



NORTH UNIVERSITY
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION



Dear NUNA neighbors,

When I said, “I will do it for a year,” there was a palpable sense of relief on Michael Riley’s face! I had felt the same relief three years earlier when Michael said, “Yes.” to becoming President. Later, when I got home and told Judy that I had just volunteered to be the President of NUNA for another year, she said, “Are you mad?” Probably, but just a tad...

I moved to NUNA in 1981. It is home. I welcome the latest opportunity to give back. NUNA is NUNA because of you. NUNA thrives because neighbors are willing to spend time volunteering, solving challenges, organizing events, serving on committees and so much more. More importantly we need your knowledge and expertise.

Michael Riley has toiled as President for the past three years. Under his savvy leadership, NUNA has thrived. The NUNA residential parking program expanded east of Speedway. The HONK ATX festival has taken root and become an energizing part of our community. With the help of Steve Tomlinson, the NUNA Vice President, various development projects have been overseen with good neighborly communications. The NUNA website, with the help of Rob Moshein, Brandon Tucker, and Sarah Seidel, was loved up with some fresh updates. Three years worth of neighborhood meetings were overseen with much intelligence, warmth and efficiency—he never kept us there too long, and he brought in some lively speakers and even some barbecue (thanks Black’s!!).



Thank you, Michael Riley

We are also happy to welcome **Lou Datillo** as our new NUNA Secretary,

replacing **Eileen Gill** after several good years of faithfully recording the votes and actions of our general meetings. Thanks, **Eileen**, for your service, and welcome **Lou**!

As we launch into the coming year as a neighborhood, I hope you will agree that NUNA is worth getting to know better. Projects are afoot and they are worthy of all of our interest. Do you know, for example, what is going on with the trees in Hemphill Park and plans to care for them? Are you a landscape architect? We need your help. Do you know about the future of the old electrical building in Sparky Park? Are you aware of the pressures from new development projects and parking schemes NUNA faces? These are the things that affect your daily environment, so come find out more.

Also, we bring in smart presentations to our NUNA general meetings. The next one will be **Zero Waste Goal: How Citizens Can Contribute Through Recycling**,



Photo of the Month: Come Rain or Shine to the Fourth of July Parade!

NUNA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

First English Lutheran Church

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

6:30 pm

AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order** Approve Minutes
- II. **Presentation: Zero Waste Goal: How Citizens Can Contribute Through Recycling, composting, and Reuse**, by the Austin Resource Recover Program
- III. **New Business—**
 - a. **Vote.** Authorize spending NUNA funds (suggestion \$400) in support of July 4th gathering in Hemphill park
 - b. **Discuss.** New parks team and Hemphill park tree and irrigation meeting with the city of Austin (Bill Bednar)
 - c. **Discuss.** Helping neighbors on Laurel Lane.
- IV. **Old Business—**
 - a. **Discuss.** Updated “Welcome to the neighborhood” letter (Steven Tomlinson)
 - b. **Discuss.** Steck house project (Mary Ingle)
 - c. **Discuss.** Progress on Aldridge light columns (Steven Tomlinson)
 - d. **Discuss.** Sparky Park construction status and updates (Doug Plummer)
- V. **Reports**
 - a. Treasurer – Jan Moyle
 - b. Quadrant Leaders’ – Dick Holland, Mary Ingle, Rick Iverson, and Laurie Marchant
- VI. **Adjourn**

composting, and Reuse, by the Austin Resource Recover Program. Do you know how you can easily compost in your own backyard without making a terrible stinking mess? Come find out! It feels good to participate, makes this neighborhood feel even more like home.

And if you have an idea for a presentation, please contact me at: nunaaustin@gmail.com.

Please come to our **Tuesday, June 2nd General Membership meeting at 6:30** at the First English Lutheran Church at 31st & Whitis. And please note that it is on **TUESDAY** for now! See you there!

