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MAY 2024

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The Polka Life

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ON THE COVER



Street dancing is a Polka Festival tradition.

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 875-3299 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's festival season!

Ennis continues to attract large crowds this time of year for the festivals we have, and while not one to repeat annually, the eclipse was massive, wasn't it? The benefit to our tourism will be hard to measure. There were just so many people here, and they were from all over the world, some traveling as many as 7000 miles one way.

Our Welcome Center, tourism staff and Chamber of Commerce work diligently every spring to bring quality entertainment, craft vendors and food vendors during these special events. There are other volunteer committees hard at work as well. I know the National Polka Festival Committee will start working on next year's event almost as soon as this one ends. The Bluebonnet Festival, Cinco de Mayo and Blues on Main committees also put a lot of time into making the events the best they can be for our residents, as well as for our guests.

Our tourism director, Becky McCarty, has shared that many visitors come for one event, learn of the next one while they are here, and make plans for a return trip. She has also shared that some of these visitors find something special enough in Ennis that they choose to become our neighbors.

Enjoy these events. When you meet our out-of-town guests, let them know how much more Ennis has to offer.

Vitame Vás! Welcome!



Bill

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A SUMMER

Relaxing near cool, clear water on a warm summer day describes a lot of our ideas of a good time, and in Ennis, there may be no better place than the completely renovated Tyrš Pool at the Sokol. The pool was dedicated and named when it was originally constructed in 1972 after Miroslav Tyrš, the founder of the first Sokol in Prague, CZ, in 1862.

For almost 50 years, the pool hosted members and guests for pool parties, fitness events and open swimming, but the years had taken its toll on the facility, and after closing for a while during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sokol leadership decided it was time for a major renovation. “We had tried resurfacing the pool three or four years before that, but it was really time for a major upgrade,” Assistant Pool Manager Judi Tabb mentioned.

Joanna Wilson is the pool manager, and she also served as project manager for the renovation, in addition to serving as physical director at Sokol. “Physical fitness is our primary mission,” Joanna offered. “The Sokol website includes this in the organization’s mission statement, ‘Our mission is to provide fitness and community for individuals and family through physical, educational, cultural and social programs.’ When we built the pool, we recognized it fit well within our mission statement.”

Michelle Slovak is the current president of Ennis Sokol. She interjected, “During COVID, we discussed whether we should try to renovate the pool or to close it down for good. We went to the membership, and it was a unanimous vote to work toward renovation. They did not want to close the pool. From there, we went forward to ‘Save the pool’ fundraising. We had a quote of \$75,000, which was just for resurfacing the pool. That is when an anonymous donor contacted my husband, David, indicating they were possibly interested in helping us. Then David, the donor and our treasurer at the time, Ray Elleven, had a meeting, and the donor confirmed they would be donating. Their contribution was about 99 percent of the final cost of the project.”

Judi added, “Before we closed the pool for the pandemic, we thought the cost might be \$45,000-\$50,000. The donor made that donation back then and was all in on the total renovation that we completed last year.”

Joanna said the pool renovation was about \$755,000, plus the renovations to the pool house and concession area, awnings, fences and miscellaneous items. “The final project cost was about \$850,000,” she recalled. “The pool has a smooth floor now, and that is an improvement over the prior pool. There are nice chairs for lounging, and a picnic area is available to rent that is very popular. We continue to make improvements, and we have a lot of good ideas for more concession items this year.”



PLACE

— By Bill Smith



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The Sokol organization is much more than the pool, and all of those involved with the pool honor the Czech culture and the other activities that the organization offers. Michelle suggested, “We have a lot of Czech families in Sokol, but we are more inclusive and want other families to feel welcome here also. We continue to teach our heritage. The Ellis County Czech Heritage Society meets here monthly in our clubroom. Our museum and library are managed by Liz Moucka Krajca, and they are always open. Of course, we have participated in the National Polka Festival since the beginning, and we have hosted the Ennis Czech Music Festival since its inception, also. We also had a great Super Bowl Party. The Heritage Society has movie nights in the clubroom.”

The Sokol gymnastics program is well-known, and Joanna mentioned that there currently isn’t another gymnastics program in town. “We are very affordable and family friendly.”

Judi added, “We have a family heritage that continues to grow. My daughter started gymnastics at age 2, and now she teaches in the gym and is also a lifeguard at the pool. We teach our kids to volunteer and be involved with events like the Polka Festival. They learn to set up equipment in the gym, and they learn to be leaders. Jennifer’s daughter is 9 years old and already wants to start coaching. These are some of the things that make us successful.”

Michelle addressed Sokol membership, saying, “We probably lost 25 percent of our members during COVID. We wanted to keep the hall open, but there was almost no income during that time. We do not have any source of income other than

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membership dues and what we make from social events and hall rentals. Since we opened the pool, we have had 164 new members join. We would love to see that double this year. We had 200 pool passes issued last year, and that number could double as well. We also gained 16 new gym members as a result of the pool.”

Opening the pool in 2023 was successful, but at the same time, there were some struggles. “The weather was crazy last year,” Joanna remembered. “There were a lot of cool, rainy, even stormy days. The pool is heated, but even our very committed ladies that came for water aerobics didn’t like how cool it was when they were out of the water.”

Judi said the future could include party heaters. “We had parties all through the month of July, including a good crowd for Independence Day.”

The pool offers daily passes for members and guests, and season passes are available from May 28 to October. There is also information on the website about pool party reservations with various rates based on the number of people attending and length of the party.

The pool has American Red Cross Certified Lifeguards, and Jennifer Wilson, assistant pool manager, mentioned that younger swimmers must pass a swimming test and receive an arm band that lets them into the deeper end of the pool.

Sokol’s Olympic-size swimming pool is surely the place to be this summer. Concessions include chips, chocolate candy, drinks, hot dogs and ice cream. Go visit the Sokol pool. Let poolside be your best side! **NOW**

Editor’s Note: Membership information for joining Sokol is on their website at www.sokolennis.com.



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— By Bill Smith



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Sunday-Monday: Closed

While it may be unusual for one to set their career path at such a young age, Dr. Aastha knew from age 12 that she would one day fulfill her dream of practicing dentistry. “I always knew that I wanted to be in health care, and I knew

I wanted to work with my hands,” she recalled. “I was born in India and moved to Zambia for most of my youth, graduating from high school there.

