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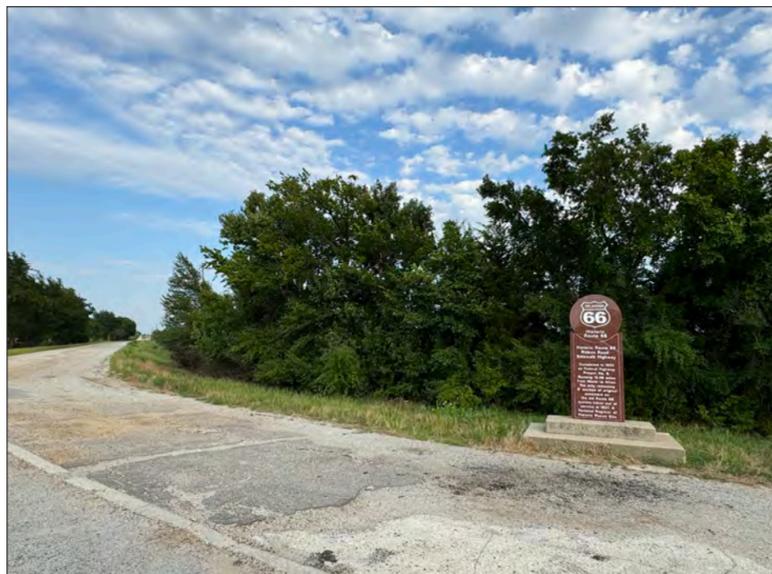
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for their elected officials at every
level of government.



EDITORIAL | spur@thetexasspur.com
Paragraphs & pixels
BARBARA BRANNON

ROUTE 66 RAMBLE, PART 5: OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma, green hills to Panhandle



THE RIBBON ROAD outside Miami, Oklahoma, is a remnant of the solitary stretch of Route 66 that was built in 1912 (before the Route was officially designated) as a single lane. **MORE PHOTOS, PAGE 9 | THE TEXAS SPUR**

Oklahoma has more drivable miles of Route 66 than any other state. And “drivable,” as twenty-first-century roadies know, is all-important.

I digress for a moment here, from Oklahoma’s varied and fascinating tourist attractions—and its music legends from Woody Guthrie to Garth Brooks—to consider that notion of “drivable.”

You wouldn’t, in the year 2024, necessarily attempt to motor west over every vestige of circa-1926 pavement that still exists. Or would you? Some purists consider this itinerary the holy grail, as Appalachian Trail through-hikers insist on walking the continuous footpath from Georgia to Maine (or vice versa) without cheating by hitching a ride during severe weather, or bypassing steep passages too challenging for your physique.

As a dedicated roadgeek myself, I know from previous tries at the 1916 Bankhead Highway from one end of Texas to the other, or US 83 (“The Last American Highway”) from Mexico to Canada, that this isn’t always possible.

An early thoroughfare that might’ve promised a continuous route from end to end simply doesn’t exist along every mile once the vagaries of weather and bureaucracy have taken their toll. Alignments stretch or straighten; stronger bridges are built; signs come and go.

Here in Oklahoma, that’s abundantly true. Any attempt to stick to the Mother Road across her 432 miles made famous by the Okie Joads of “The Grapes of Wrath” will meet with frustration at numerous diversions onto city streets, toll roads, or that most wretched of east-west Interstates, I-40. The Ross/McClanahan “Here It Is” maps (mentioned in a previous column) are your best shot. Even then, flooding and deteriorating pavement might frustrate your aims, as the author of our audiobook entertainment, Rick Antonson, once experienced in the Sooner State.

For Kay and me, in mid-July 2024, flooding wasn’t a problem. It hadn’t rained a drop since the deluge in Atlanta, Illinois.

So our first challenge, in Ottawa County, Oklahoma, was to locate the legendary Ribbon Road.

The highway anomaly—a stretch of vintage pavement only 9 feet wide that had existed for a decade before being swept up in Route 66—was under siege that very week. We’d read in the papers about the Miami (Okla.) city council’s threat to grind up the remainder of badly deteriorated concrete-and-asphalt sandwich the road had become. It’s understandable that no road-maintainer vehicle (hey . . . perhaps a new character in the next “Cars” sequel?) could scrape that pavement without damaging road and equipment alike. And the result would be only a worse grosgrain-ribbon texture than exists at present, which holds any automobile’s horses to about 10 mph.

I signed the online petition to forestall the council’s action. I reached out to Oklahoma 66’s head honcho, Rhys Martin of Tulsa, with whom I’d crossed paths in earlier preservation initiatives.

Oh, and I wrote a song, of course. Stay tuned.

