

TEXAS COUNTY & DISTRICT RETIREMENT SYSTEM

HORIZONS

A NEWSLETTER ESPECIALLY FOR TCDRS MEMBERS

FALL 2018



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On the cover...

After almost 20 years in law enforcement, Israel "Pody" Campos opened a barbecue restaurant in Pecos that has been twice recognized in Texas Monthly.

Former deputy reaches new career heights with West Texas barbecue joint

Story and photos by Gerald E. McLeod



Cooking great Texas barbecue is a lot of hard work and a lot of fun, says former Reeves County Chief Sheriff's Deputy Israel "Pody" Campos. He should know. His barbecue joint in Pecos has twice earned a coveted spot on *Texas Monthly's* list of Top 50 Barbecue Joints.

Everybody knows Israel as "Pody". He says he got the nickname in kindergarten from a sheep dog character in a children's book due to his shaggy hair at that time.

Pody, 44, got into barbecuing rather late in life. In West Texas, they cook beef over an open flame rather than smoking it by indirect heat like they do east of the Pecos

barbecue wherever I went," Pody says. "I'd never had Central [Texas] style barbecue before. One of my favorites was the original Rudy's [Country Store &] Barbecue in Leon Springs. We didn't have anything like that back home in Pecos."

"I learned a lot about different styles and methods," he says. "I bet I went to more

"I bet I went to more than a hundred different barbecue places over the years. I've got a lot respect for every kind of barbecue."

River. Pody says it's a holdover from the days of roundups and cattle drives.

In 2003, Pody's education in Texas barbecue began when he traveled the state to train sheriffs' offices on federal grants and grant writing for the Texas Municipal Police Association (TMPA). The position allowed him to work out of Pecos and Austin.

"I was driving all over the state to train law enforcement officers and trying the

than a hundred different barbecue places over the years. I've got a lot of respect for every kind of barbecue."

Taking a chance on barbecue

Then in 2011, the federal grant that paid for Pody's job with TMPA ended.

"They offered me a position full-time in Austin," Pody says. "But that would have meant I would have had to move my family

from Pecos. My whole family is in Pecos.”

Between jobs, Pody and his wife, Veronica, decided to take a chance: They bought an old cinder-block building that once housed a laundromat.

Veronica says she didn't hesitate when Pody came home with the restaurant idea. The thought of her husband going back to patrol as a deputy was a lot scarier than starting a restaurant.

“This is something he has always wanted to do,” she says. “Pody has always had a passion for cooking. He's always cooking something around the house.”

Eight months later, in August 2011, with help from family and friends, Pody's BBQ became Pecos' newest cathedral of smoked meat. The dining room is small, but has the homey feel of the real deal.

The Texas barbecue map

It wasn't long after opening that Pody met the man who would literally put Pody's BBQ on the Texas barbecue map.

Before he became the barbecue editor at *Texas Monthly*, Daniel Vaughn was working on a book about Texas barbecue when he stopped at Pody's for lunch.

Vaughn liked Pody's BBQ enough to add it to his book, *The Prophets of Smoked Meat: A Journey Through Texas Barbecue*.

The recognition continued when Pody made *Texas Monthly's* Top 50 Barbecue Joints list in 2013 and 2017.

“There have been people from



Running a barbecue restaurant requires long hours for Pody and Veronica Campos.

Australia, Japan and all over come in to sample our barbecue because of the list,” Pody says.

Evolution of a smokehouse

Over the years, Pody's BBQ has evolved and matured. Instead of cooking 10 briskets a day, he cooks 25 or more.

After trying different methods, he says that his barbecued pulled pork is now awesome, as far as he's concerned. Everybody raves about his Hatch Green Chile Cheddar Pozole. Both dishes tend to sell out during the lunch rush when oil company trucks fill the parking lot.

Vaughn is still a big fan of Pody's BBQ and has visited several times. “The nicest thing he has ever said to



me was, ‘You've really stepped up your game,’” Pody says.

“We're always looking to improve,” Pody says. “We're determined to do it right.”

He has lowered the temperature of the pit to between 228 and 230 degrees and increased the cooking time to make the briskets more tender. He mainly cooks with post oak, mesquite and pecan woods after experimenting with cherrywood.

More changes on the horizon

In 2012, a year after going into the restaurant business, Pody got a call from his friend Arturo “Art” Granado, who had just been elected sheriff of Reeves County.

“Just like the retirement system, we need to save for the future.”

“We started out on patrol together,” Pody says. “He always said that if he ever became sheriff then he wanted me to come work for him as chief deputy. He's a great guy and I couldn't say no.”

Life changed again for Pody in November when he was elected to the Reeves County Commissioners Court.

After almost 20 years in law enforcement and seven as a top pitmaster, Pody is looking forward to a new challenge in the courthouse.

