

The Texas Folklore Society collects, preserves, and shares the practices and customs of the people of Texas and the Southwest.



A Big Texas WELCOME to Kristina Downs

Folklorist Dr. Kristina Downs joins Texas Folklore Society as Secretary–Editor/Executive Director. She will also serve as an assistant professor in the Department of English and Languages in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts at Tarleton State University.

“I am very excited to join the Texas Folklore Society and can’t wait to meet the TFS community! Texas has an especially rich and diverse folk culture and I look forward to helping to bring attention to folklore throughout the state,” said Dr. Downs.

In addition to teaching folklore classes, she will help expand the partnership of TFS and Tarleton, including realization of plans for programing and outreach. Dr. Eric Morrow, Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts shared, “In welcoming Dr. Downs to this leadership role, we are moving forward in our partnership with the Texas Folklore Society.”

THANK YOU, Fran

by **Phyllis Bridges**, past-president

As the Texas Folklore Society (TFS) welcomes our new leader, Dr. Kristina Downs, it is an appropriate time for us to honor **Dr. Frances Brannen Vick (Fran)** and to express thanks for her exemplary dedication to the Society.

Fran Vick holds the rarest of recognitions of TFS—the honor of being named a Fellow of our Society. Her contributions are legendary. She has been a longtime member of the board, and she accepted the challenge to step in as Secretary–Editor/Executive Director at the request of the board during the transition period. Through the pandemic **Fran** kept the publications on track and helped guide the board in planning for the future.

Fran is a native Texan and proud of it. She holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin (BA), Stephen F. Austin (MA) and the honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at University of North Texas (UNT). She was a close friend and associate of past-Secretary–Editor **Dr. Francis Edward Abernethy**, and the two worked together for the benefit of TFS through decades. She brought to the role of Secretary–Editor/Executive Director deep experience in publishing with over 200 books to her credit, many of which achieved state and national honors. She is author or co-author of many books on Texas subjects herself, and those have received high praise. She was the founder of E-heart Press and co-founder of the University of North Texas Press, and served as Executive Director of the UNT Press until her retirement. She is a member of the Advancement Board of Texas A&M Press. She has been a member and leader of the Texas Philosophical Society, Texas State Historical Association (honored as a Fellow of TSHA), Leadership Texas, Texas Institute of Letters, Development Board of the University of Texas, the TWU Jane Nelson Leadership Institute for Women, and other academic and philanthropic groups.

Fran’s first book for TFS was the 1979 volume *Built in Texas*. Members will recall with gratitude her 2015 book *Tales of Texas Cooking*, which exceeded sales expectations and was well received by the public. Since upcoming publications are already in the works, we will benefit from her expertise over the next few years.

We are deeply grateful to **Fran** for the contributions to the Society. She is a true treasure and greatly appreciate her love for and dedication to Texas Folklore Society.



Fran Vick



The epic pandemic may have disrupted our annual meeting schedules (2020 San Antonio and 2021 Granbury) but our society's membership is a family made up of storytellers, educators, historians, and darn good writers and listeners who share a cultural interest in Texas. These two stories share some of that flavor. Enjoy!

& Angels RASCALS

Under the Influence

by **Jack** and **Elizabeth Duncan**



Jack and Elizabeth Duncan — Then & Now

Paisanos have been saying for a while that TFS Annual Meetings are like a family reunion where only the good cousins come. There are angels and rascals among us; we are precious to each other, and always arrive with big smiles and leave with hugs and promises to see each other next year. The Covid year has been difficult—two meetings missed, members lost, in the middle of trying to relocate and revamp. Several years ago, **Jack** wrote an article called “Under the Influence,” about our experiences with TFS since 1970; here’s a small sample:

At Wimberley, Elizabeth and I were amazed at the quality and diversity of the presentations. Three, in particular, were especially impressive and remain vivid and memorable nearly four decades later. **Sylvia Grider’s** paper about a horrendous Depression-era dust storm in the Texas Panhandle was graphic, and **James Ward Lee’s** talk about attending a fundamentalist brush arbor revival as a child in Alabama was hilarious and insightful. Our overall favorite, though, was **Sid Cox’s** beautifully textured saga of his family’s home place. Sid humbly prefaced his presentation by saying that fifteen or twenty minutes of the audience’s time represented “high wages” for him and a profound honor

... Those three papers and others “hooked” us, and we knew we would be back.