Following directions provided by numerous websites (the Historical Marker Database is one of the best), we set out from Miami, southwest toward E 140 Road. At a 90-degree elbow amid field and forest, we knew we’d found it: that 9-foot-wide roadway edged by concrete curbing, recognizable from many photos.

The unique-on-66 Sidewalk Highway, supposedly designed by a 1912 highway department too strapped for cash to complete a

full 18-foot two-lane road. The same budget dollars could stretch twice the miles—of a single lane.

Originally part of the Ozark Trail, a regional auto route that predated the national Route 66, the Ribbon Road has become a treasured artifact. To replace its deteriorated surface with modern material and safety marking, partisans argue, would be akin to rebuilding the Parthenon out of PVC. But few preservation remedies remain, except to leave it as is—to further crackle and weather away to dust.

We drive reverently, the setting sun drifting occasionally through the sentry rows of boxelder and blackjack, trying to prevent our Firestones from inflicting further damage. No vehicle passes to force us onto the narrow shoulder. By the time we reach the marble marker at the “preserved” curve most travelers manage to find just off today’s US 59, we’re quiet, somber.

Our first challenge, in Ottawa County, Oklahoma, was to locate the legendary Ribbon Road.

“Completed in 1922 as Federal Highway Project No. 8. Running 15.46 miles from Miami to Afton,” it reads. “The only remaining 9’ section of

original pavement on the old Route 66 system, taken out of service in 1937. A National Register of Historic Places Site.”

Whatever of Old 66 lies west of us in Oklahoma, we expect it will pale in comparison to this most elegiac of road relics.

Over the next 24 hours our rambles will take us into Tulsa past Big Bill the Muffler Man at Vinita, over the Pryor Creek iron bridge at Chelsea, by the Will Rogers Museum at Claremore and the delightful Blue Whale at Catoosa. As we stop for all of these it becomes apparent that Oklahoma will require a return trip, for we haven’t even reached its midsection of Route 66 riches.

Time’s winged chariot presses on, and after our in-depth tour of Tulsa’s Church Studio (where rock-piano legend and native son Leon Russell transformed a former house of worship into a world-class recording studio, still a vital force today) the inexorable river of I-40 sweeps us along through the capital city and westward across rivers and plains. Night falls on us at last at Weatherford, having passed our last hours of twilight traversing the two-lane roller-coaster of what Google Maps calls “U.S. Bicycle Route 66” past Bridgeport.

I drift to sleep recalling familiar forays from earlier years—this true-west country isn’t far from home for us, after all. Hydro, Hext, Texola, we’ll catch you on another day.

For now, the memory of the Ribbon Road persists, and perhaps the road will, as well. Only a few days after we’d traversed it, the Miami City Council tabled its proposal to grind up and repave the Sidewalk Highway.

“A solution has been reached to keep a century-old historic Ottawa County tourist landmark partially intact,” read KSN16’s FourStatesHomepage on July 17. The compromise, proposed in a July 16 letter, would leave one mile of the three-mile roadway untouched, said spokesmen for city and county.

“Having that original piece, that attracts tourists from all over. From, you know, all over England and Scotland and Vietnam,” Miami mayor Bless Parker told KOAM-TV on July 20. “I mean, I’ve met people from all over the world, Germany, all over the world that want to come see that piece of the Ribbon Road.”

A single mile, hmmm. Perhaps a few more could yet be spared . . . for those from around the globe, or next door in Texas? Now, where’s Woody Guthrie when you need him to compose a tune . . .

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: Fronye 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

CITY OF SPUR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT governing board of the City Pension and Retirement System quarterly meeting, Thursday, Aug. 15, 11 a.m., City Hall, 402 Burlington, Spur

KENT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT Monday, Aug. 26, 9 a.m., County Courthouse, 101 Main St., Jayton, (806) 237-3373

KENT COUNTY LIONS CLUB Monday, Aug. 26, noon, Community Center, 156 W. 4th, Jayton

JAYTON-GIRARD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT board meeting, Thursday, Aug. 15, 6:30 p.m., school board room, 700 Madison Ave., Jayton, (806) 237-2991

SPUR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Monday, Aug. 19, 6 p.m., Community Center, 101 E. Hill St., Spur, (806) 271-3097

WHITE RIVER MUNICIPAL DISTRICT Monday, Aug. 19, 7 p.m., District office at White River Lake

CITY OF SPUR CITY COUNCIL Tuesday, Aug. 20, 6 p.m., City Hall, 402 N. Burlington Ave., Spur, (806) 271-3316

SOUTH PLAINS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE (SPEC) will have its annual membership meeting, Tuesday, Aug. 20, at the Lubbock Memorial Civic Center, 1501 Mac Davis Lane, Lubbock. Registration will be held 5–6 p.m., dinner served at 5 p.m., and meeting scheduled for 6 p.m. Door prize winners will be announced at 6:30 p.m.

