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From Here to There: Exploring Fredericksburg Road

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From



Here



to

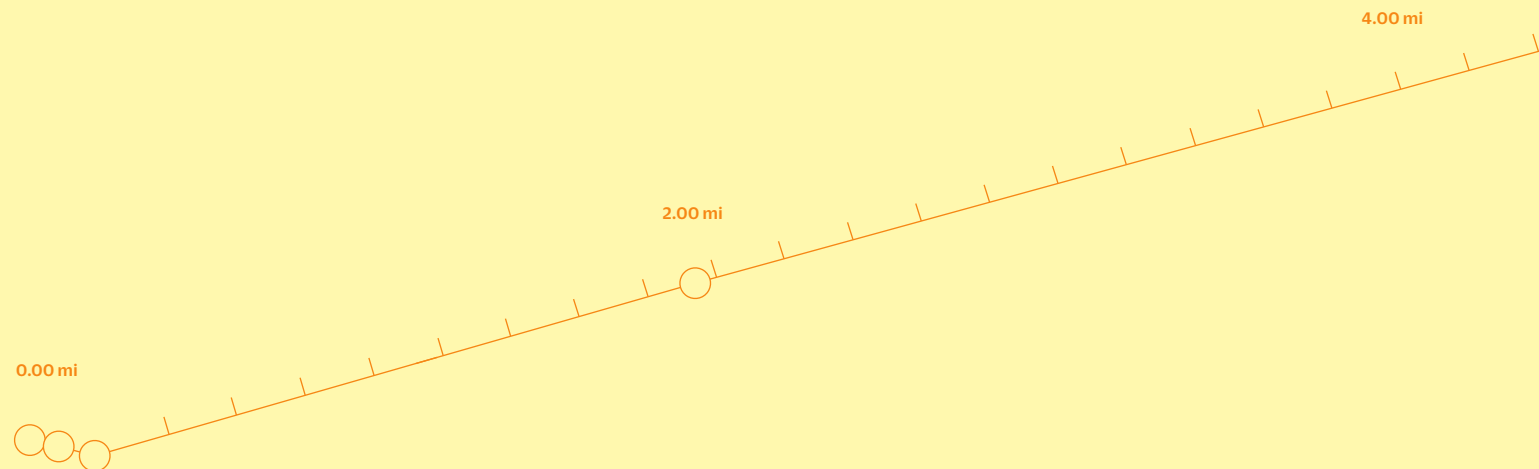


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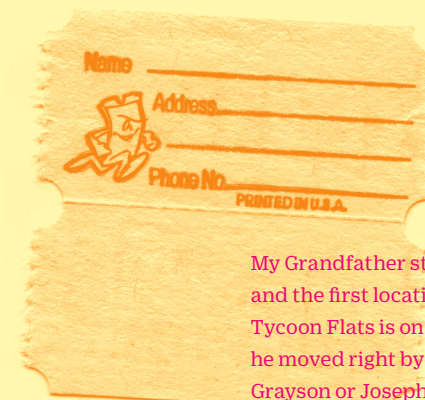
Amols'

Jeffrey Weiss



One of sixty-nine ticket varieties sold at Amols' Party and Fiesta Supplies

Portrait of Amols' founder, Julian Amols, 1934 or 1936



My Grandfather started the company in 1949, and the first location was real close to where Tycoon Flats is on St. Mary's Street. Then he moved right by where the Pearl is in the Grayson or Josephine and Broadway area.

Then he moved around the corner from where we used to be on Flores into an incredibly beautiful train depot called the Katy Depot, which was torn down before I was born. Finally, in 1962, he built the one on Flores. We were there for fifty-five years until we moved here in January. So this is actually the fifth location, but only the second in fifty-five years.

My grandfather was from Baltimore, and he actually worked in Vaudeville for a while before he moved to San Antonio. His name was Julian, last name Amols. He was a pretty interesting character. At some point, he was a manager of the first or second ranked middleweight boxer in the United States. He tried to make that work, but he said that the guy ate more than he won. He opened and operated a movie theatre on the east side of town for a couple of years, but it was difficult getting the better movies. So then he thought he'd try something like this. He tried to sell a million different kinds of things. First, it was magic tricks, gag gifts, and novelties. And then the party stuff started pretty quickly, and that has always been the constant.