Laurence Miller

Letter from the Editor

Last night I walked our seven-month-old Labrador through Hemphill Park at dusk, and the fireflies were out in full force. The park was quiet and still, just hundreds of tiny bright sparks flickering on and off, a silent festival of lights. It was a thrill to walk among those flickers, to see the magic tricks nature can perform, right here in the middle of our little neighborhood. Even my dog seemed mesmerized. It made me think of Annie Dillard’s words from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*: “There are lots of things to see, unwrapped gifts and free surprises.”

I think our neighborhood is full of these free surprises. I was reminded of that a few weeks ago when out at Round Top’s Festival Hill for their annual spring Poetry Festival. Standing in line at the buffet between poetry readings, I saw a familiar face from NUNA—Jack Brannon, our Hemphill Park neighbor and owner of Lily, the older, more sophisticated Labrador that my young pup has often exhausted with his fitful desire to play and sniff her. While standing over the salad bar talking to Jack, I soon found out that not only was he a writer, but he had actually founded this festival 13 years ago. Surprise! And, later in the weekend, after witnessing so many outstanding readings and workshops in this poets’ paradise, I felt the poignancy of the fact that this whole marvelous event was born from the labors of someone who lives two streets over from me, but I never knew it.

But of course, there’s lots we NUNarians (I borrowed that term from you, Carole LeClair) don’t know about each other, and in many ways, that’s just fine. But it is interesting to wonder about all of the intriguing accomplishments of our neighbors, ones that we don’t know about. Not that I want to get into people’s business, but the biggest pleasure of doing this newsletter is that

I have the privilege of learning more about the remarkable people who live among us. Not only did I not know Jack was a poet, I didn't know that Leoda Anderson, now 99 years old, was an avid traveler and adventurer throughout most of Mexico, that she has sipped pulque made by a Huasteca man in Jalisco and that she always carried a knife with her, just in case she needed to slice an apple or something. I never knew that my neighbor, Mary Gay, had lived in this neighborhood for about 37 years and that she built her home here on Laurel Lane from a vacant lot (although I did know that she has long fought and worked hard to keep our neighborhood intact and thriving). Nor did I know that there was a man named Diamantakis from Greece slicing up the most authentic gyros in town a mere five minute walk from my house, in a trailer at Spider House (thanks, Beth Monson, for eating all that tzatziki for us!). You can learn more, too, if you just read on....

So, it is good to be surprised by the stories and richness of the lives around us. Just as Lily, Jack Brannon's dog, might say: we are all worthy of an occasional close-range sniff, or at least a word and a grin.

So make sure you come out for the Annual Fourth of July parade in Hemphill Park, 10am. Carole LeClair is making it happen for all of us, once again!!! Everyone Welcome!

Thanks for reading. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please email me at nunanews@gmail.com.

Best,
Clayton

In This Issue

Don't miss:

News about the Upcoming Fourth of July Parade

•

Stories from the exciting Mexico travels of
Leoda Anderson

•

A NUNA reflection by Mary Gay Maxwell

•

Beth Monson's Dish on the Greek gyros in our 'hood

•

And a poem by Jack Brannon

2015 NUNA OFFICERS

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Tanya Quinn

CANPAC Representatives

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Newsletter Ads

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Newsletter Editorial

Clayton Maxwell - nunanews@gmail.com

NUNA Neighborhood Meeting Unapproved Minutes

4/6/2015

by *Brandon Tucker*

Officer nominations

- Favor passes roundly for officer nominations
- Vote on Slate: approved
- New set of officers elected

Sparky Park: Kim & Jason from Parks & Rec visit

- 100% complete with construction documents
- significant abatement of hazardous materials, asbestos removal at site.
- Original cost estimate, proposal for contractor, gap of funding between couple hundred thousand dollars
- no changes to plans will be finalized until consultation w/ neighborhood
- Funding gap will cause "Modifications of scope" to building.
- Asked about timeline, "love to go into construction in 2015" -- have to get project into budget first.
- Completion could occur within 6 months construction timeline.
- Funds could be donated privately to close any gaps if offered.

