



Issue No. 8:

# THE CELEBRATION ISSUE

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: ALICE SEFCIK SULAK

TDHP NEWS AND EVENTS

... AND MORE!

FROM THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE BOARD

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**We had a lot to  
celebrate in 2019,  
including you.**



*Kelley Russell*  
TDHP Board President

As we wind down the year, on behalf of Texas Dance Hall Preservation, I want to thank all of you for your support. In 2019, TDHP continued improving what we're doing today, and growing to better serve dance halls in the future. We look forward to another exciting year in 2020!

In this issue, you'll read about the Lifetime Achievement Award presented to Alice Sefcik Sulak last month, and boy, was this award appropriately named. Ms. Sulak has been managing Tom Sefcik Hall, which her father built in 1923, since she took over in 1970. It was TDHP's honor to recognize her for what has been truly a lifetime of achievements as a dance hall owner and a musician in her own right. What a special night for everybody who was able to attend!

We want to thank everyone who became a member of Texas Dance Hall Preservation in 2019, made a donation, or set up a monthly recurring gift. You make all of this possible! We rely on your support for our operation, including paying an executive director who is out visiting Texas dance halls on a regular basis to get to know hall owners and find out how we can best serve their needs. Grant funding and most large donations go directly to help dance halls, and you still have time to make a gift for 2019! Please contribute to our year-end campaign and make a big difference for a dance hall today.

On behalf of all of us at TDHP, we are so grateful for your interest in Texas dance halls, and of course for your support. Again, thank you so much for all you do!

Stay tuned for more ways that you can become involved with TDHP in the new year! We are so glad to have you along on this adventure!

*Kelley Russell*  
TDHP Board President

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*On the cover: Alice Sefcik Sulak and Jerry  
Haisler at Tom Sefcik Hall on November 17,  
2019 (photo by Jarrah Marie Photography:  
<https://www.jarrahmariephotography.com/>)*

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# TDHP NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

## Welcome Albert Dancehall's New Owners!

Many who cruise through the Texas Hill Country on a lazy afternoon have found themselves stopping to enjoy a cold beverage at the Albert Icehouse & Dancehall. It's a favorite place to relax among the 500-year-old live oak trees and explore historic Albert Dancehall, which will have its centennial in 2022. Now, the hall has new owners: earlier this year, Chris Horne and John Hay, both from Austin, assembled a partnership and acquired the property from the Easley family. Horne and Hay offer live music and dancing in the icehouse most nights, and the hall can be rented for weddings and other private events.

Albert Dancehall was built in 1922 by Max Beckman. Featuring German brass bands that rotated between Luckenbach, Hye, and Weinheimer Halls, Albert dancehall and icehouse hosted the Albert community for Saturday night dances and social gatherings. Today, sitting in the old dancehall, you can almost hear the walls talking about the good times had under that roof and the musicians who have graced the stage. And the good times are still going: Texas Dance Hall Preservation and the Texas Dance Hall Tour closed out our third annual tour at Albert Dancehall in November 2018 with a big dance featuring Asleep at the Wheel.

You have plenty to see and do in the Texas Hill Country, but you should make a point to stop in at Albert Icehouse and Dancehall one day soon and welcome Chris and John to the neighborhood. Keep an eye on their website <http://www.alberttexas.com> for future events. We'll be cheering them on, right along with you!



*Clockwise from left: Albert Dancehall at night (photo by Will Gallagher); at a dance (John Hay), looking in through the front door (Deb Fleming), and the hall interior (Deb Fleming)*



## Special Gift Honors An Avid Dancer

In May 2019, Nova Scotians and part-time Austin residents Peter and Jane Nicholson lost a very dear friend when long-time Austin resident James DeLony Cannon lost his battle with pancreatic cancer. The Nicholsons and Cannons met on the dance floor of the third Delbert McClinton “Sandy Beaches” Cruise more than two decades ago and have remained constant dance partners and close friends ever since. As a way to remember and honor Jim and his love of dancing and Texas dance halls, the Nicholsons are donating \$25,000 to Texas Dance Hall Preservation to establish the Jim Cannon Memorial Fund. (One gift of \$12,500 was made in 2019, with a second to come in 2020.) This special fund is earmarked specifically for preservation grants to historic dance halls, in the hope that providing funds for maintenance and repairs will assure their longevity and use for dancing for generations to come. The Nicholson and Cannon families hope others will [consider donating to the fund](#) in Jim’s memory.