“Health care in Zambia is limited, and the only time most people go to the dentist there is when they have a significant problem and are in pain. I experienced that as a child, and, thankfully, I was referred to a dentist. They were able to treat a painful infection. Eventually I had braces, and it produced a great confidence boost in my life. I learned the value of seeing a dentist at an early age.”

Dr. Aastha completed a degree in cellular and molecular biology at Louisiana State University before graduating from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry. After her graduation, she completed another year in advanced training for general dentistry. “Continuing education is important,” she said. “I recently completed a six-day course in Dallas on dental implants, and the training was both

classroom and hands-on. We have group training of our office staff, and I am also able to speak with my college professors and other dentists that I consider to be mentors.”

Ennis Smiles takes a comprehensive approach to the patient’s dental health, offering a broad range of services including cleaning, fillings, root canals, clear aligner therapy, crowns, implants and dentures. The practice is designed to appeal to the whole family. “It is never too early or too late to begin taking care of your oral health,” Dr. Aastha emphasized. “We want to collaborate with our patients and their families to develop a plan that can address any immediate problem they may have, then work on preventing future problems.

“There are a number of reasons why some people are hesitant to go to the dentist. Some are fearful about the procedures, or afraid that the dentist may judge them for the poor habits they may have had. We want the community to know that this is a ‘judgement free zone,’ and that our interest is in improving and maintaining their oral health.”

The office staff at Ennis Smiles is friendly and welcoming. There are three assistants who work with Dr. Aastha and two employees who work primarily in the front office. Dr. Aastha explained that all of the employees are cross-trained, and everyone is constantly learning new skills.

“We want our patients to enjoy coming to see us. We want children to think coming to the dentist is fun,” she said with a smile. “We are not about seeing a great number of patients every day where we do not really get to know them and have the opportunity to partner with them for their future dental needs. One of my mentors emphasized that our dental practice is not about numbers, and the patient’s care is our first priority.

“Ennis is our home, and we love it here. I like the small town, and I feel I am needed here. I enjoy the bluebonnets, the local festivals and the local restaurants. The community has been nice and friendly. We love welcoming new patients, and our goal is to help them get the smile they deserve. We work on that goal together, and I continue to learn more about Ennis from them!” **NOW**

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TIME	EVENT / BAND	PLACE
FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2024		
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Pardubická Muzika	Sokol
7:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.	Moravians	Sokol
9:00 p.m.	King & Queen Dance Contest (sponsored by SPJST Home Office)	Sokol
SATURDAY, MAY 25, 2024		
10:00 a.m.	Polka Parade	Downtown Ennis
9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Arts & Crafts, Food, & Pivo/Beer Pavilion	Downtown Ennis
11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Czech Melody Masters	Sokol
11:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Praha Brothers	KJT Auditorium
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Pardubická Muzika	SPJST Lodge #25
12:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Street Dance - Texas Sound Check	Downtown Ennis
1:00 p.m.	Kolache Eating Contest (sponsored by KJT Home Office)	Downtown Stage
1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	The Fabulous Six	SPJST Lodge #25
2:15 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Dujka Brothers	Sokol
4:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Ennis Czech Boys	KJT Auditorium
4:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.	Vaneks of West	SPJST Lodge #25
4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	Alpenmuzikanten	Downtown Ennis
8:30 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.	Brave Combo	KJT Auditorium
8:30 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.	Czechaholics	SPJST Lodge #25
8:30 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.	Country Concert - Josh Abbott Band w/ special guest Alex Meixner	Sokol
SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2024		
9:00 a.m.	Polka Mass	St John Church
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	KBEC Polka Party Live Broadcast: with Jodie Mikula Orchestra	Sokol
11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Arts & Crafts, Food, & Pivo/Beer Pavilion	Downtown Ennis
11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Pardubická Muzika	KJT Auditorium
12:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Street Dance - Czechaholics	Downtown Ennis
1:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.	Czech & Then Some / Alex Meixner	KJT Auditorium
1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Dujka Brothers	Sokol
9:00 p.m. - 11:30 p.m.	Brave Combo	KJT Auditorium



Parade in Downtown Ennis

Saturday, May 25, 2024 • Start Time: 10:00 a.m.

Floats, bands and colorful costumes will kick-off the downtown festivities. The parade traditionally includes something for visitors of all ages. Enjoy the music of our polka bands riding on decorated floats or the sounds of our award-winning Ennis High School Marching Band.

The Shriners make their annual appearance, as well as celebrities, public officials, motorcycles, horseback riders, clowns, kids and seniors! This giant parade twists through historic downtown Ennis and is sure to please.

This year's theme is "Ennis Proud ... Polka Loud!"



13th Annual Kolache Eating Contest

Sponsored by the KJT Home Office

Saturday, May 25, 2024 • Start Time: 1:00 p.m.

Downtown Stage

Don't miss the annual Kolache Eating Contest! Prizes will be awarded for Men's, Women's, Youth Boy and Youth Girl Individual Champion. Registration Ends: Noon, Friday at the Chamber of Commerce, or noon Saturday at the Downtown Stage.

THE POLKA LIFE

— By Bill





Andy Mikula remembers listening to polka bands play well before his father started the Jodie Mikula Orchestra in 1967. “Dad used to take us to dances at the old ‘SP’ (SPIST) hall long before the prior hall burned in 1970,” he recalled. “We would be there late into the night.”

Jodie had played the accordion before he joined the Army during World War II. “Dad wanted us to learn music, and Raymond Zapletal taught my brothers, Ken and Nick, to play the coronet. I was drawn to the drums,” Andy said. “While we were learning the basics of music, Dad surprised us all when he produced an old accordion and started playing some old Czech songs. Originally, Dad just wanted to get together and play. His Uncle Frank also played the accordion, and in 1967, they decided to start playing together as a band. I guess the first ‘professional gig’ we played was for Edwin Mikula’s wedding. Edwin is Uncle Frank’s son.”

The band goes all the way back to the very first National Polka Festival in Ennis. Andy was about 9 years old when he started playing the tuba, but it was not long before he switched to playing the drums, which he continues to play today. “Mom was our first drummer. I did not know much about playing the tuba, but my brother taught me a few things. I guess people enjoyed it, but after the first year, Mom decided she had enough to do without a full band schedule every weekend, so I got to move to percussion, which was what I really wanted to do from the beginning.”