Jason of Parks & Rec:

- Wants to know "how we want park to be used and programmed"
- Suggestion as non-reserve-able facility initially.
- Facility was not designed as assembly use -- one unisex bathroom.
- No amplified sound, no parking.
- Parks committee would like NUNA to have a facility conversation about usage for sparky park. Then, a consensus vote by NUNA re: it's programming would be preferred by Parks & Rec.
- Welcome to the neighborhood letter
- Steven is drafting a letter before next exec committee meeting. Trash, noise, parking, etc.

RPP for Moore Blvd. Dick Holland not here.

- Possibility of changing Moore Blvd to residential parking.
- Discussed by group, no questions or comments about it.

Steck House update

- Leon: landmark commission considered project last month and approved the demo of outbuildings. After debate, approved in principal site plan. Developer has to go back to landmark commission, for specific action to Steck House itself. General

Join the Discussion!

Listserves are a great way to become more connected with your community. **The North University Yahoo Group** is a hands-on, public communications resource, helping neighbors inform, communicate, and build a stronger community. The list is inclusive, open to anyone who lives in the North University Neighborhood and to people who have a material interest here, such as operators of a business, non-profit, or civic process. One can subscribe by sending E-mail to:

nuna-residents-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

or by visiting the Yahoo! Groups site at:

groups.yahoo.com/group/nuna-residents

YAHOO!
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@crimeatx is a crime watch Twitter feed that promotes crime prevention and public safety awareness in our area. It was established by the Central Austin CDC in January 2012 to help inform and prepare the returning student community in the immediate aftermath of the NYE attacks and murder of Esme Barrera. To sign up or learn more, visit **twitter.com/crimeatx** and tweet with the hashtag **#NORTHUNIVERSITY**.

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concept of what he wants to do – that was approved with other buildings. Gave him bad info when he met with them originally. Water under bridge, so he still does not have site plan approval. Outstanding issues w/that. May 15 deadline or his app expires (could seek extension).

Seeking an interpretation from board of adjustment. Prop zoned MF-3. Can't be called duplexes, but that's what they are. Question about how much occupancy can be on each side of building. Result in reduction of occupancy limits. Question of SF standards on an MF lot and whether or not it can be called a "duplex."

-- Vote for neighborhood fund up to \$450 to request code interpretation from Board of Adjustments:

- Passes unanimously.

Aldridge Place Columns:

-- NUNA can take responsibility for metering and paying as neighborhood. NUNA takes responsibility for columns. This is a new concept for Austin Energy & a neighborhood.

- Met with Allen Small, street light infrastructure at Austin Energy. 15 inches square, painted, to get control of those lights, cover box out – fixture, light bulbs, electricity bill. Nothing on column itself they will approve, Austin Energy will give us responsibility with a meter box.

NUNA is asked if there is interest in pursuing option—up front cost only for – electrical installation of lights and eventually paying electricity bill. NUNA agrees to continue to pursue.

Road map for lights: Steven will bring pictures of install plans & equipment to next meeting. If it is worth it, deal with liability & ownership, clarification, how partnership would be structured.

Bill Bednar: Absent, no updates

Treasurer Jan: No updates

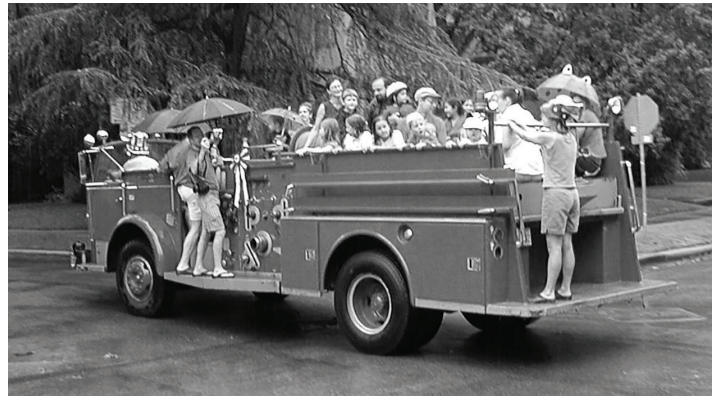
JR & Laurie:

-- Repaving speedway btwn 38th & 31st. in process make bike lanes wider, prohibit parking.

