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Display ads, classifieds, legal notices and obituaries should be submitted to spur@thetexasspur.com
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EDITORIAL | spur@thetexasspur.com
Paragraphs & pixels
BARBARA BRANNON

ROUTE 66 RAMBLE, PART 8

California dreamin' and driving

In the American consciousness, California occupies a fabled throne: lodestone of the Golden West, goal of the beleaguered Dust Bowl Okies, fantasy of film and fortune, home of the high life.

The part of this vast state you'll experience along the remnants of Route 66 provides fleeting glimpses of all this and more. Yet between the glittering glimpses lie miles of baking desert and miles of multilane concrete, neither of which is avoidable on the journey to Nirvana. Perhaps there are better times to make that journey than the hottest July on record.

Still, the blue Pacific waters beckon, and even the desert has its fascinations.

Among those, the stretch of the Mother Road known as the National Old Trails Highway west of Needles proved challenging in some ways, soothing in others. With no reservation and no particular destination other than the inevitable End of the Trail, we were in the perfect situation to observe this 130 miles of old blacktop: unhurried, plenty of gas in the tank purchased at Arizona prices, and a superbly functioning air conditioning system.

The road veers south of I-40 on a trajectory that follows an old railroad route between the Mohave National Preserve on the north and the Sheephole Valley and Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness areas to the south. In reverse order we cruise past former train stops: Essex, Danby, Chambless. We've passed no vehicles coming from the west; and only one other from the east, a red convertible that quickly overtook our pace and disappeared over the hazy late-afternoon horizon. At our leisurely speed it's easy to spot the humanmade intrusions into the landscape: a monument to Route 66; a group of low-slung, abandoned buildings; a pair of concrete Chinese lions standing watch in the distance.

At the ghost town of Amboy, pop. zero according to a recent feature in the Los Angeles Times, the futuristic angles of the Roy's Café sign are even more unmissable. The ultimate monument to the traffic-siphoning effect of I-40, the former wayside store, service station, and motel complex shuttered in 1972.

Southern California businessman Albert Okura, "The Chicken Man with a 50 Year Plan" that included moving the corporate headquarters of his Juan Pollo restaurant chain into the original McDonald's building in San Bernardino, bought Amboy in 2005. The whole town. He restored gas service and a snack bar, amenities that continue to serve travelers today under the operation of his son, Kyle. The senior Okura saw revitalization of the town as his destiny; his son carries on that legacy today.

But as in so many places along the Route, we've arrived too late to benefit from local commerce. We enjoy our photo session alone, two kids in the amusement park after the gates have been locked.

Overnighting in Victorville gives us a chance to cleanse away the desert dust in a lovely swimming pool once the evening temps have dropped into the 90s. We repack in anticipation of the homeward journey that will commence in a couple of days. We refresh our maps, preparing to follow the thread of original 66 routing amid the tangle of Los Angeles freeways. This turned out to be not as hard as we'd feared over the past 2,400 miles; it would simply take some patience with traffic, and the willingness to backtrack and reconnect when a turn had been missed.

Once over the San Gabriel mountains and into San Bernardino, I found the drive reminiscent of watching an old home movie, with what used to be distinct, individual towns rolling by in fluid sequence: Rancho Cucamonga, Pasadena, Glendale. Before long we reached place-names that were even more etched in media's memory: Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood Hills, Santa Monica Boulevard. We paused our extended film reel only to detour for stills (to Dodgers Stadium, for instance, or the Hollywood sign, or the Capitol Records building).

In this way we surely missed some of the most legendary Route 66 roadside attractions we'd been learning about via podcast; but oddly gained a more seamless appreciation for the road itself. Not its younger, slicked-back, saucier self ever in search of the next adventure, but its more seasoned, laid-back, twenty-first-century persona, angles and edges smoothed over, ripe with experience, welcoming the



END OF THE TRAIL Though Route 66 originally came to an end in Santa Monica, California, a little ways short of the Pacific oceanfront, today the tourist experience extends to a popular photo op installed on the Santa Monica Pleasure Pier. MORE PHOTOS, PAGE 10 | COURTESY PHOTO

traveler with every modern convenience. As city melts into city, from Beverly Hills to Century City to Santa Monica, the road becomes a mirror of our 2024 experience: more homogenized, branded, packaged.