A couple times a year, he'd go on a couple of road trips and set up sample rooms in Amarillo, Lubbock, the Valley, El Paso, and sell tons of this stuff. At some point, if you look at some old pictures, there's one picture I've got where there are all these lamps. Like furniture

lamps in the window. Just rows of lamps. He just tried to sell anything and see what would stick. He built the carnival prize business up and some way or another, it must be connected to the carnival prizes for the churches, in the mid to late 1960s, he got into bingo. If you think about it, the bingo game is a huge fundraiser for a lot of churches. We're talking the cards, the machines, and the dobbers. By the early 1970s, my grandfather and my uncle ended up being one of the top two or three bingo distributors in the entire United States.

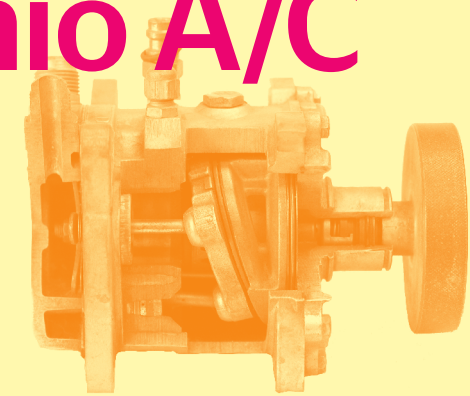
I grew up with my grandfather in this business. At some point around fifth or sixth grade, for whatever reason, I could have gone to a baseball camp or summer camp. Or I could go down to work with my grandfather. And that's what I wanted to do. I basically spent every summer from there on out just working with him. I've been doing this since 1991. I started right after college, and now I've been doing it for twenty-seven years. We moved out of the bingo business before I was out of college, but we kept the party supplies going. One niche that my grandfather carved out, randomly, was New Year's Eve. He was like, "there are a million people that sell Christmas decorations, but every hotel, restaurant, and club need to have New Year's Eve stuff." He started by focusing locally on that, and everybody came to Amols' for New Years Eve. Before the Internet, I started making catalogs for this stuff and built a list of about fifty thousand names to target. That turned out to be very successful, and we are still doing that. We always did Fiesta, and we focus on that more and more and more.





San Antonio A/C

Antonio Huerta



In San Antonio, it's real simple. Blanco Road goes to Blanco, TX. Fredericksburg, to Fredericksburg, TX. Nacogdoches, it goes to Nacogdoches. Laredo, it goes to Laredo.

When I came here, I came for work. I started working as a mechanic. I'm from Monterrey, Mexico, and when I came here in 1987, I worked real hard. When I came here, I only had one brain and two hands.

This was the first Goodyear station. In the back, they renewed the tires. It's the only place in San Antonio that would cap them. Business got hard, and Mr. Kirk shut down the tire business and found himself in the air conditioning business. And he found that to be a good business. It was the 1980s when cars didn't come with AC, so we were growing like crazy. He sold air conditioning for the whole country, whole USA. Then when cars started coming with AC, there was no more business, so it slowed down.

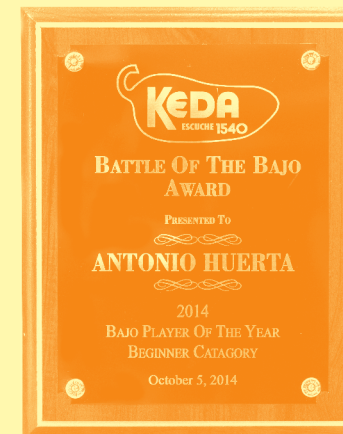
There was construction on Fredericksburg, and it took two years to fix it. It killed the business. So when the construction was complete, I wanted to come back to work, but Mr. Kirk's son wanted to sell it. And I told him I wanted to buy it. I didn't have any money, but I wanted to buy it. I worked with the bank, and it's been almost twenty years for me now. I tried to keep the same name and keep it in the same shape.

I'm a full mechanic. My father is a mechanic. He's ninety-three years and still working in Monterrey. He taught me when I was eight years old. Right now, my two sons work here with me. Somebody maybe

is a millionaire, and they don't have their sons together, and I'm not a millionaire, but I got my two sons together working with me. When people come in, they like that.

I found music in 2005. I had a big party here in the shop. Took out all the cars and put in tables. It was my parents' 45th anniversary, and I brought musicians to play here. My family from Mexico came. But after the party finished, I really liked this stuff! I went to Palo Alto and took music classes. I started from the bottom. I didn't know anything about music. Little by little. I took accordion classes. I was blind, but little by little I opened my eyes.

My mom had a little store in Mexico that sold sodas, tostadas, cigars. A little store. And they played music all day long. And the music that I play now is the music that I heard then. I started practicing at my house. But my sons said it was too much noise! So then I came here. Even when it's real cold, I have my fire pit. If you want to pick up music, you have to focus. And when you like it, you can do it. I enjoy it when I go play, and the people are dancing. I love it. That's my pay.