Meeting adjourned.

Notes by Brandon Tucker, 113 w 33rd St.

13th Annual NUNA 4th of July Parade and Splash Party!



It's hard to believe our little neighborhood parade is turning 13 years old this year. For those who remember our first parade back in 2002, it started with a huge thunderstorm. We should be so lucky this year! At that first parade, Dr. Diller brought his vintage fire truck and a pony named Dolly. My kids at the time were just toddlers, and so happy to have an excuse to eat doughnuts and have their faces painted. Those kids are going into 8th and 10th grade and still love doughnuts but are more likely to paint someone else's face than their own.

The parade has not changed much since the beginning. Some years we manage to get a city fire truck, and every year, we have neighbors bring out their specially decorated cars and utility vehicles. We don't have as many carnival games but added a big water slide. At least for those few hours on the morning of the 4th, we get a sense of what it's like to live in a small town where no one is a stranger and kids can run wild.

This parade means so much to me. My extended family has turned it into a mini reunion each year, with relatives joining us from all over Texas and California. Our house becomes a youth hostel with kids sleeping on every available couch and even bunking in our garage.

I love catching up with the neighbors I don't see often enough and meeting new faces from around the 'hood. It's a wonderful way to show our love for our country as well as this little space we call home. Make us happy we are Americans, Austinites and NUNAarians!

We will meet at 9:45am and begin the parade at 10am.

Here's what to bring.

1. Your appropriately decorated bike, scooter, wagon, unicycle or pet



2. Breakfast goodies to share with your neighbors (watermelons especially appreciated)
3. Lawn chair (and extra table if you have one for holding the goodies)
4. Bathing suit and towel (with 100 degree temps, the water slide will be tempting)
5. Optional: a monetary donation to help cover the cost of the water slide

This is a free event and open to everyone, so please invite any friends or family (especially those with kids) who are in need of a little small town style Independence Day party in the heart of this big city of ours.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to call or email me.

Carole | caleclair@gmail.com | 512-736-3833

PS: Do you have a cool car you would like to decorate and show off at the parade. We welcome anyone who wants to help lead the parade in style.

Encounters
by Jack Brannon

My work is loving the world.
--Mary Oliver

My dog thinks this is how the world should be,
soul of friendliness that she is: Everyone
should be able to visit everybody.

Every front door should give you welcome,
Every person you see good for at least
a close-range sniff, and hopefully,

a gentle pat and hug;

Every encounter, a friendship about to happen.
I find myself pained to explain
why two-legged people
operate in any other way.

I think my father held the world in the same way
Lily our Labrador retriever does,
and moved through it accordingly,
as much as the world would let him.

You never moved anywhere quickly with my father,
All those strangers being friends
he was about to meet. They would have
so much to talk about.

We always wondered how this man
from a very tiny town
could know so many people.
Only now does my heart know the secret.

He knew everyone, perhaps even knew
we are all one, all worthy
of at least a close-range sniff
and, hopefully, a word and a grin.



A Born Sniffer

My NUNA Home

Mary Gay Maxwell

Recently, during the one of the challenges facing our neighborhood, I offered to write about my experience as a long time resident of NUNA, beginning in 1972 for two years and then, returning in 1980 to live here permanently. So, I have been a NUNA neighbor for about 37 years! Yikes! One might ask what brought me here and why did I stay?

Well, growing up, my family moved many times, living in places like Brownsville, Texas, Miami, Florida, Long Island, New York, and Houston, Texas. When I came to Austin to go to The University of Texas, I had no idea that Austin would become my home, but after a year in Madrid, Spain, I came back to live with friends from college and found that Austin felt like home.

Some of my friends were living in Hemphill Park, and I was really drawn to the neighborhood by my friends and the feeling of home here. So, I found a place to live that we named "The Mud Daubers' Palace!" It was a fine, old stucco home on 32nd Street, almost to Guadalupe, and I lived on the first floor. I made friends with a number of people living here, some were single, some were married with children, and we had a great time having various fun gatherings from Laurel Lane to 33rd Street.