JAYTON-GIRARD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT will have its special public board meeting to discuss the tax rate/budget, Monday, Aug. 26, 6:30 p.m., R.N. Pierce Learning Center, Board Room.

SPUR INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT board meeting, Monday, Aug. 26, 7 p.m., school administration office, 800 Williams Ave., Spur, (806) 271-3272

CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Pandemic relief funds for schools about to end

AUSTIN—Texas public schools received more than \$19 billion in pandemic relief funds over the last four years, but that pipeline of cash will largely end on Sept. 30, The Texas Tribune reported.

That means many Texas schools already struggling with budget deficits will begin the school year with even more serious deficits, especially since the Texas Legislature has not increased base per-student pay since 2019 — a year before the pandemic began.

Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief package in 2020 to help schools deal with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused enrollment declines, teachers exiting the profession and falling test scores. That funding is about to end, with essentially nothing to take its place for many school districts already at the maximum allowed property tax rate.

“It’s not about making up ESSER, because we all knew that was one-time funding,” said La Joya ISD Superintendent Marcey Sorensen. “I just would ask, without getting political whatsoever, that everybody just look in the mirror and say, OK, if we really haven’t provided additional funding since 2019, maybe it’s time that we just give school districts a little bit more of what they need, knowing that kids have different needs now.”

A recent survey conducted by the Texas Association of School Business Officials concluded that out of 313 school districts across the state, nearly 80% reported



deficit budgets or a lack of resources as one of their top challenges.

ABBOTT ORDERS HOSPITALS TO REPORT IMMIGRANT CARE DATA. All Texas hospitals enrolled in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program have been ordered by Gov. Greg Abbott to report costs incurred by treating undocumented immigrants, the Austin American-Statesman reported. In a news release outlining his executive order, Abbott blamed the Biden administration’s border security policies for health care costs related to those immigrants.

“Texans should not have to shoulder the burden of financially supporting medical care for illegal immigrants,” Abbott said.

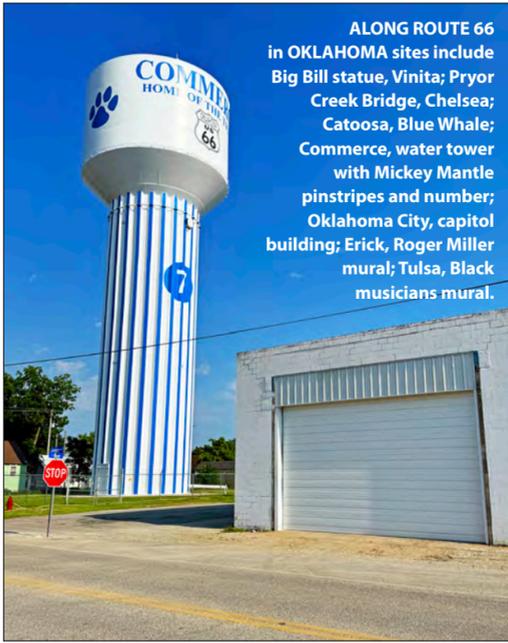
Some Democratic lawmakers criticized the order. State Rep. Gene Wu, D-Austin, posted on X: “Texas has the HIGHEST uninsured healthcare in the nation. Texas has the WORST mental health care in the nation. Texas has one of the worst (mortality) and infant mortality rates in America. But these are the Republicans priorities.”

FIVE MORE COUNTIES ADDED TO DISASTER LIST.

See **ROUTE 66**, page 9

See **CAPITAL**, page 7

SPOTLIGHT ON ROUTE 66 RAMBLE, PART 5



ROUTE 66 FROM PAGE 2

Rally for the Ribbon Road

*Over those Oklahoma hills
Came a newfangled kind of thrill:
A gas-powered transport mode
Folks started calling—"auto-mo-bile."*

For buggy lanes the auto wasn't made—
Cars required new surfaces be laid:
Concrete or macadam, brick or plank,
The price to pave the highway must be paid.

Bean counters for the county checked stockpiles,
Fell short by half, in half a dozen trials . . .
When suddenly one pencil-pusher smiled:
Divide the lane by half, double the miles!

And so, with a solution engineered,
The bureaucrats were happy, drivers cheered:
Fifteen miles of road, just nine feet wide—
The curb was set, the way was cleared.

*Sidewalk highway, ribbon road—
Half the cost and twice the miles;
More than eleven decades old,
Half the width, and twice the smiles.
Patch its blacktop if you must,
Or let it crumble into dust,
Fix it for posterity
Or let it be, just wait and see:*

But do not ruin the Ribbon Road.
Do not ruin our Ribbon Road.

