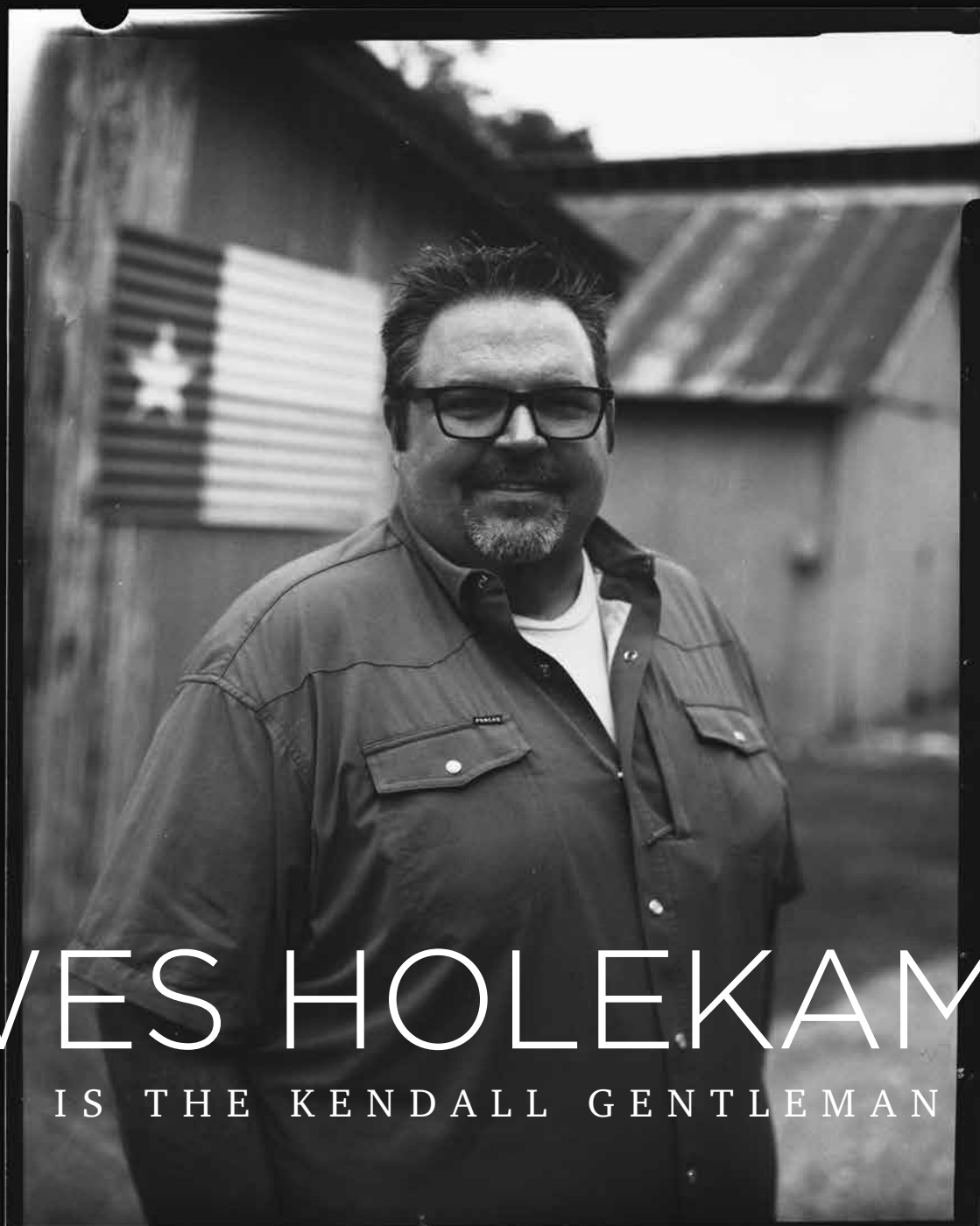




THE KENDALLTM GENTLEMAN

OCTOBER 2026 | ISSUE 10 :: VOLUME 2



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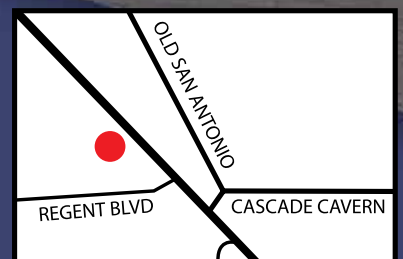
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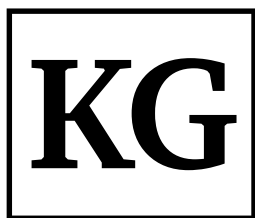
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Faithful *in the* Small Things

There are certain words we use so often that they start to lose their edges. “Faithful” is one of them. Most of the time, when we hear the word, our minds go straight to marriage. A faithful husband. A faithful wife. Sometimes we think of church, of being faithful to God, faithful in prayer, faithful in attendance. All of that is right, but I think the word reaches farther than we sometimes allow it to.

In this month’s cover story, Wes Holekamp said something that stuck with me. He was talking about the advice he would give other men, and he said to be faithful not only to your spouse, but to your family, your kids, your money, your school, and your church. That is a much bigger definition of faithfulness, and probably a more useful one.

Because when you think about it, most of what makes a good man good is remarkably ordinary. He keeps his word. He pays what he owes. He comes home. He goes to work. He takes care of what belongs to him. He calls when he said he would call. He shows up when he said he would be there. He does the job right even when nobody is standing over his shoulder checking it.

None of that is especially glamorous, and that may be part of the point. Nobody is going to hand you a trophy because you sat through your daughter’s volleyball tournament when you were tired, or because you spent Saturday fixing something around the house instead of doing what you wanted to do. Your name probably will not make the newspaper because you kept a promise, but those things matter.

We live in a culture that likes the big moment. The promotion. The announcement. The new business. The big purchase. The transformation. The victory lap. We are constantly shown people reinventing themselves, leveling up, breaking through, and moving on to the next thing.

There is nothing wrong with ambition. Men ought to have goals, and we ought to push ourselves. But somewhere along the way, we also have to remember the value of staying. Staying committed to the woman you married when marriage gets difficult. Staying engaged

with your children when they reach an age where they would rather be anywhere but with you. Staying involved in your community after the novelty has worn off and the meetings have become long and boring.

“That may be the real measure of faithfulness. Not whether we did something extraordinary, but whether the people and responsibilities placed in our care were better because we were there.”

Faithfulness can also mean staying honest in business when cutting a corner would be easier, or staying true to what you believe when doing so suddenly costs you something. Most of the time, nobody sees those decisions happening, which is part of why they matter.

A man can look impressive from across the room and still be unreliable to everyone who actually depends on him. He can have the title, the truck, the house, the business, and the reputation, yet leave a trail of people behind him who know his word does not mean much.

On the other hand, some of the best men I know are not especially flashy. They are dependable. If they tell you they are going to do something, you can quit worrying about it. Their wives know where they stand. Their kids know Dad will be there. Their friends know they can call when things go sideways. Their churches and civic organizations know that when chairs need to be moved, food needs to be served, or something needs fixing, there are a handful of people who will probably show up.

