

During fiesta time

San Antonio a sensual delight dancing to strummed guitars

By IRIS SANDERSON JONES

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. — The boatload of mariachis floats slowly down the San Antonio River to the sounds of strumming guitars. Lights hidden high in the cypress trees gleam on the

water, the brass musical instruments and the crowds clapping on either side. This is fiesta time, but it is always daytime here where this narrow river gentles the city within what once were the walls of the Alamo. The river ran through and around the

Alamo when it was one of many missions built along this road by Franciscan monks. It provided water for the men who died and are honored by name there every year when Texans remember the Alamo.

It is the main current of the renovated downtown area now, as crowds stroll the Paseo del Rio across tiny arched bridges to umbrella restaurants on either side.

To visitors from other places, this is a sensual delight. A huge paper rose in a straw hat. A young dancer with ribbons in her hair, swaying on the riverbank.

An English tourist in a striped shirt dancing on the riverwalk. A hat that says "Kiss Me! Hair scattered with confetti from the gaily colored egg shells which are filled with confetti and broken lovingly over the nearest head.

TO BE SENSIBLE about all this, you should plan your stay in San Antonio by day from the top of the Tower of the Americas, built for the 1968 HemisFair.

The tower revolves slowly 750 feet above downtown. The green patch below you is a clump of trees in Alamo Plaza, where the famous Alamo chapel is surrounded by buildings in the center of town.

A few blocks away are the historic streets of La Villita, the restored old city. Directly below your high window is the Institute of Texan Cultures, a remarkable display of diverse cultures shown in a modern domed museum.

There, to the left, is the Mexican Market, where gaily colored pinatas hang high on the walls. And the authentically restored Governor's Palace, a jewel of early Spanish architecture.

As the tower revolves it will inevitably show St. Josky's, officially called the San Fernando Cathedral, which was the geographical and social center of San Antonio until the early 1900s. Unofficially, it is called St. Josky's because now it is surrounded on three sides by Josky's Department Store.



The San Antonio River accommodates all revelers during Fiesta. (Photo by Iris Sanderson Jones)



The four-night, Night in Old San Antonio festivity combines tradition, which dates back to the 1850s, with bowls of hot chile con carne and tortillas. Volunteer chile queens, members of the Conservation Society, serve up the spicy specialties.

Beyond the city center, on the edge of your horizon, is the Brackenridge Park with its zoo and sunken gardens, and the Lone Star Brewery Hall of Hops, Fins and Feathers.

There is also an unusual landscape experiment called Los Patios. Here, trees grow out of courtyards and hang over rooftops into a green splendor of wild gardens.

Los Patios began as a commercial landscape sales center, but it was so attractive that the owners were persuaded to add restaurants and boutiques. They did so without spoiling the environment.

While you are high above the city, search out the Mission Trail that will lead you back to the early days of mission life in America.

THE SPANISH MISSIONS followed the 17th century conquistadores into Texas, building five missions designed to bring Christianity to the Indians.

The most famous as a present-day tourist site is Mission San Jose, a state and national historic site that raises its old stone tower above the trees across the street from a gas station.

The restored compound includes Indian quarters, grist mill and craft shops built into the wall around the church.

About a mile away is Mission Concepcion, the oldest unrestored church in the United States. Only church structures remain at Mission San Juan Capistrano and Mission San Francisco de la Espada.

The fifth mission is Mission San Antonio de Valero, the site of San Antonio city and known now under a later name, the Alamo. The Alamo is the site of the only solemn moment during the annual spring Fiesta here.

During the pilgrimage to the Alamo, flowers are piled on the small patch of grass in front of the chapel while a narrator reads the name of every man who

died there during the famous battle.

A multi-media presentation and other displays can be seen in nearby buildings but the essence is here in this small building with the distinctive roofline. Here Colonel Travis, who disobeyed orders to blow up the Alamo and retreat, drew a line in the sand and invited his troops to join him in a hopeless battle.

The narrator's voice reads: "Davy Crockett of Tennessee. . . Jim Bowie of Tennessee. . . John, a negro. . ." ending with the inevitable final words: "Remember the Alamo."

The Alamo is only a block from the river. Lift your head and listen. River sounds pick up. The dimmer boats are floating down the network of waterways, candles flickering. They disappear to the sound of Mexican music around the natural bend of the river and the man-made canal that leads to HemisFair Plaza.

It's not all fame and fortune and sun

Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a travel filmmaker, one who shows films to audiences nationwide? Ken Lawrence of Pontiac will tell you that it's great fun, as long as you don't have to eat too much.