Car AC compressor that Antonio keeps on his front desk

Battle of the Bajo Award presented to Antonio Huerta, 2014



Friends of Sound

George Mendoza

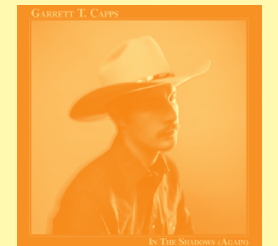
A playlist curated by George Mendoza of Friends of Sound, and inspired by Fredericksburg Road



I'll Be There
SUNNY & THE SUNLINERS



Texas
THE SHACKS



Here Right Now
GARRETT T. CAPPS



Pulsar (Part 2)
ESTRADA ORCHESTRA



No Regreso
COMBO CHIMBITA



Flash a Flashlight
BENJAMIN BALL
Let's Move the Night
DON LAKA



August in Pueblo
SGT. REMO



Pragma
CALIBRO 35



Scene Unseen
PIÑATA PROTEST



Picker's Paradise

Kirt Haeberlein
and Yvette Villarreal



This used to be a stockyard, and they used to sell cattle here. Then they built this building, and it was called the Community Brick Building. It has four different types of brick in it and, I believe, the original kiln is back here. We found ads dating back to 1926 where these were each a suite. You could rent them for between twenty-five and fifty dollars a month. This is your 1920s strip mall. There was a dry cleaning business on that end. A locksmith. There was a fix-it shop and storage for the Piggly Wiggly across the street. We've been here for two years and before that this building sat vacant for twenty-two or twenty-five years.

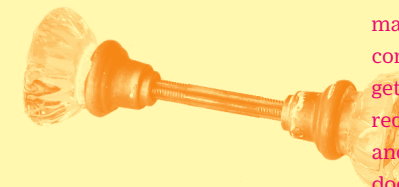
This started out on Hildebrand as an antique store. I was going to build a greenhouse, and I found an outlet for doors. I put them out for sale, and it exploded to what it is now. We've made a lot of great relationships with demo companies and contractors, and now we're getting into the neighborhoods. When they redo a house, they either sell us their old doors and windows, or they come and buy their old doors windows because somebody else dropped the ball. We are like a junk thrift shop that has turned into an architectural salvage shop. That is the best description I can do. A lot of this stuff you can't find at Home Depot or Lowe's. We try to be a place where anybody can walk in and find something and afford it. You can afford it. There are certain things, like, those doors are twenty-five hundred dollars, but they're hand carved and two hundred years old or something.

Picker's Paradise is organized chaos. Our inventory changes every day. We never

know from day-to-day what we're going to get. Just like in life, you have to adjust to what is handed to you today. There's a picker standing outside right now. He wants to bring us some stuff. Who knows what he's got. Where am I going to put it? I may have to move this because I have to put that there because he has something better than what I have there now. So you're always adjusting.

If you look at that heater right there, it says on pink tape, "Gift for Kirt." A homeowner came in and said, "We'd like to sell this. Do you want it?" And Yvette knew I would want it for our forever home. All of those chandelier parts on top of that clock are not for sale. That drives customers crazy. See those carved doors? Those are for our forever home. When the right person comes along, there are things that we love that we will still sell, but I'll cry when they leave.

I love what I do. I love when our customers come in and say, "I'm building a house. I want old doors..." Like the woman yesterday. She has an opening and she's like, "it's got these ugly doors, and I want air flowing." I say, "Well, let's go over to these Mexican doors." And that's what it's all about. It's interaction with the customers, and afterward, they post on our Facebook group, "Look what we did with this." And that's what it's all about. You're not going get rich doing this. I worked my whole life as a blue-collar worker, busted my ass, busted my hands, everything. I never wanted to be a store owner. If I didn't get to deal with the customers and I didn't get to go do the picking, I wouldn't do it. It wouldn't be worth it to me.