So many of the logos visible along this storied road are the same we've seen back home—and many originated here or are based here. Netflix, Tesla, Blockbuster, McDonald's. This phenomenon itself is part of the story of America. To find the outliers, the unconventional, the "authentic" we so seek may take some work. And maybe it's not exactly "original" we're looking for after all; it's hard to get more inventive than the McDonald brothers, or Elon Musk. It's the spark of something individual and imaginative, perhaps, that still stands out in only one place.

Read enough of the roadies' blogs, and you'll be reminded that Route 66 reached its western terminus at the intersection of Lincoln and Olympic in Santa Monica. In the early-evening crowds we cruise by that landmark in a blink of an eye.

But at the Santa Monica Pier, long a magnet for fishing, fun and film scouts, it's far easier to park your car, stretch your legs, and indulge your appetite. For date night or family outing, the pier is a mini-amusement park complete with Ferris wheel and carnival vendors, sit-down restaurants and hot-dog stands, Route 66 roadie Dan Rice of Los Angeles recognized the perfect opportunity back in

2009, when Mother Road tourism was beginning to take off again. "How could there be nothing to mark the end of the most famous road in the world?" he writes on his website, 66toCali.com.

So he made one. That year he created an "End of the Trail" marker and installed it on the pier alongside his souvenir shop specializing in made-in-the-USA T-shirts. A legend was born. The legend was cultivated with 66toCali's Certificate of Completion, which visitors can also obtain at the shop.

On that final evening of our journey, shop manager Ian Bowen welcomed us Texans and happily signed our certificates. We stood in line behind crowds waiting to pony up for those T-shirts, hoodies, mugs, and magnets, too. Money changed hands, food was consumed, selfies were taken. People had a great time, the surf rolled beneath us as the sun set over the Pacific on a pleasant evening of leisure and love for some, commerce and creativity for others.

Now, if that isn't American ingenuity, what is?

Driving back to our lodgings for the night, a concrete teepee in Rialto where third-generation Asian immigrants still run the family business, we heartily agree.

We settle into our folding camp chairs in the parking lot to watch the moon rise over the palms. The gentlest of breezes masks the occasional sounds along the road outside our motel door: engines revving, conversations among pedestrians, a police siren, a barking dog. The surface of the blue pool ripples.

A beverage from the cooler is our toast to the Mother Road.

Long may she flourish, as she approaches her milestone birthday.

Tomorrow, we'll start making our plans to celebrate it.

Once over the San Gabriel mountains and into San Bernardino, I found the drive reminiscent of watching an old home movie, with what used to be distinct, individual towns rolling by in fluid sequence.

2024 Community Calendar
Community Services and Organizations

SPUR VISITOR CENTER, 101 Hill Street at Burlington Avenue, is operated by the Spur Area Chamber of Commerce and open during regular hours Tuesday–Saturday. Visitors seeking information on the area may email spurchamber@gmail.com or call (806) 271-3097.

THE SPUR AREA FOOD BANK serves families throughout Dickens County. The Food Bank is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization operating via private donations and welcomes donations to this community work. Donations are tax-deductible and are accepted directly into the Food Bank's account at Spur Security Bank or at 612 Burlington Ave. The Spur Area Food Kitchen Inc. does not discriminate due to race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

THE KENT COUNTY LIBRARY, 156 W. 4th St., Jayton, is open for patron services Monday–Thursday, 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. Library patrons may also check out e-books and audiobooks on the Libby app for free with their library card. For information call (806) 237-3287 or "like" Kent County Library on Facebook.

