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## Faces of Texas

Quite a long time ago, when my family lived in one of the New York City suburbs and I worked downtown, I was in charge of a litigation file involving an inventor in Lubbock, Texas. He was suing my employer over a contract relating to his fertilizer pump that had shown real promise in theory but had failed all field trials. The law firm engaged to defend us was in Amarillo, a neighboring town in the Texas "Panhandle," where I expected to find little culture or entertainment. Shortly after arriving at my motel from the airport, the telephone rang and the firm's senior partner asked me if I could join him, his wife and four other people for dinner followed by a symphony concert if I were interested. I remember that evening vividly. We did not talk "shop." The conversation was lively but the participants were thoughtful and considerate. An atmosphere of true hospitality prevailed which it would be difficult to find anywhere. And the concert by the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra was both enjoyable and very professional. Recently, I checked the ensemble on the Internet and found that it was still in business. They had not stood still in Amarillo; a classical quartet had been created that presents concerts in various area neighborhoods. Were my reception and the cultural opportunities typical of Texas? Not necessarily, but they were real.

There are of course other "faces" as well. I have visited Austin, Dallas, Houston, and Galveston and am able to report that there are many pickup trucks in parking lots with racks for shotguns in the ceiling of the cabs where usually a weapon can be found. The more well to do often wear fancy boots, expensive hats and large belt buckles as if they had just rolled in from inspecting their herds. Texas was really part of the "Wild West" and was a short-lived independent nation from 1836 until 1846 before it joined the United States. Staking out claims and drilling for oil is a tough and often dangerous business and does not generally attract persons of refinement and sensitivity. The same thing can be said for ranching in a harsh climate. Any one who denies that Texas has many influential and rich people who are also tough and ruthless has his head buried in a pile of sagebrush.

But how about the "core purpose" of the University of Texas: "to transform lives for the benefit of society through the core values of learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity and responsibility." The UT main campus is at Austin with 48,000 students, 2,700 faculty members, and 17,000 other employees. The President, Dr. Larry Faulkner, is a chemist, researcher and inventor who has taught at Harvard and was the Provost at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. No published information on the size of his belt buckle is

available, but I would bet that it is not larger than the one worn by the editor of this website. Former governor Ann Richards appeared often in public without any belt buckle at all. But the Yin and the Yang regarding Texas can go on forever. For a U.S. Representative in Congress who cheers the decision to call French Fries, "Freedom Fries," there is the hilarious left-of-center essayist, Molly Ivins. For the record number of persons on death row executed in Texas there is the Grand Opera and the world-famous M.D. Anderson Medical Center (both in Houston) and so on ad infinitum. How many faces does Texas really have? 19 million give or take a few thousand. As for dominant threads in the leadership, I would say there are the Belt Buckle crowd and the other kind of leadership that is more internationalist and interested in the "common weal" — the welfare of a society as a whole. Nothing illustrates this better than the approaches of President Lyndon Johnson and President George W. Bush, two Texas chief executives.

Lyndon Johnson was born in 1908 in southwest Texas, a relatively arid area where agriculture, the main occupation, had trouble surviving. His family was politically "connected," but money was scarce and the future president had to work his way through college. He did this by teaching in a rural school and later in a Houston High School mostly attended by Mexican-American students. The poverty of many of his students made a profound and lasting impression on him, while leaving him with a lifetime bond with the Mexican-American population of his native State. His first job was with the National Youth Administration, a New Deal Agency which was charged with bringing young people and jobs together. After that he became secretary to the local Congressman and later was elected as a U. S. Representative himself, Senator from Texas, Majority leader, Vice-President, and on the death of President Kennedy, President. Shortly thereafter, in the aftermath of the assassination, he was able to pilot the first Civil Rights bill in a hundred years through Congress. He was the proponent of the concept of a "Great Society" which was to afford all citizens a chance of success. Some of the programs inaugurated at that time were successful, others were not. But he never had an opportunity to guide the process and fulfill his vision, because the Viet Nam War ruined him and his presidency. In one of the great ironies of the 20th century, his successor, President Nixon and Mr. Nixon's chief advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger kept the War going for so long that more Vietnamese and Americans were killed before the United States withdrew than had lost their lives during the Johnson administration.

President George W. Bush was born in Connecticut in 1946, but his claim to be a Texan is legitimate as he lived in the State most of his life and was twice elected governor. He is the grandson of Prescott Bush, a highly regarded Senator from Connecticut, and the son of another President, George H. Bush (1989-93). His family was well to do and he attended and graduated from Yale College and the Harvard Business School. From the beginning of his presidency, the current President has worked energetically and intelligently on behalf of the rich and very rich in the United States. This is reflected in his military procurement decisions and attacks on the Estate Tax and the Corporate Dividend Tax. His large across-the board income tax cuts not only benefited wealthy taxpayers the most, but also reduced the revenue of the individual States and are having a negative effect on numerous State programs including education, health care for the "medically indigent," and welfare. The effect on his presidency of the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, cannot be overestimated. He rallied the troops and the entire country. A grateful nation has given him wide discretion to take steps unthinkable earlier, under the banner of "security." Whereas his political friend, Prime Minister, Tony Blair is being excoriated in Great Britain over the dubious intelligence justifying the occupation of Iraq, Americans are brushing off the same information. The tough, unilateral approach to international affairs and its consequences will be tested in the 2004 election. No informed observer is willing to predict the outcome, but most would agree that George W. Bush is not a conservative at all, but the most radical president since Andrew Jackson.

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