then finally asked, "What are you doing?"

I told her honestly, "This is how they taught me at SPC."

She laughed - kindly, or as kindly as possible under the circumstances.

That was the first clue to her that I wasn't a true two-stepper.

The second clue, she still says, was my complete lack of a waltz. I could knock down free throws all day long and run 10



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THE MAN WHO BUILT JOY

By Michael G. Ethridge

Photography by Jonathan R. Mallard

I spent four and a half hours with Bill Thomas, and I left knowing I had only heard the beginning. That does not happen often. Most interviews eventually settle into a pattern: childhood, career, hardship, lesson learned. Bill does not speak that way. He tells his life as work remembered in motion: cattle gathered, pipe bought, credit extended, bids won, churches built, roads fought, prayers offered, and one woman loved for a lifetime. He is 95 now, born in 1930, and the broad shape of his life is easy to describe. He was a Burleson County ranch kid, an Air Force cryptography man, a pipe businessman, a cattleman, a husband, a churchman, and a Boerne patriarch. But the truth about him is not in the titles. It is in the doing.

Bill was born near Somerville, Texas, on a cattle ranch in Burleson County. His grandfather, also named William F. Thomas, stepped into the room after he was born and said, "This one will be William F. Thomas." Bill still carries that name with reverence. His grandfather, he says, was "a God-fearing man with integrity," and integrity is one of those

words that keeps returning when Bill talks. It is not decoration; it is foundation.

By three or four years old, he was riding behind his father on horseback, learning cattle the way some boys learn ballplayers. He could look across a herd and know which animal was missing. "I just knew the cattle," he says. That old instinct never left him. Long before he became known in pipe, he was a stockman, and in his mind, the two identities never competed. When asked once what he really knew about the pipe business, Bill answered, "If you cut my head open, half of it would be pipe rolling out of it, and the other half would be cattle. But I say my vocation is pipe."

That vocation took time. After Somerville High School, Blinn Junior College, and a short stretch at the University of Houston, Bill joined the Air Force at 19 in 1951. He trained at Lackland, moved through Colorado and Cheyenne, and was placed in top-secret cryptography work. He remembers being tested by "plants" who tried to get him talking. He did not.





He also remembers Joyce. While stationed in Cheyenne, he called her in Texas and told her to come. She climbed on a train by herself and did exactly that. They married in Wyoming in 1951. Later, he was stationed at Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, headquarters of Strategic Air Command under Gen. Curtis LeMay, one of the nerve centers of the Cold War.

After the service, Bill returned to Texas and moved to Houston in 1956. At Atlas Bradford, he entered the pipe business in a useful way, from the inside. He learned inspection, scheduling, shop flow, sales, and the daily mechanics of a plant. "I'm going to put you where you'll know what to do," he remembers being told. That training mattered. Bill did not learn business from slogans. He learned it close to the work, where mistakes have weight.

From Houston came Uvalde. From Uvalde came Gensco. And from Gensco came the shape of his fortune. The company had access to huge amounts of pipe through a Mexican mill arrangement at Eagle Pass, but lacked the systems needed to grow. Bill helped build them: memorandums, purchase orders, invoices, bidding, inventory control, and national wholesale reach. He still tells those stories with the precision of a man who can see the paper in front of him.

One of the biggest was a 328-mile Colorado Interstate pipeline replacement job. Bill helped structure the bid so the company could pursue the work without being destroyed by its size. That was one of his gifts. He could see both the opportunity and the danger. Whether he was talking about a ranch, a pipeline, or a church, his instinct was the same: put order where there is disorder, build structure first, then move.

In 1976, after years in the trade, Bill started Joy Pipe. The name came from Joyce, of course, but it became something more. "It's your name," he told her. "But it also means J for Jesus first, O for others second, and yourself last. That's true JOY." So Joy Pipe was a business name, a family creed, and a statement of faith.

As part of his transition out of Gensco, Bill agreed not to sell into Texas and eight other states, so he went elsewhere. He knew the mills, the buyers, the inventory, and the market well enough to bet his life on it. LTV later gave Joy Pipe an exclusive arrangement to sell its secondary pipe, material with imperfections that had to be represented honestly. Bill says that honesty was why the deal came his way. He would call it what it was, sell it for what it was, and not pretend it was prime. In a business where exaggeration can move faster than a rail car, Bill's word became part of the product.

