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Radio Post

A Landmark Book

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Becky Crouch Patterson delivers new book on mystique of famed Luckenbach

BY: KEN ESTEN COOKE

"I wanted Luckenbach for the same reason a dog buries a bone. So no other dog'll get it." – Hondo Crouch, "Mayor" of Luckenbach

Even as popular as Luckenbach Texas is 'round these parts, "The world awaits the wider discovery of Hondo and his Luckenbach vision. He never glorified what he so nimbly and grandly achieved there."

Those were the words of John Phillip Santos in the foreword to Becky Crouch Patterson's new book, "Luckenbach Texas: The Center of the Universe."

Crouch is one of the daughters of the late mirth-maker and legend who presided over the town that became world famous from Waylon and Willie's hit, "Luckenbach Texas: Back to the Basics of Love." The book covers in colorful detail the years her father bought the property and turned it into a historic music venue.

"This rounds out a trilogy which started a while ago," Crouch Patterson said. Her book "Hondo: My Father" was released in 1979. In 2012, "The Ranch That Was Us" described the family, ranch hands and tough Germans who settled the area.

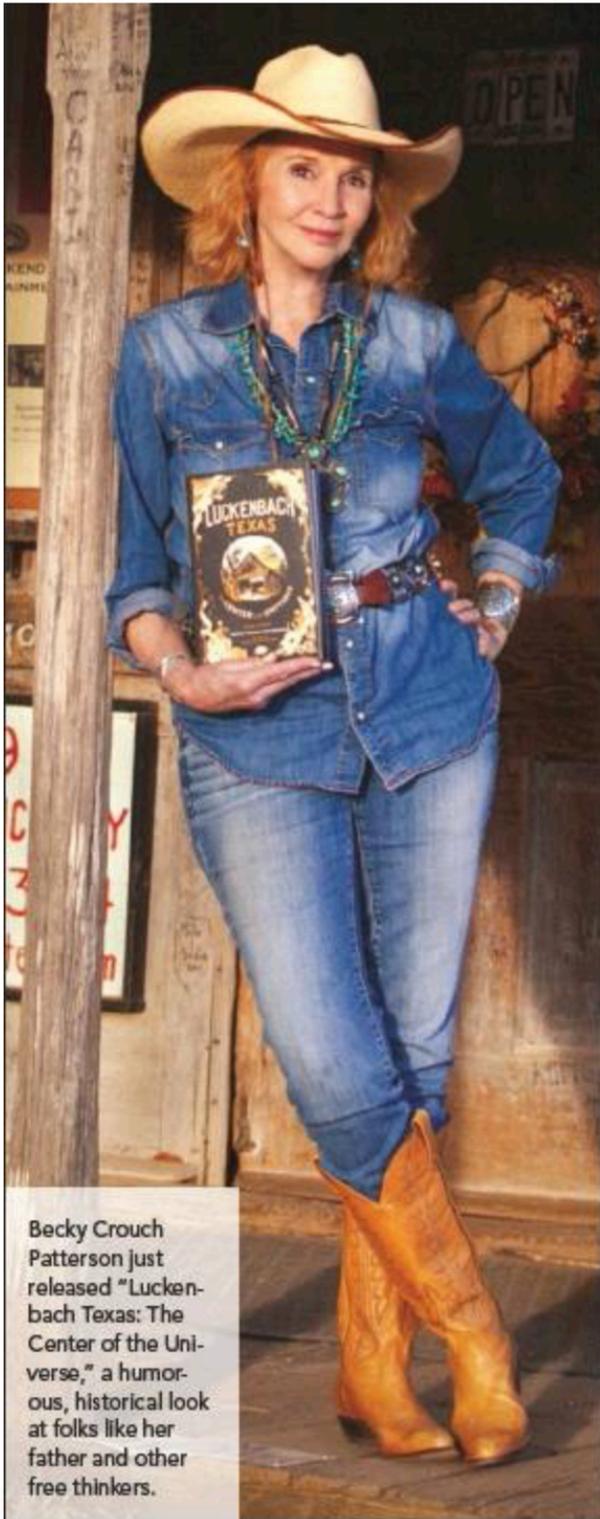
Now comes Luckenbach, which got its seeds from the Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville asking Crouch Patterson to pen a book about the famous stop in the road. (The museum already has a door from Luckenbach which it will display for three years.)

"I wanted the book to feature the years in the 1970s when my father owned it, because the people who were there were extremely creative," Crouch Patterson said.

And Patterson knows. She delves into Luckenbach as being part of the Pinta Trail used by the Spaniards in the 1700s. Then she records Hondo's and partner Guich Kooch's geographical math in proclaiming Luckenbach "the center of the universe" by using a string wrapped around the globe to prove it on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show." ("This discovery was the result of a science project of the Luckenbach boy who'd been in junior high the longest, and this is what he came up with.")

She goes into the importance of the German Texans, which even the cover art pays tribute to. There were inventors like aviator Jacob Brodbeck, Imagineers, such as Hondo himself, music makers, like any number who graced the stages, and Peacemakers, which German-Texans took pride in with deference to Penateka Comanche tribe and to the Unionists.

The group who emigrated to Texas in the 1850s around Luckenbach were the free-thinker movement — not so much those who settled in Fredericksburg. These were intellectuals who held discussions in Latin and whose populations centered around Comfort, Sisterdale and Luckenbach.



Becky Crouch Patterson just released "Luckenbach Texas: The Center of the Universe," a humorous, historical look at folks like her father and other free thinkers.

“These were persecuted intellectuals in Germany and they wanted a utopian democratic society,” she said. “They couldn’t have come to Texas at a worse time. They were Unionists and anti-slavery. Some of these little towns didn’t grow for losing their men to Confederate vigilantes.”

