

Austin



The capital city connection is teeming with action

by Jan Werner

Battalion Staff

For all you Ags able to overcome your orange-and-white-phobia, Austin offers a variety of cheap, entertaining things to do. Some of the possibilities are listed below, in no particular order.

Texas State Capitol — Yes, we know — you've already been here on a seventh grade class field trip. But it's worth going back for another visit. The building itself is enormous (the dome is taller than the dome in the U.S. Capitol in Washington) and beautiful (incredibly ornate chandeliers, marble terrazo floors, massive solid hardwood doors with bronze hinges). And you can learn more about Texas

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history (and make your Political Science 207 prof very happy) by taking one of the free tours of the Capitol building offered every 15 minutes. Afterwards, you can wander around the immaculate grounds, look at all the historical statues, and feed the tame squirrels. Absolutely free.

East Sixth Street — Not so long ago, East Sixth was the center of the seedy downtown area, the exclusive province of winos, hookers, and abandoned buildings. A few of the winos and hookers are still around (adds local color), but almost all the buildings have been renovated to house a mind-boggling array of bars (including Jorge's, home of the infamous margaritas) and shops offering everything from vintage clothing to risqué birthday cards to neon sculpture. Free, if you're strictly shopping, but purchases can be a little expensive (all that renovation doesn't come cheap, you know.)

Guadalupe Street (The Drag) — The Drag is one of the streets bordering the UT campus (don't worry, you needn't set foot on campus if you don't want to) and the five or so blocks right across from campus could qualify as the most interesting street in Austin. There's the standard assortment of bookstores and eateries catering to students (pretty much like Northgate,) plus some additions unique to Austin. If you like eggrolls, the eggroll stands on the Drag sell the best (and cheapest) eggrolls around. The street market just

off the Drag is at its best on sunny Saturdays, and offers lots of handmade gift items, like jewelry and stained glass. Some of the things are a little on the bizarre side (sheepskin sunglasses cases? batik baby clothes?) but it's fun to talk to the vendors and look around at all the stuff. And if the weather's nice — free entertainment is provided by the street people, who literally sing (or play various musical instruments, or bellydance) for their supper. Wandering around and gawking is free, but, like most places near a college campus, the merchandise is not underpriced.

Zilker Park — Austin has lots of really beautiful parks, but Zilker Park offers more entertainment possibilities than any other. For those of you really "into" nature, Zilker Gardens are blooming, and everything is breathtaking. Admission is free:

Zilker Park is also the home of Barton Springs, a huge spring-fed swimming pool. The pool is a dammed-up section of Barton Creek, so the bottom is lined with stones and moss instead of concrete. The water stays very chilly (about 60 degrees) year-round, so a plunge into the pool after baking in the sun can be a shocking experience. The grassy hills sloping down to the water is one of the most popular sunbathing spots in Austin; the fact that topless sunbathing is allowed could have something to do with that. Admission is \$1.50.

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For hopeless romantics, canoes can be rented for approximately \$3.50 an hour. You and your loved one can drift along Barton Creek and trail your fingers in the duckweed and poke at turtles with your paddle. You can also tip over into Barton Creek if you're not careful. But, life jackets are supplied, and the creek never gets really deep.

And if you're feeling whimsical, a tiny train circles the area near Barton Springs. The tracks run along the bank, and through tunnels, and along the road leading into the park. The con-