Later, in 1980, I came back to the 'hood, and I settled on Laurel Lane house sitting for some friends who were out of the country for a year. At that point, I fell in love with one of the two remaining vacant lots in Aldrich Place, and by some miracle, I was able to buy the lot on Laurel Lane and build my home there in 1982. I have lived here ever since!

When we developed our Neighborhood Plan, I stepped up to coordinate the neighborhood groups that became part of our Combined Central Austin Neighborhood Planning Team. I offered to do this because I really believe in the value of this neighborhood! There is something special here that merits protecting. It's the spirit of the place beyond all the other things that make it worthwhile. I love it enough to have spent considerable time working to make sure that it can continue to thrive. It is certainly something to fight for and to love actively.

So, friends brought me here, but the feeling of home in this neighborhood is what caused me to stay, and I still love this place after all these years. Yes, we have had difficulties at times with temporary residents who do not understand how important a functioning, lively neighborhood is to our quality of life. Sometimes, the temporary residents became residents because they,



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Website Reboot

Guess what? We are finally updating the website! With web-savvy neighbors Brandon Tucker and Sarah Seidel kindly taking the reins from former web designers Rob Moshein and Bob Atchison, we are giving the NUNA website a little freshening up. You can now read the newsletters on line, see the latest news, or just find out when the next meeting is. Thanks, everyone. www.nunaaustin.org



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too, felt the sense of home here. I guess I'm in that category as are a number of you here in NUNA. Sometimes we have to stand up for what we value here as a way of life in order to either assist people to understand it better or to let them know that THIS is a NEIGHBORHOOD that is VALUABLE and worth protecting, so that we can have a full experience of what it means to belong to a place! That is why I am still here. I feel like I belong here! It is my HOME.

A Surprise Beginning

By Leoda Anderson



Museo de Bellas Artes in Mexico City

It was the last day in Mexico City for my friend Ruby and me. Ruby had not been to Mexico before our travels. She delighted in every excursion, every new “find” of interest along the way.

She called my attention to a sign that announced a concert by the International Symphony Orchestra at Bellas Artes that night. “Could we do that?” she asked.

“Absolutely! It’s not far from our hotel. And you haven’t seen that grand old “Palace of Fine Arts” that’s sinking into the ground because it’s built of such heavy marble from Italy — and its famous Tiffany glass curtain. It’s the home of the National Opera, the Ballet Folklórico, and I don’t know what else. Oh, I’m so glad you saw that sign! We’ll go!”

It was an exciting brilliant performance. We went to bed happy with the last gift Mexico City had given us.

The next morning we were on a bus heading east to Jalapa (Ha-

LOP-ah). Eastward and downward, from Mexico City’s altitude of 7,349 feet to Jalapa’s altitude of 4,540 feet. I looked forward to Jalapa as a calm contrast to Mexico City. Not so. To my surprise, it was as busy and buzzing as Mexico City. But after all, it is the capital of the state of Veracruz, and maybe they were hosting a convention or an Austin-style festival. For the first time, I could not find hotel space. I have never, ever, made a hotel reservation in Mexico. There has always been a welcoming inn.

Our cab driver was sure he could find a hotel for us. A kind charming young man was Apolinar (Ah-pole-in-AR), probably so named by adoring parents who thought his looks equal to those of the Greek god Apollo. During the search we three became good friends. He treated us like favorite aunts. When he dropped us off at the hotel he’d found, he said, “I want you to meet my girlfriend. She’s American, and she’s a musician. And we can go out to dinner! I’ll pick you up.”

That sounded like an interesting diversion to us that wouldn’t interfere with sightseeing, so we said, “Fine. We’d love to meet your girlfriend.” Apolinar picked us up at the appointed time, we met his girlfriend Margie, a pleasant robust young lady — from New Jersey, she told us. She looked familiar. Then I noticed a cello case propped against a wall of the apartment.