*Rally for our Ribbon Road—
Help us preserve our Ribbon Road.*



PAFFORD, from page 1

that if the guides thought it likely we'd be attacked, they probably wouldn't be walking through the jungle with a couple of yokels from Texas.

To my disappointment, we never did see any tigers or leopards, but we saw lots of peacocks, summer deer and spotted deer, an eagle, quite a few rhinoceroses, including some mother baby pairs, and several rhesus macaque monkeys.

There were two different kinds of crocodiles. We got pretty close to the fish-eaters, but gave the meat-eaters a lot more distance. We saw a rare colorful oriole, several almost fluorescent caterpillars, multitudes of beautiful black and yellow butterflies, and some long, skinny, red-and-black things that looked a little like stink bugs which Caleb was really impressed with.

We never saw any sloth bears, but they apparently have those. We saw a bunch of their dung. They climb up at night and sleep on the wildlife viewing towers.

We had a group jeep safari in the afternoon. Our walking tour had been private. We got to meet several other tourists, which was fun. I got some good tips on visiting Malaysia from a woman who lived in Dubai. Caleb kept a German couple entertained when there were not so

many animals. We didn't see any animals we hadn't seen in the morning, but it was enjoyable and the scenery was brilliant both times.

I got my favorite photo from Chitwan during this jeep safari. We came upon some kids playing a pickup soccer game as we approached town. They were playing "half court" because a rhinoceros was standing there guarding the opposite goal.

When we were selecting the activities our hosts coordinated for us at Chitwan, I had asked for input from Caleb. He had heard me elect to take the group jeep safari over the private one. This alone reduced our cost by \$125! He wanted to see some elephants, but when I asked him which elephant activity he was most interested in, he surprised me by choosing the breeding facility. There was also an "elephant safari," where you actually got to ride the elephant. He had selected the less expensive option out of concern for my budget.

We had completed the items on our agenda and had a sort of "flex" day on our final day in Chitwan. I was fine with taking some of the day to rest, write, and catch up on some work. We had not seen any big cats, though, and we were here in the jungle for just this last day. I asked Caleb if he really would rather have

seen the breeding facility than ride the elephants. Once he said he had just fibbed on that to try to keep my costs down, I proposed doing the elephant safari on our last morning. I didn't expect to see any animals we hadn't seen already. It was low season at Chitwan for a reason. But we could kill two birds with one stone here. We took one last opportunity to see some wildlife and got to ride an elephant!

We didn't see any new animals, but we rode the elephant. It was interesting to see how the driver interacted with her. He nudged her forward by tapping the backs of her ears with his bare feet. He talked to her gently in Nepali, and sometimes offered more crisp commands of some kind. He did have a big stick, but I only saw him tap on the top of her ear with it, rather than using it to strike the animal. We rode around looking at the same

animals for a couple of hours. We passed through bogs, forded a river twice, and swished branches away several times. Once, my water bottle fell to the ground. The elephant picked it back up with her trunk and handed it to the driver, who returned it to me! Once, the driver had to get off to take a break. He remounted by climbing up and over the head of the elephant rather than scaling a ladder and dropping into the basket as we had done.

We enjoyed the rest of the day lounging at our room. We rode the decrepit motel bike here and there. Our host taught Caleb how to play Ludo. I wrote and caught up on work. I hand-washed all my clothes and hung them on a line on the building roof. It as a nice relaxing afternoon. I even ran that day and the next morning. The runs did not feel refreshing, though. It was still very hot in Chitwan. Even at day-



In Chitwan, the Pafford pop and Pafford son took one last opportunity to see some wildlife—and ride an elephant.

break, it was muggy and in the 80s (Fahrenheit). I had quit running due to the heat while we were in the Emirates, Oman and

India, but Sauraha wasn't much better. The important thing was that we had seen the rhinos and ridden the elephant.



HORNED GOALIE Local kids were engaged in a "half-court" soccer game— while a rhinoceros occupied the opposite goal.

**APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE
CURRENTLY ACCEPTED**

DEADLINE: AUGUST 20, 2024 BY 5:30 PM

What is Operation Round Up?

The Operation Round Up program is supported by BCEC members whose electric bills are "Rounded Up" to the nearest dollar. The "Round Up" amounts fund Operation Round Up for distribution to individuals and organizations with demonstrated financial need in the counties we serve: Borden, Fisher, Garza, Haskell, Jones, Kent, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry, Shackelford, Stonewall and Throckmorton.
Every penny stays right here at home.

Who can apply for help?

- Local organizations or programs that provide vital community services, such as food banks, shelters, medical and health needs, rescue organizations, educational projects, childcare programs, and other community needs.
- Families and individuals with demonstrated financial need due to life-altering circumstances are also eligible for assistance.



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