“It's a form of public service working as a county commissioner,” Pody says. “This is not the same community that we grew up in,” Pody says. “The county has seen a lot of oil booms and busts. Just like the retirement system, we need to save for the future.” ★



Smooth Sailing

3 steps to a seaworthy TCDRS retirement

By Rebecca L. Bennett

Retirement should be a time of rest and rejuvenation, a respite from stress and the chaos of working life. With a little savings discipline during your working years (and with help from TCDRS' automatic savings plan feature), you can make that dream a reality.

Whether you can clearly see retirement on your horizon or you're just starting to set sail on your savings plan, let these three steps help you chart your course toward TCDRS retirement:



Sign up for an in-person or online personal benefit counseling session.

During your in-person or [online](#) personal benefit counseling session, a friendly TCDRS Member Services Field Representative will walk you through the TCDRS retirement process, help you understand everything there is to know about your account and answer all of your questions. Talking through your plans with a representative is a great way to determine if you're emotionally and financially ready to retire, or if you need to give it a few more years.



Estimate your possible future retirement benefit.

Before you set sail into retirement, it's important to explore your overall financial situation. During your personal benefit counseling session, your representative can help you run an estimate to determine your possible future benefit, which is calculated based on your account balance, employer matching and other factors. You can also run your own estimate anytime by signing into your account at www.TCDRS.org.



Determine your benefit payment option, retirement date and beneficiary.

Before you start your retirement application, it's a good idea to decide which benefit payment option works best for you, when you'd like to stop working, and who you will designate as the beneficiary or beneficiaries for your plan. These selections cannot be changed once your benefit starts, so carefully consider your options before proceeding.

Once you've completed these three steps, you can apply for retirement with confidence, knowing you've built yourself a seaworthy future. If you have any questions during the process, please contact TCDRS Member Services at 800-823-7782 and a representative will be happy to help you get oriented. ★

Chart your course to retirement with TCDRS Online Counseling

By Rachael Seeley Flores



TCDRS is now offering online, one-on-one counseling sessions to members who want to learn more about their TCDRS retirement benefits.

An online counseling session is just like having a face-to-face meeting with a TCDRS representative, but from the privacy of your own home or office. Here's what you need to know:

- **What you need.** All you need is a computer or mobile device and an internet connection. Webcams are optional if you want the representative to see you, but you'll still be able to see the representative and anything they share on the screen without one.
- **It's just like a Personal Benefit Counseling session, but online.** Each session is free and lasts 30 minutes. During the session, a representative will go over your TCDRS benefits, run customized estimates, review benefit payment options and answer any questions you might have. The discussion will also cover other things to consider as you plan for your future.
- **Spouses and other retirement crewmates are welcome.** You are welcome to invite your spouse or anyone else who is helping you navigate the retirement process.
- **You can sign up today.** Just visit www.TCDRS.org/OnlineCounseling to register. Once you select a date and time, you will receive a confirmation email with instructions on how to access your session.

If you have any questions about TCDRS Online Counseling, visit www.TCDRS.org/OnlineCounseling or call TCDRS Member Services at 800-823-7782.

Living with a Retiree

By Gerald E. McLeod



Gerald McLeod was the TCDRS Communications Manager for 17 years. He is now happily retired. TCDRS asked him to share his experiences while living with his wife, who retired a year before him.

Schedule changes and life adjustments: My wife Patty and I encountered them immediately after she retired, but I continued working. Some of the changes were more difficult than others, but there was nothing we didn't overcome with a little bit of humor, sympathy and perseverance.

To begin with, Patty enjoyed her job of 32 years with a state agency. She felt she was making a difference and she liked her co-workers. But the stress was affecting her health, and she knew it was time to go.

In hindsight, the year leading up to her retirement was more difficult than being retired. She worried about finding

enough to do and being challenged intellectually. As she put it, "One day you're a peacock and the next you're a feather duster."

The week after Patty retired, she and I set out on an extended driving vacation. We visited national parks, our favorite spa and several friends — all of them retired. Each one congratulated her and gave her retirement advice. But most of all, we got to see how content our retired friends were with their lives outside of the rat race.

Back home after our long vacation, we slipped into a new routine pretty quickly.

The hardest part of living with a retiree while still working was establishing a new morning routine. When she worked, Patty left the house as I was getting ready. After she

retired, I dominated the most coveted preparation time. She gradually learned to sleep a little later, and I learned to be a little quieter. Humanity is probably better off now that I no longer sing in the shower.

Patty found volunteering opportunities and reconnected with old friends. And she had a list of home improvement projects that kept her busy.

As I continued to head to the office, my "honey-do" list at home began to dwindle. I worried there wouldn't be any projects left for me when I retired. It didn't take me long to reconsider that thought. Less projects in retirement wasn't really a bad thing.

Then came the kitchen remodeling project. As with any major construction project, Murphy's Law plays a large role. Was it wrong of me to prefer going to the office rather than dealing with contractors? My retiree wife did a great job scheduling carpenters, tile setters and electricians. When it was finally over, I was as proud of her as she was of our new kitchen.

