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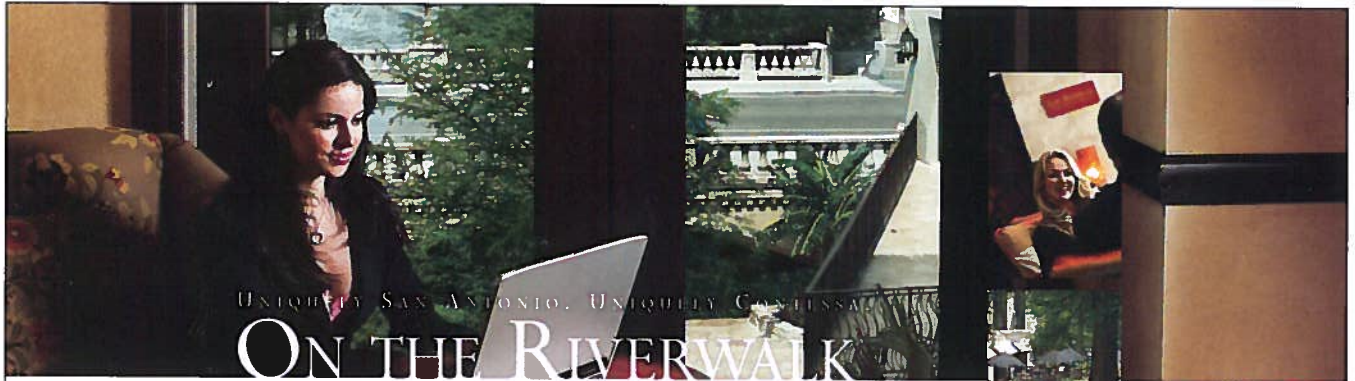


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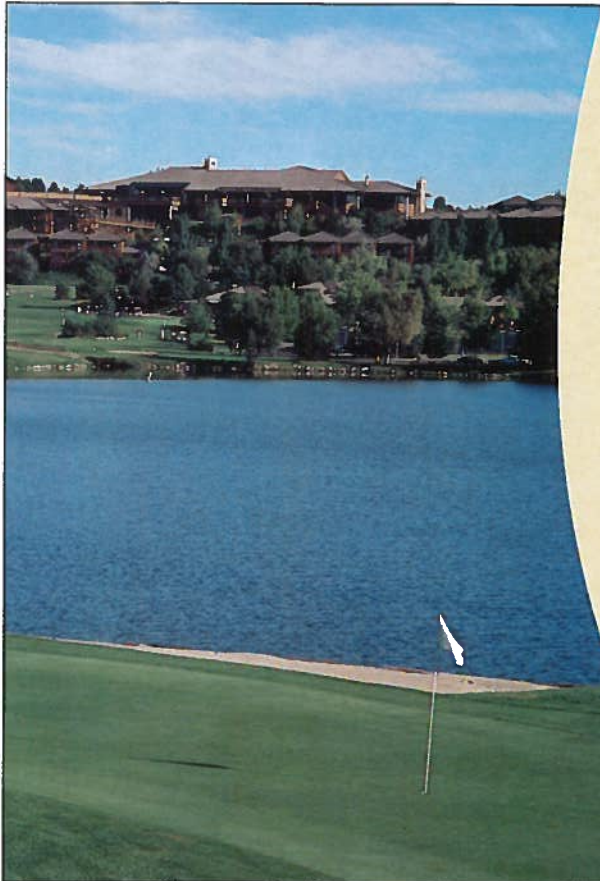
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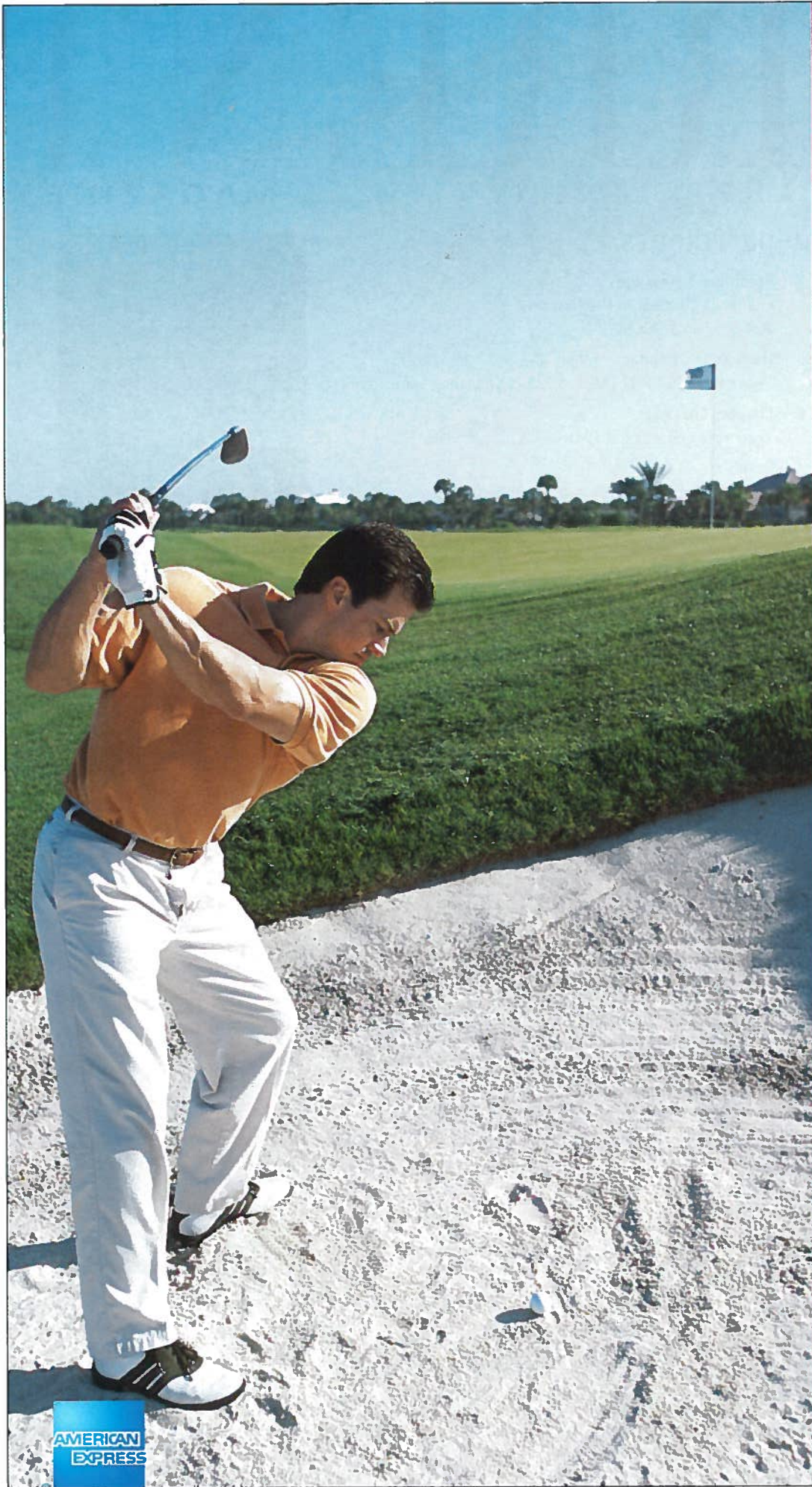
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By Carol Benavidez, CMP
HelmsBriscoe

