Book Notes

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Despite some obvious shortcomings, always the case in collections of this kind, the majority of the articles are both useful and interesting, and make the work deserving of consideration by those interested in the military experience in the gulf coast region.

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BOOKNOTES

Texas A&M University Press continues its fine work, especially in publishing materials on the Big Thicket. Geyata Ajilvsgi’s *Wild Flowers of the Big Thicket, East Texas and Western Louisiana*, and *The Natural World of the Texas Big Thicket*, photographs by Blair Pittman with an Introduction by William A. Owens, are recent examples. Both may be ordered from the Press at Drawer C, College Station, Texas 77843. *Wild Flowers* sells for $17.50 or $9.95 in paper, and *Natural World* has a $22.50 price tag. The former should appeal mostly to scientists. It contains a beautiful color photo section, but is mostly composed of word description of the hundreds of wild flowers which bloom in the Thicket. Each item contains latin species identification, and a description of the leaves, inflorescence, and fruit of the plants. Ajilvsgi is a vascular plant field taxonomist and free lance nature photographer who has combined her professional talents to produce an interesting volume on the botany of the Thicket. Probably more of our readers will identify with the beauty of Pittman’s photos and Owens’ introduction in the *Natural World*. Most of the photos measure eight by twelve inches, are perfectly lighted and focused, and capture the Thicket exquisitely. It’s a little like looking out a glass window, however. Heat or misquitoes or swampy smells can not be produced in a book, and the real thing sometimes look artificial unless one knows the Thicket well enough to appreciate the pictures.

The A&M Press also produced two other books, quite different from the above, but both interesting in their own way. *The Texas Gulf Coast, Intrepretations by Nine Artists* ($29.95), included works of Al Barnes, Herb Booth, John P. Cowan, Michael Frary, John Guerin, Harold Phenix, E.M. “Buck” Schiwetz, Everett Spruce, and Dan Wingren. It also has an Introduction by Leon Hale and a Foreword by Ann Holmes. It features forty-five or so reproduction of the artists’ works, with a statement about his intrepertation. The Introduction is pure Hale.

Bill Brett’s *There Ain’t No Such Animal and Other East Texas Tales* ($8.50) is also pure Brett. This master story teller
strikes again, following the success of his *Stolen Steers*, an award winner from a year ago. Brett’s local color writing mark him as a master of the style. Anyone who can read about “The Education of Robert” without doubling up with laughter needs help.

Another “master” of East Texas literature, Francis E. Abernethy, also strikes again with the Texas Folklore Society’s publication *Built in Texas* (E-Heart Press, Box 8908, Waco 76700). *Built in Texas* ($24.50) contains a Preface by editor Abernethy (In which the editor reflects upon his preambulations and peregrinations), excellent black-and-white photos and line drawings of Texas structures and structuring techniques, and a variety of articles. For example, G. Loyd Collier wrote of the cultural geography of folk building forms. The division on “Methods and Materials” features articles by Ann Carpenter, John O. West, and Terry Jordan, among others; “Style and Form” contains articles by Ferdinand Roemer, Thomas Green, Howard Martin, and T. Lindsay Baker, among others; and “Barns”, “Gates and Fences” - with a good article by Lonn Taylor, “Holding Water,” and “Restoration and Preservations,” fill out the contents. If you are used to good work by Abernethy and the Folklore Society, you will not be disappointed. This may be their best yet.

Another kind of photo-and-text book, *The San Antonio Story* (Centennial Heritage, Box 1620, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74101, $19.95) is also available. The principle writer of its text, T.R. Fehrenbach, tells the story of San Antonio, his city, from founding to modern life in company with ten other writers and a number of artists and photographers. San Antonio is most Texan’s favorite city (other than their own), and this book may help explain why. San Antonio’s age, romantic heritage, and continued growth seem to epitomize the older Texas spirit.

Other publications of interest included the Stevenson Press’s *Armadillo*, compiled by Terry Peters (Box 10021, Austin, Texas 78766, $3.95). This slender volume deals with the physiology, behavior, habitat, and evolution of what has become virtually the state animal. *Who Are the Chinese Texans?*, by Marian L. Martinello and William T. Field Jr., especially for young readers, is a publication of the Institute of Texas Cultures (801 South Bowie Street, San Antonio, Texas 78205). This well illustrated little book deals with the contribution of the Chinese to the development of Texas. Campers will find useful the Gulf Publishing Company’s *Guide to Texas Parks, Lakes, and Forests* (Box 2608, Houston, Texas 77001, $5.95). This book is chocked full of maps of various camping locations which direct you to the area and then suggest various activities. Charts indicate camping
facilities, and provide useful geographical information.

Guides of another sort are James H. Conrad's *Texas Educational History, A Bibliography*, available from the Gee Library at East Texas State University. This is a most complete bibliography of Texas educational materials. And the Ralph W. Steen Library at Stephen F. Austin State University has also published an interesting and useful guide, *Nacogdoches County Court House Records, 1787-1879, Inventory and Index*, which relates to materials on deposit in the Special Collections in the Library. It was prepared by Linda Nicklas with Nancy Dickerson and Linda Comingore.

Finally, our readers who do research will be interested in *The Writer's Resource Guide*, published by Writers Digest Books (9933 Alliance, Cincinnati, Ohio 45242, $10.95). This book is a portable compendium of research sources for free lance writers and anyone else who needs a handy one-volume directory of free information on practically any subject. Almost 2,000 sources are listed, completed with address of the source and a description of the kind of information available.