Music for Andy was “on the job training.” While he never had any formal instruction, he credits his friend, David Dlabaj, who was playing with Johnny Mensik at the time, with helping him learn more about the drums. “I would sit in with them, and he taught me enough to have a good start,” Andy reflected.

Both Andy and Sandra recall growing up with Czech traditions in their childhood homes. “Mom and Dad spoke Czech, especially when we were with Grandma and Grandpa, so I picked up some of it when we visited their home on Sunday afternoons,” Andy explained.

“My grandfather, Joe Zmolik, came to America from the Czech Republic when he was 4 years old,” Sandra shared. “My grandmother was born here. She was a Holy. My memories of visiting my grandparents are similar to Andy’s. We both remember they grew most everything that they ate. I particularly remember potatoes and fruit growing at their house. However, my grandmother did not particularly enjoy cooking, so we only had things like kolache and strudel on special occasions, like weddings and birthdays. We butchered our own meat, so we always had klobase, but since Dad was not of Czech descent, we did not go to a lot of dances.”

In the ‘70s and ‘80s the Jodie Mikula Orchestra was playing somewhere just about every weekend. “There was a triangle of halls where we regularly played, including West, Ennis and Dallas. There were more dances sponsored by the clubs then, and it seems like there was a wedding every weekend, too,” Andy remembered.

The band has played in several states, and in 1996, the Jodie Mikula Orchestra played in the First Annual Lawrence Welk Polka Festival in Branson, Missouri. They tied for first place in the band competition, and that evening they played with Welk accordionist, Myron Floren.

Since 1989, the band has played on polka cruises with two or three other bands. “We have had some great times on the cruises,” Sandra mentioned. “Originally, we were leaving from Miami, so we had to fly there first. It got easier when the cruises started originating from New Orleans, and now we leave out of Galveston.”

The Mikulas have four grown children, 18 grandchildren and one “on the way.” Their younger son, Corey, is following Dad’s footsteps, playing drums with the Ennis Czech Boys. Sandra added, “Our daughter, Brianna Waedekin, likes to make kolache and strudel. Corey’s wife, Samantha, wears her *kroj* (the traditional Czech dress) at the Polka Festival and placed third in the dance contest last year. Our grandson, Eli Gilbert was the National Polka Festival prince for 2023.”

For Andy and Sandra’s 40th wedding anniversary, they took a trip to the Czech Republic. Their living room is decorated with pictures of family, and a collection of Czech crystal is prominently displayed. The Czech music continues to play in the Mikula home, just as it has for as long as there has been a National Polka Festival in Ennis. **NOW**

JOSH ABBOTT BAND



Saturday, May 25, 2024 — Country Concert

Time: 8:30 p.m.-Midnight

Location: Sokol Hall • 2622 TX-34, Ennis, TX 75119

Cost: \$40 in advance/\$45 day of the event

After 15 years of building a wildly devoted following, the Texas-bred, now eight-piece Josh Abbott Band approached their seventh studio LP, *Somewhere Down The Road*, with a renewed dedication to speaking an unvarnished truth about life, love and human nature. The unbridled authenticity of *Somewhere Down The Road* emerged from a deliberate shift in singer/songwriter Josh Abbott's writing process. "I'm writing from the heart more than I ever have," says Abbott.

The album marks the first effort from the band's newly reconfigured lineup, including longtime members Austin Davis (banjo), Eddie Villanueva (drums), David Fralin (keys) and Jimmy Hartman (bass), as well as recent additions Adam Hill (fiddle) and guitarists Cale Richardson and Kris Farrow. Unguarded honesty is on tracks like "What Were You Thinkin'" (a bittersweet but up-tempo love song) and "She'll Always Be" (a sweetly poetic serenade to someone eternally free-spirited). The stripped-back but spellbinding "Guilt Of A Man," delves into a highly delicate matter seldom addressed in song form. "I wrote that about watching my wife go through postpartum depression after the birth of our daughter," Abbott explains.

Co-written by Abbott and Grammy-winning heavy-hitter Jon Randall, the title track "Somewhere Down The Road" serves as the album's centerpiece and an overall mission statement for the band. "I wanted to write about gaining some clarity in the music industry and how it all works," says Abbott. Throughout the album, Josh Abbott Band shows an uncompromising commitment to moving forward and constantly pushing into new musical terrain.

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MAY 26 - KJT #35

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Brave Combo

Saturday – 8:30-Midnight – KJT #35 Hall
Sunday – 9:00-11:30 p.m. – KJT #35 Hall



Alex Meixner

Saturday – 8:30 p.m.-Midnight – Sokol Hall
Sunday – 8:30 p.m.-Midnight – KJT #35 Hall



Pardubická Muzika

Friday – 5:30-7:00 p.m. – Sokol Hall
Saturday – 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. – SPJST #25 Hall
Sunday – 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. – KJT #35 Hall



Czech & Then Some

Thursday – 7:00-11:00 p.m. – KJT #35 Hall
Sunday – 1:00-8:15 p.m. – KJT #35 Hall



Enňiš Czěch Boys

Saturday – 4:00-7:30 p.m.
KJT #35 Hall



Jodie Mikula Orchestra

Sunday – 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Sokol Hall



Czechaholics

Saturday – 8:30-Midnight – SPJST #25 Hall
Sunday – Noon-3:30 p.m. – Downtown Ennis



Texas Sound Check

Saturday – Noon-3:30 p.m.
Downtown Ennis



The Moravians

Friday – 7:30-11:00 p.m.
Sokol Hall



Dujka Brothers

Saturday – 2:15-5:00 p.m. – Sokol Hall
Sunday – 1:30-4:30 p.m. – Sokol Hall



AlpenMusikanten

Saturday – 4:30-7:00 p.m.
Downtown Ennis



Praha Brothers

Saturday – 11:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
KJT #35 Hall



The Fabulous Six

Saturday – 1:00-3:30 p.m.
SPJST #25 Hall



Vaneks of West

Saturday – 4:30-7:30 p.m.
SPJST #25 Hall



Czech Melody Masters

Saturday – 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Sokol Hall

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2023 King and Queen, Rick and Debra Halfmann

37th King and Queen Dance Contest

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Friday, May 24, 2024 • Sokol Hall

Doors Open: 6:00 p.m.

Dance Contest Registration Ends: 8:30 p.m.

Dance Contest Starts: 9:00 p.m.

This year's King and Queen Dance Contest will be like no other! So, dust off your dancing shoes and plan on competing this year. Dance contestants must be 15 years old or older.

