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Book Notes

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BOOK NOTES

What follows is the Editor's ramblings about happenings of a historical nature and about what has happened in the wonderful world of publications about Texas.

Ed Eakin of Eakin Press (Box 90159, Austin, TX 78709) sent along lots of slender but interesting books about which you should be aware. Association Members Wanda Landrey and Bill O'Neal head the list, and do so for that reason. Wanda's book is titled *Lost In The Big Thicket*, and is billed a "mystery and adventure" set in that wonderful, unique area. Illustrations are by A. Ann Wilson; also present is a map of the region and a glossary of terms used in the text. Enjoy.

Having told us about baseball, outlaws, and more in the past, Bill's latest book is entitled *Historic Ranches of the Old West*. Texas comes in for the greatest share (King, JA, XIT, Matador, 6666, and eight more), but other states are well represented: New Mexico (John Chisum's Jinglebob, plus two more); Oklahoma (Pawnee Bill's Buffalo Ranch and others); Kansas (two); Nebraska (three); Colorado (Charles Goodnight's Rock Canyon Ranch plus four others); Wyoming (nine, but not Shiloh of Owen Wister fame, alas); Montana (four, but not the Lonesome Dove), Arizona (seven); Dakotas (two); Nevada (one); and California (two). Two chapters are of general interest: "Ranches to Visit" and "Ranching and the Movies." The story of each ranch is traced and illustrated with photos and sidebars on persons or events associated with it. As usual, Bill has done a good job.

Quicker Quips: Rana Williamson, *When The Catfish Had Ticks: Texas Drought Humor*, with such observations as "... in Jones County the trees started chasing the dogs" (p. 3) ... Margaret C. Berry's *UT History 101: Highlights of the History of the University of Texas* is a shotgun approach to its topic; for example, in the 1880s, "A plank fence was built around the Forty Acres to keep out cows and other stray animals." An Aggie friend says they still have a lot of strays there. Much more serious is Ellie Kamran Belfiglio's *The Rain Stops In Texas: A Woman's Struggle From Oppression to Freedom*, the story of her difficulties in tumultuous Tehran and her subsequent flight and finding of freedom in Texas. Her husband, Valentine Belfiglio, contributed a Foreword.

Some others: Always a winner, the *Texas Almanac, 1998-1999*, edited by Mary G. Ramos (distributed by Texas A&M Press Consortium, Drawer C, College Station, TX 78843-4354. \$12.95), is its usual indispensable self. This is the compendium that anyone interested in Texas must have, and they must always keep the newest version handy. I remember visiting Ralph Steen in Austin after he quit being president at SFA and worked for the Coordinating Board. There were three items for reading in his hotel room: that day's issue of the newspaper, the then two-volume *Handbook of Texas* – and the *Texas Almanac*. Special articles of interest in this one include "LaBelle and Fort St. Louis" and "All-Woman Supreme Court." Also included – any statistic on Texas you are likely to need.

Larry L. King's *True Facts, Tall Tales, Pure Fiction* (also University of Texas Press, same address), isn't so serious but is a good read. Each part of the title heads a section of the book, which is our scorecard to know what is going on. I especially enjoyed his recollections of our former Congressman Charlie Wilson, who represented us Up There for twenty-four thrilling years.

Games, sort of: *The Loblolly Book of Baseball* (The Loblolly Press, Carthage TX 75633), edited by Lincoln King and Beth Hazelwood, is a fancified version of the fare found for years in their serial publications, this time dedicated to the National Pastime. Has lots of b&w illustrations. . I'm letting Dennis Roberson's *Winning 42: Strategy & Lore of the National Game of Texas* – says the author; I thought it was the lottery, but what do I know? – (Texas Tech University Press, Box 41037, Lubbock, TX 79409-1037), in here because I know a lot of East Texans would agree with the premise of the title, although I don't know why. Since I really can't understand this one, I'll borrow Al Lowman's phrase: "For the folks who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they will like."

Back to Loblolly. Now who doesn't like a cookbook? I do, anyway, ever since *Helpful Hints for HouseHusbands of Uppity Women* reached print. Comes now *Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread: Loblolly Cookbook*, Gary High School. Quite a mouthful, appropriately. Put together by Karen Whitside McAllister and Ronnette Griffith Cooke (good name for such work). They stand behind each and every recipe, which is more than I can say for *Uppity*....

Friend and ETHA member Pete A.Y. Gunter sent along a published lecture given down Lamar University way, titled *R.E. Jackson And Early Big Thicket Conservation: Setting the Stage* (Big Thicket Association, Saratoga, Texas). This is a case of not being there but still getting to read about it. B&W illustrations.

Buck A. Young's *The Making of a City: Baytown, Texas Since Consolidation, 1948-1998* (Lee College: Baytown, 1997), is the story of what happened to Goose Creek, Pelly, and, of course Baytown, after their merger as one community. Chapters are devoted to local government, industry, retail and commercial activity, schools, transportation, leisure and sports, health and medicine, and leadership. Lots of b&w photos and maps.

Now for a pretty book. *Texas Past: Enduring Legacy* (Texas Parks and Wildlife Press: Austin, 1997, distributed by University of Texas Press, Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819), with text by Andrew Sansom, photos by Wyman Meinzer, and a foreword by Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock. Sansom is the director of the Parks and Wildlife Department for the State of Texas. A sequel to the writer-photographer team's *Texas Lost* (1995), this is a handsome volume filled with beautiful color photos of some of the best that is left of Texas' heritage. Good book.

Finally, one of the best for last: Bob Bowman's, *The Search for an Alamo Soldier* (Best of East Texas Publishers, Box 1647, Lufkin, TX 75901, \$20), is a personal saga. It is dedicated "To those Alamo defenders whose sacrifice has been immortalized, but whose lives have remained in obscurity." Bob has in

mind his ancestor, Jesse B. Bowman. Bob's quest began with an epiphany: discovering while visiting the Alamo in 1946 that his great-great-great grandfather had been among the defenders of the Alamo, which I have called elsewhere the crucible of Texas history. Bob's search for "the rest of the story" took him to Illinois, Indiana, Arkansas, and finally to Hempstead County. The search entailed some detective work but the benefits were great, especially Bob getting to know his family history. An excellent genealogy of the Bowman family, entitled "Jesse and his descendants," is included.