

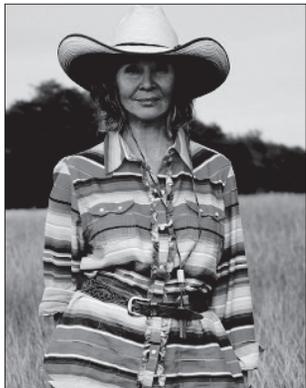
# Two new books illustrate just what we like about Texas

by Jan Sikes

**L**UCKENBACH TEXAS"—THE CENTER OF THE Universe is not only an entertaining read but educational as well. Did you know that the first flying machine was invented in Luckenbach long before the Wright brothers took to the sky? How much do you know about the character Hondo Crouch? Was it truly by accident that the town evolved into a world-renowned landmark?

Becky Crouch Patterson, Hondo Crouch's daughter and author of this beautiful book, manages to bring the history of Luckenbach as well as its many nuances to life with her distinct style of writing, sense of humor, and extensive knowledge of the deep-rooted history of the area.

Settled by Germans in the 1800s, it is steeped in culture



Becky Crouch Patterson

and traditions which she beautifully honors.

When Hondo Crouch along with his partner, Guich Kooock, bought Luckenbach for \$29,000 in 1970, I don't think he had any idea the phenomena he would create without ever seeming to intentionally do so.

As Becky recounts in the book, "at the time, they didn't know whether the purchase was for 29, 19 or 12 acres", but it did include an egg route that would pay \$60 per month and a pickup truck."

One of my favorite parts of the book (although there were many) was the first impression of their purchase when Becky, along with her family, first walked into the building that Hondo aptly named, "Post Office-General Store-Beer Joint."

She recalled being awe-struck by the generations of rich history displayed in the bar and store. "Faded 1930s beer ads, fragile, dusty, everything held together by cobwebs" creates a powerful visual.

They say timing is everything and there is a certain degree of truth to that. When the Outlaw Music movement got into full swing in the seventies, it created an entirely new breed of musicians and songwriters. Those tired of Nashville's glossy, controlling mentality rebelled and broke away from Music Row. They found the perfect home in Luckenbach. Willie Nelson held five of his Fourth of July Picnics in Luckenbach. Jerry Jeff Walker recorded his *Viva Terlingua* album at Luckenbach. It was a mecca for hungry, creative

songwriters.

Waylon Jennings described Outlaw Music as "standing up for your own rights and your own way of doing things."

And nothing fed that creative storm better than the laid-back atmosphere of Luckenbach, Texas.

When Chips Moman and Buddy Emmons wrote "Luckenbach, Texas," neither of them had ever been there. And, as far as is known, never visited. But they were reaching for something that people who were caught in the rat-race of life could relate to. That was and still is, the vibe of Luckenbach.

Hondo Crouch carried a business card that described himself as an Imagineer. All who knew him loved him, but none more than Jerry Jeff Walker. His relationship with Hondo and Luckenbach defined Jerry Jeff and helped shape him into the artist he became.

Hondo was also a performer extraordinaire, poet, and had a unique sense of humor that Becky has inherited, as is obvious in her writing. More than once while reading the book, I laughed out loud.

I can't begin to tell you every-

thing that this book encompasses in these few short words. I can only tell you that every aspect, every turn of event and every personality that found its muse in Luckenbach left an indelible footprint that won't be forgotten.

This line from Hondo Crouch's poem, "The Luckenbach Moon" says it all... "We've been tellin' strangers who come to Luckenbach 'bout our Moon, But I know they won't believe that we have such a big moon for such a small town."

And I don't think Hondo was talking solely about a literal moon.

If you love everything embodied in Texas Music, history and the Outlaw Music movement, you will be enthralled by *Luckenbach - The Center of the Universe* by Becky Crouch Patterson.

IN JOE NICK PATOSKI'S NEW book, *Austin to ATX*, you'll discover the many seemingly mishaps and events that took Austin from being known as the "City of the Violet Crown" to "Onward thru the Fog" to "Live Music Capital of The World" to "The City of Ideas" to "Keep Austin Weird."

There is a certain kind of mystical vortex surrounding Austin.

Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar, vice-president and soon-to-be president of the Republic of Texas felt it in the fall of 1838 when he shot the biggest buffalo bull in a herd somewhere near the present-day intersection of Con-

gress Avenue and Eighth Street.

Lamar declared then that this was God's country and that "This should be the seat of future empire!"

Little did he know what an empire it would turn out to be.

I loved the way Joe Nick Patoski moved through the history of Austin and wove it all together like a colorful tapestry.

He recounted how, that on an early summer night in 1970, a mile south and across the river from the same hill where the buffalo hunters celebrated their kill in 1838, a man stood outside the Cactus Club bar and relieved himself. The plumbing in the men's room had sprung a leak, so men were allowed to use the great outdoors as a restroom that night. Gazing off in the distance, Eddie Wilson spied a building he'd never noticed before. That building became the famed Armadillo World Headquarters.

What a time the birth of the Armadillo World Headquarters spawned. It brought Willie Nelson to Austin, and in many ways, Willie never left. It brought about a whole new wave of music, an era where cowboys and hippies came together to hear music and got along.

The Scholz Garten defined the pursuit of pleasure in Austin and was the oldest beer-drinking, dancing and live music venue with a life of more than 150 years.

