



## Questions from Deep in the Heart of Texas

**Q Dear Boots,**  
**My child is starting at Baylor this year.** We are from the northwest, and when we brought him to campus it was our first time in Texas. I'm worried about how disconnected we might feel since we know so little about the state. What's the best way to get acquainted with Lone Star living?

— From, Oregon Mama

**A Dear Oregon Mama,**  
**My grandpa once told me that many questions can have more than one answer, and the more interesting answer will always be the less obvious one.** The obvious answer to your question is a Texas magazine columnist's dream. All

I'd need to do is rustle up some of my best Lone Star lingo about the joys of eating brisket, pairing big cowboy hats with Buc-ee's shirts and training yourself for summer by sitting in a sauna until you come to believe 95 degrees is a cool breeze.

The less obvious answer is more interesting in that it will not involve me talking like I just walked off the set of "Fandango", and it doesn't deliver the same end result for everyone.

You see, Oregon Mama, Texas is just like any other place, in that it doesn't take much work to adopt our cliches. You could figure out how to smoke brisket in the backyard as easily as I could lean into the life of an Oregonian and learn to quack like a duck while I watched college football. If you put your heart into it — and a little elbow grease into finding the right rub — I bet by Parent's Weekend you could pass yourself off as a regular visitor at

worst, and at best, as a native who left the state but is coming back as quick as she can. (Bumper stickers for that option are available wherever "Don't mess with Texas" T-shirts are sold.)

You asked how you could get acquainted with general life in this state, but my guess is that those easy-to-spot shortcuts would actually be useless to you in the long run. What you want is much more specific: to get acquainted with your son's life here. And there's really only one way to do that — you're going to have to ask him about it. Regularly. Even when he dodges the question. Especially when he has something important to study for so he "can't talk for long."

Then, when you visit, no matter how much you're just itching to check the boxes of sitting under the lights at a Friday night high school match-up and drinking a soda the size of a milk jug, you're going to

have to let him lead the way to the gems he's discovered.

I think life in this state is absolutely beautiful, but none of what pulls my heartstrings toward it would show up in a meme about Texas. That's what keeps it interesting; I think that's why so many of us choose to call it home.

— *Love, Boots*

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**Q Dear Boots,**  
**I saw that our very own Surf Waco was featured in a popular Texas magazine recently,** but I was disappointed that the writer was under the impression there are no good restaurants in Waco. Our little town has grown up a lot in the last decade. What's it going to take to get people to see us in a new light?

— *From, Waco Warrior*

**A Dear Waco Warrior,**  
**Well, Warrior, I don't know where you've been hanging out,** but I absolutely agree with that big-city magazine fella when I say that there is not a single good thing to eat in Waco. There's nowhere decent to stay. There's nothing fun to do. Any rumors people who don't live here have heard about some kind of large park in the middle of the city that's mostly unused even though it provides world-class mountain biking, hiking and kayaking on the Brazos, one of the most storied rivers in North America ... well, that's all just a load of bull honkey with extra honkey splashed on top.

Reading your letter, I got the feeling that I met one of your friends last week. I was sitting in the middle of town on a street corner, drinking some morning sludge that I brewed for myself, just wishing we had something like a coffee shop somewhere — I've heard bigger, fancier cities have things like

that — and this guy came up to me and started rattling my ear off about how Waco had more tourists than the Alamo one year, or something like that. He said our “livability” was super high, which I don’t know much about, but would definitely classify as mumbo jumbo. Seems to me like something fake scientists have come up with, probably polling people’s *friendliness* or *how happy they are* or something silly like that. I told him directly what I’ll tell you: “Keep your mouth shut, man!” Have you been to Austin lately and sat at a standstill on their highways? Have you tried to muscle your way through NorthPark in Dallas on a Saturday? Don’t even get me started on trying to get a seat at a restaurant in Houston.

Warrior, there are large amounts of people everywhere in Texas. Everywhere, except Waco. I, for one, am happy to sit on a street curb for as long as I need to if it helps make the argument that this place is the pits. The longer we can keep those magazine writers introducing our town with stories about Koresh, the better. Instead of being ticked off, you should be thanking him profusely. Remember — the longer the lies are alive, *the more we thrive*.

— *Love, Boots*

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