Scripture spends a great deal of time on this idea. We are told to be faithful with what has been entrusted to us. That may be money, talent, a family, a business, a piece of land, an opportunity, a friendship, or a position of

responsibility. Not everybody is going to be entrusted with the same things. The question is what you are doing with yours.

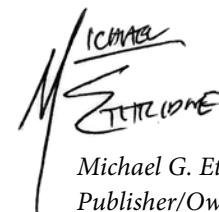
I have been thinking about that more lately. There are things in my own life I want to build. There are goals I want to reach, places I want to go, and things I still want to accomplish. I suspect most men reading this could say the same. But I do not want ambition to become an excuse for neglect.

There is always another project, another opportunity, another dollar to make and another thing demanding attention. Meanwhile, the things that matter most are usually sitting right in front of us: our wives, our children, our parents, our homes, our churches, our communities, and our word. Those things rarely demand attention with the same urgency as a ringing phone or a full inbox, but they have a way of keeping score over the years. One day, our children will be grown. Somebody else will sit in our chair at work. Somebody else will own the house. Somebody else will lead the organization. Most of the things we spend our days worrying about will eventually belong to somebody else.

What remains is the way we handled them while they were ours.

That may be the real measure of faithfulness. Not whether we did something extraordinary, but whether the people and responsibilities placed in our care were better because we were there. A good man does not need to be perfect. Lord knows none of us are. But he ought to be steady and trustworthy, the kind of man whose wife, children, friends and neighbors can say, without hesitation, “If he said he would, he will.”

There are worse things to be remembered for, and there may not be many better ones.



Michael G. Ethridge
Publisher/Owner

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

10/1/26

Comfort Chamber Mixer

Comfort Area Chamber of Commerce
804 High Street, Comfort, TX 78013
www.comfortchamber.com

Come enjoy a lively evening of mixing, mingling, and making new connections with fellow business owners, neighbors, and community members. It's the perfect chance to catch up with familiar faces, meet someone new, and experience one of Comfort's unique gathering spots with a stylish, welcoming atmosphere. Just \$2 to attend!

10/1/26

Trivia Night

Tapatio Springs Hill Country Resort
1 Resort Way, Boerne, TX 78006
www.tapatiosprings.com
Join the fun at Pub Poll Game Nights, happening every first Thursday of the month at Tapatio Springs Hill Country Resort! The games start at 6:30 pm and are free to play, offering a fantastic night out filled with laughter and friendly competition.

10/3/26

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

10/10/26

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.

10/12/26

American Legion Post 313 General Membership Meeting

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)

10/13/26

VFW Business Meeting

VFW Post 688
Kendall Masonic Lodge
897 E Blanco, Boerne, TX 78006
www.vfw688.org

10/17/26

Barktoberfest

Hill Country Animal League
100 N. Main Street, Boerne, TX 78006
www.hcaltx.org/barktoberfest
This Oktoberfest inspired festival will be held on the main plaza in Boerne and will be complete with doggy dash races, a dog costume contest, local beer vendors, music, food trucks, pet adoptions from local rescues, a petting zoo, and more. Come hang out for the day to support a great cause and local small businesses!

10/17/26

Open Bowling

Boerne Turn Verein
221 E. Theissen, Boerne, TX 78006
www.boerneturnverein.com

10/19/26

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

10/24/26

Texas Open Fire MEAT Up

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523 8th St, Comfort, TX 78013
www.the8thstreetmarket.com
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Trivia Night

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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.

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Following *the* Ratio

Why the most effective leaders listen twice as much as they speak

by Tommy Mathews

Leadership Begins with Restraint

Leadership is often associated with speaking: casting vision, giving direction, making decisions, and rallying people around a goal, a plan, or an objective. Yet many of the most consequential leadership moments begin not with a statement, but with a pause. A leader stops talking, turns down the internal noise, and gives another person the space to be fully heard.

I call this discipline following the ratio: listen twice as much as you speak. The image is simple - we have two ears and one mouth - but the leadership demand behind it is substantial. The ratio is not a stopwatch rule. It is a posture. It reminds leaders that their first responsibility in conversation is to understand reality before trying to shape it. When leaders consistently speak first and longest, they may create speed, but they also create blind spots. People learn to wait for the answer instead of contributing what they know. Concerns remain unspoken, promising ideas stay undeveloped, and agreement is mistaken for commitment or by-in. Following the ratio interrupts this pattern. It treats listening not as a passive courtesy, but as an active method for building trust, improving judgment, and multiplying leadership throughout a team.

Listening Is a Leadership Action

Real listening is not silence while preparing a rebuttal. It is disciplined attention aimed at discovering meaning; truly hearing and understanding what the speaker is communicating. A listening leader notices the words being used, the facts underneath them, the assumptions connecting them, and the concerns that may still be difficult to say aloud. That work requires curiosity and emotional control. It asks the leader to delay judgment long enough for a more complete picture to emerge.

This matters because leadership decisions are only as sound as the information reaching the decision-maker. Research on engaging leadership connects trust in management, communication, participation in decision-making, and performance feedback with stronger team effectiveness. Research on supervisors' active-empathetic listening has also found a positive relationship with employee work engagement. The practical lesson is straightforward: when people experience a leader as attentive and receptive, they are more likely to contribute the information, energy, and ownership that the work requires.

Listening becomes visible through behavior. Put away the phone. Stop scanning the room. Let the speaker finish. Ask a question that could influence your thinking or even change your mind. Reflect back what you heard: "What I hear you saying is..." Then check your understanding before offering a solution. These practices communicate something powerful: your perspective matters enough for me to get it right.

The Ratio Builds Trust Before Agreement

Employees do not expect leaders to agree with every recommendation. They do expect to be taken seriously. There is an important difference between being heard and getting one's way. A leader can listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions, make a different decision, and still strengthen the relationship - provided the reasoning is clear and the contribution is respected.

Imagine a team member raising a risk late in a project. A speaking-first leader may defend the plan, explain why the concern is manageable, or remind the person of the deadline. A listening-first leader asks: "What are you seeing that I may be missing?" That one question changes the conversation. It lowers defensiveness, improves the quality of the evidence, and signals that truth

is more valuable than protecting the leader's original position.

Over time, these moments define culture. If difficult information is welcomed, people bring it sooner. If dissent is explored rather than punished, teams challenge weak assumptions before customers or competitors do. If leaders listen beyond the comfortable answer, trust becomes operational: it improves what the organization can see and how quickly it can respond.

Better Listening Produces Better Decisions

Leaders are paid to exercise judgment, but judgment is not the same as instant certainty. The higher a person rises, the more filtered information can become. People summarize, soften, or omit what they believe the leader does not want to hear. Following the ratio counteracts that distortion by making room for detail, disagreement, perspective, and expertise.

