

Town compares to JJ Walker's Desperado

Plenty of beer-drinkin', little dominoes

By BRUCE SUBLETT
Special to the Batt
"There was old men with beer guts and dominoes, lying 'bout their lives while they played."
—Jerry Jeff Walker

It was hot and clear in Hearne on October 1. The little town was quiet, like everyone was inside for an af-

ternoon nap. The Chamber of Commerce office was closed in spite of the sign that says Open 8A-5P. The highway patrol and Western Union offices were closed too, because they share the same tiny building. Right across the street is an oasis for a hot and thirsty traveler. The Hearne Domino Palace is a perfect example of the legendary Texas beer joint.

It's dim and cool inside, even though there is no air conditioner.

Henry Sadler, the bartender, says what will you have and you tell him a cold Pearl. He pulls a frosted mug from the freezer and draws off a cold one.

There is just one other person at the bar, an old man with one arm in a cast. He's drinking Budweiser, pouring it out of the can into a seven-ounce Pearl glass. He methodically crushes each can when it's empty with his one good hand. He doesn't bother to call Henry for another beer, he just goes behind the bar and gets one. While he's back there he asks if you'll have one more.

None of the other five men in the place are playing dominoes, but the tables are ready and a sign on the wall gives the prices: 20 cents a loss for two players, 15 cents for three and 10 cents for four.

Henry looks up from watching nobody playing dominoes and notices you're empty. He gets you another beer and you start talking about how hot it is and how there's sure not any doves in the country. Henry says yes it is and no there's not, but old Jim over there has been doing pretty good on squirrels.

Sure enough, old Jim is putting 13 squirrels in a pot of salt water to soak overnight. He says he's going to make stew tomorrow in the bar's little kitchen. Old Jim looks about 35, in hunter's coveralls and a red baseball cap.

In the process of filling the pot, old Jim has spilled some water on the floor. Henry tells him he'll whip his ass if he ever does it again. Jim says he'll mop it up and that will be the only time the floor has ever been clean. Everybody laughs.

One of the other customers has gone out to the movie theater and brought back three cartons of popcorn. For a while, everybody is busy eating the salty kernels. Henry smiles because he knows everybody will have another beer after the popcorn.

Three more men come in. Two of them order beer, but one gets a small can of grapefruit juice. He goes outside and returns with a big insulated mug of ice. Six ounces of grapefruit juice shouldn't begin to fill the mug, but he only pours in half of it before the mug is full.

Inevitably, talk turns to the recent double murder in Hearne. Each man acts as judge and jury, pronouncing sentence on the suspect. They all agree that he is guilty. The man with the powerful grapefruit juice explains that trouble has been brewing since the suspect ran off to Mexico with the victims' daughter. Most of them think the police should have killed the suspect instead of wounding him. One says it would save the taxpayers a lot of money that way.

When most of the patrons leave about 6 o'clock to go home and eat supper, Henry comes over to gripe about his life and hard times. His red, leathery skin shows he hasn't worked inside all of his life. He's down on the owner of the place, whom he hasn't seen since the previous Friday. He says this would be a real nice place if the owner would put in an air conditioner, but then he says he wouldn't do it if he were the owner because of the electricity bill.

Henry says he usually closes up about 9, since all the night business goes to the three honky-tonks up north of town.

It's getting about supper-time, so you get up to leave. Henry says you boys come back, now, and somehow you get the feeling he means it.

Out of the cool dark into the hot bright street and two tough-sounding street rods rumble past, soul music pouring out the windows with ear-

splitting volume, welcoming you back to the real world. And then you know: the Hearne Domino Palace isn't just a beer joint, it's Escape.

Justice survives transition from railroad to ghost town

By STEVE BALES
Special to the Batt

It was hot in Millican at two o'clock in the afternoon. The sun had finally come out of hiding after a week of record-breaking rain in Brazos County and making up for lost time.

No one was in sight, but the sign in the tiny post office said open. Inside, behind the one-window counter, stood a woman about 40.

The only person in town that knew anything about the history of Millican was Fletcher L. Pool, the justice of the peace, she said. But he was in Galveston for back surgery. All she knew was what she had read in the newspaper articles from time to time, something about Millican being a Confederate railhead in the Civil War. Something like that.

Oh yes, Mrs. Dora Langford might help. Better stop at Dockery's store and try to call her first to make sure she's home and to get her to look up her three dogs.

Dockery's store was a small place with few goods and high prices. The lady there said that the phone could only be used on local calls. Just dial the last four numbers to get a ring.

No one answered at Mrs. Langford's. The lady at the store said that Mrs. Fletcher Pool was at home and she knew as much about Millican as her husband did. Her number is there on the wall above the phone, along with the a dozen or so more of the people here.

A small, frail voice answered the phone with a "hello". She said she knew a little about Millican's history and that she would be glad to talk about it. She said to just come back to the post office and turn right on the gravel road and go along 'till you get to the old, white house on the right. You can't miss it, it's been here for more than 130 years.

The Pool's place was old allright. The sandstone and mortar chimney attached to the house looked as if it had seen better days. The mortar had turned to powder in places, leaving large holes in the chimney. The front door opened and an elderly woman walked out on the porch. She said she was Mrs. Pool and to come on in and sit a spell.

