



PHOTOS BY BILLY CALZADA/gcalzada@express-news.net

Richey Keller and Mary Fitzsimon dance at the 121-year-old Quihi Gun Club dance hall. "We come out here just about every time they have a dance," Fitzsimon said.

## DANCE HALL NIGHTS

A tradition for generations of Texans lives on in historic rural venues

By Roy Bragg  
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QUIHI — The band was playing, the adults were dancing, and the kids were moving in packs.

It was a typical Saturday night dance at the Quihi Gun Club, one of the most historic and well-preserved dance halls in Texas, situated at the end of a winding dirt road just outside Hondo.

For generations, venues such as Quihi have served to keep Texas' rural traditions alive, said Patrick Sparks of Texas Dance Halls, a preservation group. And it was no different on this night.

The immaculate wood dance floor, ringed by tables and illuminated year-round by Christmas light strings,



Madelyn Marsh, 6, enjoys a bit of cake during a celebration at the Quihi Gun Club.

was packed with dancers. Old couples, young families and locals mingled.

Corey James and husband Jesse James, who bring

their family here every few months, noticed there was a gaggle of boys amusing themselves — running around, playing tag and chasing each other. Nearby, little girls sat quietly or danced with each other.

She called out to the boys, a few of whom were her sons.

"We told them that we'd pay \$5 to the first one who danced with a girl," Corey James said. Son Rafe, then 6, accepted the challenge.

"(A girl) actually asked each of them to dance," James says, "but he was the first one to say 'yes.'"

Within minutes, Rafe was dancing while older boys looked on dumbfounded.

See HALLS/9K



Kim and Terry Thoe arrive at the Quihi Gun Club on a Saturday night. The dance hall, which hosts two dances a month, cultivates a family atmosphere. "It's a safe place," patron Emily Young says.



Malorri James, 9, and Rafe Clendenin, 7, take a turn on the dance floor at the Quihi Gun Club.

## Cedar fever: It's not just a pain in the nose

As I sit down to write today's column, I stop every few minutes because I get the feeling that something gross is about to happen.

I grab a Kleenex and blow my nose to halt the natural flow of things, if you know what I mean. I do this at least 20 or 30 times a day. As the day progresses, the trash can at my feet fills with spent tissues.

These days, my lips are chapped and my nose is sore all of the time. My voice sounds like Tom Waits with a mouthful of sandpaper. When I cough — which I do often — I sound like a Kentucky coal miner nearing retirement.

I'm sneezing a lot, too. Last Sunday, while watching football, I sneezed so hard that I pulled — at



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various times — muscles in my neck, arms, back and butt. Last Wednesday, I sneezed so hard and so often that when I woke up Thursday, the muscles in my neck and shoulders were throbbing with pain, as if I had been pushing a sedan up and down the street.

Odds are, many of you are going through the exact same thing.

It's mountain cedar season, that time of year when nature exacts revenge on mankind, or at

least the mankind of the Texas Hill Country who suffer from allergies. I don't know what we did to deserve this, but A&M expert Barron Rector has a pretty good idea about why it's so bad.

First, says Rector, associate professor and extension range specialist with Texas AgriLife Extension service, it's not mountain cedar. That's a plant that grows in the mountains out west.

The tree putting a bug up our nostrils is the ashe juniper, also known as the blueberry cedar. It's one of six junipers native to Texas. And, Rector says, we only have ourselves to blame for this horrific, annoying, snot-spraying state of affairs.

Unlike the mesquite, See BRAGG/3K

## Collections reveal culture

Exhibit shows range of African American art.

By Elda Silva  
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By now, the story of how Harriet and Harmon Kelley began what is considered one of the best collections of African American art is fairly well known.

The San Antonio couple was inspired to buy works of black artists by "Hidden Heritage: Afro-American Art, 1800-1950," a pioneering exhibition at the San Antonio Museum of Art in 1986.

As it turns out, the same exhibit spurred the interest of another husband and wife team, Leo and Irene Edwards, friends of the Kelleys who, with encouragement from the older couple, began their own col-



COURTESY SAN ANTONIO MUSEUM OF ART  
 William H. Johnson's "Sowing," a stencil print owned by Irene and Leo Edwards of a couple planting crops, is part of "San Antonio Collects: African American Artists."

lection.

"San Antonio Collects: African American Artists Featuring Works From the Harriet and Harmon Kelley and Irene and Leo Edwards Collections," an exhibit opening Tuesday at SAMA to mark the 25th anniversary of the San Antonio MLK March,

features 26 works, including painting, prints and photography.