Before a major decision, leaders can deliberately structure the conversation around listening. Ask the people closest to the work to speak first. Invite the quietest or least senior voice before momentum forms around a preferred answer. Request

“The goal of leadership is not to become the most essential voice in every room.”

disconfirming evidence: “What would have to be true for this plan to fail?” Summarize the strongest case against your position. Only then state your conclusion.

This approach does not weaken authority. It strengthens the basis on which authority acts. Leaders still decide, set direction, and hold people accountable. The difference is that their decisions are informed by a broader field of view. Listening slows the conversation just enough to prevent the much greater cost of moving quickly in the wrong direction.

The Ratio Multiplies Leadership

A leader who supplies every answer may feel

useful, but the team becomes dependent. A leader who listens and asks well-framed questions helps others think. Instead of immediately saying, “Here is what you should do,” ask, “What options have you considered?” “What tradeoffs do you see?” or “What outcome are you trying to protect?” The conversation shifts from instruction to development.

People are more likely to own a plan they helped shape. Listening gives team members a meaningful role in defining problems and constructing solutions. It also allows leaders to diagnose capability accurately. Is the person missing knowledge, confidence, context, or authority? Speaking too soon can conceal the answer. Listening reveals where coaching is actually needed.

The goal of leadership is not to become the most essential voice in every room. It is to create more people who can assess reality, exercise judgment, and act responsibly. Following the ratio creates the space in which that growth occurs.

Practicing the Ratio

The ratio becomes useful when it changes daily behavior. Begin with these five habits:

Ask before telling. Begin one-on-ones and problem-solving conversations with two sincere questions before offering your view.

Use the last-word pause. When someone finishes, wait two seconds. People often reveal the most important point after the first silence.

Separate understanding from agreement. Restate the person's position fairly enough that they recognize it, even when your final decision differs.

Track airtime, not perfection. After a meeting, ask whether your voice expanded the team's thinking or crowded it out.

Close the loop. Explain what you heard, what you decided, and how the input influenced the outcome. Listening without follow-through eventually feels performative.

The ratio should flex with the moment. In a crisis, a leader may need to give direct instructions. When developing a new vision, listening should surround the process: before speaking, to understand the situation; afterward, to test comprehension, define potential consequences, and to quantify what the vision will set in motion. Following the ratio is not silence for its own sake. It is the exercise of wisdom and the disciplined use of voice.

The Quiet Advantage

Leadership voice matters. People need clarity, courage, direction, and conviction from those who lead them. But that voice earns influence when people know it has first made room for theirs. Listening twice as much as speaking is not a retreat from leadership; it is one of leadership's clearest expressions. It says: I do not need to dominate this conversation to guide it. I am secure enough to learn, patient enough to understand, and responsible enough to act on what I hear.

The next time you enter a meeting, a coaching conversation, or a difficult decision, remember the ratio. Ask one more question. Wait through one more pause. Seek one more perspective before declaring the answer. The strongest leader in the room may not be the one who speaks the most. It may be the one who listens long enough for the truth - and the people carrying it - to emerge.

KG



Tommy Mathews leads Westward Environmental, headquartered in Boerne. A proud Boerne native and BHS '78 graduate, he's actively involved in the community through roles with the Boerne Kendall County EDC and Visit Boerne, where he serves as Chairman. He's also a dedicated member of St. Helena's Episcopal Church.
tommy@thekendallgentleman.com



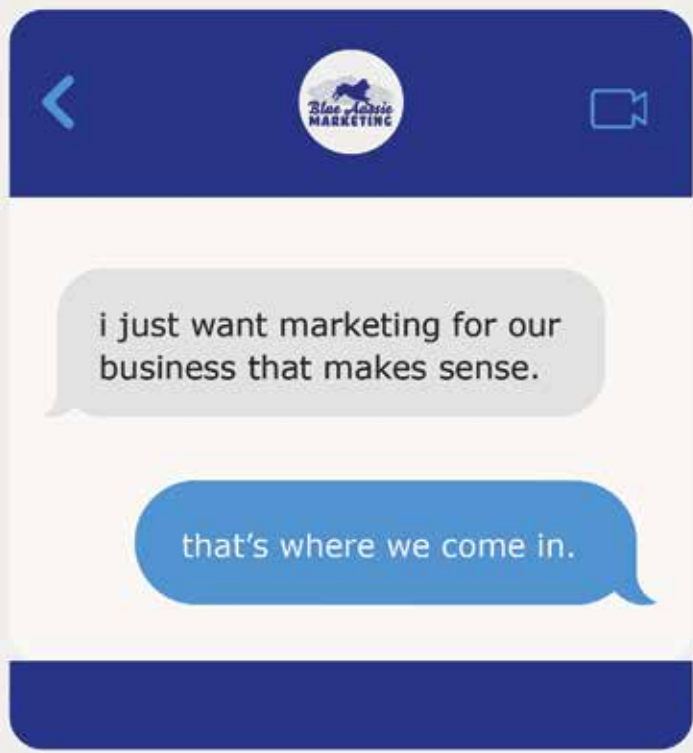
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More Than *the* Medicine

*Kendall County EMS paramedic Pete Macias
on military medicine, compassionate care, and
answering the call.*

by Jonathan R. Mallard

For Kendall County EMS paramedic Pedro “Pete” Macias, some of the most important moments in emergency medicine begin when a patient is frightened, vulnerable, and unable to advocate for himself.

During a recent call involving a patient with developmental disabilities, Macias and his partner, Jennifer Harris, had to safely care for and transport a patient in crisis. The situation required clinical judgment, patience, and an approach tailored to the patient’s individual needs.

While Macias managed the medical side of the call, Harris sat on the floor and colored with the patient for about 20 minutes. Her presence helped calm him and create a safer environment during a stressful encounter.

“The compassion, caring for people, it’s not in a textbook,” Macias said. “You need to have those people skills to reach out and understand where they’re coming from.”

The response earned public recognition and a letter of commendation from Kendall County Judge Shane Stolarczyk, who praised the patience, empathy, and professionalism demonstrated during the call.

Macias was reluctant to accept personal credit, but he welcomed the attention it brought to emergency medical services. “We need that recognition,” he said. “EMS needs that.”

Macias’s path into medicine began more than 20 years ago. Born in Argentina to American parents working overseas, he spent much of his childhood moving between countries before his family settled in Texas.

Macias enlisted in the Army National Guard as a health care specialist, the official title then used for the military occupational specialty better known throughout the Army as a combat medic. Although the title emphasized health care, the job meant being prepared to practice medicine wherever soldiers needed him, including on deployment.

That experience became the foundation of a career spanning 21 years of military service and civilian medicine. Macias remains a staff

sergeant in the Texas Army National Guard and is pursuing a commission.

“I got my civilian-acquired skills from my military service,” he said. “I liked the idea of working on the ambulance and being a first responder. That’s what drew me to emergency medicine.”

Macias joined Kendall County EMS because of its reputation as a service dedicated specifically to emergency medicine. He

“You can be the super-smart medic who knows all the things. But if you don’t have the people skills, it’s just for nothing.”

was equally drawn to Boerne and the relationships that come with serving a close-knit community.