**Whether it is
a personal or
professional
goal you
seek, make
a difference
in 2009.**



Challenge Yourself in the New Year

Each Jan. 1, many of you probably debate about a list of resolutions, whether professional or personal. My challenge for you is to embrace an opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and do something different.

For me, my past professional accomplishments have ranged from obtaining a degree in hotel and restaurant management, certification as a CMP and, not to mention, having the honor of being the 32nd president of the MPI D/FW Chapter. On a personal level, I have just finished walking 60 miles in three days with the hope to cure breast cancer and, of course, every year I reward myself with incentives when I lose weight. However, as the new year rolls around, I think about what I can do to make a difference for others as well as look internally to further my education and increase my mental and physical well being.

2009 will come with many successes and failures to include economic changes as well as historical events. Jan. 20 will be a day to remember! I will receive some birthday wishes, but I believe most people will watch history as the country swears in the first African-American president of the United States. No matter your political preference, what a dream! And you should dream when contemplating your goals. What is your passion? With each success or failure it gives us the chance to enrich our lives.

A common thread that connects all of us is the part we play in the MPI D/FW Chapter. Each month we are provided with opportunities for continuing education, networking and enhancing business relationships. As a group, we impact the economy within the hospitality business, and we give back to our local communities. We should be proud of our accomplishments.

To continue, whether it is a personal or professional goal you seek, make a difference in 2009. Here are some examples to get you started:

- Visit another country and learn about its culture.
- Finish your college degree or expand upon it.
- Adopt a student for a MPI monthly program.
- Read a good book or read to your children.
- Set out to obtain your CMP and/or CMM.
- One day answer all your phone calls.
- Take a vacation by yourself.
- Volunteer your time.

Remember, you can only grow if you challenge yourself. I would love for you to share your New Year's resolutions. Send to cbenavidez@helmsbriscoe.com.

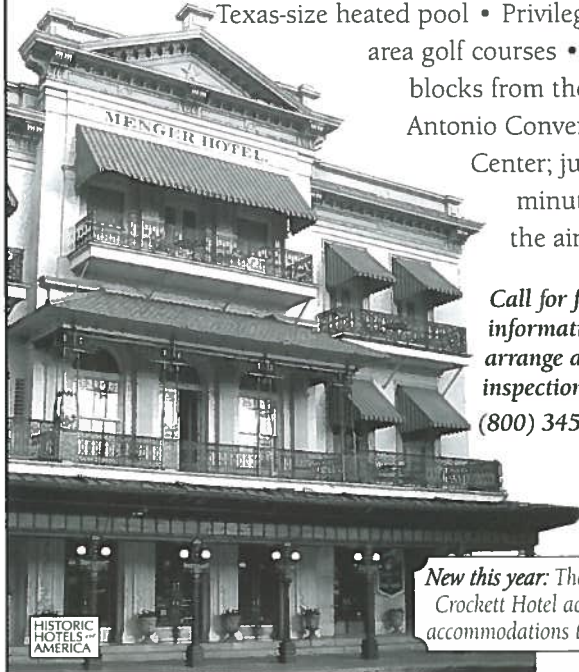
Sincerely,

Carol Benavidez, CMP
MPI D/FW Chapter President

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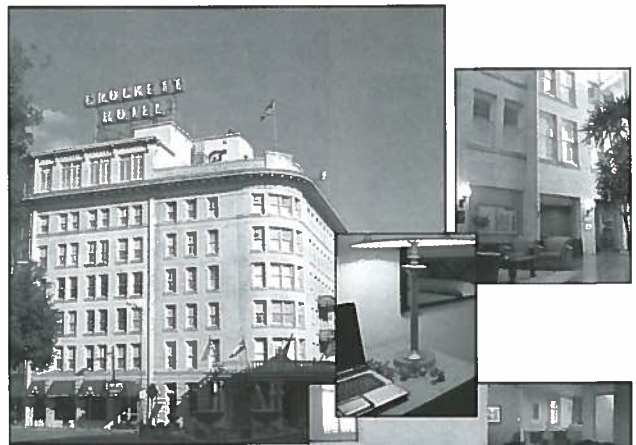
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR



JANUARY 22

January Monthly Program

MPI D/FW Gives Back
Complimentary meeting for the first 300 members who register.
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Eddie Deen's Ranch
944 S. Lamar Street
Dallas, Texas 75202

JANUARY 26

CMP Study Group Introductory Meeting

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Westin Galleria Dallas
13340 Dallas Parkway
Dallas, TX 75240
The introductory session is designed for those interested in earning their Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) designation. Come to learn about the spring study program and application process from our D/FW Chapter's experienced CMPs.

