

The end of the road: a shack and windmill on Highway 6 near Reagan, Texas.

To the north ...

The first leg of the Great Highway 6 Odyssey is to the north, in the direction of Waco and Dallas.

It's raining, naturally. College Station isn't the only place where it rains.

The trip through downtown Bryan is familiar — the banks, seedy restaurants and car dealers lining Texas Avenue are of little interest.

Already boredom has set in. Cleaning the inside of the car windows helps a little, but when there's nothing to see, why bother to see it clearly?

Soon the commercial region of Bryan is past, and we're in the nether regions of the town, where dilapidated houses slump in yards full of junked cars, old dogs and weeds. It's like Lewis and Clark, exploring new areas.

What's out there?

Still not much. A few hosses — maybe this is Bonanza.

The Rest-Ever Memorial Park is on the right. The cemetery has only plastic flowers by the graves, no stones.

At 8.8 miles we rejoin the bypass; 9.5 and we're in the wilds of Texas. It looks like a jungle. A sign says "Plant Entrance;" we didn't see any entering, though.

The first metropolis along the road is Benchley. The big attrac-

tion here is Leon's Truck Stop. It's still raining, and we're still awake, so we pass by. We're anxious to reach Hearne, a reputed Mafia hangout.

There's really no place for them to hang, but maybe they enjoy the peace and quiet.

Hearne looks like an extended truck stop — a town of gas stations, car dealers and cafes with names like Sidetrack, the Main Cafe and Pitt Grill, and a sign proclaiming "The cheapest way to feed a cow is Lone Star Fertilizer."

Then we're in the jungle again.



Waco

CALVERT

An unexpected oasis farther on down the road — Calvert.

Behind the crumbling storefronts are some of the most fascinating antique pieces in the state. And just off Highway 6 are 37 blocks of restored Victorian homes.

It's raining harder now, but the first shop we enter is warmed by a wood stove and the smiles of the couple who run it.

Wiley and Ruby Kirk moved to Calvert from Kansas to open the Ox-Cart.

"We just wanted to quit punching a time clock and do something fun," Mrs. Kirk says.

Their shop is full of small knick-knacks and larger pieces. They show us an overgrown courtyard connecting several of the stores. Grass is sprouting out through the brick patio and some of the doors are crumbling, but Mrs. Kirk is fixing it up.

Further down the street, at the Boll Weevil, Sallie Tucker Anderson has a shop full of all kinds of antiques. Most impressive are the old wooden bars, but they're not for sale, she says, because they are from the Calvert area.

And so on down the street, more beautiful articles from long ago. We could have spent the entire day visiting with the friendly antique dealers up and down the street, but the open road, and deadline, were calling.

On the road again

More grass and trees, houses. Dead tires and litter the road.

We're keeping a close eye on the odometer. How much farther to 50 miles? At 46 we're tempted to stop at Swick's Store.

At last to big five-o turn beside a tree.

For interest's sake, we take a picture of a shack and head up ahead, and go just a little further to the town of Hearne. With such a name, how could we miss?

Easily.

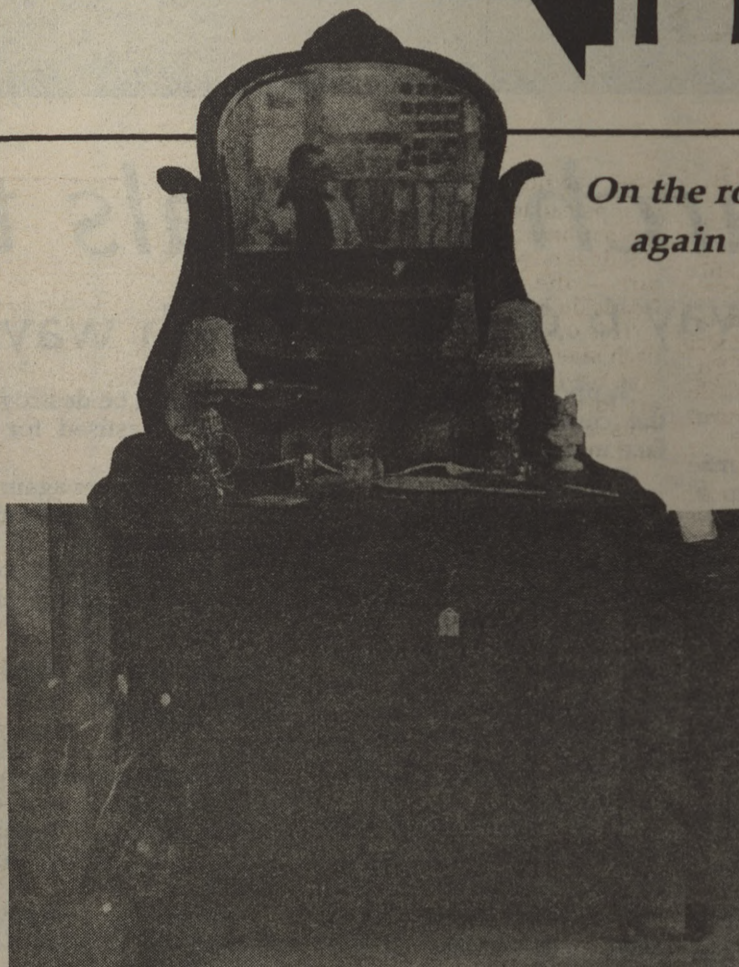
The return trip is uneventful, even more so than the first.

In the middle of nowhere a taxi passes by. Some lubber should get a good fix on that, but where could he be going?

In Hearne, the Dixie Diner looks too good to pass up. It must be the Dixie Diner Jiminy G. Felt sang about?

After overcoming the tedium of being the only people in the restaurant not wearing gaudy caps, we settle down to the best of meal you can't find in College Station, the kind mom makes on Sunday afternoons.

Then it's back to Agribusiness raining still.



Wiley Kirk is reflected in the mirror of an antique dresser in the Ox-Cart in Calvert.

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