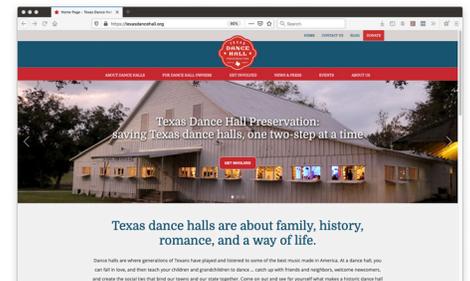
Jim Cannon at Kendalia Halle (photo by Peter Nicholson)

## We Have a New Website!

We are beyond excited to announce the rollout of our brand-new expanded, informative, and colorful [website](#). New features include information for dance hall owners and operators, as well as an improved interactive map, with more halls to be added over the next few months, and an events calendar that you can help populate by sending us information about events in your area.

If you are new to the TDHP family of followers, [we invite you to check out TDHP’s story](#) and learn how you can become involved in helping to save and revitalize historic dance halls across the Lone Star State.

The new website has been a long time coming, but we think you’ll agree that it was well worth the wait! We hope you will let us know what you think. And, of course, while you are perusing the pages, consider [becoming a member or donor on a recurring basis](#). It’s quick and easy!



## Dance Hall Photo Exhibit at Austin Airport

The traveling dance hall photo exhibit landed at Austin Bergstrom International Airport in early September and will be there through February 2020. The display is in one of the large gallery spaces across from Gate 12 in the new terminal, which was designed to be reminiscent of a dance hall. The exhibit includes a variety of dance hall images (including an 8-foot by 10-foot interior photo of La Bahia Turnverein), vintage posters, a Ray Benson guitar, artifacts found at halls during various renovation projects, and more!

# TDHP NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

## COMING SOON: THE 2020 TEXAS DANCE HALL TOUR!

Next fall, plan to join Texas Dance Hall Preservation on another fun weekend extravaganza of dancing, tours, daytime activities, and of course some of the best bands that Texas has to offer! While our friends at Asleep at the Wheel won't be along for this tour — they'll be too busy celebrating their 50th anniversary (!) — you'll enjoy the same great experience with new halls to explore, as well as some old favorites. More information will be available soon!



### Meet Our New Partner: U.T. San Antonio!

TDHP is excited to begin a new collaboration with the University of Texas at San Antonio's [Center for Cultural Sustainability](#) (CCS) and UTSA professor of architecture and heritage conservation William A. Dupont and his students. With a focus on practical, real-world applications, CCS matches small groups of students with projects that combine architecture, historic preservation, land use, sustainable development, and heritage tourism.

As a pilot project during the Fall 2019 semester, Dupont and CCS students worked with Twin Sisters Dance Hall in Blanco, Texas, to determine the hall's construction date, research options for window replacement, and design a new sign for the hall. Students also visited three other dance halls in Lavaca County that illustrate the diversity of halls and their needs in one small area. The success of that initial outing has led UTSA and TDHP to make this an ongoing program. TDHP is honored to be working with this group and helping to bring their expertise to bear for historic dance halls.

Over future semesters, more halls will have opportunities to participate, receiving assistance from students that is specific to each hall. If a dance hall is interested in this program, please [contact Deb Fleming](#) at [deb@texasdancehall.org](mailto:deb@texasdancehall.org) for more information.