One month, he says, Joy Pipe sold 67 rail cars. Later, the company bought a 107-mile pipeline in Ohio, refurbished the pipe, and sold 530 loads to Milwaukee and another 90 to Birmingham. Years after Joy Pipe began, the business restructured into Joy Pipe USA, with the original Joy Pipe holding accumulated capital and investments. Protection mattered to him. Build something, guard it, keep going.



“But it also means J for Jesus first, O for others second, and yourself last. That’s true JOY.”

But business was never the whole of him. Running beside the pipe trade was a cattle life measured in decades: Hereford heifers from his father, the move into Brangus, dispersal sales, bargain buys during hard oil years, and the patience to recognize quality when the market was panicking. That is the ranching side of Bill Thomas, part instinct, part discipline, part belief that God still has a hand in where the best stock ends up.

Boerne entered the story through loyalty, not strategy. In 1995, Joy Pipe moved from Uvalde to Boerne because his son-in-law, Tom Bibb, wanted a better school system for his children. Bill’s answer was simple. If the man needed to move, the company could move too. They loaded the furniture in Uvalde on Friday, placed it in Boerne on Saturday, and were back in business Monday morning. It says something exact about Bill. He was not only building a company. He was building a culture where people mattered enough to move with.

Boerne also gave him a public role. Bill helped defeat two separate TxDOT loop proposals in Kendall County, first around 2007 and later again under a different county administration. He saw those fights as local, practical, and personal. In his view, the loops were unnecessary, secretive, and harmful to

the county. That pressure has not gone away. Kendall County still wrestles with growth, roads, land, traffic, and the question of who gets to decide what kind of place this will become. Bill understood that early. He did not oppose every change. He opposed the kind that arrives already decided.

Then there is Joyce, who is not a side note in this story. She is its quiet center. Bill says she died on April 28, 2021. He buried her at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in William Penn, northeast of Brenham, where her family was buried and where he plans to be buried too. Afterward, he funded a major refurbishment of Messiah Lutheran Church in Boerne, modeling parts of it after a church Joyce loved near Brenham. He describes the gift not as philanthropy, but as a memorial, a devotion, and a duty.

That same seriousness runs through how he talks about people. Bill says he gave Rooster McConaughy his start by extending credit when Rooster was beginning. “How much credit do you need?” Bill remembers asking. Then he told him, “You got it, just run with it.” He does not tell that as charity. He tells it as business done the old way: take a man seriously before the world has decided whether he matters.

After four and a half hours, I understood why men listen to Bill Thomas. It was not because he was loud, because he was not. It was not because he was trying to impress me, because he was not. It was because every story seemed to carry a lesson earned the hard way. I could have sat there another four and a half hours. Maybe longer. Maybe a lifetime. Some men are wells of wisdom, and you know early on that you will run out of bucket before they run out of water.

Late in the interview, I asked him what advice he would give the men of Kendall County. He did not wander around the answer. “Go forward with the strength of the Lord behind you,” he said. Then he added, “Let Him help you make your decisions, and He will make the right decision for you.” When I asked what he would tell a young man, he said, “First of all, be faithful and absolutely know his talents. And when he selects the best talent in him, pursue it with all vigor. Don’t look back.”

Then he told me how he thinks about Joyce. “When we were married,” he said, “God gave us two tickets to ride His train together through life.” They rode that train together, he said, to God’s glory and to the fulfillment of their life. Joyce has reached her destination. Bill is still riding.

That may be the truest ending. Bill Thomas has built companies, raised cattle, backed men, fought for land, loved one woman, honored God, and given more to Boerne than most people will ever know. But he does not speak like a man standing among ruins. He speaks like a man still under orders, still called to move while the Lord leaves him here to work.

He built Joy, and he is still on the train. And this month, we’re honored to mark one stop along that remarkable journey by recognizing Bill Thomas as The Kendall Gentleman.

KG




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Whether you're enjoying the last days of summer or getting ready for a new school year, here are important tips to keep you and your family safe!




BACK TO SCHOOL SAFETY TIPS



STAY UP TO DATE

Make sure immunizations are current and schedule a sports physical if needed.



GET ENOUGH SLEEP

A consistent bedtime helps kids stay focused, healthy, and ready to learn.



EAT WELL

Fuel your body with healthy foods for energy and better concentration.



PACK SMART

Don't overload backpacks. Encourage good posture and take breaks.



WASH HANDS

Good hygiene helps prevent the spread of germs—especially during cold and flu season.



SUN PROTECTION

Wear sunscreen (SPF 30+), a hat, and sunglasses. Reapply every 2 hours!