FEBRUARY 19

All Chapter Committee Meeting

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Holiday Inn Select – North Dallas
2645 LBJ Freeway
Dallas, TX 75234

FEBRUARY 26

February Monthly Program

Chef's Challenge
Fair Park
Food & Fiber Pavilion
1233 S. Washington Ave
Dallas, TX 75315

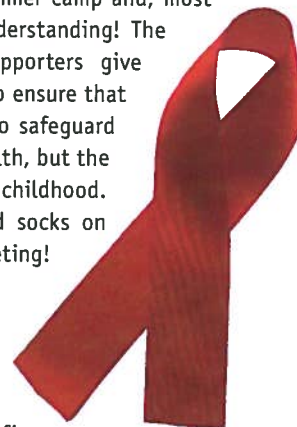


In order to adhere to the guest count policies of our host venues, we no longer accept walk-in attendees at monthly meetings. Please register online at www.mpidfw.org.

CHAPTER CHARITIES

Bryan's House

The MPI D/FW Chapter Charity Relations committee will once again honor Bryan's House as the January Monthly Charity. We will be accepting cash donations through the RED Sock Program. At Bryan's House, they don't just care for children infected with HIV/AIDS. They provide kids affected by HIV/AIDS with the quality of life they deserve. Their primary service is medically managed childcare. They also provide child development programs, support groups, play therapy, school supplies and clothes, birthday and holiday gifts, summer camp and, most importantly, hugs and understanding! The staff, volunteers and supporters give their time and resources to ensure that Bryan's House continues to safeguard not only our children's health, but the most precious gift of all—childhood. Please fill those little red socks on Jan. 22 at the Chapter meeting!



Alzheimer's Association-Greater Dallas Chapter

At the February Chef's Challenge Program, we will be accepting cash donations to benefit the Alzheimer's Association. Established in 1983, this association is dedicated to providing support and assistance to persons affected by Alzheimer's disease and their families. The Greater Dallas Chapter is the only centralized professional source of support for Alzheimer's families and caregivers in the Dallas and surrounding counties. We provide a broad range of programs and services, educational classes, and support to a concentrated range of 34 counties serving an estimated 50,000 Northeast Texas persons with Alzheimer's and their families.

Dallas Chapter provides support, guidance and training for families through various programs including respite care assistance, MedicAlert + Safe Return, a 24-hour helpline, caregiver classes, support groups, chapter newsletters and online information. Don't forget a little cash when you attend the Chef's Challenge in February!

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Interested in becoming a staff writer for *Current*?
E-mail editor@mpidfw.org for more information.

SCENE

Our Chapter members have been quite busy lately, attending events such as MPI D/FW's October and November monthly programs.



MEMBERSHIP CORNER

MPI International has launched initiatives to assist its membership in navigating the current economic situation. Visit MPIweb.org to learn about Career Connections, the six-month Membership Dues Relief Program, and the Natural Disaster Relief Fund.

Career Connections offers our community and the industry a marketplace for employment. Members are allowed to post their resumes free of charge. Member employers at a discounted rate can also post open positions. MPI is aggressively marketing Career Connections to increase the number of employment opportunities for our members.

Membership Dues Relief Program is an extension of a current membership for six months at time of expiration if the member cannot renew due to job loss or career change. This allows members to take full advantage of networking opportunities during a time when it is urgently needed.

Natural Disaster Relief Fund – MPI will waive membership dues for up to one full year for members that have recently been affected by a natural disaster. Additionally, MPI will continue to support the affected chapters by continuing to fund the rebate for those members who apply and are approved for the 'hardship membership.'

MeetDifferent in February 2009 is offering an early registration discount to planners. Contact Member Care at (972) 702-7032 for more detailed information on these programs.

If you haven't attended a program, here's what you have been missing!



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City Talk is a spotlight on the new development and upcoming events in our Chapter's cities, brought to you by your local Convention and Visitors Bureaus.

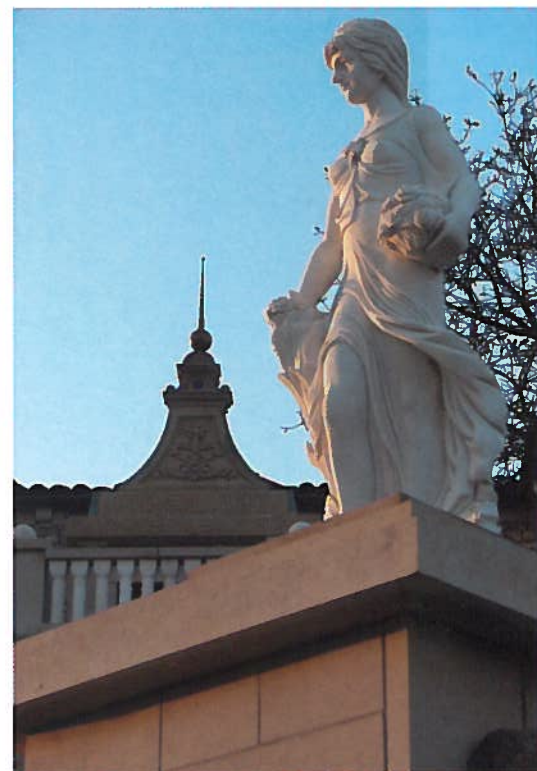
Upcoming Developments: City of McKinney



Grand Hotel & Ballroom.

Coming to McKinney in 2009-2010

- Convention Center and 220-room Westin Hotel (projected opening in summer 2010)
- LaQuinta Hotel (Highway 121 and Alma Road in Craig Ranch – completion projected in 2009)



Visit the Mediterranean without Leaving the United States!