THE KENT COUNTY SENIOR NUTRITION CENTER, 156 W. 4th St., Jayton, is open Monday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to noon and Tuesday and Thursday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. A lunch meal is served at noon on Tuesdays and Thursdays for a nominal cost, and is also available for carry-out. For information call (806) 237-3288.

THE SPUR-DICKENS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY, 403 E. Hill St., is open Monday–Thursday, noon–5 p.m., and extended hours on the first Monday of each month until 7 p.m. Call (806) 271-3714 for questions. Free WiFi (password spurlib2017) is available inside and from the parking lot. Also contact the library for inquiries regarding the Spur Photography Club.

SPUR-DICKENS COUNTY MUSEUM, 327 Burlington Ave., Spur, is open April through October. For a tour please call a board member: Froyne Morris, (806) 271-3577; Linda Swenson, (806) 271-3238; Woodie McArthur, (806) 271-4415; or Don Wright, (806) 271-4520.

SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER/SOUTH DICKENS, 210 Burlington Ave., provides a dine-in meal at noon Monday–Friday, the salad bar is available on Wednesdays. A donation of \$4 is suggested for ages 60 and older, with an \$8 donation for those younger than 60. For more information call (806) 271-4472.

SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER/NORTH DICKENS, 511 Montgomery St., Dickens, provides a meal at noon Monday–Friday. A donation of \$5 is suggested. For more information call (806) 623-5520.

DICKENS COUNTY MUSEUM on Montgomery Avenue in Dickens is open 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., the second and fourth Saturdays monthly. For a special viewing or other hours please call Ruby Combs at (806) 269-6215 or Bron Combs at (806) 294-5302.

KENT COUNTY LIONS CLUB meets the second and fourth Mondays of each month at noon at the Kent County Community Center, 156 4th St., Jayton. Lunch is served at a cost of \$10 per person; please RSVP to Daryl Ham at (806) 269-1179.

SPUR ART GUILD Open painting day every third Monday at the Spur Senior Citizens Center, 201 Burlington Ave., Spur.

Public and Civic Meetings Coming Up

- Please let us know of any corrections: News@thetexasspur.com
- KENT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT** Monday, Sept. 23, 9 a.m., County Courthouse, 101 Main St., Jayton, (806) 237-3373
 - KENT COUNTY LIONS CLUB** Monday, Sept. 23, noon, Community Center, 156 W. 4th, Jayton
 - WHITE RIVER MUNICIPAL DISTRICT** Monday, Sept. 16, 7 p.m., District office at White River Lake
 - CITY OF SPUR CITY COUNCIL** Tuesday, Sept. 17, 6 p.m., City Hall, 402 N. Burlington Ave., Spur, (806) 271-3316
 - SPUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** Monday, Sept. 16, 6 p.m., Community Center, 101 E. Hill St., Spur, (806) 271-3097
 - JAYTON-GIRARD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT** board meeting, Thursday, Sept. 19, 6:30 p.m., school board room, 700 Madison Ave., Jayton, (806) 237-2991
 - SPUR INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT** board meeting, Monday, Sept. 23, 7 p.m., school administration office, 800 Williams Ave., Spur, (806) 271-3272

CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

New Texas laws now in effect

AUSTIN— It took some time, but a set of new laws and rules passed by the Texas Legislature in 2023 went into effect on Sept. 1, the Houston Chronicle reported. Prominent among these are the SCOPE Act, or Securing Children Online Through Parental Empowerment Act, which tightens restrictions for online users younger than 18.

Under the SCOPE Act, users must register their age on social media and other websites. Minors are prohibited from making purchases from those sites, which are also required to filter and block certain material. Examples include content that promotes suicide or bullying, as well as trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Violators could be fined up to \$10,000 per incident.