We also were very impressed by **John Lomax’s** *a capella* singing of religious and folk songs. Later we would learn that John was a son of **John Avery Lomax** who traveled

the South in the 1930s, recording songs by prison inmates such as folk and blues musician “Lead Belly” (Huddie William Ledbetter). . .

Also among those present at the Wimberley meeting were **Bertha Dobie** (J. Frank Dobie’s widow), **Martha Emmons**, and **Mody Boatright**. As a fundraiser, the Society raffled off a commemorative quilt made by **Loraine Anderson**. **Sylvia Grider** won it, and folksinger/novelist/attorney **Hermes Nye** asked Sylvia if that was the first time she had ever taken a chance on a quilt.*

To find a group with common interest in folklore was a boon for us. They helped direct our then-undefined interests in how we celebrate, how we grieve, what music we like, what stories we pass on, how we cook, what jokes we tell, what we believe, and where all that came from.

We celebrate the places we’ve been and the people we’ve known. We treasure the welcome we received back in 1970, friendships we developed, encouragement and assistance. We’ve both been privileged to serve as local arrangers, as members of the board, as program chair and as president. We appreciate the new blood that keeps us engaged and moving forward. And, of course, we enthusiastically look forward to our next publication and our next Annual Meeting.

**Celebrating 100 Years of the Texas Folklore Society 1909-2009*, edited by Kenneth L. Untiedt, PTFS LXVI (Denton: UNT Press, 2009), pp. 367-381.

.. In So Many Words

PERSIMMONS in Texas

by **MM Pack**

A version of this article was previously published in Edible Austin magazine, Nov. 2010.

*Possum up a 'simmon tree, raccoon on the ground,
Raccoon said, 'you son of a gun, shake them 'simmons down! —
American folk song **

Possums, raccoons, squirrels, deer, insects, and humans—everyone's crazy for ripe persimmons in the fall. Astringently inedible before ripening, these tree fruits (actually large berries) turn into juicy globes of complex sweetness once the weather turns cool. Wild critters enjoy them just as they are, but we who have kitchens get busy turning them into seasonal puddings, salads, sauces, jams, breads, and pastries. Early American settlers used persimmons to make wine, beer, and vinegar.

Members of the ebony family, 450 persimmon varieties grow across the globe, primarily in the tropics. Only two are native to North America and, lucky for us, both grow in Texas. Various Asian persimmons (originating in China) have been naturalized in the US since the 19th century; these grow pretty well in Texas, too.

Native American Persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*) bear small, dark purplish-orange fruits; they're indigenous to the southeast quadrant of the US and into East Texas as far west as the Colorado River. These persimmons were an important nutritional source for Native Americans; the word comes from the Algonquin pessamin, meaning chokefruit. In 1612, Captain John Smith of Virginia wrote, "If it be not ripe it will draw a man's mouth awrie, with much torment, but when it is ripe, it is as delicious as an Apricock."

Naturalist painter John James Audubon departed from his better-known bird paintings to capture two Virginia opossums picking ripe persimmons on bare branches in his collection *Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America* (1849-1854).

Closer to home on the Gulf Coast, Atakapa tribes called this fruit piakamine; early French settlers adapted it to plaque-mine (as in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish). Elias Wightman, a surveyor for Stephen F. Austin in the 1820s, documented persimmon groves in southeast Texas "which bear that excellent fruit only excelled in flavor and sweetness by the fig."

Native Texas Persimmons (*Diospyros texana*) are resilient, graceful trees found from northern Mexico to Central Texas.



Native Texas Persimmon fruit (left) & 500-year-old Texas/Mexican Tree which bears a small black fruit, Barton Hills Neighborhood in Austin.

Extremely drought-resistant, they grow 15-20 feet tall and produce inch-long black fruits filled with seeds. German settler Viktor Bracht wrote in his book *Texas* in 1848, "The black persimmon is a medlar-like bush that is common. A tasty preserve may be made from it. Eaten fresh, the fruit has a mild, sweet taste."