TDHP board member Julie McGilvray has worked with Dupont to extend our partnership, and as a result, UTSA also will be hosting TDHP's new dance hall database, which will collect and archive historical information, including images, advertisements, oral histories, and other documents that tell the story of individual dance halls and provide resources for historians and other researchers. We hope that halls will allow their archival documents and images to be digitized so that they can never be lost. Stay tuned for more information about those efforts!



*Bill Dupont (left) and students meet with Arlen Bruemmer (right) at Twin Sisters Dance Hall in fall 2019 (photo by Cathy Hut for the Hill Country Passport)*



*The Center previously prepared a business feasibility plan in coordination with efforts to restore and transform Lerma's Nite Club—the oldest live Conjunto music venue—into a cultural service site in San Antonio. That project led to Center professor William A. Dupont's interest in Texas dance halls. (Photo by San Antonio Express News)*

## The Dancehall Tapes go to AmericanaFest

AMERICANAFEST®(the Americana Music Conference and Festival) is an annual gathering that brings together legendary artists and the next generation of rising stars, fans, and industry professionals for six days of music and education in Nashville, Tennessee. Now in its 20th year, this past September's AmericanaFest was once again a must-attend event for anyone who loves the melting pot of roots, folk, country, blues, and soul-based music.

Texas dance halls and Texas musicians were highlighted during a panel called "Radney Foster and Kimmie Rhodes Talk "The Dancehall Tapes": A New Texas Music Doc Series." Texas Music Office program specialist (and TDHP board member) Steve Ray moderated the panel. The session also featured the world premiere of "The Dancehall Tapes" Season One highlights video. The Dancehall Tapes is a music documentary series that pairs a legendary Texas musician with an iconic Texas dance hall. Each 40-minute episode is an intimate portrait of both musician and dance hall conveyed through live acoustic performances, conversations about the halls, and a deep dive into who these musicians are outside of their music. During the panel, Foster and Rhodes — two of Season One's featured musicians — and the filmmakers shared stories about their experience during this process and why this feels so important. Learn more at [www.thedancehalltapes.com](http://www.thedancehalltapes.com).



## Spring 2020 Preservation Grant Deadline: March 1!

It's that time again ... time for nonprofit dance halls to submit their applications for the TDHP Preservation Fund grant program. If your hall is in need of repair, please contact Deb Fleming to learn more about the grant program. You can also download the grant application as a PDF from our website at <https://texasdancehall.org/dance-hall-owners/preservation-fund-grants/>.

This grant program is designed to help with building repairs that have not already been completed, and most grants are in the amount of \$1,500–2,500. If you have a larger building project, please contact us for other assistance with fundraising. Also, we have a small fund for emergency repairs; contact Deb for more details.

# LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD ALICE SEFCIK SULAK

BY STEPH MCDUGAL

On Sunday evening, November 17, 2019, friends, family members, neighbors, dignitaries, and many longtime patrons of Tom Sefcik Hall gathered to honor Alice Sefcik Sulak as she received Texas Dance Hall Preservation's Lifetime Achievement Award. Sulak, 88, was born in the house next to the hall; her father, Tom, constructed both buildings and ran the hall with wife Teresa. They were a musical family, and both Alice and her older sister Adela played in Adela's band, the Music Masters. After a brief stint on the drums, Alice switched to the tenor saxophone, which she has been playing ever since; in fact, she recently had to get a new horn — her sixth — having worn out five previous instruments.

In 1966, Alice was a founding member of Otis Beck and the Melody 5, a polka band that included accordion player Bob Haisler and Bob's 10-year-old son Jerry on guitar and saxophone. In 1971, the band became Jerry Haisler and the Melody 5, and Alice and Jerry played together for 50 years. Alice has continued playing in the Melody 5 with Bob's grandson Robert Haisler and other Haisler family members for many years and still sits in sometimes, when she feels like it.

Alice also sings and is one of the few female Czech vocalists in Texas. She previously was honored by the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center in 2017 and by the International Polka Association in 2019. Tom Sefcik Hall was recognized as a "pioneer dance hall" by the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1995.