Like most romantic-sounding jobs, it has a price. Ken got into broadcasting during his Air Force years in Savannah, Ga., and has been a broadcaster for stations all over the country.

He spent 10 years as a television anchorman, and his voice was previously heard over the radio in Port Huron and Marine City and over the television airwaves in Lansing and Bay City.

"In Bay City, I invented a half-hour, two-man news program long before Huntley and Brinkley came along," he says. "The station manager took it off because he said nobody would watch a program like that."

It was during his first trip to Europe that Ken began to long for a traveling life. He was shooting pictures with an Instamatic at the time, but he decided to do better.

With a lot of self-tutoring and a little help from his technically proficient friends, he bought a 16mm Canon Scoopic movie camera and went to work.

He now has three full-length travel films that he shows to civic and social groups throughout the country. The films are about Michigan, Austria and Britain.

"My first booking was in La Fox, Illinois," Ken says. "I was hired by the Friends Bible College, which operates out of a cornfield there."

"I was very nervous and I got more nervous when I faced an audience of 300 high school students and realized that they were adherents of a fundamentalist religion and I would probably have to be careful about what I said."

He had one slightly risqué joke, which he toned down. The audience gave him a standing ovation and his career was launched.

That's the good news. For those of you who are now ready to rush out and join the traveling filmmaker's business, Ken wants to tell you the rest.

"There is no way I can make a living from this, much as I'd love to," he says. "I get 10 bookings a year, and I would need 30 to survive at a basic level."

"It's a very difficult business to break into at the ground level."

AS A TRAVEL WRITER, I have noticed that travel-related jobs bring out the envy in my friends. They all want to know how to get into the business.

TRAVEL LOG of Iris Jones



I have a very simple answer: do what Ken Lawrence did. Quit your job. Spend years learning your trade and building up clients. Then live off what you can earn.

The grass is always greener on the other side of the world.

FROM THE MAILBAG

MICHIGAN ARTRAIN has been in Livonia for a week and will be open today and tomorrow, May 14 and 15, at the railway siding on Industrial Drive and Levan, one block south of the Jeffries Freeway.

From there it moves to the campus of St. Mary's College, Orchard Lake Road south of Commerce Road, in Orchard Lake from May 19-27. If you have never seen this marvelous train, which brings an art museum and artists to the public throughout Michigan, see it now.

Travelers from around the United States have visited it during its many outstate and instate tours.

FOOTBALL FANS may be interested in an unusual travel package being offered by American Airlines. American will take 20 players from the New York Jets to Puerto Rico in June, and you are invited to join them.

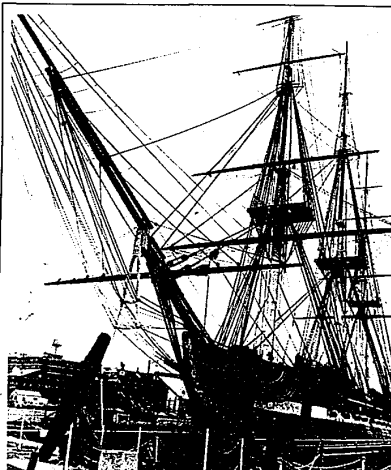
The package includes round-trip transportation, hotel, and most meals for \$475 (five days, four nights) or \$699 (eight days, seven nights).

Participants can sign up for a one-day golf tournament. Otherwise they will meet and mingle with their gridiron favorites.

"SUMMER FEST '79," a booklet of summertime events in this area, is being offered now by the Southeast Michigan Travel and Tourist Association.

It lists festivals, sailing events, guided tours and daily scheduled events along with the phone numbers of sponsoring organizations.

The free brochure is available from the association at the American Center Building, Suite 350, Southfield 48034.



Master of the draw

The USS Constitution, known as Old Ironsides, is the Navy's oldest commissioned ship and Boston's number-one drawing card, with 30,000 people stopping by annually. The mainmast of the frigate is 220 feet tall. The ship is berthed near the spot where the British troops landed during the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. The ship earned its nickname because cannon balls bounced off her thick live oak planking.

Monumental attractions

Thousands of tourists yearly include a visit to the Arlington National Cemetery in their vacation plans. Yet such attractions as the John F. Kennedy gravesite or the Lincoln Memorial are not unique to the nation's capital.

Hundreds of equally interesting memorials to famous persons in history are located around the country. To find them:

• Local libraries have books on historical sites in cities you will visit. Folders from travel agencies and regional travel guide books often include interesting monument sites.

• A monument retailer or cemetery manager will usually know of any

interesting monuments in the cities or areas you will visit.

• Once a destination is decided upon, write or visit the tourist center in each state on your route.

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