Visitors to McKinney don't have to leave the state of Texas to visit the Mediterranean, as a very detailed replica of a Croatian village is taking shape in the heart of McKinney. While some shopping, offices and dining options are already open, the completed Adriatica will feature a boutique hotel, meeting space, wedding chapel, fishing galleon, floating stage with amphitheater, piazza, bell tower, palm trees, stone streets and carvings, and a plethora of Old World-style shops and restaurants. The vision of developer Jeffery Blackard, Adriatica will be a truly unique destination for business and leisure travelers.

New Lodging Options in McKinney

Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites: The name may be familiar to travelers worldwide, but

McKinney's new Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites, which opened in September 2008, is unlike any other Holiday Inn. All 99 of the full-service hotel's plush king and queen rooms and king suites feature refrigerators, microwaves, ceiling fans and Wi-Fi Internet access. Guests also have access to the fully equipped fitness center, lagoon-style indoor pool, guest business center, restaurant and lounge.

Long before the hotel opened, bookings were coming in for the meeting space, which consists of a 2,900-square-foot dividable ballroom and a boardroom that can accommodate 15 people and features a 42-inch screen for presentations. The ballroom features drop-down multimedia screens at both ends of the room, projectors and Internet accessible ports.

Grand Hotel & Ballroom Expansion: An expansion project recently began on

the Grand Hotel & Ballroom located in the heart of historic downtown McKinney. The 14-room hotel and ballroom currently occupies about 7,000 square feet above Rick's Chophouse. The 16,000-square-foot expansion being built just west of the existing building contains an additional 32 rooms and will feature a newly expanded lobby. The banquet and meeting space at the Grand Hotel and the adjoining Rick's Chophouse, which can accommodate groups up to 250, will not be directly affected by the expansion project, slated for completion in April 2009.

continued on page 14 >



McKinney's new Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites.

The city's new downtown square.



Michael Johnson Performance Center.

For More Information

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Revisit the New Historic Downtown McKinney

The heart of McKinney's historic district received a facelift over the first nine months of 2008. Wide bricked sidewalks, enclosed dining areas, additional parking spaces and updated landscaping greet visitors to the renovated downtown square of this growing city. The wider sidewalks are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also offer improved pedestrian movement and safety as well as space for outdoor dining.

Focusing on Wellness: McKinney's Craig Ranch

Pro and amateur athletes have multiple options when it comes to fitness and training in McKinney. Check out these prestigious facilities, all of which are located in McKinney's Craig Ranch area:

- **Michael Johnson Performance Center:** Five-time U.S. Olympic track gold medalist Michael Johnson opened his fully equipped training facility in McKinney during the summer of 2007 where professional and aspiring Olympic athletes hone their skills.
- **TPC Craig Ranch:** This 72-par acclaimed golf course and club provide a unique setting for meetings, formal dinners and celebrations, offering 43,000 square feet of hospitality space.
- **Cooper Fitness Center & Spa:** The "father of aerobics," Dr. Kenneth Cooper, established this McKinney location featuring state-of-the-art training equipment, expert training and luxurious pampering.
- **Times Square:** Currently under construction, the newest project in Craig Ranch will feature shopping, lodging, dining and residential space. **D**

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BEE the brand

— Creating Buzz is the Key to Events that Blossom

Taking a Holistic Approach to Event Marketing Will Have Prospects Coming to You in Droves



By Kristie Vento

When it comes right down to it, it is all about buzz. *Buzz* – noun. a low, vibrating, humming sound, as of bees, machinery, or people talking¹. The goal in any marketing effort is to generate buzz; to get your public talking about you and your business so they are marketing your event for you. It is interesting how analogous the word buzz is to how we may sometimes feel when we are planning an event and to the process of bringing that event to fruition. Political theorists throughout history have likened colonies of bees to a model of human society, working together in the colony to produce the ultimate win – honey². Similarly, we all aspire in our own colonies/organizations for

the sweet nectar of success – a great event; and we do not want to break out in hives to get there. Like worker bees, we flutter around trying to determine how to drive traffic to our event, how to make it the most incredible event ever held in natural history and, at the end of the day, how to impress our clients, so they will hire us for their next big event and to blossom our client relationships.

No matter what type of event we are



hosting, we must be sure we are taking a holistic approach and staying on brand/theme by creating pre-event marketing and buzz; by being creative on-site; by staging post-event follow-up and embracing the extraordinary will allow you to achieve the sweet smell of success.

Bee a Brand Ambassador

The most important component in producing a successful event is to stay true to your brand and loyal to your messaging. Themes are fun and creative, but make sure that in every aspect of the theme, you are reinforcing your Unique Selling Proposition and your Value Proposition, not just producing an event with mirrors and lights. One example of this would be to create signature hors d'oeuvres and drinks that are representative of your brand. It's all in the details. My company once planned a grand opening/open house for a law firm called Bailey, Galyen & Gold. The drink of the evening was Bailey's Galyen and Goldschlager, and we served chilled Bailey's with a shot of Goldschlager in a logo signature shot glass that the guests could take home. The sensory details are what burn an experience to memory, so give your guests a sensory experience from the moment they open the invitation or marketing piece until the moment they leave your event.

Pre-event Marketing

From media relations, announcements to invitations and marketing pieces, the key here is to call your audience to action – make them turn out in droves to your event.

Media: No matter how much training we have, none of it comes with a user's guide on how to win over the media. It all comes down to newsworthiness – and that based on space and time. Perhaps the best advice I can give involves ensuring that your pitch/message/event is audience-appropriate. Make sure you are targeting the right beat, the right reporter/writer and at the right time. Also, think outside the proverbial media box, and think toward promotions. Team up with the promotions teams at local TV/radio outlets and invite them on-site, if appropriate, to cover the event, because they are often looking for promotional opportunities and added value for their

listeners and advertisers. Help them facilitate that process and become an ally. One idea is to create a pre-event marketing flyer or unique piece that inspires your colony of prospects to act – give them a reason to come to your booth or to sponsor your event. Determine what that hook is, exploit it, and they will make a bee line to your booth or to your event.