A Czech costume or "fancy" dancing is not a requirement to compete, but a Czech costume is required for the winners who will participate in the weekend festivities.

In addition, contestants ages 6 to 10 years are eligible to participate in the Polka Prince and Princess Contest. Contestants must have their parent's or guardian's consent. Winner must have a costume.



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County Commissioner Lane Grayson brings the program to the Ennis Host Lions Club.

Zoomed In: Nic Collins

By Bill Smith

Nic Collins recently returned to Ennis to serve as Minister of Youth and Music at Baylor Baptist Church. A native of Elkhart, Indiana, Nic completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Evansville with a degree in music. In 2000, he joined the U.S. Air Force and was deployed seven times to Afghanistan and Iraq, serving as a special operations navigator. Before he exited the military, he completed a graduate degree in criminal justice at the University of Cincinnati.

After working for the U.S. Labor Department for about seven years, Nic entered the ministry. He received Master of Divinity and Master of Religion degrees from Liberty University, and he is pursuing a doctorate in education.

Nic and his wife, Maria, have two children: Jessie, age 7, and Justus, age 3. Nic said, "I'm happy to be back in Ennis. It feels like home."



Chet Hensley and Randy Dixon contemplate their next moves at the recent chess tournament.



Sadie Jones, Paisley Terry and Sydney Jones enjoy the solar eclipse.



Becky McCarty greets visitors downtown.



Riley Leobold buys books at the library book sale.



Suzy Ray Oster shows *The Garden Woven* exhibit at Ennis Welcome Center.



James Patak introduces Anna McCane and Haley Burnett at a recent meeting.

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In the Kitchen With
 DARREN AND
 DEBBIE SLOVAK

— By Bill Smith

Darren and Debbie Slovak have deep roots in their Czech culture, customs and recipes. They both have traced their ancestry from their great-great-grandparents' immigrations from Moravia/Czech Republic to America and proudly say they are both 100 percent Czech. "Cooking is a joy we share together, and many of our recipes have been passed down through the generations," Darren mentioned.

They also give of their time by organizing and cooking many meals for the Sokol KHB Hall in Ennis. Making strudels and kolaches for The National Polka Festival and Darren's favorite pinto bean recipe for Sokol's Lenten Fish Fries are just a couple of examples. "One of the most rewarding undertakings of ours was cooking three meals daily for 60 people over a two-week period when Sokol KHB Ennis hosted the National Instructors School a few years back," Debbie added. When you visit Sokol, you will always find Darren and Debbie in the kitchen. **NOW**

**Slovak's Kuřecí Polévka
 (Chicken Soup)**

- 5 qts. water
- 4 Knorr chicken bouillon cubes
- 2 tsp. Knorr powdered chicken bouillon
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 5-8 whole allspice balls
- 2-3 boneless, skinless raw chicken breasts
- 4 stalks celery, thinly chopped

- 1 bunch Italian parsley (divided use)
- 1 bunch green onions with stems
- 6 carrots, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
- 3 potatoes, peeled and cubed (optional)

1. In an 8-qt. cooking pot, add the water, chicken bouillon cubes and bouillon powder, salt, pepper, whole allspice, chicken, celery, 1/2 bundle of parsley and green onions; stir.
2. Cover; simmer on medium heat until it

boils. Once it boils, reduce the heat to low; simmer for 1 1/2 hours, or until the chicken is cooked.

3. Using tongs, remove the chicken to a separate pan; let cool. Cut/shred the meat into pieces; set aside.
4. Remove all the green onions, parsley and whole allspice balls carefully; discard.
5. Add the carrots and potatoes; cook another 20-30 minutes on medium heat until the vegetables are cooked.
6. Return the chicken to the pot.
7. Chop 2 Tbsp. of the remaining parsley leaves for garnish.
8. Serve the soup over noodles and/or Kapanka (Czech Egg Dumplings) and top with the chopped parsley.

**Kapanka
 (Czech Egg Dumplings)**

- 3 qts. boiling water
- 6 eggs
- 1 Tbsp. Knorr powdered chicken bouillon
- 2 to 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1. Bring the water to a boil.

2. Beat the eggs; add the chicken bouillon.
3. Gradually add the flour to the egg mixture, beating consistently with a table fork until a thick mixture is achieved.
4. Dip a spoon in the hot water to heat it; use the spoon to drop small portions of the thick mixture into the boiling water. Allow to release from the spoon. If the dumpling does not hold together when dropped into the water, add more flour. Too much flour and too thick of a batter will result in hard dumplings, so a good balance is best.
5. Allow the dumplings to cook for about 5 minutes, or until they float.
6. Scoop the dumplings from the pot; add them to a bowl of chicken soup.

České Brambory (Czech Style Wedding Potatoes)

- 1 gal. sliced potatoes (# 10 can or 105 oz.)
- 1 stick melted butter
- 1 tsp. granulated garlic
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 2 Tbsp. Italian parsley leaves, chopped
- 2 Tbsp. green onion tops, finely chopped

1. Preheat the oven to 300 F.
2. Open the can of potatoes; rinse under cold water in a colander.
3. Place the potatoes in a 9x13-inch casserole dish. Add the butter, seasonings, parsley and green onions; gently mix.
4. Cover the dish with foil; place in the oven for about 45 minutes, stirring gently once and then a final gentle stir before serving.

Cream Cheese Rolls

Dough:

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 8 oz. sour cream
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 2 pkgs. dry yeast
- 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 4 cups sifted all-purpose flour

Cream Cheese Filling:

- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese (not low fat)
- 2 tsp. vanilla or 1 tsp. almond flavor
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1 egg, beaten

Glaze:

- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 4 Tbsp. milk
- 2 tsp. vanilla or 1 tsp. almond flavor



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Slovak's Kuřecí Polévka
(Chicken Soup)

1. For dough: In a medium pan, melt the butter; add the sugar and salt; stir to combine on low heat.
2. Remove from the heat; add the sour cream; mix well. Set aside; cool to lukewarm.
3. In a separate large bowl, add the warm water; sprinkle the yeast and 1/2 tsp. sugar into the water; mix to activate the yeast. Continue mixing until the yeast dissolves.
4. Beat the eggs in another small bowl. Once the yeast mixture begins to bubble, add the eggs and cream mixture; mix.