Mineral oil lamp that was popular in the 1970s

Deconstructed door installation with vintage glass door knobs, hinges, and plates from Picker's Paradise



Classic Theatre of San Antonio

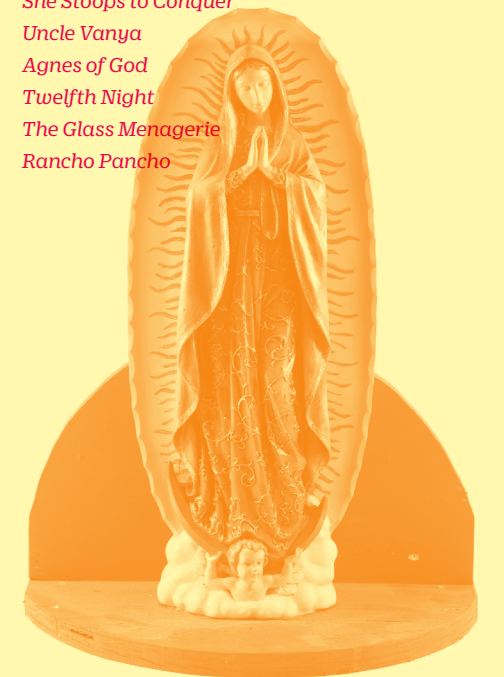
Kelly Hilliard Roush, Kacey Roye,
and Florence Buntен

You Can't Take It with You
A Doll's House
Bless Me, Ultima
The Cherry Orchard
Bus Stop
The Tempest
The School for Scandal
The House on Mango Street
Born Yesterday
The Seagull
Medea
Master Class
Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike
The Merchant of Venice
Ghosts
Arms and the Man
Private Lives
Death of a Salesman
The Taming of the Shrew
Proof

Scapin
Painting Churches
The Firebugs
The Importance of Being Earnest
King Lear
Six Degrees of Separation
The House of Bernarda Alba
Buried Child
Hedda Gabler
The Lion in Winter
Blithe Spirit
Much Ado About Nothing
Waiting for Godot
All My Sons
She Stoops to Conquer
Uncle Vanya
Agnes of God
Twelfth Night
The Glass Menagerie
Rancho Pancho

A list of all the productions
at the Classic Theatre
of San Antonio from the
past ten years