Marketing: Especially applicable to trade shows, make sure you give your prospects a reason to come see you. Promotional items in the booth/event are great tools, but think bigger. Call them to action by offering an enter-to-win that is relevant to your brand, and do it with a pre-event marketing piece with your booth number on it. You might ask them to complete a survey and present it in person for a chance to win something, so that you can differentiate between good leads and those who we call 'freebie seekers.'

On-site Marketing

You've planted the seed with your pre-event marketing, so continuity and differentiation are keys in the next stage – on-site marketing. Buzz creation doesn't stop in your pre-event activity. Remember, it is a sensory experience. When on-site at a trade show, for example, differentiate yourself in the sea of booths. Do a booth promotion that reflects who you are and what value proposition you bring to your audience. Be inventive! Offer a show promotion that involves all the booths in a



scavenger hunt format or other activity. Also, make sure your premiums reflect who you are. A few years ago, we attended a trade show where everywhere you looked you saw screeching monkeys soaring through the air. The entire show floor was abuzz about where to get one of these slingshot monkeys. The exhibitor's mascot was an ape – hence the flying monkeys with logos on the cape – sensory. If you are a hotelier and your value proposition is a comfortable bed, then bring that bed to the show, stage a hotel room, and invite your guests to lie down for a foot massage or other sensory experience. Be unique. Stay true to your brand. Accentuate your unique selling proposition.

Post-Event Marketing

We visit with many salespeople who claim they are great with the pitch but struggle with asking for the sale. They are great at the pollination process, but when it comes to putting the honey in the jar, they falter. The same applies with events. You have to follow through on your efforts and ask for the commitment to your brand. Whether the media, your audience, your fellow exhibitors or your partners and contributors, make sure you are cultivating those seeds that you planted to actually harvest the relationships. Offer your media contacts a follow-up story, just in case your event news was trumped by other pressing news, and send them pictures, so they have the sensory experience without having been there. Follow-up with your prospects while the event is top of mind to avoid the loss of that brand equity you built as the buzz subsides.

By staying true to these fundamental event marketing activities and by staying true to your brand in the process, you will generate the type of buzz that will serve as a springboard for your brand and for your message. When you are asked how you pulled off such a great branding expo, you can simply reply, "None of your beeswax." ■

¹ Dictionary.com – <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/buzz>
² Wikipedia.com – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honey_bees

Fresh SPACES

New Ideas for Venues to Host Your Next Event

With the new year comes new meetings and events. Many planners constantly ask themselves, "How can you make a bang with my meeting?" and, "How can I 'wow' my guests when they enter my next event?" There are many places that would be more than suitable for your next meeting, but you want that special location.

Dallas and Fort Worth are full of great venues that meet all price points and styles. Here are a few fresh spaces you might want to check out before booking your next event.



By Noemi Aguirre
Wolfgang Puck Catering
Union Station/Reunion Tower



The Stoneleigh Hotel and Spa

2927 Maple Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75201

A historic Dallas hotel is a great place to hold your next event. With this hotel being built in 1932, it provides a historical and iconic feel of the city. The Stoneleigh Hotel and Spa offers a Grand Salon and the Penthouse for events. With a total of 4,856 square feet, this event space can accommodate 300 people reception style. The penthouse reminds guests of Château Versailles in Paris, with each room in the penthouse introducing a new, fresh feeling.

"Our property is for the more intimate event and those that are looking for truly something different," says Director of Catering Billie DeLaRosa. "Our penthouse has that look, appeal and attraction with the décor, the 'homie' feel and beautiful views."

If you want a unique and memorable event, The Stoneleigh is the perfect place to host your next luncheon or reception. For more information, contact DeLaRosa at (469) 375-5847 or by e-mail at BDelarosa@stoneleighhotel.com

Norris Conference Centers – Fort Worth

304 Houston Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

Norris Conference Centers are located in Houston, Austin, San Antonio and now in Fort Worth (Sundance Square). Since 1990, when the first Norris Conference Center opened, its philosophy has been that long-term customer service is synonymous with "event perfection." Norris Conference Centers commit to creating an experience for clients, that from beginning to end, is pleasant, efficient and, most of all, culminates in a totally successful event. Norris Conference Centers specialize in day meetings and social events such as wedding receptions, graduation parties, Quinceañera and so on.

The Fort Worth location is located in downtown Sundance Square and surrounded by restaurants, entertainment and hotel options. The doors opened on Oct. 10 and has just over 20,000 square feet of meeting space, including two ballrooms.

Log on to
[www.norriscenters.com/
FortWorth](http://www.norriscenters.com/FortWorth)
to get more information
on this spectacular new property.

Fresh SPACES



Hilton Bella Harbor

2055 Summer Lee Drive
Rockwall, Texas 75032

Set sail for a meeting or event overlooking the beautiful Lake Ray Hubbard. It is not just another Hilton. The complete theme of the hotel is built around water, and it can be seen from the entrance all the way through the hotel. This resort-style hotel can offer you everything from a ballroom to a private dinner for two in its wine room. The convenience of the hotel linked in with a movie theatre and other restaurants will give your overnight attendees options without having to leave the area. They can even take a sunset ride on the hand-built catamaran each evening.

With a total of 25,000 square feet of event space, you are able to hold your business meetings, and after take in the panoramic views of the lake while enjoying cocktails in its variety of options for event space.

Do not let the drive to Rockwall scare you from coming to use this hidden treasure to the northeast. To book your meeting or event, please call (214) 771-3700 ext. 5109 or e-mail dalrw_salesadm@hilton.com



The Sanford House Inn and Spa

506 N. Center
Arlington, Texas 76011

Tucked away from the hustle of its adjoining cities, The Sanford House Inn and Spa provides a retreat away while not being far from home. This family-owned inn will impress you with its Grand Courtyard for events, dining room to hold meetings and cottages for those who prefer to not stay in the main house. Across the street you will find the spa, which can provide a relaxing afternoon after a long day off meetings or a great pampering prior to a wedding.