“I fell in love with the small-town vibe of this place,” he said. “I got fixated on this idea: I’m going to move my family out here.”

Those relationships make the work meaningful, but they can also make difficult calls more personal. In a small community, responders may be called to the home of a friend or care for someone they regularly see around town.

“We see people on their worst days,” Macias said. “At the end of the day, we’re trying to do something that’s in your best interest to help you out.”

Macias believes strong medical knowledge is essential, but it must be accompanied by compassion and the ability to connect with people.

“You can be the super-smart medic who knows all the things,” he said. “But if you don’t have the people skills, it’s just for nothing.”

Macias first encountered Hope for Heroes Texas about three years ago through its community lunches and support programs. He appreciates the organization’s efforts to

give first responders and their spouses time away from the demands of the profession.

“It’s a nice break for that person and his wife to just get away from everything,” he said. “It’s great, and I’m sure it goes underappreciated.”

For Macias, that support also reminds the public that EMS professionals prepare each day to step into situations most people hope never to face.

“If it’s just a job to you, I don’t think you would survive in the environment,” he said. “Those who have done it for a long time are passionate about it.”

Message from Brad Cornell:

“Pete represents the courage, compassion, and humility we see throughout Kendall County EMS,” said Brad Cornell, founder of Hope for Heroes Texas. “He brings decades of military and medical experience into every call, but he also understands that saving a life begins with seeing the person who needs help. Hope for Heroes Texas is proud to stand behind Pete, Jennifer, and all the EMS professionals who answer when our community needs them most.”

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



The Call of *the* Wild

by *Jed Mazour*

In 20 days, my son Hunter and I will make our way across the great plains of Northwest Texas, through the high desert of New Mexico, and toward the northern reaches of Colorado's Rocky Mountains near the Wyoming border.

For the past several weeks, I have collected the gear and necessities required to camp in the mountains for as long as 10 days and nights. Yet, not once have I worried much about where we will go or what we will do when we get there. It may sound strange, but I have prepared everything we will need - and nothing we will not.

On September 11, the day before my wedding anniversary, Hunter and I will begin our journey. We will drive until we find a suitable campsite, then set out with one purpose: to find a bull elk. By the time this letter is published, we may be sitting on a mountainside, praying that God gives us one opportunity at an elk - the same moment some of you are reading these words.

While you may be enjoying the first cool evening breeze of fall, Hunter and I will likely be in a two-man tent, facing 30-degree temperatures and a 50 percent chance of rain. But a 50 percent chance is all we need. That is exactly how I see our odds: we will either be successful or we will not.

When that morning comes, after we hug our ladies and kiss them goodbye, it will be heel to belly.

More Than a Hunt

I believe the call of the wild is real, and I believe it lives inside every man. Too often, we limit ourselves by ignoring our intuition and our hearts.

Have you ever crossed paths with someone you had just been thinking about calling?

Have you ever been placed in a situation - or faced a decision - only moments after it crossed your mind? Maybe you have felt something deeply before it happened. Some people chalk that up to coincidence. I do not.

God calls me back to the wild often. I can feel it, and I believe you probably have felt it too. What does it mean? To me, it means He wants to speak to you. He wants your full attention.

Jesus often withdrew to the mountains to pray and communicate with God. For me, I think I know what He wants to talk about. Sometimes we use reasons we can understand to answer the call of the wild - hunting, fishing, adventure, escape - but the truth may be far more important than any trip we plan. It is something Saint Hubert learned during his stag hunt.

The next time you feel that overwhelming urge to get into the wilderness, ask yourself: Is something heavy on my mind? Is there something I am wrestling with?

Maybe God wants to talk to you.

Here is a tip I have picked up along the trail: Do not listen with your ears.

A Farewell to a Friend

Just last week, I received a call that a friend of mine had passed away. His service is only a few hours from now, as of this writing.

I was asked to say a few words, and I had planned to do so - until today. This morning, I found peace in the thought of not telling stories. Instead, I will use this time as something sacred: a chance to let my heart and soul do their job and say goodbye.

Waylon and I had known each other for more than 30 years. We were wild, feral kids growing up in the back roads of Fair Oaks Ranch during the mid-to-late 1990s. The memories we made through high school could fill a Netflix documentary about the last generation to experience true freedom.

In the early 2000s, we moved to College Station together and gave school a pretty weak attempt. Through our twenties and early thirties, we did what most guys do. We hunted together. We fished together. We constantly competed to see who was tougher. We spent long nights and early

mornings talking about plans we should have committed to.

We camped along the Devils River, Lake Amistad, Big Shell, and eventually the banks of the upper Guadalupe River. He was even a groomsman in my wedding.

The truth is, Waylon wrestled with demons, and he was taken too early. People who had once been close to him were pushed away. We did the best we could, but ultimately, it was out of our hands.

So today, it is goodbye.

Into the Mountains

As Hunter and I settle into the woods, we will face two tasks: harvesting a bull elk with a bow and sorting through whatever is heavy on our hearts and minds.

Before the orange sun crests the mountaintops, the coldest part of the day will sweep through the valleys. Before that happens, we will be waiting patiently on a mountainside, hoping to hear the song of a bull elk cut through the cold and echo across the pines.

The days will be long. They will test our endurance over miles of rough terrain and thousands of feet of elevation change. We will stop to hydrate, rest our feet, and chart our course. We will search for signs that we are in the right area: fresh tracks, scat, recent urine, hair on branches, and scrapes on pine trees. Each sign may lead us closer to a herd.

Our evenings may range from a warm meal over a campfire with our feet propped up to nights spent miles from base camp in a small two-man tent, trying to stay dry and remain on the heels of a nomadic herd.

Over those days, miles, and quiet nights alone, we will speak to God without saying a word.

It is in the wilderness that the noise and distractions of life begin to disappear. You are left vulnerable, facing your thoughts without the usual places to hide. The longer



a man stays in the wild, the more it whittles away at him.

Stay long enough, and you might just find what you are looking for.

Sharing the Outdoors

My family has always spent our free time outside. Because of our shared love for exploring the outdoors, Denise and I have decided to take that passion to the next level.

Last month, we started Mazour Outfitting Co., a river outfitting company offering fully guided kayak and canoe trips on the upper Guadalupe and Llano rivers. We want people to experience these rivers the way our family has enjoyed them for years: slowly, comfortably, and with a genuine appreciation for the water, the land, and the Hill Country around us.

We provide kayaks and canoes, personal flotation devices, paddles, homemade river meals, fishing tackle for guests who need it, portable speakers, ice chests, and just about anything else you may need for a day on the water.

We are also offering a Grande Package on both rivers. After a day floating the river, guests can relax at a private ranch for an overnight stay. The package includes a steak dinner, ranch tours, and breakfast on Sunday morning before departure.

For visitors to our community, we can make dinner recommendations, point out local sights, share area history, and help with the details that make a Hill Country trip memorable. Denise and I believe we are offering one of the best ways to experience this part of Texas.

