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- Atlanta
- Jersey Shore
- Padre Island
Corpus Christi
& Galveston

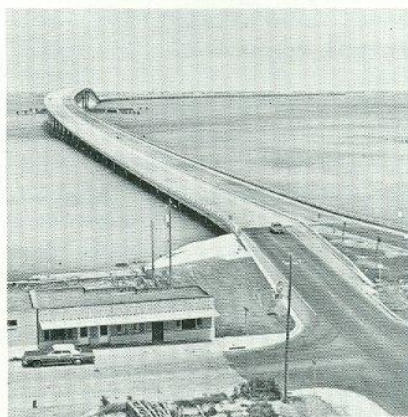
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similarity is not a thriving gay sex life, but topography. Both are serpentine sandbars lying lazily in the sun, their faces turned languorously to a vast expanse of water—the Atlantic Ocean . . . the Gulf of Mexico—while their backsides nestle cozily in bays separating them from the mainland. Although no discernible gay sex profile emerges anywhere on Padre just now, if gay Texas dudes who have come to know this exciting new Eden have their way it's possible it will see a large gay colony in action before long.



Right now Padre Island is in a state of flux. Having lain primitively dormant since the days of the Conquistadores, it is now being feverishly explored from tip to tip by those who find its ceaseless contrasts fascinating. Fishermen would like to keep it as a feudal deep-sea preserve . . . surfers see in its erratic coastal waves a kind of Endless Summer West . . . while hunters would like to lock up all the unslain deer until their coming again. Weekend picnickers love Padre Island so much they'd even like to put the ants on leash. So if gay guys ever get around to staking their claim to a piece of this still-virgin land, who's to say them nay? Our pitch for Padre is this, fellas . . . get **on** with it! No dilly-dallying. Strike while the libido is at twelve-o'clock high! Let's have some action from you Texas longhorns! Time's a'wastin'.

Fortunately there's room for all, without anyone stepping on another's toes. The Department of the Interior saw to that in 1962 when it declared Padre Island a

National Seashore. Even though motels, restaurants, gas stations and other holiday enterprises have sprung up near the gateways to Padre, the island is essentially just as unspoiled as it was many centuries ago. Let's get a picture of it in our minds.

A 'LONG' ISLAND

Actually, Padre Island is so vast it might well have been declared Texas II. It stretches 113 miles in length—from the Corpus Christi area adjacently north, to Port Isabel in the south, near the city of Brownsville, which lies next to the Mexican border. At its widest, Padre stretches 3 miles across, while at some points—like Fire Island—it is only 100 yards wide. Geographically, Padre is categorized as a subtropical **barrier** island. Its protective white dunes rise like the battle turrets of a medieval fortress . . . at night they shimmer ghostlike in the moonlight. The island is blessed with another natural protection—very dense growths of wild sea-oats act as a shield against the sometime furies of the Gulf when enraged.

The surf all along Padre Island is lovely most of the time; it goes sexily lap-lap-lap against the shore . . . tongue-plunging into the mouths of little coves. All across the island, even at its 113 miles widest, one can feel the tang of sea air; its aroma is distinctly Caribbean, hinting of dark, passionate affairs to come. Recurring tides bring a harvest of exotic objects from the Azores and the Caribbean, The Yucatan and South America. During the day there is the frequent whir of birdwings as hungry gulls dive-bomb from the skies for some of the tasty shrimp that fishermen bring up in their huge nets.

When Mother Nature had created this long umbilical of land she must have looked back and reflected that it was just too long for one island, so she cut it in two. About two-thirds of the way down padre is bisected by the Mansfield Cut—a natural channel. There is no road linking North and South Padre, thus each is actually a separate island taking on the special flavor and

Padre Island

Plus Tips On
Corpus Christi
& Galveston

Will It Have A Fire Island Future?

By Walter Norris

New York's Fire Island and big Padre Island off the east coast of Texas have several things in common. At the moment, however, the principal
March/April 1976

characteristics of the populated areas at each end.

SOUTH PADRE

South Padre, near Port Isabel, is reached from the mainland by the new toll-free, \$13 million Queen Isabella Causeway. Once across you'll note that it is quite Mexican in flavor, having a little more 'Olé!' than North Padre. At present it is also the more developed. For example, at its southernmost tip is Isla Blanca Park with a boatel, cabanas, overnight shelters, a trailer area as well as a pavilion, bathhouse, cafe and fishing pier.

Beautiful condominiums have also begun springing up, seemingly every day. And attractive motels now line the highway. On the side roads you'll see fantastically-conceived beach houses . . . many of stark, granite-colored wood with asymmetrical tiers and covered roofs, and look for all the world as if Grant Wood, in a prankish modern mood, had painted them. One of the big luxury motels on South Padre, the Bahia Mar, is built in this same style . . . a kind of inverted-clapboard architecture, with balconies and porthole windows looking out on a gorgeous cerulean pool.