“Wait a minute,” I said, “were you by any chance playing with the symphony orchestra at Bellas Artes in Mexico City last night, sitting in the front row with...” (“with that cello” I meant to say).

“With my legs in a very ungraceful position? Yes, my mother always comments on that.” She laughed. “I love playing with that group. It’s known as one of the two best symphony orchestras in Mexico. And I get paid much more here than in the States!”

Then we all went out to dinner. It was a fun evening. The next day Ruby and I marveled at their excellent museum, especially at

Suzanne Pringle

Big thank you to **Suzanne Pringle**, long time NUNA resident and our newsletter head of advertising. She has been doing such a smooth job keeping up the ad side of the newsletter, and we are all grateful for her help—without it, the newsletter would cease to be. Thanks, Suzanne!



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Olmec Heads in Mexico

the enormous sculptured Olmec heads with African features, displayed outdoors. As far as I know, no archaeologist or historian has presented a reasonable explanation of how and why they came to be.

Our next goal was a garden outside the city. Jalapa is known as “the city of flowers.” A feature of its weather is their frequent drizzles — *chipi-chipi* (cheepy-cheepy) they call them. My mother in Illinois used to refer to drizzling as shnoodling. Terminology aside, their result is obvious: lush tropical growth of all plant life, including coffee plantations.

In the garden we saw orchids, azaleas, camellias, and little coffee plants with red berries nestling at the base of tall banana plants. And, as a contrast to all those colors, gliding together on the pond were a white swan and a black swan.

Many years later Ruby was on her deathbed in California, too weak to speak on the telephone. But the nurse said, “Just talk to her; she wants to hear you. I’ll hold the receiver to her ear.” So I launched into several minutes of reminiscing about our travels in Mexico, names, places incidents — and my love.

The nurse thanked me warmly and added, “She closed her eyes and really listened! And she would nod and smile, nod and smile.”

Tequila Tales

by Leoda Anderson

And other beverages of Mexico I may add.

We were in a region of Mexico relatively unfamiliar to me, and since my friend was a little short of adventurous, we hired a guide, Roberto, to give us a mini-tour of the area.

Our first stop was at a field of those intimidating gray-green giant century plants, the agave cactus from which tequila is made. At one point in his lecture Roberto said, “I would show you a cross-cut of the plant’s interior, but I don’t have a knife.”

“I have a knife,” I offered.

Roberto took a step backward, then stammered, “Y-y-you have a knife?”

“Sí. I always carry a knife. I never know when I may need one, like peeling an apple, or cutting a tomato or avocado...” Or stabbing a guide, I could have added mischievously, but didn’t. Roberto didn’t seem like a “jokey” kind of fellow. He might have taken me seriously and taken off running!

The frozen moment thawed with my explanation, and a reassured Roberto, with the assistance of my knife, confidently resumed his lecture.

On a later trip, with two friends who had not known each other before the trip, we visited a “tequila factory.” I had traveled enjoyably with each of these friends before, so assumed that the threesome would be equally enjoyable. Wrong! My mistake. Each found the other’s actions and attitude annoying.

We three, Gerda, Hallie and I had departed Guadalajara, bound for Tequila about 40 miles away, still in the state of Jalisco. Tequila was a small town in the midst of huge maguey/agave plantations. I had heard of a tequila factory there that was adorned by artwork all along the front of the building. It was almost startling to come upon this joyous scene of life-sized men and women in colorful garb, enjoying life — due to tequila, the artist no doubt meant to portray. You could almost “hear” the music to which they were dancing. “La Dulce Vida” it could have been titled.

I asked someone in charge what the mural had cost them. From pesos to dollars it amounted to about \$225. A bargain. We arrived near the end of the workmen’s break time. One of the

men came up to us to ask if any of us had a cigarette. I pointed to Gerda, the only smoker among us. Gerda opened her purse, got out a pack of cigarettes, and then fumbled to extract a cigarette. I could see Hallie watching this with growing impatience.