One of the bill's co-authors defended its intent. "Testimony from parents and children in committee gave graphic examples underscoring how desperately we need to better protect kids online," state Rep. Shelby Slawson, R-Granbury, wrote. "The SCOPE Act will do just that."

Others don't agree. The nonprofit Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression sued the state on Aug. 16, challenging the government restrictions. "While these efforts to protect young people are well-intentioned, they lack perspective," the lawsuit states.

Another measure that took effect Sept. 1 updates qualifications for family violence shelters that provide lodging and care for domestic abuse victims in order to receive state funding. Criteria now includes providing direct services, establishing a referral service for victims, and having been in operation at least a year.

ELIMINATING PROPERTY TAXES WOULD REQUIRE MASSIVE FUNDING. Eliminating the state's property taxes



is high on the wish list of some Republican lawmakers. They received a reality check last week when state budget officials said doing so would require the state to produce \$81 billion each year to cover the costs of public schools, as well as the revenue now received by cities, counties and special taxing districts through property taxes.

The Texas Tribune reported that Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick directed the Legislative Budget Board to tally the costs of replacing property tax revenue, which funds teacher salaries, law enforcement and many other government functions. Eliminating the tax likely would require a massive increase in sales tax rates – something that appears highly unlikely.

State Sen. Paul Bettencourt, R-Houston, is Patrick's chief lieutenant on property taxes. He noted \$81.5 billion is "a huge amount of money to be able to replicate."

Lawmakers have worked to lower property tax bills the past few sessions by raising the homestead exemption and limiting how much school districts and local governments can collect. But without a state income tax, lawmakers are limited in how to completely replace property taxes with another form of revenue.

PERRY JOINS PHELAN'S TEAM AS ADVISER. Former Gov. Rick Perry has joined House Speaker Dade Phelan's office as a senior adviser, the

See CAPITAL, page 8

We welcome letters to the editor via mail or email—to thank a group or organization, suggest an idea, or state an opinion, for instance. Be sure to provide your name and address to verify your identity.

- Contact your elected officials
- President Joseph R. Biden**
www.whitehouse.gov/contact/
 - Governor of Texas Greg Abbott**
www.gov.texas.gov/contact
 - United States Senate Sen. John Cornyn**
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Lubbock Office Wells Fargo Center 1500 Broadway, Suite 1230 Lubbock, TX 79401 (806) 472-7533
 - Sen. Ted Cruz Dirksen Senate Office Bldg., Ste. SDB-40B**
Washington, DC 20510 west_texas@cruz.senate.gov www.cruz.senate.gov
 - U.S. House of Representatives Congressional District 13 (including Dickens County) Rep. Ronny Jackson**
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 - Texas State Senate District 28 (including Dickens & Kent Counties) Sen. Charles Perry**
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 - Texas House of Representatives District 83 (including Dickens & Kent Counties) Rep. Dustin Burrows**
Room E2.610, State Capitol P.O. Box 2910 Austin, TX 78768 (512) 463-0542 District Office, Lubbock (806) 795-0635 dustin.burrows@house.texas.gov https://house.texas.gov/members/member-page/?district=83
 - The Texas Spur encourages citizens to consult **www.ballotpedia.org/Who_represents_me** for their elected officials at every level of government.

SPOTLIGHT ON ROUTE 66 RAMBLE, PART 9, CALIFORNIA



THE ROAD TO AMBOY beckons with the Route 66 shield painted on the pavement and the mountain range across the desert in the distance.