A black dye can be made from Native Texas Persimmon fruit; this has been used in Mexico to dye animal hides. For indigenous peoples, the fruit and bark had various medicinal applications, like treating mouth sores, hemorrhoids, and heartburn. The extremely hard wood has been used for digging sticks, tool handles, and lathe products. Today, the trees' curvy trunks, decorative peeling bark, and minimal water requirements make them attractive for urban landscapes.

Naturalized Asian Persimmons (*Diospyros kaki*) have larger fruits than the native varieties and are cultivated for commercial purposes. Most common are the round Fuyu, eaten raw and crunchy like an apple, and Hachiya, edible only when soft and gelatinous. Both turn gorgeously red-orange when ripe.

In Texas, both Native American and naturalized Asian persimmons are available in late fall in farmers' markets; there are also a few pick-your-own orchards around the state. Ripe persimmons should be eaten or processed within a few days; the ones not quite ready will ripen in the refrigerator.

Except for dishes made with fresh Fuyus, most persimmon recipes call for pulp. One way to make pulp is to simmer ripe fruit 5-10 minutes in a heavy saucepan over low heat with a little water. When skins burst, cool the pulp and strain to remove seeds and skins. Keep pulp in the fridge for making persimmon treats, or freeze it for later.

*—American folk song, Alan Lomax, *The Folk Songs of North America: in the English Language*, Doubleday & Company, 1960.



MM Pack writes about food and cooks for a living. But some days she'd rather be reading.

REFLECTIONS

Storytelling, Vittles, Songs, & Words of J. Frank Dobie



Norma Cantú



Some the TFS member fans in attendance

Embers glowing, Chili con Carne bubbling, and the words of **J. Frank Dobie** filling the air make a unique literary event celebrating folklore, literature, and storytelling of Texas and the Southwest. Dobie Dichos has been recognized by *The New York Times* as being one of “the” events to attend in Texas. Imagine a rustic stage in the bed of a 1942 International Truck surrounded by—and beneath a canopy of—mesquite trees and a Texas sky. Authors and storytellers influenced by **J. Frank Dobie** are invited each year to participate in the event. They read/tell a story from one of Dobie’s works or read/tell a piece inspired by his works.

Dobie Dichos™ takes place at the original Live Oak County Jail grounds at Oakville, Texas, near George West (south of San Antonio). The event began as a George West Storyfest pre-festival event and although the Storyfest is no longer, Dobie Dichos is now an entity of its own. Since 2011, Texas Folklore Society (TFS) past president **Mary Margaret Campbell** has served as the executive director of the event.

Live Oak County’s most famous son and the TFS Secretary–Editor for two decades in the ’20s and ’30s, internationally known Texas author, University of Texas professor and 1961 TFS Fellow **J. Frank Dobie** was noted as a collector of stories of the folk and writer of those stories. For those who are new to the TFS, **J. Frank Dobie** was responsible for taking the TFS to national acclaim with his writings.

Dobie Dichos is a special night for taking a moment to embrace excerpts of words inspired by **Dobie**. TFS members who have participated as storytellers include **Scott Bumgardner, Mary Locke Crofts, Robert Flynn, Lee Haile, Donna Ingham, Mary Grace Ketner, Fran Vick, and Lucy Fischer-West**.

In spite of the pandemic, the gathering in 2020 included the following TFS members: musical performer **Lee Haile**, speaker **Steven L. Davis**, and Dobie storytellers **Donna Ingham** and **Norma Cantú**. Also in attendance were TFS members **Maria** and **Scott Bumgardner, Glen Chappell, Jerry Ingham, Mary Fogel, Jerry Ingham, Lori Najvar, Sylvia and Rollo Newsom, David Orton, J. Michael Sullivan** and his children. We all did have a great time!

At Dobie Dichos we reclaim a timeless heritage as we gather round the campfire, swapping stories and summoning J. Frank Dobie’s spirit out of the smoke.

— **Steven L. Davis**, author/curator of the Wittliff Collection at Texas State University.

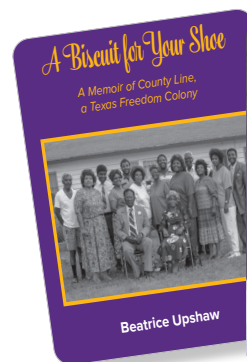
Attending the magical Dobie Dichos evening with some of my Austin students and a San Antonio poet friend was one of the literary highlights of my recent years in Texas. All readings were stunning and transporting, and will change the way you think about J. Frank Dobie and our state forever. I urge everyone who can make it to attend!”