“Oh, c’mon, Gerda,” she burst out, then took the pack from Gerda’s hands and handed it to the man.

The man mumbled “Muchas gracias,” and, looking absolutely awed at his unexpected good fortune, scurried away.

Gerda stood there, looking stunned, then spoke in a slow meditative kind of way, as though talking to herself, “I had them all counted out.”

I hurried them off to watch the tequila-making process, which had resumed. Men remove their hats in the fermentation room of pulque, and maybe also for tequila, as though in a church. We didn’t feel that kind of reverence. Tequila-making is akin to sausage-making in that the observer of the process does not feel motivated to consume the product.

In a large pool the cactus pieces are floating, fermenting, stirred by workmen with long-poled paddles — reminding me of the pole-paddles used by my mother and next-door aunt to stir apple butter being cooked to spicy perfection in a large black, copper-lined kettle over a fire.

We did not ask for or receive any samples.

I mentioned pulque (POOL-kay) a few paragraphs ago. Another product of the maguey/agave cactus, but pre-Hispanic. One time on one of my Mexican safaris, I asked the hotel-keeper if there were any Indian markets nearby — a market for the native people, not for tourists.

“Tomorrow,” he said, “not far away. I’ll take you.”

I was ready, bright and early. On the way he asked me if I had ever tasted freshly-fermented pulque. “No, nor any other kind of pulque.”

“There’s an old Huasteca Indian who brings it. I’ll take you to his stall.”

The market offered practical things, many of them made of wood—bowls, combs, furniture, no frivolous doo-dads. Then

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the pulque: the old Indian dipped into his handmade wooden cask with a gourd-dipper and poured the liquid into a clay cup. I drank it. The word "fresh" pulsed up in my brain. I have never tasted a more refreshing beverage; it topped even my favorites, apple cider and cherry cider. At that stage it has a low alcohol content, about 5-6%. But it soon proceeds to "go bad." Pulques in border-town markets are doctored up with flavoring and colors to disguise the fact that they have "gone bad."

But before the Spanish conquest of Mexico, chocolate was the primary beverage of Mexico. Not cocoa, oh no. Traditionalists still prefer rich dark chocolate, to which they add water, sugar, cinnamon and vanilla, and beat it to a froth with a wooden whirler. It is worth doing, ordering a cup of chocolate (oo-nah KO-pah day cho-ko-LAH-tay) to see the gleam come into the waiter's eyes. "Ah," he is thinking, "here is a visitor who appreciates our specialty."

Cheers!

The Dish

by Beth Goulart Monson

The food trailer trend sweeping through neighborhoods all over the country hasn't missed North University. I've written about the delicious coffee and charming service at **Beware Coffee!** in these pages before. Now I've rounded the corner to check out **Greek Original Gyros**, the trailer that sits on the patio of **Spider House's Ballroom**.

Anastasios Diamantakis opened his mobile establishment at its current location in February, 2013 with the intention of serving genuine Greek food - something he hadn't found elsewhere in town. He had moved to Austin in 2010 on the suggestion of a friend and says he found that "there are many labels that advertise Greek food," but none he found authentic. And while he isn't a trained chef in the traditional sense of the word - in Greece he worked in various professions including imports, retail, and car sales - he claims that being Greek is qualification enough. When you grow up in Greece, he says, "even if you don't want to learn to cook, you know how to cook."

His customers range from neighbors to people who come from other parts of town. They are students and professionals and stay-at-home moms who bring little kids (ahem). Some customers eat at the picnic tables under the pecan trees while watching a stone baby pee into a bathtub, and others take their food to-go. Those in a rush text their

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orders in advance (512-298-9514). Diamantakis even offers home delivery through Postmates and Favor.

What he doesn't offer is substitutions. The customers, he explains, don't have the expertise to customize authentic Greek food. "People here, they know nothing about Greek food," Diamantakis tells me. In the case of a true allergy or serious food issue, he says, he will tweak a gyro. But if you come to his trailer, he expects that you want to taste true Greek food. So as a general rule, he doesn't customize. **Subway** is just across the street, he notes, for customers who would prefer to design their own meals. (If he seems cranky, don't let that deter you. It's because he cares. He just wants to make sure you don't cheat yourself of the experience of eating authentic Greek food.)