5. Begin folding in the flour; mix well. Then knead until the dough is not sticky.
6. Cover tightly; refrigerate overnight or for 8 hours.
7. For filling: Combine all the filling ingredients in a bowl; use a mixer to blend until smooth.
8. Divide the refrigerated dough into 4 even parts. Roll out each ball separately in a rectangle to about 8x12 inches.
9. Spread 1/4 of the cheese filling on 3/4 of the rolled-out dough. Put melted butter where there is no filling.

10. Roll up to where the butter edge begins. Pinch the ends to seal. Stretch to elongate the roll.
11. Place on a greased cookie sheet; butter the rolls. (Using scissors, snip slits across the top of the dough about 2 inches apart.) Let rise for 1 hour.
12. Bake at 350 F in a preheated oven for about 15 minutes.
13. For glaze: Mix the glaze ingredients until smooth. Drizzle the glaze over the top of the baked and cooled rolls.

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Dip YOUR TOES



On the coast of Alabama sits a 32-mile stretch of white sand beaches that entices visitors to frolic in the Gulf of Mexico. Children build castles or toss the football, and parents relax in the sun, slathered in sunscreen, of course, as they take in all that Alabama Beaches — the twin cities of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach — have to offer.

Alabama Beaches are about a 10 1/2-hour drive southeast from the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. With 15 public beaches from Gulf Shores east along Alabama Highway 182 to Orange Beach, beachgoers have much to explore. Temporary vacation accommodations are offered at a variety of hotels, condos and houses along both sides of the highway. Caribe Resort is a popular travel destination in Orange Beach. The resort features an on-site restaurant, several pools, beach trolley service and access to a marina.

Best Western Premier – The Tides Hotel is an affordable alternative. Best Western Premier offers typical room options, plus a double queen room with two bunk beds for the youngsters and suites. The outdoor pool on the lower level includes a bar for cocktails and beer for adults, or fruit





in the sand

— By Amber D. Browne

smoothies for the children. With beach access and available chairs and umbrellas for rent, it is easy to spend most of your time on the beach near the hotel.

Swimmers might catch a glimpse of various species of marine life in the clear Gulf waters. Seasonal lifeguards keep a watchful eye to aid in emergency situations. For a view from outside the water, dolphin tours, parasailing, offshore fishing and even an Orange Beach Pirate Cruise can be booked for some fun out on the Gulf.

Orange Beach offers a variety of dining options from The Gulf, with offerings of American fare near Perdido Pass, to Coastal and its menu of seafood, sandwiches and more, plus creative cocktails. Whatever restaurant is on the agenda, try the gumbo (if available) and try to make a reservation. For dessert, Kayden's Candy Factory is a must-try, but several ice cream and dessert shops offer tasty treats in the area.

Orange Beach's retail shops are open for all your vacation necessities and souvenirs. For an afternoon of entertainment, vacationers can visit Adventure Island for go-karts, golf, arcades and more. At Gulf State Park, visitors can spend their days swimming, hiking, biking and simply enjoying time in nature. Anglers can catch a big one at area fishing spots, including the Gulf State Park Pier, which is expected to reopen this summer following renovations for damage caused during Hurricane Sally in 2020. The state park offers a variety of camping and lodging options, as well.

Just a short drive north sits The Wharf, where visitors can spend hours shopping retail stores, enjoying entertainment and feasting at waterfront restaurants along Portage Creek. Go for a spin on the Ferris Wheel, view the nightly SPECTRA Laser Light Experience or catch a concert at The Wharf Amphitheater. Hotel accommodations are available at The Wharf, and The Wharf Marina provides access to guests joining by land, air or sea.

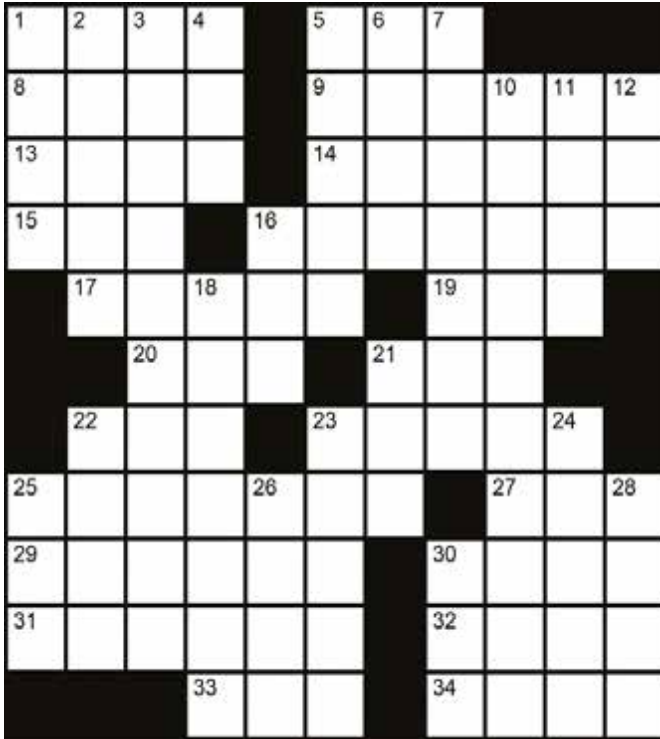
Several miles west of Orange Beach, vacationers will find Gulf Shores, where more white sand beaches await to tempt them into the warm waters. Gulf Shores offers even more dining, nightlife, entertainment and shopping options.

Regardless of where you choose to dip your toes in the sand at Alabama Beaches, much fun is to be had and fresh seafood to be shared with family and friends. The peak season includes the summer months, so if Alabama is on your mind, make those reservations soon. **NOW**

Sources:

1. gulfshores.com.
2. cariberesort.com.
3. alwharf.com.
4. alapark.com/parks/gulf-state-park.