Prop from the production
of *Bless Me, Ultima*

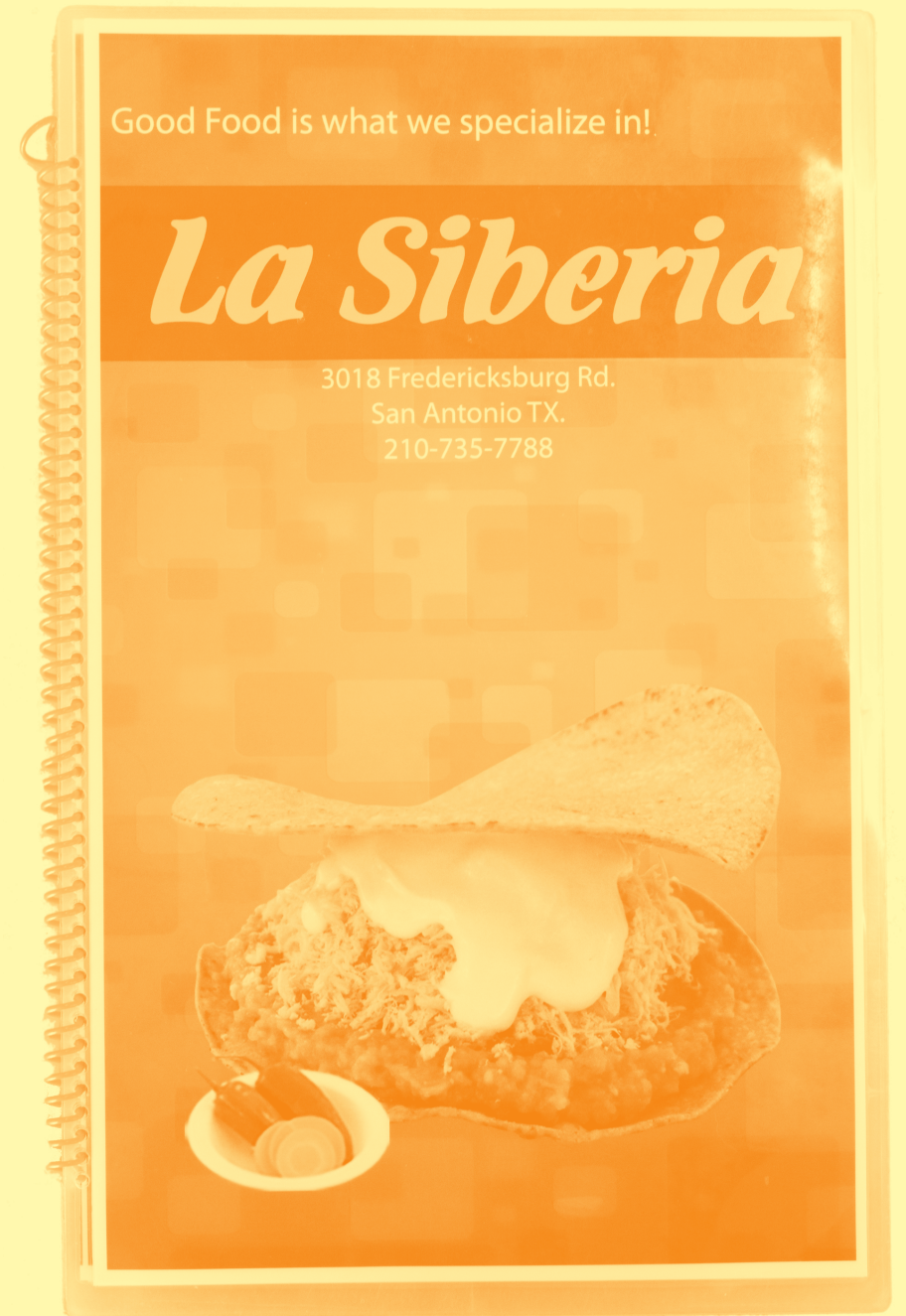


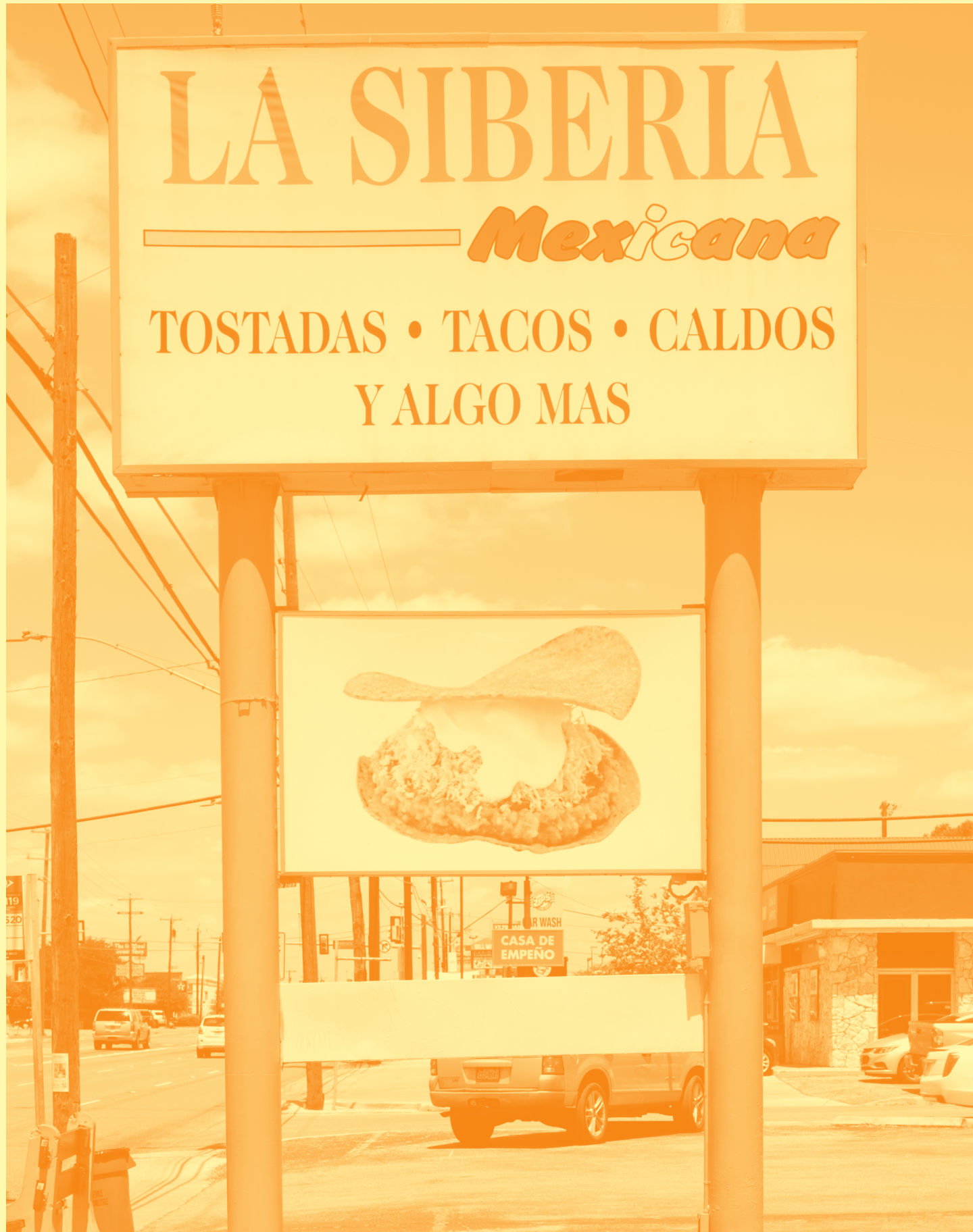


La Siberia Mexicana

Manuel Rodriguez

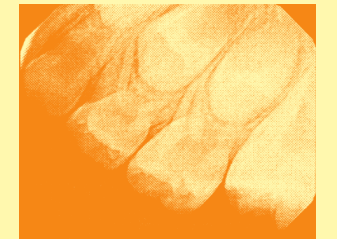
La Siberia menu featuring
the Tostada estilo
Siberia, a specialty from
Monterrey, Mexico





Brident Dental

Asa and Eilan Menjivar



I've pulled out like five of my own teeth. One time, it was maybe my third time pulling a tooth. I had a very close stuffed animal, Bunny. So, we're going to try this new tactic. You tie the floss to your tooth, tie it to the door and then slam the door. And of course, my brother got the honors of slamming the door while I was holding Bunny. I was like, "I don't want to do it!" And then Eilan said, "Yes, I want to do it." And then finally Eilan just slammed the door, and it was just hanging on the doorknob. It was like hanging with the tooth, and I was like, "I didn't feel anything."

I really like how scared you get right before you pull out a tooth, even though you've been wiggling it for the past two weeks. And you are so nervous, but then you yank it out, and you don't really feel anything. It's just like so weird.

After they are out, I put them under my pillow in a smaller pillow. The tooth pillow. And then wait till the morning, and I get money. I'll be rich by yanking out my teeth all the time. The tooth fairy takes the tooth, but my daddy brings the money.

The tactic we use most often to get teeth out is, well, we call it a ritual. Everybody gathers around the couch. I lay down on it. You tie floss around my tooth, and then you just yank it out. Another, when I was in kindergarten, it was probably one of my first loose teeth, I was so excited about losing it, and it was super loose. At lunch, I was eating grilled cheese, and I took a bite out of it and had no clue my tooth fell out. So I took another bite of it, and then I crunched down on my tooth. Luckily I did not crack it.

A fun fact...when my two front teeth were loose, they were like completely crooked. One was on top of the other one. I felt so proud when I lost them, I was like, "Ya, I lost my front tooth. I'm cool now." No one really said anything though because everyone in first or second or third grade lost their teeth. So it didn't really make any difference. Well, the only difference is that they got five bucks and I got ten bucks, for both teeth.