The Sanford House Inn and Spa will give you attendees the convenience of the office while being at home. To schedule your meeting or event, call (817) 861-2129 or log on to www.thesanfordhouse.com for more information.



WINNING the Battle



The economy stinks. It's the worst since the Great Depression. My 401K is now a 201K. Will I get laid off? Will anyone travel? So many questions. So much negativity. And, in many cases, rightfully so. But, is it time to turtle, or to dig in and find other ways to succeed?

First some facts. Most expect that 2009 will be a year in which the travel and meetings industry will see significant shifts in the way companies travel. Many expect the number of meetings to decline, or at the very least, the number of attendees will. Others expect that less spouses will travel, eliminating the lucrative opportunities to entertain these leisure guests as part of a business meeting.

But, it is not all doom and gloom. Lower fuel costs may help corporate bottom lines. And *Business Traveler* magazine reports that 81 percent of respondents plan to or are considering extending a business trip to include time with family and friends.

Is there an end in sight? A group of industry experts at a recent GlobeSt.com Webinar see 2009 as a continuation of a challenging economic climate, with relief and opportunity arriving by mid-2010.

Now is the time to thoroughly review your business plan for 2009. Will you do more targeting of local groups, offering them the same amenities they can get elsewhere, without the expense of travel? Will you be the company that is flexible in 2009, while building 2010 business with those that are struggling in the short term? Will you stick to your contracts? Only you know the right decisions, but you need to game plan NOW, so you are not caught off-guard by the inevitable challenges this economy will present to everyone in the meetings industry.

To provide an expert D/FW opinion, I posed some questions to three of our industry leaders to get their take on the economic impact on their business. Respondents are Tim Arnold, VP National Accounts at Hospitality Performance Network; Jesh Batra, associate director of sales at The Adolphus; and Nancey Hernandez of the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau.



By Dave Fleming
Man vs. Office

VS. THE ECONOMY

Q How is the current state of the U.S. economy affecting your business?

Arnold: It is not affecting my business right now. The state of the economy is actually causing more people to use my services to maximize their time and save money for their company.

Batra: We have seen a slow down, clients putting their meetings on hold or asking for cheaper rates to justify pricing. Meeting planners are not willing to sign contracts for anything past three months out. Some larger groups are canceling because it would be cheaper to pay cancellation than move forward with the meeting.

Hernandez: Companies are watching spending VERY closely. This directly affects meetings and tradeshow as the cutback in spending can mean less attendees (and a decrease in room blocks). For large tradeshow, some exhibiting companies are cutting the number of people in their booths. I am seeing some VERY last-minute cancellations. This is tough on both the suppliers and planners in our industry. Suppliers have to find a way to recoup last-minute losses, and the buyers are faced with keeping their end of an agreement (attrition, cancellation fees, etc).

Q What are you doing differently because of the economy? Or, what have you stopped doing?

Batra: We are definitely much more careful with our monies. We are taking groups that we would not normally take during certain periods. We are focused on finding new business. We are keeping more in touch with past clients to see what they are doing with meetings in 2009 and beyond.

Hernandez: Personally, I have to be very careful with my marketing budget for business expenses. I have to make sure every dollar I spend counts and will ultimately result in business booked in our city. I have to be creative, and I look for the best ways to include partnership in my efforts.

By including Strategic Partnerships, I can have a greater impact (create a larger event) and give a good return for the partners involved.

Q Do you anticipate less meetings and events in 2009?

Arnold: Thus far, none of my clients have cancelled or postponed any meetings, but they are also being a bit more cautious in the numbers they are projecting for future meetings.

Batra: We do believe that we will see less meetings, and possibly smaller meetings, rather than totally cancelled meetings.

Hernandez: Not necessarily – but I anticipate tighter budgets. I also see a potential trend toward combining events to save on travel costs.

Now is the time to thoroughly review your business plan for 2009.

Q What have you done to overcome downturns in the economy in the past? What have you learned then that you put to use now?

Arnold: Past downturns have taught me to diversify my client base, so I am not dependent on one client or one sector. I also make sure I am adding value to my clients and their meetings at every stage, in order to be as invaluable to them as possible.

Batra: We work with groups and their attrition clauses, will be more flexible with attrition fees, stay true to our budgets, cut costs where possible. Look everywhere you can for business; stay positive, listen to your clients.

Hernandez: I have learned to create and maintain long-term relationships. Often, when times get tough, these are the folks who can help send business your way. I will stress a need to focus on supplier to supplier relationships as well! Cultivate a network of “friendly competitors.”

Q Any other final thoughts/advice to our membership?

Arnold: Turn off the TV news, and shut out those who would like you to believe the Great Depression is right around the corner. I do not know what the economy is going to do for the short term, but I have unwavering confidence in the market and the economy in the long term.

Batra: When working with hotels, from a supplier perspective, work with your planners, not necessarily ‘giving it away.’ There is no need to panic; this market will turnaround.

Hernandez: I recommend you develop a consultative approach when working with each other. For example, if someone is trying to book business with you and the business doesn’t “fit,” suggest

alternate ways to make it a “win-win” for each other. For hotels and venues, that may mean offering creative solutions to bring a group to your property (day-of-week pattern, adding a reception, etc.). For meeting or event planners, you may be able to offer flexibility in order to get the best financial package. This practice applies to almost all of us. Ultimately, you may have to turn away the business, but be sure to give a referral. Your friendly competitor will appreciate it and the customer will remember you in the future! ▀

Dave Fleming of *Man vs. Office* is a corporate jungle survival expert. He has survived more than 18 years inside the corporate jungle and currently speaks and entertains on productivity and humor in the workplace. Fleming can be reached at (214) 718-3121, www.manvsoffice.com or dave@manversusoffice.com



I am CMP

Shawn Quish, CMP, ACC
Worldwide Meeting Management, Inc.
Garland, Texas



I am an independent planner who plans meetings and events around the world, and I always make time to take a weeklong cruise every year with family and friends.