Crossword Puzzle



CrosswordSite.com Ltd

Across

- 1 Diamond element?
- 5 Norm, briefly
- 8 October's birthstone
- 9 Puncture
- 13 Goose cry
- 14 Tip off
- 15 Piece
- 16 "And Still I Rise" poet
- 17 Luxurious
- 19 Kind of deal in the 1930s
- 20 Open mesh fabric
- 21 Cleo's nemesis
- 22 "... Degrees of Separation"
- 23 Live
- 25 Heal
- 27 Big ISP
- 29 Apparel
- 30 The nasty half of R L Stevenson's split personality
- 31 Muse of comedy a hit, L A resolved
- 32 Start of something big?
- 33 E M Forster's "Howards ..."
- 34 German-Polish border river

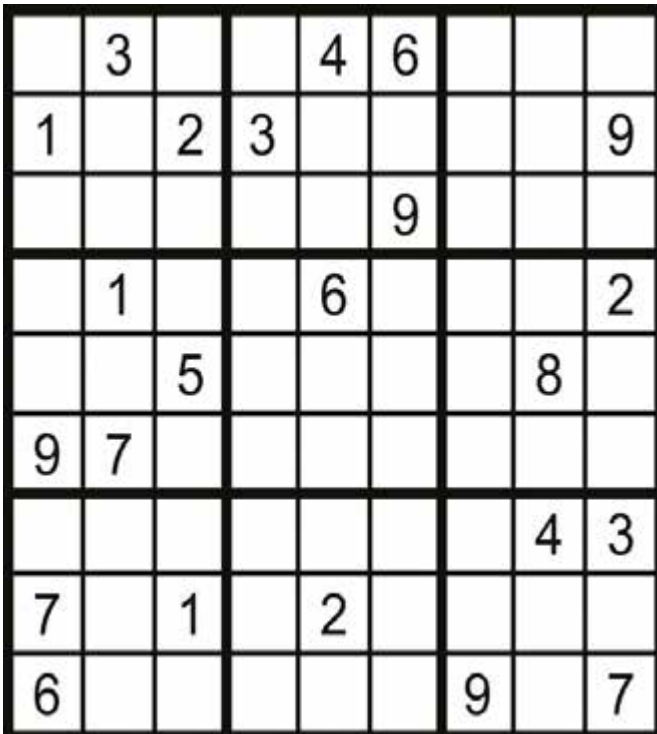
Down

- 1 Atomic physicist Niels ...
- 2 "... --- player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage ..." (Shakespeare, "Macbeth")
- 3 Nicaraguan politico
- 4 Large deer
- 5 Like a porcupine
- 6 Sound of a small bell
- 7 Resistance against attack
- 10 Deploy Earl badly on stage, perhaps?
- 11 Humiliating meal?
- 12 It'll never get off the ground in Australia
- 16 AIDS fighter
- 18 Cloth
- 21 Amazement
- 22 Adam and Eve's third
- 23 Overpowering fear
- 24 Skier's shelter
- 25 First animal in the Chinese Zodiac
- 26 "Little Shop of Horrors" dentist --- Scrivello
- 28 Shakespeare character "more sinned against than sinning"
- 30 Medical insurer

Online versions and solutions available at www.nowmagazines.com. From our Homepage, click on the Crossword-Sudoku tab. Click on a puzzle. Click on the See All button to view solutions.

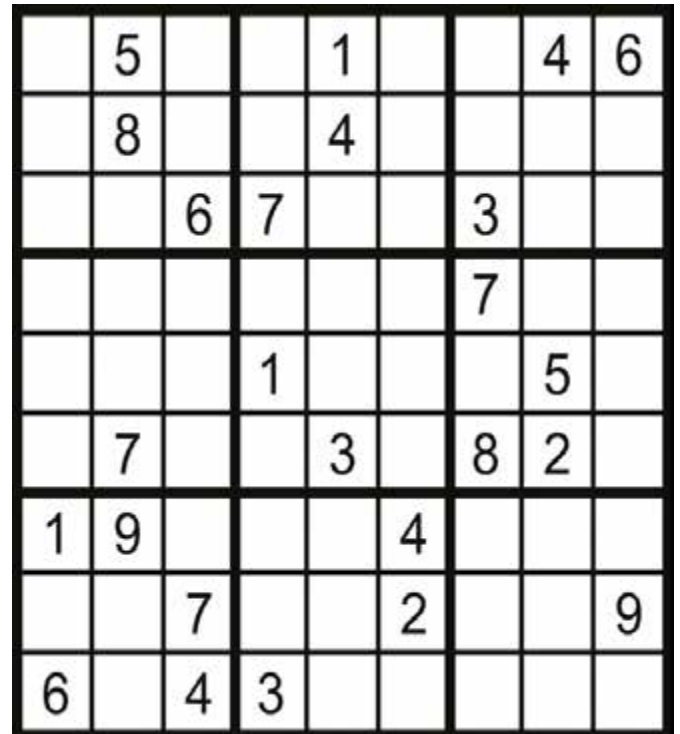
Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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Medium



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Serenity Advanced Dentistry

If you are an adult who is afraid of going to the dentist, or even just a little extra anxious, Serenity Advanced Dentistry may be just what you are looking for. "We do a lot of sedation dentistry, mostly for adults," Dr. Allala explained. "It's kind of my niche. Many adults may have some pretty serious anxiety about going to the dentist. They may not even seek care. They'd rather be in pain. I provide a place to take care of these people. When patients elect to get treatment, we lower the statistics of people living in pain. I like being able to contribute to improving people's lives."

"Coincidentally, a lot of people who are anxious about going to the dentist are also people who don't have good insurance. That's a bad combination. I have membership plans for patients without insurance, and really good discounts on implants and dentures. A membership might not be necessary if you only need one simple procedure, but if you need sedation and a lot of work, it really pays for itself."

Dr. Allala is a graduate of the Texas A&M School of Dentistry. "When I started there, it was still Baylor. My diploma has both names on it," she recalled. "I specialize in oral surgery, and we're really good at it. I'm nothing without my team. We do everything in dentistry. I like being well rounded. I enjoy being an overachiever, so I'm constantly taking continuing education, keeping up with all the

newest techniques and technology. I'm also a native Spanish speaker. I grew up speaking both languages. Our YouTube videos explaining procedures are available in both English and Spanish."

Dr. Allala is proud of the service they provide at Serenity Advanced Dentistry. "I think we give five-star service. And I know my staff is five-star. We know what works and what doesn't. I know it sounds corny, but this is my life's work. Most of my staff have been with me for years, at different locations around DFW, before I came to Cedar Hill. I met Mariela seven years ago, in Pleasant Grove. It was my first job out of school. Racine has been with me four years, and Jazmine three years, both in Red Oak. Our newest team member is Jessica. She found us three months ago when she emailed me looking for an opportunity to shadow a dentist."