My advice to anyone about to lose a tooth is to just stand there with your favorite stuffed animal, and you'll be OK.

Eilan's dental X-rays



Himalayan Bazar

Harry Singh



I am from Punjab in India. I came in 1985 to LA. In 1992, I moved to San Antonio.

One of my friends quit his job and came to LA and started living with us. He couldn't find a job over there, so he moved over here. Then from here, he called, "Hey guys, come over, it's cheaper over here. You guys are making five to six dollars over there per hour. You can make the same over here, but expenses are less so you will save more." So we came to look around. Back then, we were paying six hundred and fifty dollars for a one bedroom apartment over there. Over here, it was two hundred and fifty dollars for two bedrooms. A Coke bottle, it was sixty-nine cents over there, thirty-nine cents over here. So that made sense to us, so the three of us moved over here. Three friends. Back then we were single. We were bachelors. We could do anything we wanted to.

In 1995, my family came, and their families came, too, at the same time. So we settled over here, and now we don't have any plan to move anywhere. We love our San Antonio. Nice weather. It is warm for some people, but we are used to it. It is warm over there in India, too. The same kind of weather.

I started with 7-Eleven, you know, as a clerk, and I moved into the manager position and moved over here and started again from zero in a private convenience store on Southcross and Commercial. I worked like six years over there. In 1999, I bought my own business which was on Culebra and Westover Hills. From there, I went to Rittiman Road, and then this one was available, so we came to Fredericksburg Road in 2013.

My wife and I work here. My wife comes around six o'clock. These are all my family, too. We don't say, "Hey, this is our employee." No, they are our kids. They are all my children.

We sell almost everything Indian, Pakistani, South Asian...Burma, Nepal, all of those. Groceries, spices, some clothing, some utensils, fresh vegetables that we get every Tuesday and Friday. Frozen stuff is there. Dairy products are there. Then we have worshipping items. Mostly everything moves. Rice and flour go out the most. So we have to buy them in bulk. Then, spices. Then, sweets, cookies, and snacks.