The old house had a musty smell of rotting wood and dirt that had been ground into the floor over the years. From the living room you could see four other rooms and the front porch. The fireplace had been boarded up and there were a few nick-nacks on the mantel.

Mrs. Pool sat down and picked up

an envelope with a bunch of yellowed newspaper clippings in it. She said she had been keeping them for a long time. Most of the clippings had Fletcher Pool mentioned in them somewhere because everyone that came to Millican looking for its history talked to him. The old woman smiled and said she knew most of what her husband had been able to find out, how Millican got its name and what life here used to be like. She sat and thought a while and then she started her story.

Millican was named for Elliott M. Millican, the son of Robert Millican who was one of Stephen F. Austin's original 300 colonists, who came to Texas from South Carolina. Elliott was given title to two cities of land (which equals about 8,857 acres) by the Mexican Government in March, 1831. He served as sheriff of Navasota County in 1941. Brazos County was created that same year but wasn't organized until 1843; the name was changed from Navasota to Brazos in 1842. Elliott also served as a representative and later a senator of the Texas congress.

In 1853 the first Texas railroad had been completed from Alletton to Galveston to Beaumont to Houston and by 1859 to Millican. The second leg of the railroad from Houston to Millican was called the Houston and Texas Central (H. & T. C.).

With the outbreak of the Civil War the railroad couldn't be extended any farther north so Millican became the northernmost terminus of the H. & T. C. As wagons and traders poured into Millican from all around the population boomed to 6,000. Sanger-Harris department store in Dallas first started in Millican during the Civil War.

Confederate soldiers came to Camp Speight, located at Millican, for training and then to march overland to Louisiana and Arkansas. Others went by train to Houston and Galveston and then from there by boat to New Orleans to be sent

up the Mississippi river to join the trans-Mississippi campaign. After the war the railroad didn't change much until World War I when the traffic on main road that ran from Navasota, through Millican, eastward to the new Highway. With the loss of the traffic and the remaining merchants moved more prosperous locations. Millican now has the post office, one small store, two churches and about 100 people.

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Adviser discusses 'contrasumers'

By KANAYA MAHENDRA
Staff Writer

Dr. Albert J. Fritsch, former adviser to Ralph Nader, spoke Thursday night on the topic, "The Contrasumers: A Citizens Guide to Resource Construction."

According to Fritsch contrasumer means against consumers. Fritsch said that people should find out how much energy each individual is using and find out what they are doing. Sighting an example Dr. Fritsch said that people give up colored toilet paper but drive big cars and think they are saving energy.

Dr. Fritsch compared the consumption of energy in 1876 to what is projected for 1976.

It is better to conserve energy

than to expand the sources of energy, said Fritsch. A hundred years ago people were heavy consumers of energy but they had a slower life. Today it's pretty good where we are, we have made progress. It is difficult to pin down the quality and quantity then and now. Fritsch further commented that increased consumption of energy has dropped the net energy and we must change to environmental energy sources, like solar energy or windmills.

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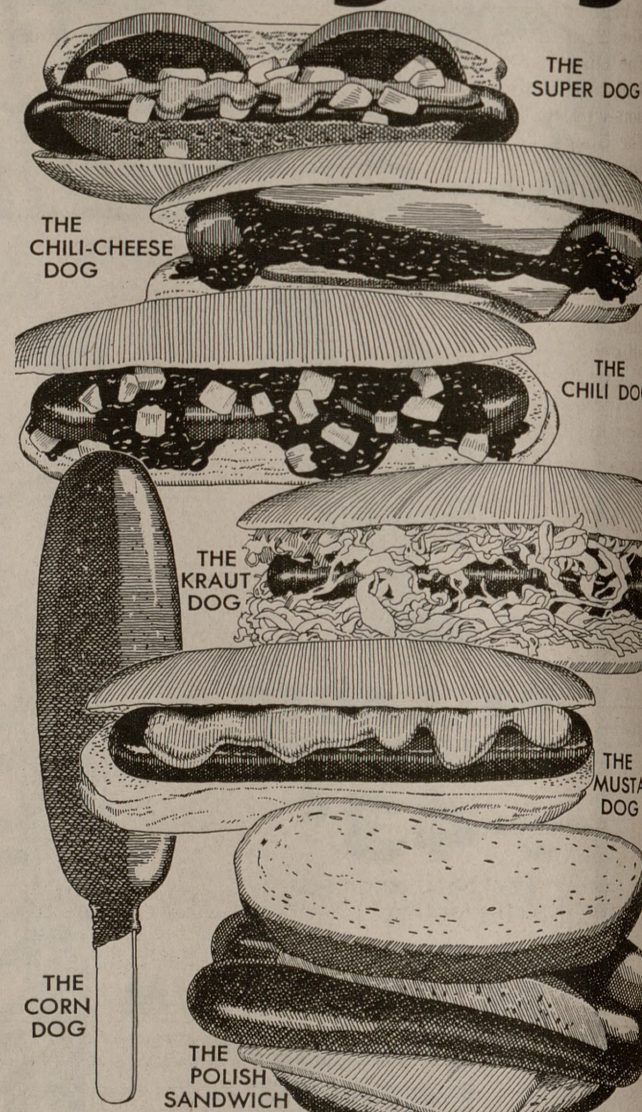
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