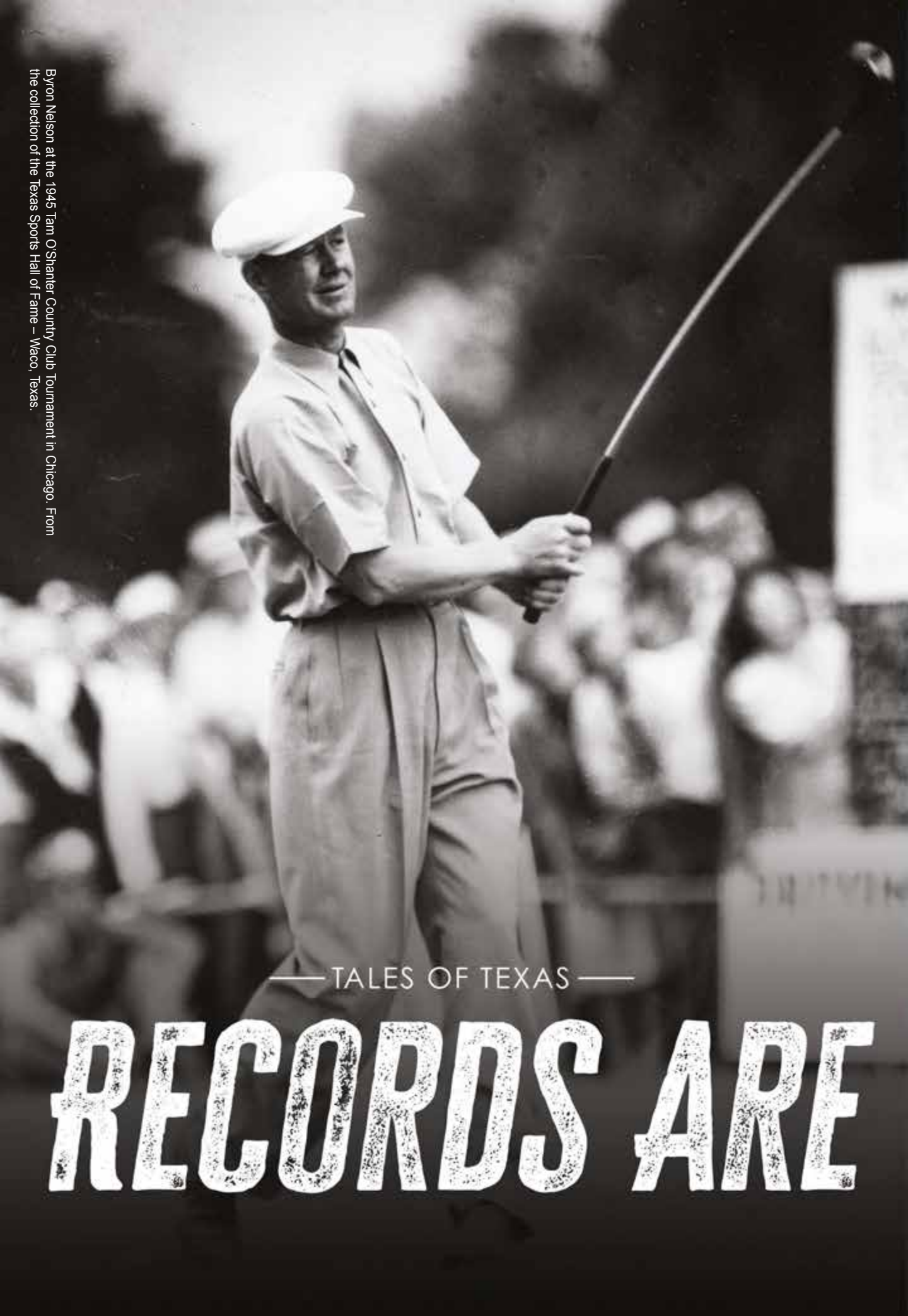
"I LIKE BEING WELL ROUNDED. I ENJOY BEING AN OVERACHIEVER, SO I'M CONSTANTLY TAKING CONTINUING EDUCATION, KEEPING UP WITH ALL THE NEWEST TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY."

Serenity Advanced Dentistry has all the newest technology to make your experience convenient. "We have hospital-grade blood pressure machines, so we can do sedation. We also have intraoral scanners, so I can see inside your mouth, from every angle, before I ever go in for your procedure. We print dentures and place implants right here in the office. With our skills and strategies, most patients don't even feel our injections. We have TVs in every room to keep you entertained while we work. It's all about efficiency — working smarter, not harder. That's why I designed the floor plan of the office myself. And we're really big on sanitation and sterilization. It's important to maintain a sterile environment, which is why we're closed every Friday for deep cleaning the office and training."



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Byron Nelson at the 1945 Tam O'Shanter Country Club Tournament in Chicago. From the collection of the Texas Sports Hall of Fame - Waco, Texas.

— TALES OF TEXAS —

RECORDS ARE

During the 2023 edition of the AT&T Byron Nelson Golf Tournament (now the CJ Cup Byron Nelson), the television commentators mentioned Byron's record of 11 straight PGA tournament victories. They said, and rightly so, that 11 wins would be an outstanding career for any golfer today, but to win 11 in a row is essentially unheard of. Byron Nelson accomplished this feat in 1945, so he has held the record for 79 years.

Byron was born in 1912, the same year as a couple of other well-known and similarly accomplished golfers, Sam Snead and Ben Hogan. The Texas State Historical Association lists his birthplace as Long Branch, Texas, which may have been a "suburb" of Waxahachie, and many biographies of Byron simply list his birthplace as Waxahachie. His childhood included working on the family cotton farm until age 11, when the Nelson family moved to Fort Worth.

By age 12, Byron was working as a caddie at the Glen Garden Country Club. It was there that he first met one of his great rivals on the course, the legendary Ben Hogan, who was also serving as a caddie. Originally, caddies were not allowed to participate in the game on Glen Garden, but the rules were later relaxed, and a tournament for caddies was eventually contested. Byron beat Ben by one shot in a nine-hole playoff in 1927.

Byron completed his formal education in 1928, and after a brief stint working with the Fort Worth and Denver City Railway, he began golfing full time in 1929. He joined the Professional Golfers' Association in 1932 and worked as a golf pro at a number of clubs around the country. His first professional tournament was in 1932 at the Texarkana Open. The entry fee at Texarkana was \$5. Byron finished third in the tournament and collected \$75 for the effort. His career as a professional golfer was underway, and while it was a very successful career, it would be considered brief, certainly by today's standard. Apparently, playing golf was a "means to an end" for Byron, and he retired from the tour at age 34 to purchase his dream, a ranch in Roanoke, Texas, known as Fairway Ranch.