— Naomi Shihab Nye, poet/author/professor at Trinity University.

Texas Folklore Society is a proud sponsor of this special event. Join us **Fri., Nov. 5.** and be a part of our efforts to invite and enroll new members. See you in Live Oak!

For more details: www.dobiedichos.com and on **Facebook**.

Beatrice Upshaw



Beatrice Upshaw

On February 26, Tarleton State University Department of English hosted **Beatrice Upshaw**, author of *A Biscuit for Your Shoe*, PTFS 2020. After a discussion about the book, students, staff, and faculty were able to ask questions of the author. A previously scheduled book signing event was postponed by rising COVID-19 cases, but we hope to reschedule the event in coming months with **Beatrice Upshaw, Richard Orton**, teaming up at Victor Morrison’s venue Uncle Doug’s BBQ in Douglass, Texas. Be sure to watch for this and more opportunities to meet the author. Members received this publication in 2020. Learn more about the book and about how to get a copy: www.texasfolkloresociety.org/publications/Our-Books/

Ken Untiedt



January 2021, **Scott Hill Bumgardner** (rt) presented a custom wooden plaque to **Kenneth L. Untiedt** (lt) for his leadership and service as Texas Folklore Society’s Secretary–Editor for the years 2004–2020.

MEMBERSHIP

Invite a Friend

This is the only organization that you join and attend because you want to. You expect no professional advancements from it; you have no political axe to grind. You are not pressured

—J. Frank Dobie, ca. 1925, Editor

Remember, you can request brochures or direct future members to the website. You can also volunteer at many of the future events when TFS participates.



I joined the TFS on a whim in the early 80s, but stayed all these years on purpose. I joined the TFS when I heard that members annually received a new hardback book on Texas “free” just by paying dues that were less than the cost of a book. I was infatuated with the first several “free” books I got! A year or so later mostly on a whim, I went to check-out the annual meeting that was being held nearby. I was, intrigued by the presentations, enjoyed the banquet, immediately addicted to the hootenanny and overwhelmed by the friendly welcome. I have not missed a meeting since.

—Rollo K. Newsom



GOIN' DOWN THE ROAD

Current Texas Events

Have an event to share? Please submit to:
TexasFolkloreSociety@gmail.com
 Texas Folklore Society 2022 Annual Meeting details will be announced soon!



Sylvia & Rollo Newsom enjoying the Dobie Dichos evening.

- Food for the Soul** • June 11 • noon–2 • 110 West Barnett Street, Kerrville
- Juneteenth Celebrations** • June 19 • check your local community event calendar
- Billy the Kid Breakout Show** • June 20 • El Paso
- 33rd Annual National Cowboy Symposium** • Sept 10–12 • Lubbock
- Texas Outdoor Musical** • May 29–Aug 14 • Palo Duro Canyon State Park
- East Texas Historical Association 2021 Fall Meeting** • Oct 15–16 • Nacogdoches
- Westfest** • Sept 3–5 • West
- Texas Heritage Days** • Sept 26–27 • Schreiner University, Kerrville
- Kerrville Folk Festival** • Oct 1–11 • Quiet Valley Ranch, near Kerrville
- 2021 Texas Book Festival** • VIRTUAL Oct 25–28 OUTDOOR sessions • Oct 30–31 • Austin
- Dobie Dichos** • Nov 5 • Oakville
- WurstFest** • Nov 5–14 • New Braunfels
- Candlelight @ the Ranch** • Dec 12–Jan 3 • National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock
- Texas State Historical Assoc. 126th Annual Meeting** • Feb 24–26, 2022, Austin
- Texas Folklore Society 104th Annual Meeting** • April 14–16, 2022 • Granbury

Folklore Society Adventures

by **Frances B. Vick**

In going through some files, I ran across copies of old speeches I had made about my publishing adventures. One of them was a speech I made when *The Dallas Morning News* published a piece in the High Profile section about **F. E. Abernethy**. I was quoted as saying that everyone has an **Ab** story to tell and my **Ab** story is a rather long one. It is how I got into publishing and came to publish Texas Folklore Society books. Here is that story. [Read more on TexasFolkloreSociety.Org](https://www.texasfolkloresociety.org)