If you are interested in a trip - or know someone who might be - please share our information. Mazour Outfitting Co. can be found on Facebook and Instagram, and our

website, MazourOutfittingCo.com, includes trip details and booking information.

Tune Out the Noise

The call of the wild has been a part of me for as long as I can remember. It was there when I was young and exploring my surroundings. It was shaped by growing up with Waylon and the guys we ran with. It has stayed with me while Denise and I raised our children, and it is part of the next chapter we are building together.

Only in the past several years have I begun to understand what that call truly means to me - and what I am supposed to do with it.

I do not know that I can fully articulate it, but the takeaway is simple:

Explore new, wild places and share them with your friends and family.

Get away every once in a while to reset.

Put your faith in Jesus Christ and begin reading the Bible.

Work to shed selfishness.

Learn that less is often more.

Give without needing recognition.

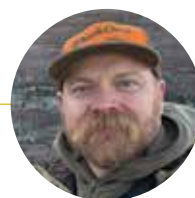
Treat people the way you want to be treated.

Be kind.

It sounds simple until you realize how hard today's world works to pull you away from those things.

Tune out the noise. Find a wild place. Talk to God.

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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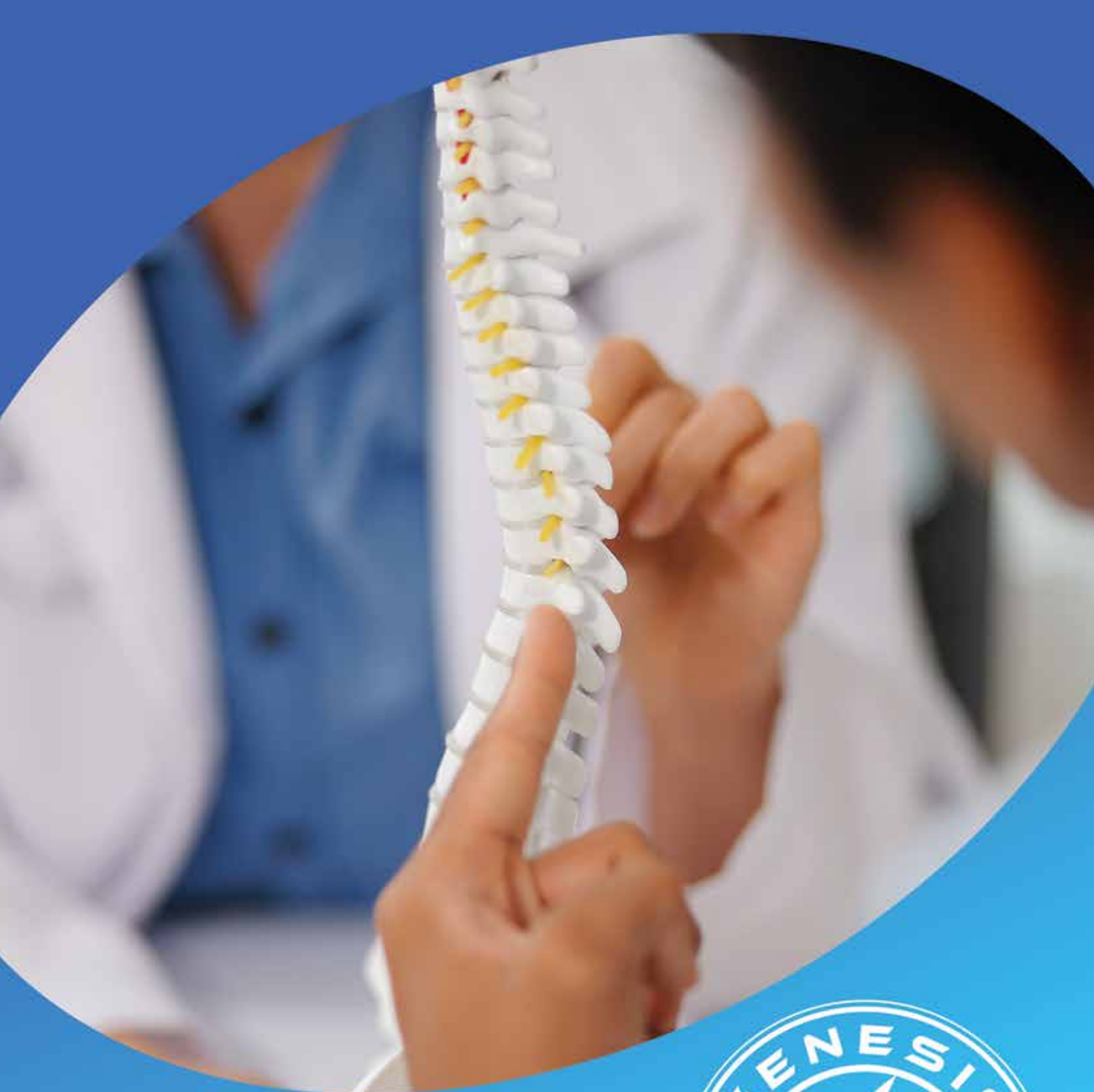


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Undercrown 10

by Clay Smoot



I smoke a cigar a day, as it is part of my “calming” routine. Sometimes that smoke is on the way to a meeting, getting on a video conference, or after a long and exhausting day of being me. If you know me or follow my social media, then you know exactly how much truth there is in the statement of “being me.” It’s a lot. It is now my favorite time of year, and my favorite time to smoke a cigar outside. If you have read my previous reviews, you probably know by now that I am not a fan of the hot weather. So, when the seasons start to change from summer to fall, I relish it with the joy of someone who understands it is time for a dark, full-bodied,

made from a blend of Nicaraguan tobacco in the Jalapa region of the country. It is then wrapped in a Mexican Maduro leaf from the lush San Andres Valley. This unique cigar is sure to satisfy the highest expectations of Maduro cigar smokers.

Wrapper – Mexican San Andres Maduro
Binder – Connecticut Broadleaf
Filler – Nicaraguan
Size – 5x50 Robusto

I will be pairing this cigar with a hot cup of Dirty Duck French Press Coffee. Rum or coffee is my preferred drink with a dark

adult who dislikes the Texas summers and is eagerly awaiting the first, and slightest hint of a cool autumn breeze (which at the time of this article being typed is nowhere in our future). I am still excited as I know what I am going to get when I light this cigar.

Once lit, I take a deep drag on this cigar, and the hit of a rich espresso flavor is unmistakable. It is immediately followed by a strong pepper taste that is long-lasting and prominent. As I start to get a little closer to the middle, more earthy tones like oak and cedar start to emerge and really bring the first third of this cigar to a wonderful balance.

In the middle of this cigar, the pepper starts to let up a little bit and is not so prominent. I notice the beginning of a very slight sweet aroma to form, but it doesn’t last long. However, the sweet, creamy taste of cocoa, raisin, and a hint of caramel are starting to emerge.

The last third of this cigar is a delicious smorgasbord of all of the flavors. The pepper starts to poke its spicy little head out, and the espresso hits the tongue with a quick but lasting punch as if to say, “hey, remember me?” The creamy chocolate espresso taste, with a hint of oak, vanilla, and a little bit of spice.