A proper gyro is made from ground beef and lamb. Years ago, he says, the Greek government banned their sale because it couldn't confirm the quality of ground, mixed meat. Additives could be present but undetectable. Today in Greece, vendors need a special permit to sell the traditional ground meat gyros. In the meantime, vendors switched to using pieces of pork as a gyro filling, and it's these pork gyros that are Diamantakis's specialty.

Together with his wife, Dayan, Diamantakis hand-prepares the pork filling for his Original Homemade Gyros Wrap (\$7.99) using high-quality ingredients. He also makes his tzatziki from scratch - and it is a fine specimen of yogurt sauce made with Greek yogurt, English cucumbers, a little garlic, and extra-virgin olive oil.

He orders other traditional Greek items from a specialty food distributor - which is what gyro vendors do in Greece, too. This includes the beef and lamb mix for those gyros (\$7.39), dolmas (\$6.99/3) and the sweet pastries like baklava (\$3.59) and nut rolls (\$3.59).

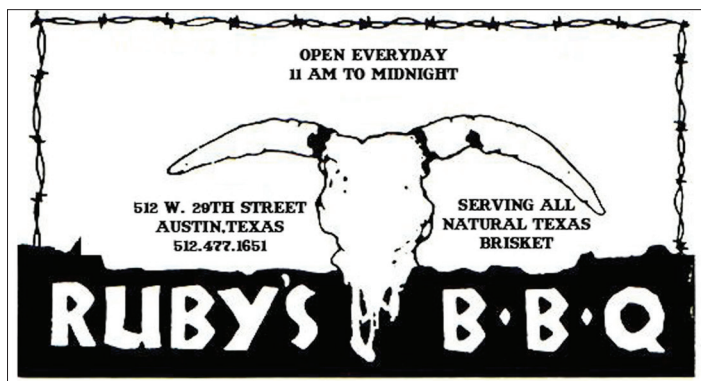
It also includes the mix for his falafel, which is the one thing on the menu that isn't, strictly speaking, Greek. Greek cuisine uses similar seasonings to those in falafel, he explains, and you can find falafel in Greece - but you would typically find it in Middle Eastern restaurants. He serves it wrapped in flatbread like a gyro, with romaine and that delicious tzatziki sauce (\$6.99) or on a platter of five pieces with tzatziki (also \$6.99).

I can't get enough of this sauce. One evening, my husband

and I ordered a plate of falafel for the kids to share, and we ended up scooping up every last bit of their sauce with spoons. I like the falafel less - it is drier and heavier on the cumin than I prefer. (Conveniently, if it's falafel I'm after, **Tom's Tabouli** is right around the corner, and I think the falafel there is fantastic.)

Diamantakis and his wife run the trailer without help from other employees, so their hours are limited. In general, during the summer, they will open from 4 pm until 11 pm - or longer if events at the Ballroom run late.

Diamantakis hopes to open a brick-and-mortar restaurant someday, but for now he has no specific plans for changes. If you want to know how the food is, go try it for yourself. "I don't believe in Yelp," says Diamantakis. He trusts an opinion only if it comes from someone he knows - not from strangers on the internet. Since I'm your neighbor, here's my opinion: Order the pork gyro. Take it to go. Walk up Hemphill Park while you eat, and don't let any of that precious tzatziki sauce get away.



Don't Waste the Chance to Learn!

Please come to the **Tuesday, June 2nd**, General Membership meeting. 6:30 pm at First English. Learn how to be a smart composter without a lot of fuss in our scheduled presentation: **Zero Waste Goal: How Citizens Can Contribute Through Recycling, composting, and Reuse**, by the Austin Resource Recover Program. Thanks **Laurence** and **Mary Ingle** for setting up the presentation.

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310 EAST 35TH STREET

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