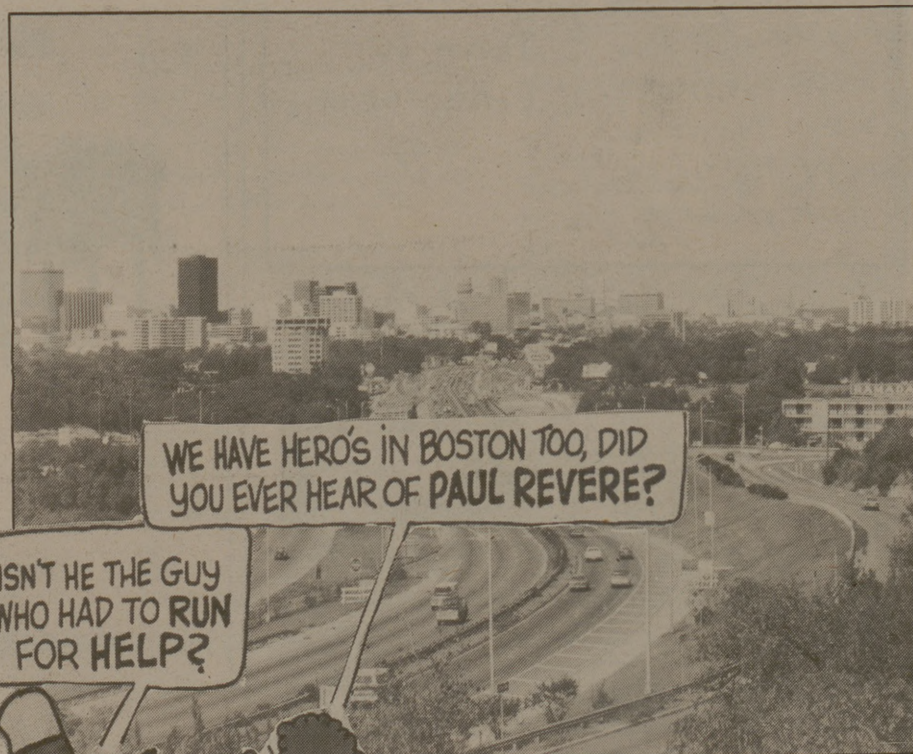
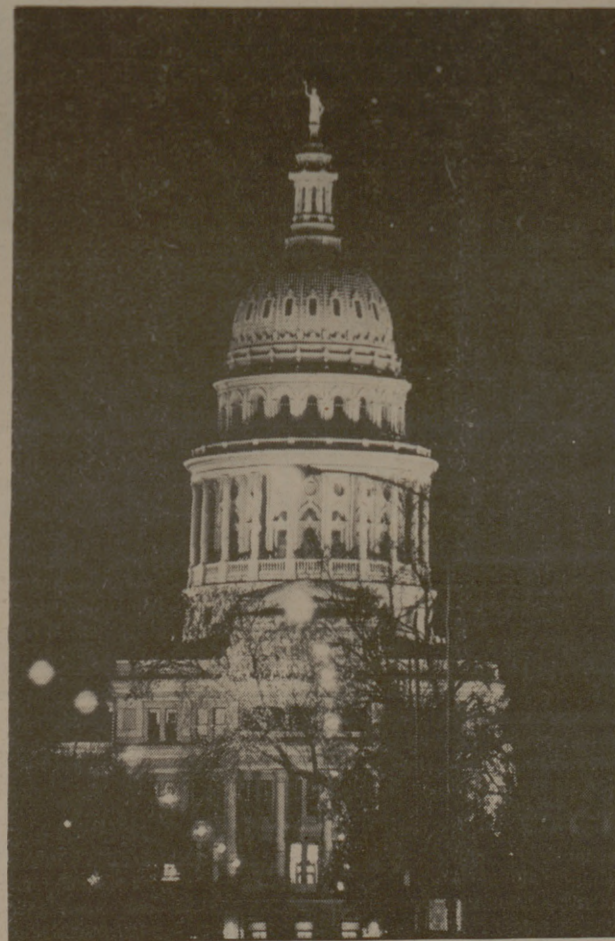
ductor lets big people ride it, too; it's really pretty fun, and you can see all the hopeless romantics drifting along in Barton Creek (see above). Tickets are 75¢.

The Highland Lakes — Although they're not in Austin, these seven lakes, especially Lake Travis, are within easy driving distance of Austin. All the usual lake facilities are available; ski boat and sailboat rental, campsites, day cruises,

etc. For more information on the lakes themselves, what's available, and how much it costs, call the Highland Lakes Tourist Association at (512) 478-9383.

The places listed above do not begin to describe all the things to do and see in Austin; they're just some of the more unique places in Austin.

There's also an almost unlimited variety of good local music at various clubs around Austin, lots of excellent museums on and off the UT campus, and dozens of wonderful restaurants. For more information about any of the places described above, or anything else in Austin, call the Austin Chamber of Commerce at (512) 478-9383.



"...ISN'T HE THE GUY WHO HAD TO RUN FOR HELP?"

WE HAVE HERO'S IN BOSTON TOO, DID YOU EVER HEAR OF PAUL REVERE?