Cheek-by-jowl, almost, with such contemporary architecture, you may smile at older beach houses with their 'skirts pulled up to their knees'. Their foundations are stilts to keep them dry during storms/flooding . . . and they will remind you of the celebrated house in the Arthur Hartmann painting, **The Hut Built on Fowl's Legs**.

If you're in a bizarre 'bazaar' mood, and haven't just come up from South of the Border, an outing to Matamoros, Mexico is a special treat. This is a town of nearly 190,000 and its streets are twistier, turnier and more-get-lost-in than the ancient cowpath-streets of Greenwich Village or The Lanes in Brighton, England. The small streets can barely accommodate an automobile and for all the world you'd think it another Hong Kong. Shop for curios, bargains, good leather, arts and crafts, copper and onyx. Have a drink at the U.S. Bar or

The Texas Bar . . . have some good Mexican food at the Drive In Restaurant, or at the Santa Fe, with its good Chinese food.

With special reference to the dream possibility of a gay sex enclave being established on Padre Island, here's why a gay colony in this area would really swing. So bring along your **sextants** and **divine(ing)** rods, fellas, and get the lay of the next

FIRE ISLAND SOUTH?

Think Port Isabel and you simultaneously think Brownsville (the name itself augurs well for such a venture . . . lovely word, so appropriate!). Brownsville is adjacent to Port Isabel and is one of the busiest seaports in the world. Think oil . . . tankers. Then think horny humpies too long aboard ship, and think not few, but hundreds. And think all ages, just to make everyone happy . . . from 18 to post 60. Then think of the Mexicomplexion of Brownsville and its Latin beat. Right there you have a wild mixture ready to **zz-z-z**. Surely this immediate area is a natural for a Fire Island South.

NORTH PADRE

North Padre is reached from the mainland in the Corpus Christi area via the John F. Kennedy Causeway, or from Aransas Pass. This northern end is quite different . . . for all its target boom it retains much more of its rusticity, yet it features many of the amenities of South Padre's Isla Blanca Park. Nueces County Park has great Gulf swimming, fishing and picnicking. Available also are a cafe, cabanas, bathhouse and other travel/vacation comforts. At Malaquite Beach there is also camping and an observation tower and concession. Going up are lavish beach houses and condominiums/motels. It has been just a little longer in the doing than South Padre.

THE NORTH GAY PROFILE

As far as sketching a gay profile of this area, the big draw would obviously be from the Corpus Christi complex. The term 'complex' is used advisedly

because Texas, being what it is—like big-g-gg—and where 'a stone's throw' means something like 100 miles, one thinks not alone of Corpus Christi but of Galveston, farther north and east . . . and Houston, north and west. With individual small aircraft being as common as Volkswagens back East, Texans in this area think 'minutes' from place to place, rather than miles.

So if a gay colony should emerge from this speculation it may well have its roots in such C.C. gay bars as the **Chez Paris**, 2207 Ayers, and **The Box** (The Joker), 4950 Ayers. Also please note that the gay texture of this precise spot is enriched by all that young-hungstuff pilot/officer material earning their wings (they already know how to 'fly'!) at the Naval Air Station 10 miles southeast on TEX 358.

Galveston's harbor can berth 50 ocean-going ships at one time. Where Brownsville is oil, Galveston is grain, cotton, cattle, sulphur and some oil. Then too, the merchant seamen who make Galveston's gay bars jump—and who would be such a treasure trove in a Fire Island North—are also quite different from the **macho**-guys of Brownsville. Humpy, too, but overall a little more youth-oriented. So if a gay colony does take roots somewhere in North Padre it may well have had impetus from entrepreneuring guys in such Galveston gay bars as the **Fruit Jar**, 2214 Mechanic Street (dancing, and good after the beach), or the **Paradise** at 213 Kepner (dancing, and drag show), and **Dirty Sally's**, Stewart Beach (daytime). Or at the **Kon Tiki Baths**, adjoining the gay bar of the same name. Or at the john upstairs at Stewart Beach where the west end is gayly active! Stay at the **Lafitte Hotel**, 409 Rosenberg. Popular with gay guys, and there's a gay bar downstairs—**Robert's Lafitte**.

So with such diverse gay venues—and so many guys populating each—plus fast intra-coastal travel being a Texas commonplace, an enterprising prospectus for a possible F.I. North may well be devised for this end of Padre Island. Of

CIAO!

course, the Gulf on the east, and the Laguna Madre Coastal Waterway separating Padre from the Texas mainland, are everything to the success of this area. Port Isabel and Corpus Christi are the magnets and gateways through which ever-increasing numbers are drawn to this fascinating island that is so steeped in history . . . where the Conquistadores walked; where Lafitte docked his pirate ships; where Spanish galleons still lie buried with their prizes of gold. In spite of the fact that the Texas Antiquities Act protects such treasure, and penalties are levied against those who would remove a single sovereign or doubloon, some find clandestine excitement in the search.