People eat at the restaurant, and then they come over here and say, "We liked the food and want to make our own." So they look for the spices, and they ask us, "What kind of spices do they use?" And I say, "The chef is not going to give me the recipe, but this is what it is, you know." [laughter] That helps us a lot. People eat over there, and then they come over here and look for the spices and all that. It helps.

One of ninety-eight varieties of rice sold at the Himalayan Bazar International Grocery



Lockehill Cemetery

Scott Baird

One of my favorite cemeteries in San Antonio is the small Lockehill Cemetery, on the corner of Huebner and Fredericksburg. The cemetery provides a comforting mixture of longevity and modernity. Longevity emanates from the large number of mature Live Oak trees, reminders of the days when the cemetery was owned by Oxford Methodist Church. Modernity flashes from its half dozen pictorial gravemarkers, products of the new owners, Mission Park Funeral Chapels and Cemeteries.

An excellent example of this fairly recent pictorial artistry sits just inside the Huebner Road entrance and immediately to the left. A dark grey rectangular cube, three feet tall and two feet wide on each side, presents an eye-catching monument/sculpture—memorializing Dawn Hamilton. At right angles to the side facing Fredericksburg Road, sits a black bench—with the word HAMILTON engraved on each side.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, various technological advances—using Goodkin Lucigraph sandblasting; computer assisted designing; lasers; and diamond-tipped engraving tools—have allowed monument makers to duplicate photographs and other etchings onto stone. Fortuitously, in the early 1980s the increasing availability and affordability of imported granite—especially black granite—provided a hard surface that accepted this technology better than other types of stone. Monument makers were now capable of offering a product that allowed for a new type of creative art. The HAMILTON monument beautifully displays this range of new technology.

The cube, made of traditional grey granite, has been inscribed using a computer-assisted laser technique. The side of the cube that faces Huebner road reads: “CLASS OF 1981; TOM O. CLARK HIGH SCHOOL.” Beneath, arranged in symmetrical order, are inscribed icons that appear to declare individualized

connections to Dawn: a cowboy hat, a truck license plate, a dog, a possum hanging from a tree branch, a fishing pole, a soccer ball, a tennis racket, a piano, a clarinet, etc.

Opposite the bench, on the side of the cube that faces the gravel road, visitors can see a laser-inscribed, unedited, handwritten poem. Clearly we are hearing the words of Dawn herself:

DEATH: When Someone Dies then your depressed for they were alive now they're at rest. / But, when one dies You shouldn't mourn for when God takes another is born. / When the loved one dies, You feel all pain. / The last time is vivid, those times will never be again. DAWN T. HAMILTON

