



Pullman Car Built in 1930s
Now Eastland Airbnb



Editor/Publisher H V. O'Brien
....Icon Promoting Eastland for 60+ Years



THE IDLE AMERICAN

A Pullman Pushed and Pulled....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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It's got to be a borderline miracle when Eastland--a town with fewer than 5,000 people--can lay claim to not one, but TWO "facts" worthy of the Guinness Book of Records recognition.

"Facts" has quotation marks for a reason. It's not certain that a horned toad named Ol' Rip actually hibernated for 31 years in the Eastland County Courthouse cornerstone and found alive--sharing space with the Holy Bible and a bottle of whiskey--when the current courthouse construction began. Google for a trainload of stories, most alleging that this creature was featured in an around-the-world tour, and much else. They claim he had a noiseless "stare down" with then president Calvin Coolidge, whose nickname was "Silent Cal."

Houston V. O'Brien, beloved editor/publisher of area newspapers for more than 60 years, is "H. V." to many, maybe because he's not a "Houston" kind of guy. I usually call him "High Voltage" or "High Volume." Anyway, he was pre-school age when Ol' Rip was first encased. Honored by the Texas Press Association and many other groups, he's spent his life beating the drums for "America's best hometown" and perpetuating the story of Ol' Rip. At age 93, he's still drum-beating in his weekly newspaper, *Eastland County Today*. His zeal--coupled with substantiated claims of ongoing community progress by the Eastland Chamber of Commerce--make their assertions hard to argue!...

Guinness editors may require more proof. The CofC claims, however, can be "nailed down" as the Gospel, even though Ol' Rip stories and how a train car arrived in town aboard two trucks stretch credulity limits.

Many of us arrive on the backs of turnip trucks. The Pullman didn't, but if you guessed trucks were involved, you're on track. Fact is, the rail car--built in the 1930s and in service for some 30 years--made the 60-mile journey from Abilene to Eastland atop two 18-wheelers! (With today's regulations, there would have been "zilch" chances for the move.)

Don't get ahead of me. The 80-foot-long rail car was placed aboard BOTH trucks, with one backed against the other--reverse-gear--for the entire distance. Surely this is some kind of record!....

Originally, the plan was for what is now Bank One Abilene to use the Pullman as an advertising tool. This didn't work out, so the late Don Pierson, an Eastland community leader, bought it for his daughter's 16th birthday some 60 years ago, moving it to Eastland.

For several years, the iconic rail car was the scene of parties and celebrations, visited by celebrities and ordinary folks alike.

Come 2021, Brandon and Crickett Abbott purchased property that includes both the Piersons' former residence, with "The Train"--a new AirBnb attraction--100 yards out back. It's on West Plummer, near the South Hillcrest intersection. Spending \$70,000 and thousands of hours of "elbow grease," the Abbotts are ready for their May 1 Grand Opening!...

Craig Murphy, a busy vocalist, maintains a frenetic schedule that makes the Energizer Bunny's pace look best fit for runner-up finishes in turtle races.

Making more than 500 appearances annually since 2011--largely at care centers and often thrice daily--he's a former "spring chicken" morphed into mid-autumn. His "busyness" didn't faze the traffic officer who flagged him down on I-20.

There was no talking his way out of this citation. "I've been waiting for you all day," the officer wise-cracked. "I got here as fast as I could," Murphy cracked back. (He also jokes about a friend addicted to brake fluid "who can stop when he gets ready.")

Uncle Mort lives in a tiny community where most motorists are lost, confounded when "beats me" shows up on their GPS. Many law enforcement officials may not know it exists.

Mort laughs when asked if there's even a map dot.

"Heavens no! There's little between the two highway signs that read 'Litter Barrel Ahead' and 'Resume Speed'."...

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