CMP designees represent the top 12 percent of all meeting planners who plan meetings, conventions and events throughout the United States and around the world. Currently, 12,549 professionals in 35 countries and territories across the globe have the advanced training and experience required to be called a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP). Working with a CMP assures the client that they are aligning with a true professional.

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THINKING Beyond the Trend

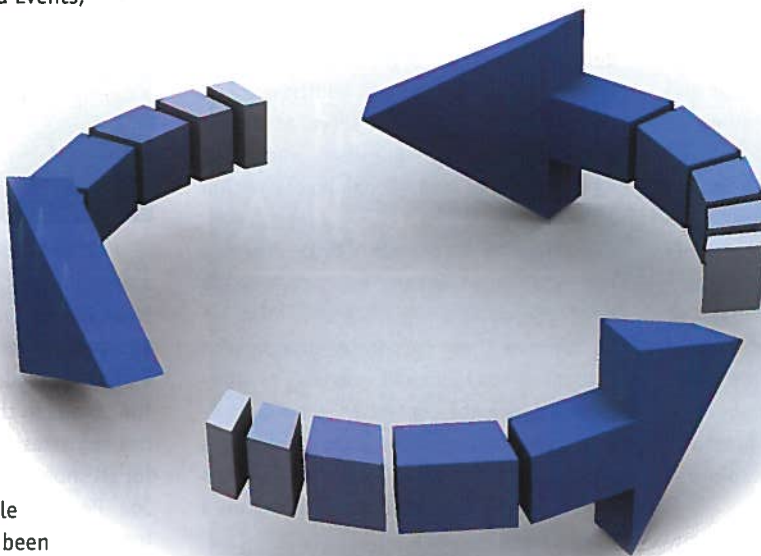
A Look at Some of the Current Trends in Event Design and Décor

By Courtney Jordan
Magic Moments Parties and Events,
Inc.

Trends change each season. Fads come and go. Cycles continue with ups and downs. We are in interesting times, where everyone wants to be cutting-edge, but is restrained by fleeting finances. In the event industry, everyone is challenged to make their affair more memorable than the last. "Never been done before" and "out of the box" are phrases we often hear as we try to describe the overall desired experience of a meeting or event. There are lots of new products out there that are constantly changing and giving us food for thought. But while innovation is great, it is also important to think beyond the trend and create your own personal twist.

When it comes to décor, there are many trends that we have noticed lately and are worth sharing. It is my hope that you take these ideas and run with them, pushing the limits and making them your own.

Trends in décor typically are reflective of trends in fashion. This season is known for warm grey tones in varying shades. Bright tones of orange and purple are also big and complement these grey undertones nicely. Lounge furniture continues to be extremely popular for both social and corporate events, and sprucing it up with bright pillows makes it all the more chic. It promotes a desired level of comfort and fosters conversation, which makes for an overall more enjoyable experience.



On the note of comfort, another major trend we have seen is a return to comfort food and décor. Themes like fireside chats, Moroccan lounges and a return to childhood bring a sense of comfort and excitement to any group. Ideas such as toasting marshmallows, board games and candies from our childhood days are always a hit. Call it the economy or maybe just a return to the simpler days, whether it be plush pillows and colorful patterns, an outdoor fireplace or good old mac-and-cheese, people are really enjoying this concept.

Reflection has also been a recurring motif. Mirror tabletops, chandeliers, guest table card displays or vases are just a few examples of some of the mirror décor. Whether it be transforming basic rectangular tables to stunning mirror masterpieces or using them to visually help enlarge a space, mirrors and the idea of reflection have definitely become a way of making any event just a little more elegant.

Incorporating an element of surprise is always a great way to keep guests' attention and maintain the level of excitement throughout the evening. Lighting is a great way to quickly transition the mood from one to the next.

I was at a party recently where I heard a story about an event where the entire group met at what they thought was the event location to find that they were all being bused to an unknown space. After some driving, the bus stopped in what appeared to be a dark field. The guests were told they had reached their destination, and right on cue, a tremendous display of lights and color switched on in a coordinated sequence to light up the night. Reminiscent of the Opening Ceremony at the Beijing Olympics, these types of surprising displays of light and color provide a strong impact and continue to resonate with guests for the rest of the event.

Playing with proportions is also a common idea that continues to play a part of event design and décor. Oversized props have been around forever. Taking more mundane everyday items and either enlarging them or reducing their size really creates an interesting dynamic and contrast to keep the event interesting. Simple objects like lamp shades and picture frames can be drawn out to extreme proportions to help fill a space. Likewise, "mini" items such as food and table décor continue to

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Freeman: Beyond the GREEN

By Dina Evans
A&H AwardPro

Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR, has many facets beyond just being eco-friendly and greening your company. CSR involves being responsible to your community, your people and the environment. Basically, it's having good character and walking the walk before ever having to talk the talk.

CSR is about setting a standard within your company that exudes good business practices inside your office walls and spills out into your community and your industry. When selecting a supplier partner, CSR should be a top component in your screening process. Freeman is one such supplier in our industry and has become a leader in innovation in green practices in addition to caring for their employees and community.

Freeman is a family-owned company that has built its core values around a code of ethical business practices and a commitment to its people, the community, the environment and its industry. As a leader in the event industry, Freeman attributes its growth to its care and commitment to its everyday CSR practices.

Ellen Beckert, Freeman's corporate director of marketing, is encouraging others to heighten their awareness that CSR entails more than just greening practices. "CSR is about being true to your people, your community and your environment. Yes, 'going green' is the new buzz phrase, but don't forget about the rest of your responsibilities," she says.

Employees actively participate in community programs and fundraising efforts on national and local levels. Whether it's walking in the American Heart Association Start! Heart Walk, distributing gifts at the "Love for Kids" holiday event, or setting up a Texas-sized bingo game for more than 1,000 seniors from retirement centers, Freeman gives back.

The events and exhibition industry is riding a wave of trends and face-to-

face marketing needs that depends upon continual education and professional development. Freeman supports this growth through financial grants, student scholarships, mentor programs and training opportunities. In addition, many of Freeman's employees serve at different capacities as volunteer leaders at local, national and global levels within its industry.