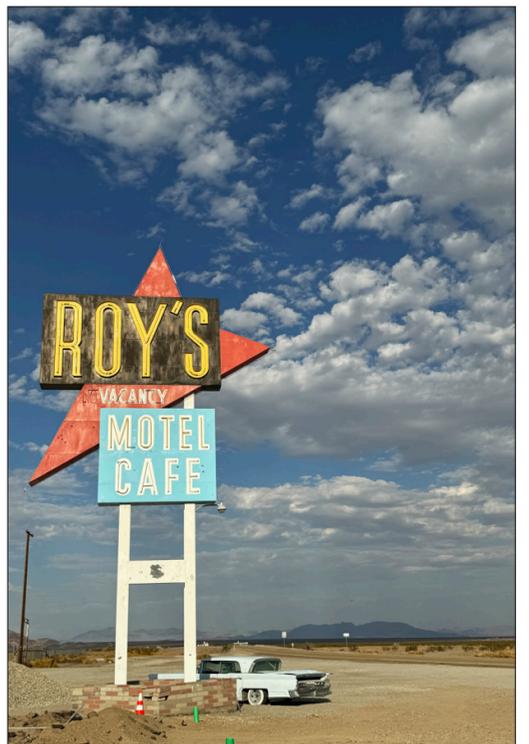
IN NEEDLES, CALIFORNIA the local convenience store harks back to a much earlier mode of travel—while empowering newer ones. All along the Route, but especially in California, we spotted plenty of Tesla electric Cybertrucks.



ROAD CLOSED In the Southern California deserts, many two-lane roads—including surviving stretches of Route 66—were badly damaged by tropical storm washouts in recent decades and have remained unrepaired.



ROY CROWL built a complex of tourist services along Route 66 in Amboy in the 1940s, but in 1972 the coming of I-40 a few miles to the north left his enterprises cut off. Today, gas (which must be pumped by an attendant during open hours) is going for \$6.49 a gallon.



MID-CENTURY MODERN and "Google"-style architecture are a treat all along Route 66, especially at cafes and gas stations. This one is in Hesperia, California.



WILMINGTON, NC 2,554 MI is the flip side of a similar green Interstate sign located near the eastbound terminus of I-40. Twenty-one years ago I traveled here from Wilmington, pulled off on the shoulder here and took one of my first selfies ever, underneath this very sign.



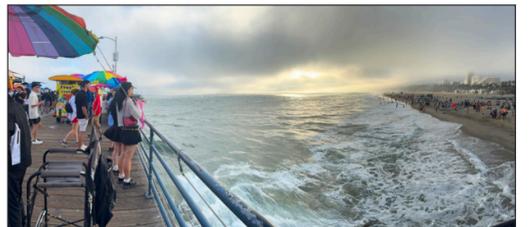
BUDDHA IN THE DESERT is one of the mysteries along this isolated stretch of the Mother Road.



SLEEP IN A TEEPEE — it's still possible at the clean, well-run Wigwam Motel in Rialto (San Bernardino), California, where generations of travelers have delighted in the kitschy, if inaccurately named, design. In 1933, wirtie the current owners on their website, Frank Redford first started developing the Wigwam "Villages" by designing teepee shaped motel units around a museum-cum-shop he had built to showcase his Native American artifacts. He went on to build seven motels using his wigwam design, and the hotel in San Bernardino CA was his final, established in 1949.



HOME OF THE SCORPIONS, reads the sign at the Hesperia (California) High School. We don't want to tangle with their mascot!



SUNSET OVER THE PACIFIC Thanks for riding along on our journey! For more (many, many more) photos, visit www.flickr.com/photos/barbarabrannon



TEXAS CO-OP POWER SEPTEMBER 2024

Read your September Texas Co-op Power magazine for voting instructions. Votes **MUST BE** received by Sept. 20 to earn \$15 energy credit.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

Virtual Annual Meeting
Online beginning at 10 a.m. Read our Annual Report in your September *Texas Co-op Power* magazine for details and instructions on voting methods and how to receive your \$15 energy credit!

and **Open House** at each BCEC office come and go, 4 - 7 p.m. Snacks & door prizes for members who stop by!

We look forward to seeing YOU!

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From Hollywood's Sunset Boulevard to Santa Monica, familiar icons abound. At the End of the Trail on the Santa Monica Pier, merchant and artist Ian Bowen presented us our Route 66 Certificates of Completion.