STAY HYDRATED

Drink plenty of water throughout the day—especially when outside in the heat.



WATER SAFETY

Always swim with a buddy and never leave children unattended near water.



BUG PROTECTION

Use insect repellent to protect against mosquito bites and prevent illness.



HEAT SAFETY

Never leave kids or pets in the car. Temperatures rise quickly!



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Uncle Willie *and* Zodiac Farming

By John Eddie Vogt

Willie enjoyed farming and was usually the first person to have his fields worked up each spring. He was a believer in the use of signs of the moon and zodiac in his farming and ranching. He planted, harvested, cultivated, everything by the signs. When he was dying I asked him if he would mind if I recorded him while he told me what all of the different signs meant. It was OK with him, so I set up a date. We talked about the fruitful signs and the barren signs, and he went into quite some detail. This was just a few years after the great drought of the 50's. When it appeared that we had covered everything, he looked at me and said, "But hell boy, if it doesn't rain those signs don't mean a damn thing."

Once I had several hundred sheep. They were lambing and every few days I would go out and castrate and cut off their tails. One day while doing this I noticed that they bled more than usual. When I came back to town, Willie was at the store so I mentioned to him what I had been doing. Immediately he stated that the sheep had probably bled a lot. When I admitted to the fact, he said the moon is in the wrong sign, that kind

of work should only be done in the dark of the moon with the zodiac sign in the knee or foot. The next time I worked the lambs, I looked at the calendar and watched for the dark of the moon. I went out, castrated and cut off the tails but they still bled quite a bit. When I came back to town I looked him up to tell him his theory was for the birds. He looked at me, laughed, and refraining from calling me stupid he said, "Sure the moon is in the dark sign, but you forgot to also look at the zodiac sign." Sure enough, it wasn't in the knees or the feet. From that day on, whenever I was going to castrate, dehorn, or cut lambs' tails I looked at both the moon and zodiac signs. Don't ask me how it works, but it does.

Uncle Willie had a shearing machine, or as they were sometimes called, a roaching machine. It was a hand-turned cutter that stood about four feet high with an arm several feet long and the cutter at the end of that arm. He had an old sheet in the workshop where he kept the shearer, and all of the neighborhood boys would come by for their haircuts. There was one old German

gentleman who would also come out every three or four months for his haircut. Each time Mr. H. would be finished, he would reach down deep into his pocket and pull out an old snap-top purse. Reaching into the purse where he conveniently had a dime, he would hold the dime forward to Willie and in German ask how much he owed. Each time, Willie would decline payment. This went on time after time, year after year. One day after Willie had finished with the haircut, Mr. H. took out his purse and snapping the purse open, in Willie's words, "He got this strange look on his face. As he was asking how much he realized that there was nothing in the purse except a fifty-cent piece. Evidently the thought ran through his mind that never in all the years had any money been accepted so holding the coin forward he asked "Vie fiel?" I grabbed the coin and said, "Fifty cents" and stuck the money in my pocket. The old man immediately left and never returned again for a haircut."

KG

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.



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August Hoffmann

By Tom Allred, Sr.

Correction and Retraction: In a previously published article concerning August Hoffmann, information was included indicating that he died in the 1862 Nueces Massacre (also known as the Battle of the Nueces). Subsequent research has confirmed that August Hoffmann survived that tragic event and went on to live a long and productive life, contributing significantly to the growth and development of Comfort and the Kendall County area. The author regrets the error and submits this corrected article in the interest of historical accuracy.

A German-Texan Survivor of War, Principle, and the Hill Country Frontier

In the rolling limestone hills of the Texas Hill Country, where cypress trees shade the Guadalupe River and old German names still echo through cemetery stones and family histories, the story of August Hoffmann stands as a reminder of one of the most difficult and morally complex chapters in Texas history.

Born in Germany on December 9, 1842, Hoffmann belonged to the generation of German immigrants whose families came seeking opportunity, freedom, and land in the young Republic and later State of Texas. Like many German settlers who established communities across the Hill Country, his life would become deeply intertwined with the ideals of liberty, self-government, and resistance to political oppression. He would live through frontier hardships, civil war, Reconstruction, and the modernization of Texas itself before his death on March 4, 1935, at the age of ninety-two.

His long life stretched from the age of sailing ships to the age of automobiles, from the fragmented German states of Europe to a rapidly changing America. Yet the defining experiences of his generation were shaped in the turbulent years surrounding the Civil War and the fierce loyalty many German Texans maintained toward the Union.