Pairs well with

Dirty Duck French Press Coffee
Espresso
Balvenie Single Malt Scotch 14 Year Week of Peat
Dark Rum
Lager
Red Wine – Cabernet Sauvignon or Malbec

“ The pepper starts to poke its spicy little head out, and the espresso hits the tongue with a quick but lasting punch as if to say, “hey, remember me?” ”

maduro cigar outside in the crisp fall breeze or the light chill of a Hill Country autumn.

I was introduced to this cigar’s little brother, Undercrown Maduro, about seven years ago. I enjoyed that cigar, but it lacked a certain “pop”. A couple of years later, the Undercrown 10 came out. This cigar had the “pop”. It is now one of the few maduros that I keep in my personal humidor.

The Undercrown 10 Maduro is made by the Drew Estate Cigar Company. This cigar is

maduro cigar. I go into my home office, I grab my cigar from my big humidor, I turn on some Randy Rogers Band, selecting “In My Arms Instead”, hoping that the fiddle intro will somehow summon the spirits to actually make the “leaves turn to rust”. They didn’t, and it’s still 100-plus degrees outside. Anyway, I grab my small cigar punch, make my hole, turning down the flame on my torch. I rotate my cigar clockwise, then counterclockwise to ensure that the whole end is lit evenly and correctly. I approach this cigar with the excited expectations of an

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



Rails

by Coach Stan Leech

In the fall of 1986, the home side of Greyhound Stadium was what is now the visitor side. It was simple back then. No video board, no seven-room press box, no instant replay. Just Friday night lights, wooden bleachers, and a community that loved its Greyhounds. There was also a wooden press box that had been built in 1972, and on top of that press box was one of the best views in the stadium.

Coach Jack Moss was the head football coach. Coach Bruce McConaghy coached the defensive backs and was also the head baseball coach. Bruce and I were both young coaches in our mid-20's, and on Friday nights we had an important assignment. We climbed on top of that press box. Yes, climbed. There wasn't a nice staircase leading to a comfortable coaching booth. We climbed up almost like climbing a ladder. Once we got there, we sat on top of a wooden box three stories above the ground. No rails.

Bruce would talk to Coach Holcomb about the defense, coverages, adjustments, and what he was seeing from the opposing offense. My job was a little less complicated, but still very important in my mind. I simply

told Coach Moss who made the tackle. There we were, two young coaches sitting on top of a wooden press box on Friday nights without a rail anywhere around us.

Looking back, Bruce and I still laugh about it. Forty years later, we shake our heads that nobody thought twice about two young coaches sitting that high above the ground with nothing around us. Nobody said, "Should we put a rail up there?" Nobody said, "Maybe this isn't the safest idea." We just climbed up and went to work.

That's youth. When you're young, sometimes you don't even notice there are no rails. You believe your balance will always be there. You believe your next step will land exactly where you planned. You believe confidence and

“Wisdom isn’t seeing how close you can get to the edge without falling. Wisdom is recognizing the value of the things and the people that keep you from falling in the first place.”

safety are pretty much the same thing. Then life teaches you differently.

The older I get, the more I understand rails. Rails aren’t glamorous. Nobody walks into a stadium and compliments the handrails. Nobody brags about the rail beside a staircase or around the edge of a roof. Most of the time we don’t even notice them, until we don’t have them or don’t have them any longer. They just quietly do their job. Rails keep us from falling.

The interesting thing about rails is that most of the time you don’t need them. You can walk beside one a hundred times and never touch it. Then one day your foot slips. Your balance leaves you for just a second, and suddenly that rail becomes the most important thing around.

In 2023, my grandson Jack attended a varsity football game with me. By then, everything about the stadium was different. The home side was on the opposite side of the field, much higher than it had been in the old days, and Greyhound Stadium had become Boerne ISD Stadium. Bigger. Taller. More modern.

I was excited for Jack to experience a varsity football game from the press box. He was nine years old, and I wanted him to see Friday night football from a different perspective. We ate Chick-fil-A sandwiches together and watched the band march into the stadium. He enjoyed the lights, the players warming up, and everything going on below us. I enjoyed watching him enjoy it.

At some point, I thought it would be fun to climb the ladder up to the filming nest at the very top of the stadium. So up we went. Step by step. The same young coach who had once climbed onto the top of a wooden one-room press box with no rails was now a grandfather climbing to the top of a much taller stadium with his nine-year old grandson. Funny how life works.

When we reached the top, Jack wanted to go outside of the filming area where there was a rail protecting the edge. It was safe. The rail was strong. It had been designed and built for exactly that purpose. There really wasn’t any reason to believe something would go wrong.

I looked at Jack and quickly said, “This is not a good idea. Let’s go back inside.”

Trust me, it was safe. But Jack is my only grandchild, and at that moment I wasn’t interested in what was safe. I wasn’t interested in taking even an extremely small unnecessary chance. I wanted the best odds possible that absolutely nothing could go wrong.

Think about that. In 1986, I was in my mid-20’s sitting three stories above the ground on top of a wooden press box with no rails. In 2023, I didn’t even want my grandson standing near the edge of the stadium with a rail protecting him.

What changed?

I did.

Some people think rails keep us from enjoying life. We sometimes look at boundaries as restrictions. We think rules keep us from having fun, experiencing adventure, or enjoying freedom. When we’re young, especially, we can spend a lot of time wondering how close we can get to the edge without going over.

But maybe we’ve been looking at rails the wrong way. A rail doesn’t keep you from enjoying the view. A rail helps you enjoy the view safely.

That’s what parents try to provide. That’s what good coaches provide. That’s what teachers, grandparents, mentors, and true friends provide. They put rails around the people they love. They say no occasionally.

They establish boundaries. They warn us when we’re getting too close to an edge we may not even recognize.

And yes, I believe that’s what God does too. His rails aren’t there to keep us from living. They’re there because He knows how easily we can fall.

When I look back over my life, I realize I’ve had rails all around me. Parents who corrected me. Coaches who challenged me. Friends who cared enough to tell me the truth. People who told me no when yes would have been easier. Faith and Scripture reminded me where to stand when I wasn’t quite sure myself.

At times, I probably thought some of those rails were in my way. Now I realize many of them were keeping me upright.

Bruce and I will continue to laugh about those two young coaches sitting on top of that wooden press box in 1986. We survived it. Forty years later, we have a great story to tell. But somewhere between that Friday night in 1986 and the night I climbed to the top of Boerne ISD Stadium with Jack in 2023, I learned something.

Wisdom isn’t seeing how close you can get to the edge without falling. Wisdom is recognizing the value of the things and the people that keep you from falling in the first place.

Maybe that’s one of the gifts of getting older. You finally learn to appreciate the rails.

KG



Coach Leech, now in his 41st 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

THE LONG ROAD HOME

Wes Holekamp left Comfort to build a career. Years later, he came home to raise his family in the same Hill Country community that raised him, and found there was still work to be done.