She compares the free thinker settlers to the drivers of the “outlaw country music” movement in the 1970s. “The book is also about outlaw musicians because these are more artists, poets and songwriters. These are stories of the rule-breakers and people who colored outside the lines,” Crouch Patterson said. “The creatives.”

Hondo

And most of the book is much more light-hearted, given her father’s gift for gab and for comedy. (He once upstaged Bob Hope at a comedy show.)

“He had an incredible sense of humor and he was a folk hero through his writings, antics and gift for publicity,” she said. After Hondo’s death in 1976, Luckenbach began to grow even more in legend. The song meant constant people from all over the globe took pilgrimages to the tiny place to “get back to the basics.”

Today, the tiny town is as iconic as the Dallas Cowboys or Lone Star beer. “Jerry Jeff Walker’s ‘¡Viva Terlingua!’ album was really a turning point in outlaw music,” she said. “Before that, the town barely had electricity. Then Gary P. Nunn recorded his ‘London Homesick Blues’ there, which became a Texan anthem.”

Then there were Willie’s picnics and the biggest pickers’ circle ever organized, with more than 1,900 singers joining in on the ballad that made the place a huge export and a record in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Still, Hondo’s presence was felt long after his passing (and still is).

“He was the king of making insignificant things significant,” she said. “We were in awe of him. We didn’t even call him ‘Dad,’ we called him ‘Hondo.’”

She recounts how if he were to bring home a new pickup truck for the family, he would make a game out of them finding it by following a long string around trees and buildings and down the trail before they saw their new truck.

He also would prank visitors (and his own kids). On a hunting trip with his children, he asked son Juan to hand him his BB gun because he had seen a deer. He fired once, then got the children to follow him to a downed deer, which, unbeknownst to them, he had felled earlier and planted.

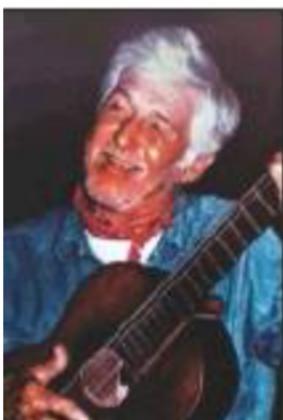
He did the same thing with “city slicker” visitors by planting arrowheads which he would find with ease. When he pointed them out for his visitors to pick up, there would be a price tag on them.

“That was Hondo. He was theater in the public — not on stage,” she said. “I’m *still* hearing Hondo stories that are unbelievable.”

She said the cover design was done by Backstage Graphics – Grammy Award winners for Texas music art – which incorporated the facets of Luckenbach.

“People call the book historical and hysterical,” Crouch Patterson said. Her father Hondo called Luckenbach “a state of mind.”

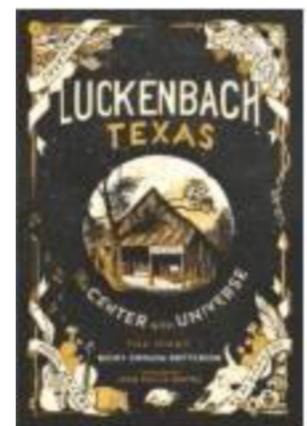
“It’s a landmark book,” she said. “Everyone wants to know three things: Who was Hondo Crouch; Is Luckenbach even a real town; and Where the hell is Luckenbach?”



Inspiration was found in Patterson’s father, Hondo Crouch, the Mayor of Luckenbach. The book is the third in a trio about Hondo, Hill Country Life



AUTHOR WEBSITE
www.beckycrouchpatterson.com



Available at Pioneer Museum, Luckenbach on Main and Texas Jack Wild West Outfitter. Online at Amazon.com.

Like everybody else, I loved Hondo and remember him reciting "Luckenbach Moon". I wish everybody could've heard him do that. I was lucky. I did. – Willie Nelson

Singing "London Homesick Blues" for the first time at Luckenbach during the recording of "Viva Terlingua" was the highlight of my career. – Gary P. Nunn

Drive to Luckenbach. Step into another time. I can't think of another place like it. – Jerry Jeff Walker

Luckenbach is still a small unpretentious place, but it's big in my mind's eye because of what happened there. – Freddy Krc, Gonzo Compadres Band

You don't have to worry about going over in Luckenbach. The people there have perfected hanging out. It's more like a theatre. It has a deep sense of integrity about it. – Ray Wylie Hubbard

Hondo was the Sunday Mayor of Luckenbach and the Grand Imagineer. He was so easy to remember, like some song you can't unlearn. – Charles John Quarto

I went to Luckenbach to get 'Back to the Basics'. – Miranda Lambert

I like what Hondo said about himself: that he was a "legend in his own mind." Hondo Crouch is definitely a Texas Legend, in the minds of countless admirers. – James A. Michener

Hondo was a culture all his own. – Gordon Fowler, son of Chili Entrepreneur Wick Fowler

Previous Publications

- *The Ranch That Was Us* – Texas Book Festival 2012; San Antonio Book Festival 2012
- *Hondo My Father*

Awards

- San Antonio Express News Artist of the Year
- Outstanding Women of America
- Comfort Heritage Foundation Award for *The Ranch That Was Us*

Marketing

- Regional broadcast and print publicity campaign
- Advance distribution to reviewers, bloggers, journalists, booksellers, libraries and the media
- Author talks and signings at bookstores, select retailers and libraries across Texas, private events
- Book is available at bookstores throughout the state of Texas, Luckenbach General Store, Luckenbach on Main, and online at <http://www.luckenbachtexas.com>, <https://www.beckycrouchpatterson.com>, and www.amazon.com.
- Author website: <https://www.beckycrouchpatterson.com>
- Author's Facebook page has over 3,000 followers (@beckycrouchpatterson)

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