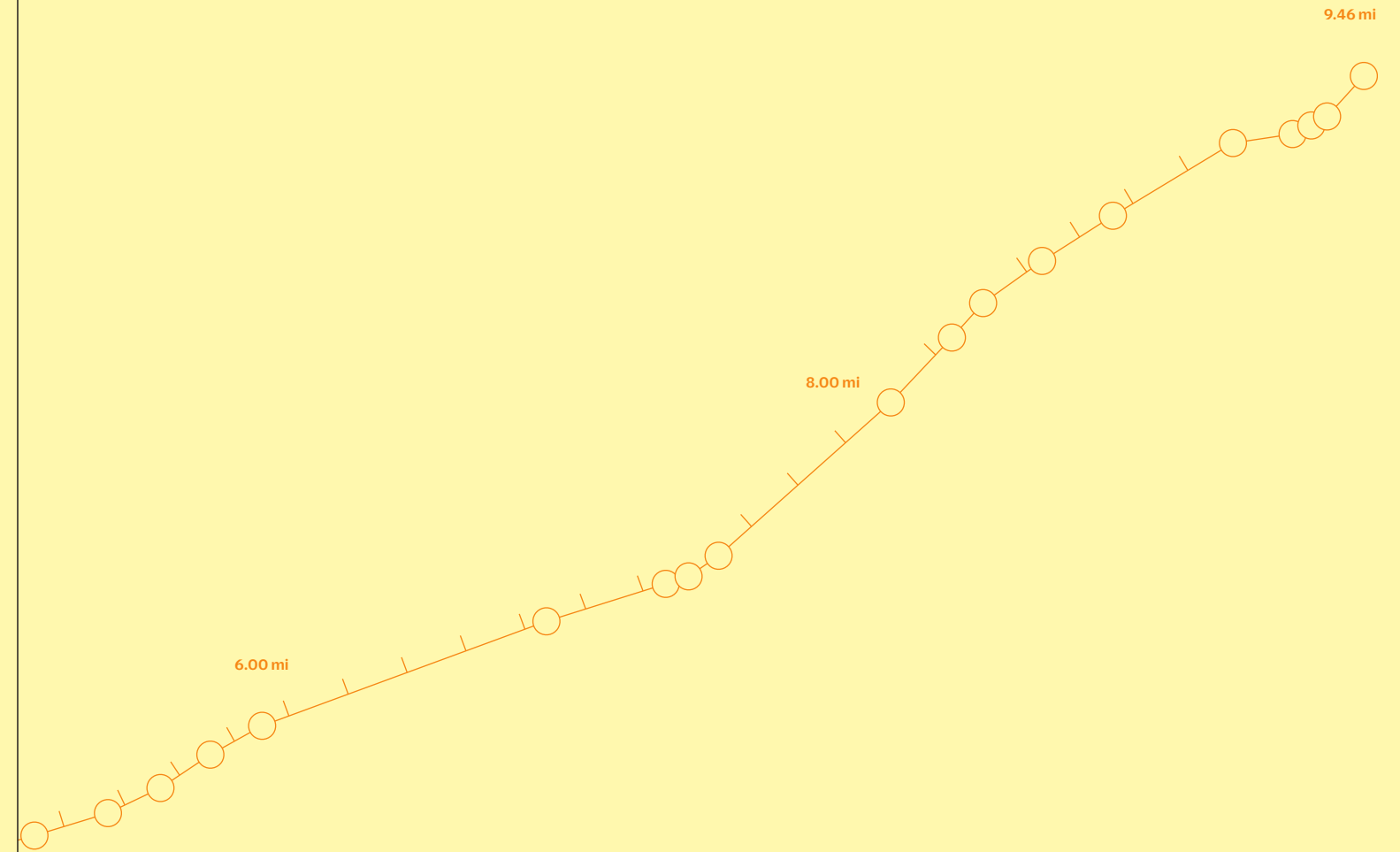
On the south side of the cube, at right angles to the poem, are a collection of laser-inscribed icons. At the top is displayed a wide-angle image of a sunrise, with the word DAWN embedded within the outstretching rays. Beneath that sunrise are images that “look like” a modern version of the classical YinYang; the words “friends forever”; and a large drawing of a truck.

These engraved icons overlook a conventional family headstone—black granite—lying flat on the ground. It reads: “Dawn Patrice Hamilton; Oct. 30, 1963; May 16, 1982; Daughter and Love of Pat and Cindy Hamilton.” Between the birth and death dates, a 1920s-style ceramic, color-enhanced, photograph of Dawn has been set into the granite. To the left, however, is an engraved etching of a guitar—most likely hand-engraved with a diamond tool.

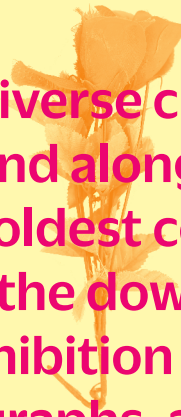
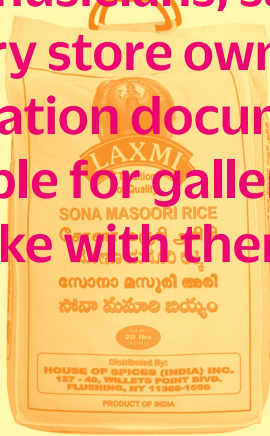
This duality of memorialization, the sculpture erected by classmates complemented by the headstone erected by family, tells a remarkable story. Visitors do not know what caused Dawn's death. We do know, however, that she was loved.

So what makes a cemetery a favorite cemetery? The love of family, of course—love that emanates from majestic live oak trees and from contemporary artistic icons on gravemarkers.

Good Grief: Pictorial Gravemarkers by Scott Baird, Professor Emeritus in Applied Linguistics at Trinity University, August 30, 2010



From Here to There explores the diverse cultural, economic, and social activities found along Fredericksburg Road—one of the oldest corridors in San Antonio and a link between the downtown and 1604 UTSA campuses. The exhibition features objects, archival materials, photographs, and interviews that have been selected and made in collaboration with community members ranging from musicians, salvagers, and mechanics to grocery store owners and DJs. This participatory publication documents each site and is made available for gallery visitors to assemble and take with them.



Published on the occasion of the exhibition *From Here to There* curated by Mark Menjivar and Molly Sherman for the San Antonio Tricentennial.