By Michael G. Ethridge | Photography by Jonathan R. Mallard

There are a lot of ways to measure the distance between Comfort and Fort Worth. On a map, it is a little more than 250 miles. For Wes Holekamp, there was a stretch of life when that distance became something much more personal.

"I was coming from Comfort to Fort Worth every week for six months," he said. "That's like two hundred fifty-six miles one way."

Then, with the kind of understatement common among men who have already decided something simply has to be done, he added, "It was a little bit of a chore to manage family life and getting to things, but we made it work."

That drive gets close to the heart of Wes's story. He spent years building a life somewhere else, then reached a point when home began pulling harder than opportunity was pushing.

Wes grew up on Cypress Creek, the only child of Glenn and Edith Holekamp, in a family whose name has been part of Comfort for generations.

"We were born and raised here in Comfort, out in the Cypress Creek area," he said. "Both my parents were born and raised here."

After graduating from Comfort High School in 1998, Wes headed to Tarleton State University, where he studied Agriculture Services and Development. The degree generally pointed students toward agricultural education or Extension work, but Tarleton exposed him to a different world.

"Once I got a little bit of a taste of the corporate world, which I wasn't exposed to here growing up, I thought that might be something worth expanding my horizons on," he said.

So he added marketing and business classes. He also met Brandy, the woman who would become his wife.

"I stumbled on the love of my life," he said. After college, the couple settled in Fort Worth, where Wes went to work for Ag Workers Insurance. He began in marketing and eventually became director of marketing. The job put him on the road constantly, traveling across Texas and working agricultural conferences, meetings, and events.

"I really enjoyed getting out and meeting with folks," he said. "I enjoyed the time on the road, but I didn't enjoy being away from my family."

Once children came along, that mattered more.

"It wasn't unheard of for me to drive from Fort Worth to San Antonio for an evening meeting and then back again," he said. "So that can make for a very long day."

Wes stayed with Ag Workers for about 12 years. Then the company went through a reduction in force, and he was one of several employees let go.

There is no bitterness in the way he tells it now.

"One of the things I learned from that is that something that was probably hurtful at the moment opened my eyes," he said. "It made me expand my reach, wanting to see what else was out there."

That led him to Great American Insurance Group and to a specialty line of insurance dealing with theft, fraud, embezzlement, and other financial crimes.

What Wes likes about the work is that it still requires judgment.

"A lot of the P&C lines, especially, become so automated," he said. "You put in a driver's license number or a VIN number, and it spits out a number."



“For me, it felt like I was coming home. I knew we would have a network, so to speak, of support here.”

His side of the business is different.

“We get to set the price and the deductible. We get to put the forms and endorsements,” he said. “We get to build a deal. Get to make a deal.”

There is something fitting about that. A fifth-generation Hill Country man working in a modern corporate world, but still drawn to work where relationships, judgment, and experience matter.

Great American also became important to Wes when his mother became ill. His manager gave him the flexibility to work remotely so he could spend more time in Comfort helping her.

“I felt very loyal to the company for allowing me to do that,” he said.

His father had already passed away. When Edith later died, Wes was an only child, and the family home place remained.

That forced a conversation.

“We said maybe it’s time to move back,” he recalled. “I think the kids will thrive in a smaller community, and so we made the move.”

They put their Fort Worth house on the market and expected the process to take a while.

It sold in four days.

After finishing out the school year, the family headed south and moved into the same Cypress Creek house where Wes had grown up. The place needed work, and the renovation meant spending about six months in a travel trailer.

Still, Wes never questioned what the move meant.

“For me, it felt like I was coming home,” he said. “I knew we would have a network, so to speak, of support here.”

That move also put his children into the same community that had shaped him. Kayleigh has now followed him to Tarleton, while Mason has started his freshman year at Comfort High School.

“I’m fifth generation, so my son Mason is the sixth,” Wes said.

His grandfather attended the old Cypress Creek schoolhouse before the rural schools were consolidated into larger districts. The Holekamp name itself reaches deep into Comfort history, and Wes still keeps an original 1856 family land deed.

The age of the family name occasionally produces some humor too.

At a Boys & Girls Club fundraiser, a couple who had purchased an old Holekamp house was excited to meet him after researching the property and walking through the cemetery.

“She said honestly, this is the first live one.” Since coming home, Wes has steadily found himself pulled into community service. He first became involved with the Cypress Creek Community School organization, where the need was pretty simple.

“They were just looking for young folks to help, mow and keep the place up,” he said.

That eventually led to other roles, including service with the Kerr Central Appraisal District, the Comfort Cemetery board, and multiple years as a deacon at First Baptist Church in Fredericksburg.

Then somebody asked him to run for the Comfort ISD Board of Trustees.

Wes had already been attending meetings and paying attention to what was happening in the district. When the trustee representing his area decided not to run again, he approached Wes.

“I thought, that’s the gift that keeps on giving,” Wes said.

He filed anyway. No one ran against him, and not long after he joined the board, the district entered what he described as a “hornet’s nest” of issues.

Wes says he did not run with a personnel agenda.

“I had run my campaign on transparency, and I wanted more flow of information from the district down to the community,” he said. “I was not there with an agenda to hire or fire somebody.”

One piece of advice from another trustee has stayed with him.

“When you’re making decisions, make sure it’s to the benefit of the kid,” he said. “Then you know you’re making the right one.”

You can see that philosophy most clearly in the way he talks about career and technical education.

Comfort ISD has expanded welding and other workforce-oriented programs. Mason recently earned a welding certification before even beginning his freshman year. At home, Wes sees both sides of the education debate.

“I’ve got one that was ready to go to college, and I’ve got one that is not wanting to go to college,” he said. “Which is fine. We have to be able to do both.”

That may be one of the simplest summaries of good education policy you will hear. A school should not manufacture identical futures. It should help young people build useful ones.

Late in our conversation, I asked Wes what advice he would give the men of Kendall County.

His first answer was service.

“Find something in the community that you can be active in, participate in, and give a hundred and ten percent,” he said. “Don’t give fifty; give a hundred and ten.”

Then he talked about faithfulness.

“Be faithful to your wife,” he said, before broadening the thought. “Faithful not only to your spouse, but to your family, to your kids, to your money, to your school, to your church.”

Faithfulness is a pretty good word for Wes’s story. Faithful to Brandy, whom he met at Tarleton. Faithful to Kayleigh and Mason, whose futures changed the way he thought about work. Faithful to a company that gave him room to care for his mother. Faithful enough to come home, and faithful enough to stay involved once he got here.

When I asked what advice he would give younger men, his answer came back to relationships.

“Build relationships, both older and younger than yourself,” he said. “Not online. In person.”

That tracks with the way he has built his career, his public service, and his life in Comfort.

These days, Wes admits there is not much spare time left over for hobbies. He likes to fish, travel with Brandy, and spend time in the deer blind with Mason.

“I enjoy going with my son now,” he said. “So I mostly just sit there and pester him.”