All-in-all, living with a retiree while I continued to work was not as big a lifestyle change as we thought it would be. Maybe I was a little jealous of all her freedom, but having all that fun seemed like a full-time job for her. ★



ROADSIDE TEXAS:

5 UNUSUAL ATTRACTIONS

By Kelly E. Lindner

RACHAEL SEELEY FLORES



Texas has no shortage of unusual attractions lining its highways. If you've ever wanted to see a very big or very small anything, Texas is the place to find it. Here are some of Texas' quirkiest roadside enchantments.

PRADA MARFA, VALENTINE

Along Highway 90, about 30 miles from Marfa, is the world's smallest Prada store ... art installation. Created by artists Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, [Prada Marfa](#) was unveiled in 2005 as a store that could not be entered or used in the West Texas desert. Over the years, many have drawn their own conclusions of what this fake store is supposed to mean, but it's become a major selfie destination. Even Beyoncé has a [selfie](#) with it.

times a day) that she even has her own [photo gallery](#), where fans can post their photos.

GIANT ARMADILLO, HOUSTON

A 14-foot-long, 22-foot-tall steel-plated [armadillo](#) guards the Goodie Co. Armadillo Palace restaurant near Houston's Museum



District. It has horns, glowing red eyes and smoke that pours out of its nose. According to the [Houston Press](#), owners Jim and Levi Goode first spotted the giant armadillo at a restaurant and trading post in Cody, Wyoming. It was sitting on a trailer sporting flat tires and a Texas license plate, since it originally belonged to a DJ in the Panhandle. Luckily, this bizarre armadillo found his way back to the Lone Star State.

GIANT COWBOY BOOTS, SAN ANTONIO

Unlike the Giant Armadillo, these [cowboy boots](#), which come in size 35 feet tall and 30 feet long, were originally created by artist Bob Wade and installed in Washington, D.C. in 1979. But a year later, the boots — a heavy



steel structure covered with a mixture of concrete and fiberglass — were moved to the North Star Mall in San Antonio. In 2016, the boots won a [Guinness World Record](#) for the tallest cowboy boots sculpture. Currently, the boots stand before the Saks Fifth Avenue store at North Star Mall.

See more in our [Texas Roadside: Unusual Attractions](#) Facebook photo album. ★

Sources: [RoadsideAmerica.com](#), "The evolution of Prada Marfa from sculpture to pop culture landmark", [Vogue.com](#), "That armadillo has a long and strange tale to tell", [HoustonPress.com](#)



STONEHENGE II, INGRAM

At about two-thirds of the size of the original Stonehenge, [Stonehenge II](#) sprawls along a non-descript side street in

Ingram, Texas. Forged from steel and concrete, this structure looks somewhat eccentric sitting across from a softball field, though that may be due to the two accompanying Easter Island statues. The late Al Shepperd and his neighbor Doug Hill originally built the Stonehenge replica on Shepperd's property in Hunt, Texas. The property sold in 2010, and the Hill Country Arts Foundation bought and relocated the 75 pieces to Ingram in 2011.

MS. PEARL, GIANT SQUIRREL, CEDAR CREEK

Since 2011, this 14-foot squirrel has sat outside the Berdoll Pecan Candy and Gift Company, along west-bound Highway 71, drawing many tourists. In fact, the company slogan is, "Come for the squirrel. Stay for the pie." [Ms. Pearl's](#) name was actually thought-up by a customer during a best-name contest. She is said to be the [world's largest squirrel statue](#). People take selfies with Ms. Pearl so often (up to 100





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- ★ What's sizzling at Pody's BBQ
- ★ 3 steps for a seaworthy retirement
- ★ 5 unusual Texas roadside attractions

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In memoriam

For a list of employees and benefit recipients who passed away this year, visit www.TCDRS.org/Publications then check "In Memoriam".

TCDRS Members: You Inspire Us!

In 2017, we asked TCDRS members to tell us about their retirement dreams and our inbox was flooded with responses. We couldn't wait to share them with you, so we collected and posted some of our favorites on [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com).

Our members and retirees have dreams that are as diverse as they are. Some plan to travel the world, restore classic cars and explore the Texas Hill Country. Others look forward to spending more time with loved ones (and beloved pets), and pursuing fulfilling hobbies.

Our members and retirees are accomplished pilots, jewelry makers and book lovers, while some are simply looking forward to sleeping in and doing things on their own schedule.

TCDRS is proud to provide some of the financial confidence that helps our retirees do retirement right.

"I would like to travel and see the places that I have only dreamed about. Also, I would like to do more volunteer work." – Stephanie M.



To see more and get inspired, visit our [Pinterest page](https://www.pinterest.com/TCDRS_pins/Retirement-Dreams) at [Pinterest.com/TCDRS_pins/Retirement-Dreams](https://www.pinterest.com/TCDRS_pins/Retirement-Dreams). Share your retirement dreams with us by emailing info@tcdrs.org.