It was also in Texarkana where he met and married Louise Shofner, his late first wife of 50 years. In an interview with *Sports Illustrated* in 1979, Louise made it clear that she was originally opposed to Byron retiring from golf and becoming a rancher. She reasoned that he knew a lot about golf and nothing about being a rancher. The ranch essentially cost the Nelsons all they had, but the work to bring it to the comfortable home they enjoyed for many years was worth the effort.

There were a few lean years when Byron found it necessary to pick up his clubs again to help support the ranch. He was able to play some exhibition matches and was successful playing matches in the mornings, followed by luncheons, clinics and dinner speeches. He could still hit some great golf shots, but he did not take it too seriously. When he entered a tournament, he admitted that he was just playing for fun.

Byron's record of 11 PGA victories in a row may never be broken. The 11 wins are not the sum of his golf career, as he is also a top contender in several other categories. He had 54 career victories, twice winning The Masters, twice winning the PGA Championship and one victory in the U.S. Open. While the record he is most remembered for was set in 1945, he claimed 1939 was his best year on the course. That was the year of his U.S. Open victory, among others, and he set a professional scoring record with back-to-back rounds of 65 at the Phoenix Open.

In his later years, Byron regularly attended the golf tournament in the Dallas area that bears his name, along with his second wife of almost 20 years, Peggy. The Byron Nelson Tournament is the first PGA Tour event named in honor of a former player. Players who came off the course after the 18th hole looked forward to a wave or a handshake from him.

His reputation as a gentleman earned him the nickname "Lord Byron." In 2004, the World Golf Hall of Fame honored him with an exhibit called "Byron Nelson: A Champion ... A Gentleman." What a great legacy, regardless of the records. And besides, they are made to be broken, aren't they? NOW

Sources:

1. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/nelson-john-byron-jr>.
2. <https://vault.si.com/vault/1979/05/07/good-lord-of-golf-in-those-days-he-was-lord-byron-and-set-records-still-unequaled-then-at-34-byron-nelson-quit-the-game-to-fulfill-an-old-dream>.
3. <https://thecjcupbyronnelson.org/legacy/>.

MADE TO BE BROKEN

— By Bill Smith

HAPPY Mother's Day

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

MAY

5/3

Farm to Table Dinner:

Ennis FFA is hosting their annual farm fresh dinner and auction. Support our youth in agriculture. 6:00-7:00 p.m., 100 N. Dallas St. For tickets, please call (469) 337-5301.

5/5

Cinco de Mayo:

Visitors can expect ballet folklórico and mariachi performances, authentic food selections, local artisan vendors, kid crafts and activities and more! Adults: \$5; kids 12 and under: free. Purchase tickets at the gate only. Noon-9:00 p.m., Downtown Ennis. For more information, contact Ennis Welcome Center, 201 NW Main St. (972) 878-4748.

5/18

Auditions for Wizard of Oz: Youth Edition:

Noon-4:00 p.m., Ennis Public Theatre, 113 N. Dallas St. See <https://ennispublictheatre.com/auditions/> for details.

5/24-5/26

The National Polka Festival:

Come help celebrate 57 years of Czech heritage and traditions. The festival kicks off with an opening dance on **Friday** featuring polka music and the King and Queen Dance Contest, where participants

and non-participants are encouraged to wear traditional Czech *kroj* (costumes).

On **Saturday** morning, decorated floats, bands and colorful costumes kick off the downtown festivities with a giant parade that twists through historic downtown Ennis. Then experience our traditions, religious customs, dancing, tastes, sights, sounds and “a little bit of the Czech Lands” on **Saturday and Sunday** at our three spacious air-conditioned halls (KJT, Sokol and SPIST) and in downtown Ennis. Enjoy a weekend of polka dancing with 15 live polka bands including Grammy Award winning Brave Combo and the Josh Abbott Band Country Concert on **Saturday night!** Visit www.nationalpolkafestival.com for more information including admission, band schedules, food and hall locations.

5/27

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County Meeting:

Come join us! Social time: 6:00 p.m.; meeting begins: 6:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave., Waxahachie, TX 75165. For more information, please contact Kathy Bright at klbright53@gmail.com.

6/1

Pancake Breakfast Fly-In/ Drive-In:

Classic airplanes and fighters,

helicopter and airplane rides, Midlothian Classic Wheels Club, live music, children's activities and more! Free entrance and parking. Breakfast tickets: \$7; children under 8: \$3. 8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, 131 Airport Dr., Midlothian, TX. Call (972) 923-0080 for details.

Mondays and Wednesdays

Chess Classes:

Come learn to play. Free. 3:00-5:30 p.m., Ennis Public Library, 115 W. Brown St. For information, call (972) 875-5360.

Second Tuesdays

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Chapter 1191 Meeting:

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., rotating between Corsicana, Ennis and Waxahachie. For details, contact (972) 775-2463 or rjcarey1@gmail.com.

Wednesdays

Storytime:

For preschool children through age 4. 10:00 a.m., Ennis Public Library, 115 W. Brown St. For information, call (972) 875-5360.

Ennis Host Lions Club Meeting:

Noon, Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 Country Club Rd.

First Thursdays, Every Other Month

Ennis Retired School Personnel (ERSPA):

Meets are at the new EISD Transportation Building on the first Thursday of even numbered months. 3105 Ensign Rd. For more information, contact BettyAnn Blazek at blazek2@sbcglobal.net.

Second Thursdays

Managing Autism:

Presented by Ellis/Navarro County Family Resource Center. Topics: Behavior management, self-help skills, social skills. Ask questions, build your capacity, share your experience and learn with other caregivers. 10:00-11:00 a.m., 305 N. Dallas St.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to bill.smith@nowmagazines.com.

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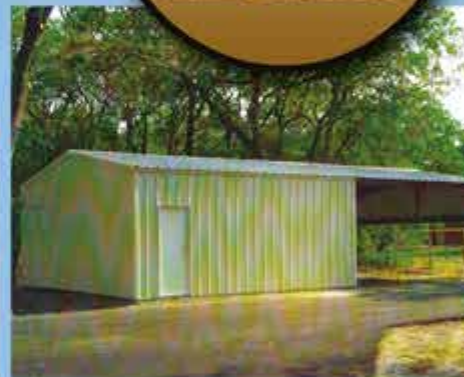
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