For a man whose professional work stretches far beyond Comfort, his world has become remarkably local again. The old home place, Brandy, Kayleigh and Mason, a school district, a cemetery, a community and a family name that was here long before him. So I asked him what keeps him going.

“The kids do,” he said. “The kids keep me going. Not just mine, but all of them.”

Maybe that is what the long road home was really leading toward. Wes Holekamp went away from Comfort to build a life, and he came back to help build what comes next. For that, we are proud to recognize Wes Holekamp as The Kendall Gentleman.

KG





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The Boerne Limited

by John Eddie Vogt

The railroad was built through Boerne sometime in 1887. I remember when the train used to come through Boerne every morning at about ten o'clock going north. At the depot, which was located at the east end of Theissen Street, there was an arm that extended out and the crew would attach a mailbag to it when they went by going north. Every afternoon at about two it would come back through heading for San Antonio. In later years it would have extra time and either going or coming it would stop just south of the Sisterdale Road cutoff crossing, across Main Street from the Live Oak Cafe

(sometimes called the Live Roach Cafe), and the crew would go over for a snack.

The jobs at the station were all handled by one station master. At one time this was a lady. Her responsibilities as station master were to operate the depot. She handled the telegraph, Railway Express, Southern Pacific Transport, seeing that the post office was notified of the mailbag, sweeping the floor, keeping the fire going by using coal that was left off by the train, and probably two or three other chores. This wonderful woman had the habit of putting on the appropriate cap as she was doing each job. We lived near the depot for a while and I remember going by and talking with her and being fascinated by her skill at using the telegraph key.

Trains ran through Boerne for about eighty years. The tracks were pulled up shortly thereafter, then around forty years after that someone decided to turn the old railroad right-of-way into a hike and bike trail. In looking for a name for the trail, another

someone must have decided to go back in time to their childhood and name the trail "Old Number Nine." When I say "go back to their childhood," it may have been in remembrance of the old nursery rhyme "Engine, Engine Number Nine, going down Chicago line...." Oh how catchy that diddy was that we remember it for so long. What a name for our tourist population that it might also take them back to their childhood. However, at no time was the railroad from San Antonio to Kerrville/Fredericksburg named the "Number Nine."

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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The Holekamps: A Family That Helped Build Kendall County

From German immigrants to generations of Hill Country leadership

by Tom Allred, Sr.

When Friedrich “Fritz” Holekamp and his young wife, Betty, left Germany in 1844, Kendall County did not exist. Boerne had not been founded, Comfort had not been surveyed, and Sisterdale was still several years in the future.

Yet the Holekamp family would eventually become woven into the history of all three communities. Their story is particularly fitting among the founding families of Kendall County because their influence did not end with the pioneer generation. Their descendants became businessmen, teachers, county officials,

bankers, musicians, civic leaders and even a member of the Texas Legislature.

From Hannover to the Texas Frontier

Betty Wilhelmine Abbenthern was born March 4, 1826, in the Kingdom of Hannover. On March 17, 1844, at eighteen, she married Georg Friedrich “Fritz” Holekamp, born in Hannover in 1812.

Within months, the newlyweds made an extraordinary decision: they would leave Germany for Texas.

They joined the German immigration movement associated with the Adelsverein, the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas. In September 1844, Fritz and Betty sailed from Bremerhaven aboard the Johann Dethardt, reaching Galveston that November.

Betty was only eighteen years old when she exchanged the relative comforts of Germany for the Texas frontier.

The Holekamps first participated in the settlement of New Braunfels, where Fritz established a mill on the Comal River. They later lived in Fredericksburg, and Fritz signed an 1847 petition seeking the creation of Gillespie County.

Their journey eventually brought them to Sisterdale.

There, on June 10, 1849, Betty gave birth to their son Julius. He has traditionally been described as the first white child born in Kendall County. More precisely, Julius was born within the territory that later became Kendall County, which was not formally created until 1862.

Helping Build Comfort

The family moved again before settling at Comfort in 1854, just as that new German community was being established.

Fritz participated in surveying and platting the town, and historical accounts credit the Holekamps with building Comfort's first house.

That statement is worth considering. The Holekamps did not arrive in an established town. Streets, businesses, and homes familiar to later generations were only beginning to take shape. They were there while a settlement was literally becoming a community.

By this time Fritz and Betty were raising what eventually became a family of seven children: George, Julius, Daniel, Dora, Johanna, Ernest, and Bettie.

Then the Civil War changed everything.

Fritz joined the company of Captain John Herman Kampmann and was stationed at Brownsville. He died in 1862.

Betty was approximately thirty-six years old and suddenly responsible for seven children.

She never remarried.

Instead, historical accounts tell us that she took in boarders and operated washing and sewing businesses to support her family.

Some colorful traditions surround Betty Holekamp. One says she boldly rode through a swollen Guadalupe River during the immigrants' journey. Another says that when Texas became part of the United States, she fashioned an American flag with a single star and consequently became known as the "Betsy Ross of Texas."

Those stories are part of Holekamp family and Hill Country tradition, although they cannot be documented as confidently as other parts of her life.

The documented story may be more impressive.

A thirty-six-year-old widow on the Texas frontier managed to keep seven children together and provide for them through her own labor.

“ The Holekamp story also reminds us that communities are rarely built by one celebrated founder. They are built over generations. ”

Betty remained in Comfort for another forty years. She died November 2, 1902.

But by then the Holekamp story had moved into another generation.

From Pioneers to Community Builders

Fritz and Betty's children became participants in the economic and civic life of the communities their parents' generation had helped establish.

Their son Daniel, known as Dan, became a Comfort businessman. Dan and his wife, Franciska "Frances" Wiedenfeld Holekamp, operated several enterprises beginning in the 1880s, including a mercantile business and an establishment known as Holekamp's Hall.

The hall served as more than a business. Concerts and other entertainment were held there, including German-language performances, making it part of Comfort's social and cultural life.

Today, the Dan and Frances Holekamp home at 421 Seventh Street in Comfort is recognized with an Official Texas Historical Marker.

Julius - the son born at Sisterdale in 1849 - also entered public service, becoming a Kendall County commissioner representing the Comfort precinct.

The family's movement from pioneer settlement into public service would continue with his sons.

A Holekamp Helps Build Boerne

Julius's son Paul Fricke Holekamp, born in Comfort in 1877, became one of the family's most significant figures in Boerne.

Paul began as a teacher before voters elected him Kendall County tax assessor in 1904. He would serve the county in that position for more than thirty years.

His activities extended far beyond the courthouse.

When Boerne State Bank was organized in 1906, Paul served as assistant cashier. He later became involved in preparing abstracts of title and helped develop the business that became Kendall County Abstract Company. He also served as secretary of the Kendall County Fair Association.

And there was music.

In 1906, Paul became director of the Boerne Gesang Verein, the German singing society. He remained its director for more than half a century.

The connection between generations is striking. Fritz Holekamp had studied music in Germany. Decades later, his grandson was helping preserve German musical traditions in Boerne.

The story of the Holekamps continues online. Read more at www.thekendallgentleman.com.

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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