



# 43 YEARS & COUNTING

by Joe Herring

With the upcoming 43rd anniversary of the Kerrville Folk Festival, I thought I'd dig through my files for a bit of its history:

Rod Kennedy, who died about a year ago, gave me a remarkable document years ago: a program from the first Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair, of which the first Kerrville Folk Festival was a part.

It is remarkable for many reasons: its words, pictures and design evoke a spirit that thrived in this place that summer of 1972.

From the welcoming letters printed in the front of the book from Governor Preston Smith, Schreiner Junior College and Preparatory School President Sam Junkin, and the first Executive Director of the Arts & Crafts Fair, Phil Davis (of the Texas Tourist Development Agency), all the way to the list of exhibitors (including my dad and an old platen printing press) – you can tell that Kerrville was on the ball, making a difference for itself in the state.

The Fair was held for 6 days, starting on a Tuesday and running through Saturday, on the campus of Schreiner Institute. Admission was \$1.00 for adults and 50 cents for children. Parking was free.

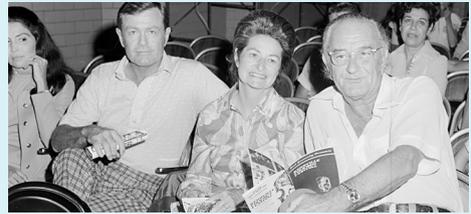
Rod Kennedy produced the first Kerrville Folk Festival June 1, 2, and 3 (Thursday through Saturday) at the Kerrville Municipal Auditorium, with a \$2.50 per person admission. Other things were going on during the same time: Schreiner Institute offered a production of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown," and the Hill Country Arts Foundation had a Neil Simon comedy, "Come Blow Your Horn."

The program is filled with ads for the expected restaurants and hotels – but also packed with ads for real estate. I'm thinking more than a few people, once exposed to

Kerr County in such a positive way, loaded up the truckster and moved here.

I was 10 years old during that first fair and festival, but I remember it clearly. During the day I helped Mom and Dad at the tent where the old iron beast printing press was on display (and running, printing maps of the fair).

I remember it was blazing hot. Blazing. Lady Bird Johnson attended that first fair. I gave her a map.



I also remember attending the first Kerrville Folk Festival, crowded into the Kerrville Municipal Auditorium, listening to performers like Peter Yarrow, Allen Damron, Kenneth Threadgill and Carolyn Hester. I'm afraid I didn't make it through the entire show, falling fast asleep after a long day at the fair.

I'm proud of the Kerrville community for producing such dual (and diverse) shows for the world. And though I miss the Texas State Arts and Crafts Fair, I am certainly proud of its surviving twin, the Kerrville Folk Festival. I know Rod Kennedy would be proud of it as well.

You can find more by Joe Herring Jr. at [joehearingjr.com](http://joehearingjr.com)

*Joe Herring has a reputation as, "Kerrville's Historian." Joe has been collecting historical anecdotes and images for years and has been sharing them with the Hill Country community. If you want to see the evolution of Kerrville and the surrounding area as a rail head for sheep and cattle ranching to the modern town it is today, Joe is your go-to man. Join us each issue as Joe brings Texas history to Heart Beat's pages.*

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