

Local

Indian cures may be European in nature

Old Indian cures used along the South Texas border are often European in origin rather than native, says a Texas A&M researcher specializing in culture mixing.

Dr. Clarissa Kimber said many folk medicines used among South Texas Mexican-Americans are days after referred to as Indian in nature — having been passed on from generation to generation — but from knowledge usually can be traced back to Spanish or Portuguese explorers and settlers.

Kimber, a geographer, and her students have spent more than a decade comparing folk cures among modern-day Texas descendants of immigrants from Germany and Mexico.

Kimber said the main differences between the two groups were that herbs play a greater part among Mexican-Americans and that there are fewer traditional alternatives (such as chiropractors) used by older folk.

"Among the similarities is the definite persistence of folk medical tradition, which demonstrates the vitality of that tradition," she explained.

Hill Country German-Americans, who have lived in Texas less than 150 years, still cling closely to a European-influenced system of treatments based on science and technology, she said.

Mexican-Americans, however, place a much

stronger emphasis on the folk healer, called a "curandero" in Spanish. Because the migration process took hundreds of years, many Mexican-Americans think of common folk cures as Indian in nature when they are really European, Kimber said.

The plant most commonly used in Mexican-American folk medicine, she explained, is the peppermint, which was imported to the New World from the Iberian Peninsula. Of the 11 plants and trees comprising the five most-frequent folk cures among Mexican-Americans, six are imports.

With the exception of native prickly pear, all of the 10 most-prescribed plants and trees frequently used by German-Americans are imports to Central Texas, said Ph.D. student Donna Lannie. Black cherry, aloe vera and chamomile are used more than other plants and herbs by Hill Country descendants.

Kimber said some of the most common ailments for which Mexican-Americans seek folk cures are insect stings, stomach disorders, warts and boils, constipation, measles, fevers, colds, skin diseases and insomnia.

The list is similar for the German-American with stings, coughs, burns, the need for a tonic, boils, stomach trouble, wounds, earaches, bruises and congestion being the conditions that usually prompt Hill Country residents to seek such treatments.

Shasta, a six-month-old ferret, relaxes in the sun at Lake Somerville during the weekend with her owner, Joni Puckett. Puckett is a senior animal science major from San Antonio.

Photo by Daniel Puckett

nio. She says that ferrets are the perfect pets for apartment dwellers. She says, "They'll eat anything from cat food to table scraps; they're very tame and almost totally quiet."

A&M grad begins career

Texan makes wine

for nothing.

Even then he had to find a French wine-making family that would agree to sponsor him. Through the French connections of former Texas A&M student Tom Gillis and his wife, who own an exclusive Houston wine distributorship, and Frank Malone, a Houston contractor, it was arranged for McBryde to work at the Chateau Lynch-Bages in the Bordeaux region.

"I worked in absolutely every phase of the process," he said, including the backbreaking job of moving huge oak barrels used to age the wines, to recognizing the subtle qualities of the finished product.

After one year of practical experience, McBryde had planned to continue his studies at the University of Bordeaux's Institute of Enology.

He was only able to raise \$4,000 of the \$10,000 needed to enroll for one year at the institute. Enter Frank Malone, who with a group of Francophiles called Alliance Francaise, raised the money.

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"It is an incredible expression of our American system," he said. "Someone who has merit mixed with a little aggressiveness and initiative can get the help he needs. To me that's what makes our society so great."

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Robert McBryde doesn't fit the image of the little shakeout wine-maker.

He was born in Houston, grew up in Dallas, went to school at Texas A&M University and now may well be the first Texas only "home-grown" enologist. Well, not exactly home-grown — he has spent the past two years in France.

An enologist is a wine-maker. But McBryde isn't little or old. He's 26 years old, robust and ready to launch a career as a man of the grape.

Unfortunately, he thinks he may have to go to California to find his fortune in the vineyard. He's not optimistic about the hopeful talk of a wine industry in Texas.

"About the best that can be expected is production of a modest table wine," McBryde predicted, noting Texas' unfavorable soil and climate.

McBryde, Class of '79, became an enologist through a combination of a French connection, American stick-to-it-iveness and a dose of Aggie grit.

"I was looking for a career in a field that combined something that would be romantic and artistic," McBryde explained. "I think wine-making definitely an art, but if you're not a good scientist, you're not going to make good wine."

Armed with a degree from Texas A&M in horticulture — the science of growing fruits, vegetables and ornamental plants — he realized the best place to study wine-making was in France where the French, least, like to think the best wines are made.

That is when McBryde's determination and Aggie grit entered the picture. The French government is very strict about aliens entering the country to work. The only way they would let this Texan into the country to study wine-making was if he worked

at that time.

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Carter estimates 138 students will be graduated from the College of Veterinary Medicine.

State Senator Kent Caperton will address the doctor of veterinary medicine degree recipients and their guests at the August 21 ceremony in Rudder Auditorium.

Dr. W.O. Trogdon, president of Tarleton State University, August 15 will present the commencement for Texas A&M graduates in G. Rollie White Coliseum. Doctoral, master's and bachelor's degrees will be presented at that time.

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