Curated by SAMA director Katie Luber, the exhibit takes a historical approach in an effort to reflect the shifting African American experience, both in art and the

See ART/8K

# HALLS

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Asked about it later, a sheepish Rafe would only acknowledge that it happened, but offered no insight.

That's a good example, Sparks says, of how a dance hall keeps tradition alive.

"There's so much Texas character that comes out in dance halls," he says. "Gentlemanly honor, respect for women and girls, strong community, strong ethnic heritage."

"These are the places," Sparks says, "where the little girls learn to dance standing on their daddy's feet. It's the little boys learning to ask the little girls how to dance. It's grandma and granddad going out every Saturday night like they've done for 50 years and remembering when they met at the dance hall. It's newly married couples who met there and keep going. It's what holds Texas together."

Singer Geronimo Trevino, author of a book about dance halls, agrees.

"Its the history behind them that makes them attractive to me," he says. "You take an old place like Cherry Springs Hall (a closed venue north of Fredericksburg). Elvis played there. Hank Williams Sr. played there. Bob Wills played there. Ernest Tubb played there."

Historic dance halls dot the state, Sparks says, but the numbers are diminishing. Once, there were a thousand. Only half are still standing, and only a fraction are still booking



Dancers dip low to the music of Bobby Jordan and the Ridgecreek Band during a Saturday night dance at the Quihi Gun Club. The dance hall has drawn folks from around the world.

dances. Dance halls continue to thrive in the Hill Country and Southeast Texas, Sparks and Trevino say. Anhalt, located between Boerne and Bulverde, and nearby Kendalia Halle have both been preserved by locals and still host dances.

And there's a distinction, they say, between a dance hall and a honky-tonk. A dance hall, says Trevino, paraphrasing singer Johnny Bush, is where people go to be seen; a bar is a place where you didn't want to be seen.

Patrons say Quihi, which hosts two dances a month, cultivates a family atmosphere.

"I like that I can bring my kids here," Corey

James said. "Sure, there's alcohol, but it's not the type of alcohol consumption that you find in bars."

"It's a safe place," says Emily Young, 60, who has been coming to Quihi since she was a child. "You don't have to worry here."

The 121-year-old Quihi Gun Club is unique because it's a social club, says Kathy Muennink, who runs the place along with husband Clyde. Membership was limited to men of German heritage, from Medina County, who were "upstanding citizens."

The rules were strict. "For a while," Muennink says, "you couldn't even wear a cowboy hat in here."

Jim Been was at a

dance when he was 15 when a man from a neighboring town was dancing in boots that had exposed tacks that were scratching the floor. He was thrown out of the hall — literally, by several men who hurled him down the front steps — because he laughed when he was asked to change boots or stop dancing.

In those days, the hall wasn't air-conditioned, says Bobby Jordan, whose Ridgecreek was playing Quihi on a cold night recently.

"I remember them putting water sprinklers on that old tin roof to try and keep it cool," he says with a laugh.

Another unique aspect here is that the dance hall sits on pylons. It was



PHOTOS BY BILLY CALZADA/gcalzada@express-news.net

The Quihi Gun Club sits on stilts because of the nearby Quihi Creek. The pylons also cushion the dance floor.



Jewelina Moos, 8, sits on the counter while her father, Scott Moos, tends bar at the Quihi Gun Club.

washed away several times when Quihi Creek jumped its banks, Muennink says, so it was rebuilt resting on stilts. That didn't stop 2010 floodwaters, which still got into the hall.

The hidden benefit of the pylons, she says, is that they cushion the dance floor. Dancers can stay out on the floor all night and not suffer sore legs the next day.

The Quihi Gun Club remains popular despite its isolation.

"We get people from all over the world who come to dance here," she says.

Sparks, of Texas Dance Halls, says he tries to bring out-of-state visitors here to give them a crash course in Texas.

"People from around the world have this vague idea about what Texas is," he says. "There's the cowboy part, the oil part and the 'shoot 'em up' part. But the thing that ties it all up is the Texas dance hall."

"It's the most Texas thing there is."

# Celebrations

Celebrations is where South Texans announce their wedding and engagement announcements, births, birthdays, debuts, quinceañeras, graduations, promotions, bar/bat mitzvahs and a myriad of events for the world to see. For a simple way to place your Celebrations Announcement, log on to **MySA.com/Celebrations** or call 250-2583.