When the hippies converged on Austin, they brought with them psychedelic drugs and free love. Head shops opened along with music clubs like the Vulcan

Gas Company, the Underground City Hall, Antone's and Threadgill's.

They covered a range of music from psychedelic rock to blues to country. That, in many ways, is what has always defined Austin. The way boundary lines blur and opposites blend.

Patoski covers the Outlaw music time period extensively in the book, citing the beginning careers of Jerry Jeff Walker, Rusty Weir, Michael Martin Murphey, Gary P. Nunn, and others. These were the pioneers, the songwriters who dared to cross all music borders. Austin embraced this way of thinking.

The University of Texas has also had a huge impact on the Austin landscape, then and now.

Writers like Larry McMurtry, Bill Wiltfiff, Bud Shrake, J. Frank Dobie, Gary Cartwright, and Billy Lee Brammer found their niche in the diversity of Austin.

There were monumental music festivals, Carnivals, and Willie's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Picnics. There was a "Gloriathon" where participants sang the song, "G-l-o-r-i-a" for twenty-four hours straight.

In 1991, Austin was named "The Live Music Capital of the World," boasting more musicians per capita than any other city.

Austin's free-spirited expressionism has attracted people from the art world since the 1970s. It is still a place where art is respected and revered. Poster artists like Jim Franklin, Micael Priest, Bill Narum, Danny Garret, Sam Yeates, and Ken



Joe Nick Patoski

Featherston earned a solid reputation, and their work is highly sought after. There is a Memorial Wall at South Austin Museum of Popular Culture that gives a visual of the versatility of art and how it grew and flourished in Austin

I can't begin to tell you everything that this book encompasses. I can only tell you that Joe Nick Patoski has left nothing out. The entire evolution of Austin is detailed and entertaining. If you love history and you love Texas, you'll be enthralled by "Austin to ATX" by Joe Nick Patoski!

So, to sum it all up in the infamous words of the great Gary P. Nunn, "You ask me what I like about Texas... Well, if I tell you, you're gonna be here all night long..." Instead, you can pick up both of these fabulous books about historical Texas people and places and find what you like most about Texas between the pages. ■

## Randy Brown to host LJT Fest's Bloody Mary Mornings

Feature and photos by Mary Jane Farmer, Scene In Town

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN TO A RANDY Brown Show, you've no doubt felt all the joy that everyone around you felt. That's the way it is when Randy Brown and his band take the stage — unbridled joy capping off good solid honky tonk music.

Randy Brown is performing at the Larry Joe Taylor Texas Music Festival, being held April 22-27 on his Melody Mountain Ranch near Stephenville. Brown will be hosting, for the third year, the event's Bloody Mary Mornings, held inside the T-Birds Garage Pub from 10 a.m. until noon and will run from Tuesday until Saturday of the festival. "This is acoustic, just a morning wake-up show," Brown said.

Brown said he'll be performing each day, but will also have other musicians involved as well. "Old timers and newcomers, and all kinds of folks in between," Brown said as he mentioned one band that showed up last year and which is making even more waves now than then, and who go by the name Copper Chief.

"We had a big ol' time with them.

He's definitely got Jamie Richards and Steve Helms coming in for sure, he said. And "I'll take requests and play classic country stuff. And it's all included in the festival ticket price, just a way to kick it off each day. Nothing like a good Bloody Mary to get a day started."

Randy Brown is the real deal when it comes to country music. He grew up in the heart of Cowtown, which gave him a steady dose of hardcore honky-tonk sounds. It was inevitable that he began writing songs and performing, which he's done for going on 1.5 decades now.

Brown and his band, the Randy Brown Show, are on the road constantly, and just returned from their fourth trip to

play the Houston rodeo. They played the rodeo in Las Vegas and are going back in 2020. There's an upcoming trip to Mexico — get him to tell you about that on one of those Bloody Mary Mornings — and he's taking Sam Riggs, Tanner Fenoglio, and others with him. He's traveled twice to London

and Ireland, and toured in Australia in 2018. The kind of stuff that real-deal musicians do. "When we were in Europe, I got to eat breakfast in Germany one morning, lunch in Switzerland, and dinner that same night in France." As much fun as that was when they sold out New Year's Eve at Luckenbach Texas. "That

was on my bucket list," he smiled.

The Bloody Mary Mornings aren't new to LJT Festival. Before Randy stepped in, it was Thom Shepherd who hosted those, but, when Shepherd's schedule wouldn't let him continue, Brown said, "We got asked and it seemed like a good fit.



Randy Brown

We have a great time and hang out with a lot of folks. It's not the easiest gig, playing two hours a day for five days, I'm just glad I get to do it." Brown added that "LJT (Larry Joe Taylor) has always been good to me, and I get to interact with a lot of folks. I can fit in, fill in with just about anybody sitting in with me. Newer talent, older talent — I just tell people to come on in and play a song with me."

The festival schedule is pretty tight, what with this T-Birds stage and two others going on from 10 a.m. until well into the night. The moment the last note sounds in T-Birds Garage Pub, the first one strikes up on the Allsup's acoustic stage. That done, about 5 p.m., the Bud Light stage kicks the evening performances off.

"I love what I do, and making people happy is a blessing to me," Brown said. Ask anyone who has been to a Randy Brown show and they will most likely say they love what he does, too. ■

For much more on the Larry Joe Taylor Texas Music Festival, go Online to [LarryJoeTaylor.com](http://LarryJoeTaylor.com)