Within its 70 branch offices, Freeman has established Green Teams comprising employee owners who take the initiative to improve their corporate environment through innovation and everyday practices. From climate-controlled window tinting and motion-sensor lighting fixtures to the recycling practices, the Freeman offices are helping our environment on a daily basis.

CSR is about setting a standard within your company that exudes good business practices inside your office walls and spills out into your community and your industry.

Besides its own corporate practices, Freeman leads its industry in implementing new eco-friendly standards for greening tradeshows. As one of the biggest general service contractors, Freeman has taken the time to develop small steps, which have yielded huge results. Online exhibitor service ordering, recycling aisle carpet, reusing event signage, A/V technology and utilizing recycled modular structural systems and event components have all lessened the carbon footprint.

"Freeman has implemented touches with the Natural Products shows, including using sign substrates that are 100-percent recycled for show cards instead of standard foam-core substrates, biodegradable and compostable can liners



and table tops, rental carpet that's made from 75-percent recycled content and is 100-percent recyclable, and using Plyboo, a plywood made from bamboo, for a lot of the stands in the lobby area, in panels for the registration and entrance units and for all show management structures," said Joe Pestka, national accounts manager for Freeman.

Freeman also has integrated a unique manufacturing partnership resulting in the recycling of more than 44 million square feet of used aisle carpet since June 2006. The recycled carpet is used for drainage pipe for septic systems, dramatically reducing landfill waste. In 2008, Freeman received *Trade Show Executive* magazine's Innovation Award for its significant impact in waste reduction of events through this carpet recycling effort.

When selecting a supplier partner for your next event or meeting, you should feel confident that your supplier partner uses CSR practices before, during and after the event has concluded. Freeman deserves the spotlight as a supplier who truly cares and can "walk the walk." ▀

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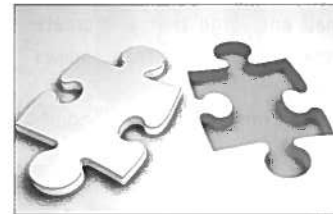
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be a big hit. It is when you mix this dynamic of small and large that you create a playful sense of space that really makes your event unique.

Finally, aside from the fickle economy,

the other pressing issue these days is the environment. Green and other eco-friendly design ideas continue to be a major trend and often are an essential component to any meeting or event. LED lighting

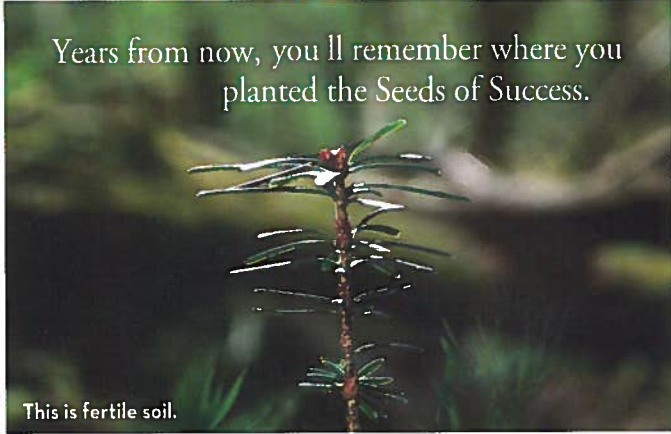
continues to be increasingly popular due to its increased functionality as well as energy efficiency. Centerpieces consisting of potted plants, fruits and vegetables, or other recyclable materials are also a great way to consider the environment. No matter your effort, this is a trend that we definitely cannot afford to look past.

While each of these trends is certainly influential and can help shape a theme or décor concept for an event, it is taking these ideas and using them as a springboard to really create your own dramatic design schemes that make an event truly unique. At Magic Moments, we are all about "custom" and like to take an idea and stretch it to make it individual to each event. Whether it is a custom sign, lighting or giant prop that distinguishes your event, or simply a recurring theme that is carried throughout each aspect, taking a trend and making it your own is key to creating an ultimate special event that will have your guests talking long after the tables have been cleared and the last votive candle burns out. **D**

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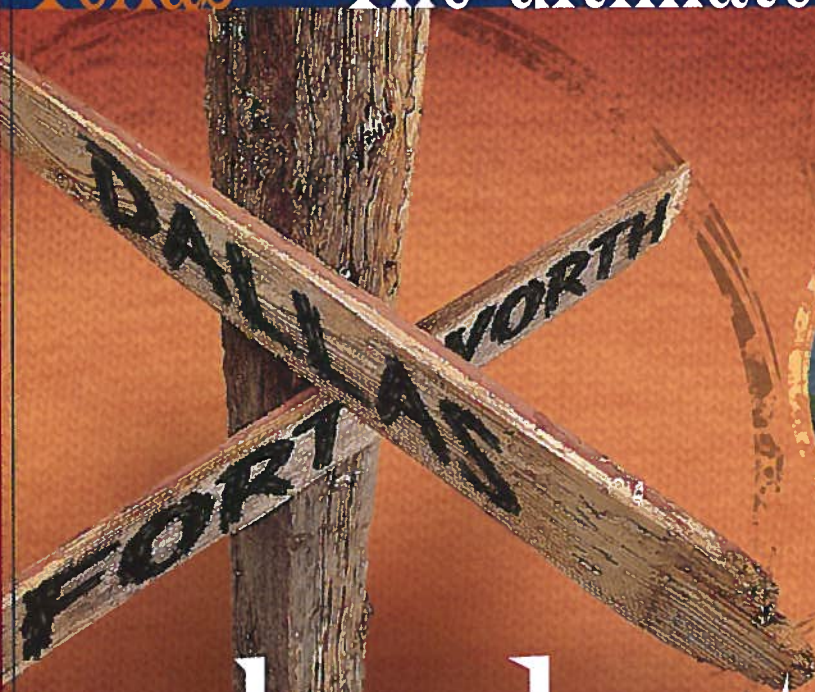
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