

THANKS TO ALL OF YOU FOR HELPING TO MAKE  
TEXAS A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY!

### *The Las Cuevas Ebony*

This year's award features a painting by Texas artist Ronnie Wells of Salado. It is the tenth in a series of historic tree paintings commissioned by the Texas Forest Service. The painting depicts a giant Texas ebony that stands high on the north bank of the Rio Grande, near the present town of Los Ebanos. From its vantage overlooking one of that river's more important fords, it has witnessed years of history unfold.

The history of this crossing is replete with incidents of cattle rustling, smuggling, banditry, and entry of wet-backs. Most of this illegal traffic was eliminated in 1950, when a hand-pulled ferry was installed and the crossing at Los Ebanos was made a U.S. Port of Entry.

Standing at the southwest corner of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Station, at the southern edge of the little town of Los Ebanos, this immense tree provides tired travelers a shady spot in which to wait for the hand-pulled ferry. Around its girth is a one-inch steel cable, which spans the river to hold the ferry.

It is not difficult to visualize this low-water crossing as it must have appeared centuries ago. The first recorded Spanish visit into the area was in the 1740s, when this ancient ford was crossed by explorers and colonists led by José de Escandón. In the Mexican War in 1846, General Zachary Taylor moved his army up river from Fort Brown and invaded Mexico from this spot. During the Civil War, on December 28, 1862, armed Mexican thieves crossed into Los Ebanos and attacked a Confederate wagon train; three teamsters died, and all the goods were lost.

Late in 1875, customs men learned that Mexican rustlers were picking up a large herd of cattle from the King Ranch and were heading south. When they were spotted at the Cuevas Crossing, the famous Texas Ranger Captain L. H. McNelly was summoned from Fort Ringgold. Captain Randlett and some troops of the 7th Cavalry accompanied McNelly and his Rangers to the crossing. Word was sent to the Mexican commandant at Las Cuevas (now San Miguel) requesting the return of the stolen cattle. When the Mexicans refused, Captain Randlett sent three customs men, six Rangers and about four of his troops across the river to get the cattle.

They were met in Las Cuevas by a small force of Mexican troops and townspeople, who engaged the "invaders" in a half-hour gun battle. All of the Americans later returned safely, but five Mexicans were killed. Only about half of the cattle were recovered. Among the Mexican defenders who died in the battle was Juan Flores Salinas, owner of the Las Cuevas Ranch.

During the 1920s and 1930s the crossing was again popular as a crossing for smugglers, who brought alcohol from Mexico. For the past two decades, the Las Cuevas Ebony has served as an anchor for the last hand-operated ferry on the U.S.-Mexican border. Today an average of about 100 cars pass under this tree each day, carrying travelers to Los Ebanos or to San Miguel. The crossing is currently not included in the 700 mile, \$1.2 billion border fence approved by Congress in the Secure Fence Act of 2006.

From the Hidalgo County Courthouse in Edinburg, go south on Bus. Hwy. 281/SH 113 for 6.6 mi., then turn right on US Hwy. 83N and go 25.3 mi. Turn left on FM 886 and go 1.9 mi. (through Los Ebanos) to the international crossing and ferry. Tree stands next to a state historical marker.

2008

## TEXAS TREE CONFERENCE

### AWARDS LUNCHEON

THE 2008 AWARDS PROGRAM IS SPONSORED BY THE  
TEXAS FOREST SERVICE

AND THE  
TEXAS CHAPTER OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ARBORICULTURE

TREE

CONFERENCE

CELEBRATING ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

HILTON COLLEGE STATION CONFERENCE CENTER



## 2008 TEXAS TREE CONFERENCE

### AWARDS LUNCHEON

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#### **Welcome and Introductions**

*John Giedraitis, President, Texas Chapter ISA*

#### **Invocation**

*Deacon Dave Mayes  
St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church  
College Station, Texas*

#### **Presentation of the Texas Community Forestry Awards**

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## 2008 AWARD WINNERS

### **Texas Community Forestry Awards**

#### **INDIVIDUAL AWARDS**

**2008 Texas Arborist of the Year**  
*Larry Maginnis*



**2008 Lifetime Achievement**  
*James B. Hull*

#### **PROJECT AWARDS**

**Arboricultural Project of the Year**  
*Residential Street Tree Pruning Program  
First Colony Community Association  
Margaret Hall Spencer, FCCA  
Steve Spears, FCCA*

**2008 Gold Leaf  
Landscape Beautification Co-Award**  
*West Texas Tree Planting  
Chapman Forestry Foundation  
Christie Billing, Chapman Forestry Foundation*

**2008 Gold Leaf  
Arbor Day Award**  
*El Paso Arbor Day  
Sam Calhoun, City of El Paso*



*All award winners are requested to have their  
photos taken either before or after the program.  
Thank you.*