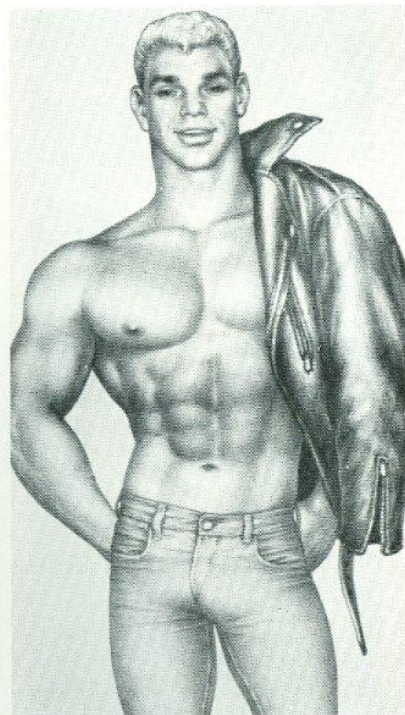
The real treasure here, however, is peace of mind . . . it's a great 'unwinding' place. Time stands still along its 113 miles, and those long-pent in concrete jungles come here for that special relaxation that nature alone can still provide.

If you are interested in making a swing down Texas way and would like to do some gay exploring, you can get more detailed information about South Padre from the Cameron County Park Board, Box 666, Port Isabel, Texas 78578; and if your interest lies more northerly at the gay entrance at Corpus Christi, write The Corpus Christi Tourist Bureau, Box 1147, Corpus Christi, Texas 78403. Prepare to be delighted!

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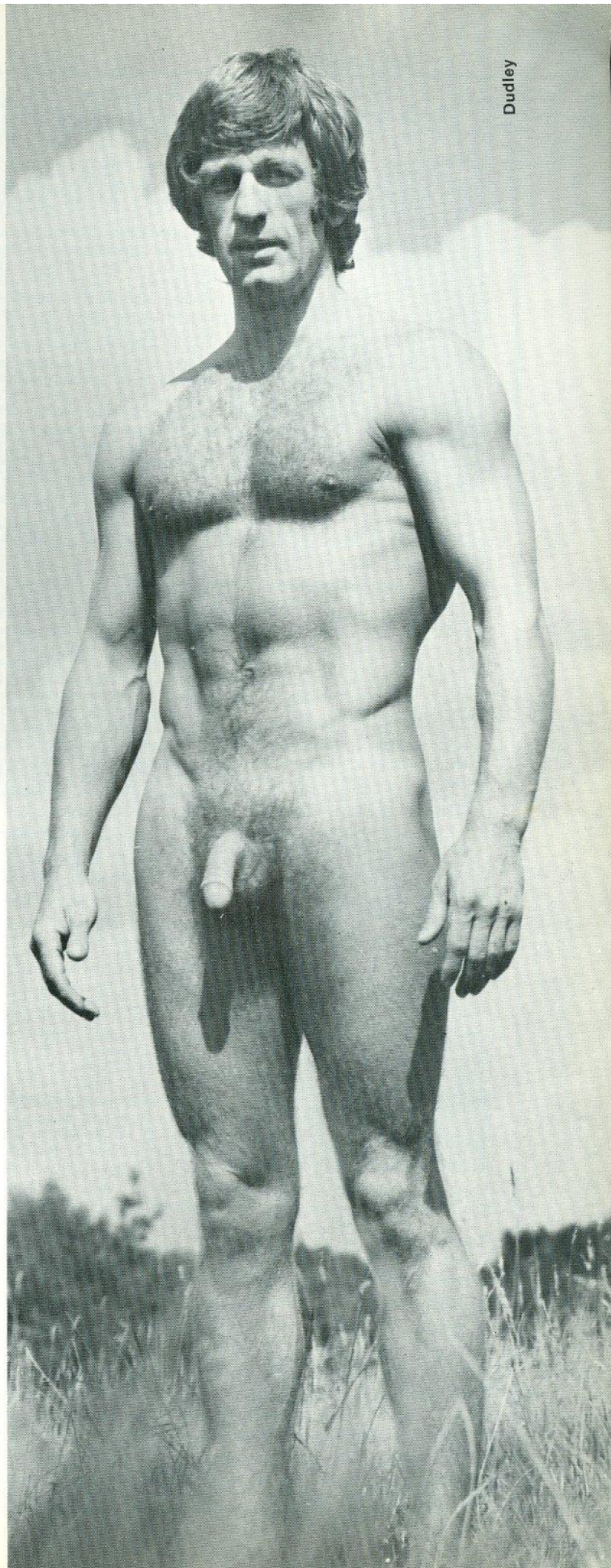
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