The November 17 event included a reception, with hors d'oeuvres and cake provided by Central Market, followed by the award ceremony and a dance with Jerry Haisler and the Melody 5. Central Market also generously provided free admission to the first 100 guests.

In addition to the Lifetime Achievement Award, Ms. Sulak received a proclamation from the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, along with a flag that was flown over the State Capitol; a resolution from the City of Temple, Texas, proclaiming November 17, 2019, as "Alice Sefcik Sulak Day"; a plaque from the Texas Music Office, inducting Ms. Sulak into its Hall of Recognition; and resolutions from the U.S. House of Representatives, Texas House of Representatives, and Texas Senate. She also received a certificate of honor from the SPJST (*Slovanska Podporujici Jednota Statu Texas* or Slavonic Benevolent Order of the State of Texas, a Czech fraternal organization).

Four generations of the Sulak family and extended family were on hand to celebrate the momentous occasion.



Alice Sefcik Sulak (photo courtesy of Sefcik Hall)



Alice Sefcik Sulak with the awards presented to her on November 17, 2019 (photo courtesy of Texas Polka News)



TDHP Lifetime Achievement Award presented to Ms. Sulak (photo courtesy of Texas Polka News)

Dignitaries on hand to honor Ms. Sulak included Temple Mayor Tim Davis; Bell County commissioner Bill Schumann; Texas Representative Hugh Shine; Cheryl Hassmann, constituent liaison for U.S. Representative John R. Carter; Candyce Speidel, district representative for Texas Senator Dawn Buckingham; Stephen Ray, program specialist for the Texas Music Office; Evan Thompson, executive director of Preservation Texas; and Melanie Zavodny, SPJST communications director. Deb Fleming made the Lifetime Achievement Award presentation for TDHP.

Kenny Sulak, Alice's son, who (with his wife Irene and family) helps his mother manage the hall, said afterward, "Out of all the various articles, presentations, recognitions, and accolades bestowed upon my mother and Sefcik Hall, the TDHP presentation was by far the best. Thank you!"

Bandmate Jerry Haisler, who also spoke at the award ceremony, said afterward, "It was a grand event and exceeded my expectations. I'm so grateful that Alice was feeling well and could enjoy the festivities. Thank you to TDHP for selecting Alice and Tom Sefcik Hall! I cannot think of anyone more deserving. As I said the day of the event, Alice has been my musical mentor and coach for over 50 years and has become a best friend who I love dearly. She has done so much to ensure that there is a comfortable and enjoyable place to enjoy live music every weekend, suitable for all ages."

TDHP executive director Deb Fleming added, "It was personally gratifying to me to be a small part of the celebration where the love, admiration, and respect for Alice was overwhelmingly obvious from start to finish. This event would not have been possible without the generous assistance of Kenny and Irene Sulak, as well as Jerry Haisler. It was a truly wonderful evening, with more than 200 people in attendance to share this tribute and praise Alice for her lifelong commitment to the Seaton and east Bell County community. That's a testament to the deep roots that Alice, the Sulak family, and Sefcik Hall have established here."



Central Market provided this delicious cake, as well as the refreshments for the reception (photo by Deb Fleming)



Deb Fleming presents the TDHP Lifetime Achievement Award to Alice Sefcik Sulak (photo by Jarrah Marie Photography)



On hand to honor Alice Sefcik Sulak (seated) were (left to right: Temple Mayor Tim Davis, Evan Thompson (Preservation Texas), Stephen Ray (Texas Music Office), Bell County commissioner Bill Schumann, Melanie Zavodny (SPJST), Cheryl Hassmann (U.S. Rep. John R. Carter's office), Candyce Speidel (Texas Senator Dawn Buckingham's office); Texas Congressman Hugh Shine; and Jerry Haisler (photo courtesy of Jarrah Marie Photography).

