

## Contest Entry

May 14, 2009

Michael Robinson

Re: How do you surround yourself with adventure in Uvalde?

*I have lived and worked in the Uvalde area for about two and a half years. The great thing about spending time in Uvalde is you do not have to surround yourself with adventure; adventure surrounds you. The real question for me is: Am I aware of the adventure that surrounds me while I am in Uvalde?*

*Author William Least Heat-Moon summed it up best with an observation from his book, Blue Highways. In the book, he stated one does not have to go searching for adventure. It is ridiculously easy to find! I find this is true when I am in Uvalde, and oftentimes the little adventures I find are delightful.*

*One of the first adventures I encountered occurred in fall of 2006. There were millions if not billions of snout nose butterflies fluttering around town. Most vehicles had splattered bugs all over them!*

*Shortly after I arrived here, I remember writing about some of my observations about Uvalde. In this piece, I mentioned the Rexall Drug Store lunch counter and soda fountain. I also stated that the pace is a bit slower here and that town folks know each other. I went on to say that the night sky outside of town is dark and the Milky Way band is clearly seen. When I shared these and several other observations about Uvalde with a friend whom I had worked with in the Temple Belton area, he said what I was describing sounded almost like a dream?*

*One of the things I enjoy about my job is stepping out the front door of the newspaper office and walking around the downtown area to go see my customers. It seems like everyone has a story to tell. While we all have our daily challenges and obstacles, most folks seem to have a knack for finding something to smile and laugh about even on the most difficult of days.*

*A special way I have found adventure in Uvalde and at nearby Fort Inge Historic Park is by looking up at the night sky. As an amateur astronomer, I was*

*excited to come live in this area because Uvalde has a wonderful natural resource right in its backyard: a beautiful, starry night sky. The stars, major constellations are easily seen just outside of town at Fort Inge. In November of 2007, I set up my two telescopes on the downtown square and invited the public to view the moon, the planet Jupiter and a comet. Even in the heart of Uvalde, I was able to spot the comet!*

*Following that event, my wife and I have hosted several public star programs or "star parties" at Fort Inge. During these events, we let people look at the visible planets and other night sky objects such as star clusters, gaseous nebula and distant galaxies through two telescopes. I also point out and trace the patterns of the major constellations using a green laser pointer.*

*I do these programs because I enjoy sharing my hobby and passion with others. During the last star program held last April for a Cub Scout pack, I enjoyed watching people get excited about seeing the planet Saturn through the telescope, some for the first time.*

*As an amateur astronomer who was an active member of the Central Texas Astronomical Society, I miss observing with my astronomy friends and hope that as interest in astronomy increases, perhaps an amateur astronomy club could be established right here in Uvalde County. An astronomy club with passion for service and education could benefit Uvalde. It could make the science of astronomy accessible to the public and offer a practical means to get students excited about science and learning in general.*

*Finally, Uvalde is a wonderful place to hear two different languages spoken. Several years ago I took a Spanish course in college. Since then, I have informally been trying to learn the language. While I have a long way to go to becoming a fluent speaker of Spanish, I have been amazed at how much Spanish I have learned since I have been in the Uvalde area. I attribute this in part to the environmental Spanish that surrounds us here. I sometimes dare to speak the Spanish language with some patient Spanish speaking friends. If you want to learn a new language, it helps to practice speaking the language with others and not be afraid to make mistakes.*

*Adventure surrounds you in Uvalde. Can you see it?*