German Immigration and the Hill Country

The German immigration movement into Texas accelerated during the 1840s and

1850s through the efforts of organizations such as the Adelsverein, formally known as the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas. Thousands of Germans settled in communities including New Braunfels, Fredericksburg, Sisterdale, Boerne, and Comfort.

Many of these immigrants were influenced by the liberal democratic movements that swept Europe during the Revolutions of 1848. Often called the “Forty-Eighters,” many opposed aristocracy, favored constitutional government, supported public education, and strongly objected to slavery. August Siemering and other German intellectuals promoted democratic reforms and abolitionist ideas within Texas German communities.

Communities such as Comfort became known for their Freethinker traditions - emphasizing education, civic independence, and skepticism toward authoritarian control. Churches were slow to appear in some of these settlements because many early residents placed greater emphasis on philosophy, education, and civic societies than on denominational structure.



It was into this atmosphere that August Hoffmann came of age on the Kendall County-Gillespie County line in the area of Grape Creek and Bankersmith.

The German Unionists of the Texas Hill Country

When Texas seceded from the Union in 1861, the decision deeply divided the state. While many Texans supported the Confederacy, substantial pockets of Unionist sentiment remained - especially among German immigrants in the Hill Country. Communities in Kendall, Gillespie, and Kerr counties became known for resisting secession and Confederate conscription.

The German Unionists were not necessarily abolitionists in the modern sense, nor were they uniform in their political beliefs. However, many strongly opposed slavery, distrusted centralized military authority, and viewed secession as unconstitutional or reckless. Others simply refused to fight in what they considered a political conflict that was not their own.

As Confederate conscription expanded in Texas during 1862, many German Texans faced an impossible choice: serve the Confederacy, flee Texas, or resist.

Some chose resistance.

That resistance culminated in one of the darkest episodes in Texas Civil War history - the Nueces Massacre, also called the Battle of the Nueces.

In August 1862, a group of mostly German Unionists attempted to flee Texas for Mexico to avoid Confederate military service. Confederate cavalry intercepted them near the Nueces River west of San Antonio. After a fierce clash, a number were killed outright, while others were later executed after capture.

The event sent shockwaves through the German settlements of the Hill Country. Many families went silent politically, fearing retaliation. German immigration slowed dramatically during and after the war.

Yet the memory of those men endured.

In Comfort, residents erected the Treue der Union Monument - "Loyalty to the Union." Dedicated in 1866, it remains the only Union monument in the former Confederacy and the oldest Civil War memorial in Texas.

August Hoffmann's Survival and Long Life

Historical references indicate that August Hoffmann survived the violence and turmoil that claimed the lives of many Hill Country Unionists. Some historical discussions and local family traditions have occasionally confused his fate with those who died during the Nueces campaign, but available evidence supports that he lived until March 4, 1935, and was the oldest known survivor of the battle/massacre, dying at age 92.

That longevity alone made him a living connection to a vanished generation.

By the time of his death, Texas had changed beyond recognition from the rough frontier landscape of his youth. Railroads had crossed the Hill Country. Telephone lines stretched between towns. Automobiles traveled roads once crossed only by wagons and horseback riders. The German language, once dominant in many Hill Country communities, had begun fading from daily life.

Yet men like Hoffmann represented the endurance of the early immigrant settlers who helped shape the culture and identity of Kendall County.

The German settlers brought more than farming and craftsmanship. They introduced traditions of education, music, civic debate, agriculture, and independent thought that continue to influence the Hill Country today. Their stone homes, dance halls, schools, and community traditions became part of the cultural foundation of communities such as Boerne, Comfort, Sisterdale, and Fredericksburg.

A Legacy Remembered

Today, the story of August Hoffmann and the German Unionists of the Hill Country remains important not because it fits neatly into modern politics, but because it reflects the difficult realities faced by ordinary people during extraordinary times.

These immigrants arrived in Texas seeking freedom and opportunity. Many suddenly found themselves caught between loyalty to neighbors, loyalty to conscience, and survival itself.

Some paid for those convictions with their lives.

Others, like August Hoffmann, survived long enough to see history remember what their generation endured.

In the quiet cemeteries and historic communities of Kendall, Gillespie, and Kerr Counties, their legacy still remains - etched into weathered limestone, preserved in family memory, and carried forward by those who continue telling the story of the Texas Hill Country and the people who built it.

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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