## Wedding Announcements



### McKee-Johnson

Dr. and Mrs. Paul Jay McKee of Boerne, Texas, are pleased to announce the marriage of their son, Ian Alan McKee, Esq., to April Marie Johnson, daughter of John Johnson and Andrea Bryans of Lafayette, Louisiana. The wedding ceremony was held at LaTrobe's on Royal, New Orleans, LA, on October 2, 2011. The wedding was officiated by Amanda Barlow. Matron of honor was Lauryn Gossage and best man was Dustin Gossage, Esq. The bridesmaid was Shanna Tims and bridesman was Ryan Brandon. The groomsmen were Eric Heitzman. The reception was held at LaTrobe's on Royal. The couple honeymooned in Japan. They will reside in Endicott, New York.

## Engagement Announcements



### Maxwell - O'Brien

Mr. and Mrs. Carlisle Maxwell Jr. are delighted to announce the engagement of their daughter, Carlisle Elizabeth, to James Joseph O'Brien III, son of Mrs. Nancy Hogan O'Brien and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Michael O'Brien. Carlisle is granddaughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles Stanley Price and the late Mr. and Mrs. Carlisle Maxwell Sr. The groom-elect, "Jamie", is grandson of the late Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Francis Hogan Jr. and the late Mr. and Mrs. James Joseph O'Brien Jr. Carlisle and Jamie both attended Alamo Heights High School. The bride-elect graduated from the University of Texas at Austin and earned her Master of Business Administration degree from St. Mary's University. She is employed at South Texas Money Management Ltd. as a portfolio management administrator. Her fiancé received his Bachelor of Business Administration and Master of Business Administration degrees from Texas Tech University, and earned his Juris Doctorate from St. Mary's University School of Law. He is employed at the Law Offices of H.L. Blomquist III, PC as an oil, gas and mineral attorney. The wedding is planned for April 14, 2012, at First Presbyterian Church.



### Brunner - Oppermann

Mr. and Mrs. William Regan Brunner joyfully announce the engagement of their daughter, Whitney Regan, to Ryan Christopher Oppermann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Charles Oppermann Jr. of Muenster, Texas. The bride-elect is the granddaughter of the late Jean and Allen Quereau, and the late Ross Phillip Brunner and Mrs. Devereux Smith Brunner of Ardmore, Oklahoma. The prospective groom is the grandson of Mrs. Lola Ophelia Oppermann and the late Arthur Charles Oppermann, formerly of Lubbock, and Mr. and Mrs. Victor Bernard Matschek of Rowena, Texas. Whitney is a graduate of Alamo Heights High School and Texas Tech University. She was a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in human development and family studies. Whitney is employed with Dell Children's Medical Center of Central Texas as a child life specialist in Austin, Texas.

Ryan is a graduate of Jesuit College Preparatory School in Dallas and Texas Tech University, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering and a master's in atmospheric science. He is currently employed with E.ON Climate and Renewables of Austin, Texas.

The couple plans a March wedding at Horseshoe Bay Resort in Marble Falls, Texas.

## Anniversary Announcements



### Garcia-60th

Six children, 18 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren: this is the beautiful family that Roger and Elida Garcia have created in their 60 years of marriage. God has truly blessed all of us with the

gift of your love. It may not have always been a smooth ride, but the bumps along the way showed us that love can truly overcome all obstacles. May the Lord continue to bless us with many more years of your laughter and wisdom. Love, Vivian, Roger Jr., Hector, Leticia, Rene, Henry and your grandkids.

Roger and Elida celebrated their anniversary with a family dinner along the River Walk.

## Engagement Announcements



### Cortez - Perez

Miss Elizabeth Marie Cortez, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Eddie M. and Rebecca Cortez of San Antonio, Texas, is engaged to SrA. Christian Michael Perez, son of Ms. Tamiko Perez and Mr. Raymond Perez of San Antonio, Texas. The bride-elect is a graduate of Antonian College Preparatory High School in 2008 and will be graduating on May 12, 2012, with a Bachelor of Science in biology and minor in chemistry from St. Mary's University. Her fiancé is a graduate of Tom C. Clark High School in 2006, and attended San Antonio College. He joined the United States Air Force in 2008 and proudly served in an Afghanistan deployment last year. The high school sweethearts will live in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, after the May 19, 2012, wedding at Prince of Peace Catholic Church.

## Special Announcements



### Ruby Foster - 106 years old

Ruby M. Foster was born January 13, 1906, in Midway (Madison County), Texas. She is a member of Mount Zion First Baptist Church; the Reverend Otis I. Mitchell, Pastor.



### Happy 15th Birthday, Angelica!

We love you. From Grandma & Grandpa Zamora