

## Ormand Family Activity

### March 2010: David's Trip to Dallas/Fort Worth

Another trip to the Raytheon McKinney plant for three days of meetings. This time, due to circumstances, I am on my own, so I will have the opportunity to explore.

Also, the meetings start on Monday. Due to other circumstances - the annual Davis-Monthan Air Show - I can't get a flight out on Sunday. So I have to travel on Saturday afternoon. This sets my plans to start by visiting my uncle and aunt, David and Judy Herring, in Hurst. So Saturday arrives, and I leave... an hour late, due to the competition for Tucson airspace from the Air Show. I arrive at DFW Airport... *in the snow!*

It's cold, but not objectionably so, and it's snowing, but not very heavily, and it's late, but not too late, and I've already told my uncle that I would see them tonight. It isn't difficult to follow their directions, and we visit for almost two hours, and then I leave, after finding out what time their worship services start tomorrow. It's still snowing, but not heavily, and after an hour and a half of driving (183 to 35 to 30 to 75) around Dallas and north, I get to my hotel in McKinney.

The next morning I get up to... *SNOW!* Thick. Highway 75 is covered with slush. But like a fool I join the light traffic sloshing slowly through the slush and sliding on the packed snow on the overpasses. I get detoured twice, and manage (with my trusty but inadequate car rental map) to get back to the highways, and I'm only five minutes late to the worship service!

I spend a pleasant hour at First Baptist of Hurst's first service, and see my cousin Doug in the band on the stage. Another pleasant hour in my uncle's Sunday School class. And another pleasant hour with the family at a restaurant for Sunday dinner. Then I take my leave and continue with my solo adventure!

### Downtown Dallas

Which starts on Sunday afternoon. It's really crummy today; cold and

windy. I stop in downtown Dallas and look around until my ears are numb and my already frost-bitten fingers are tingling (unlike Utah or Maryland, in which rental cars are equipped with snow scrapers, I have to resort to shovelling the snow off my car in the hotel lot with my little pink hands). Now, the next day is beautiful, and the meetings end early, so I do it again under better conditions.

After getting back from Dallas on Sunday evening, the snow is still pretty thick in the north cities. This is a fine house in downtown McKinney.



Whereas the next day, the snow is gone, the sun is bright, the air is warm, and the blossoms are still on the trees!

Dallas has a wonderful transit system of trains, light rail, and buses. The Red Line terminates in Plano. Monday afternoon, I board at the Parker Street Station. Once again, you are obliged to buy a pass, but they don't check that you really did.

[www.dart.org](http://www.dart.org)



After somewhat more than an hour, the Red Line has passed through the northern part of Downtown and pulled into Union Station. The Reunion Tower looms over the outside boarding platform. At night, the Reunion Tower becomes a ball or scepter of glittering lights for passing motorists.

A few blocks north of Union Station is the Old Red Courthouse, which is now a museum and tourist information center. Neither is open, because it's after 5:00pm. I'll have to go back during "normal operating hours" sometime.



A block north of the Old Red Courthouse is a County building which used to be the Schoolbook Depository, from which sixth-story window Lee Harvey Oswald fired upon President John F. Kennedy. There is a fellow hawking papers here, and there is a tour, but not after 5:00pm.



The first cabin from the Dallas Settlement has been preserved in Founder's Square. The map says its the Bryan cabin, but there's no explanatory sign here. In fact, except for a plaque at the Depository building and little historical plaques on some of the historical tall buildings (original purpose, date of construction, etc.), there is hardly any historical or touristy signage at all. Tucson wins over Dallas in this department!



Dallas is a tall city, but open and airy (unlike Chicago, say). It's really a beautiful city, and very walkable. At least by my standards, and I could walk all over downtown Tucson in August, so take it for what it's worth. Unlike Chicago (or even Tucson), there's very little traffic, either motor or pedestrian, which is odd. There are little parks and cafes and fountains, the traffic lights cycle fairly quickly, and the streets are regular and fairly well marked. The three main longitudinal streets are Elm, Main, and Commerce, and are crossed by latitudinal streets like Market, Griffin, and St. Paul.

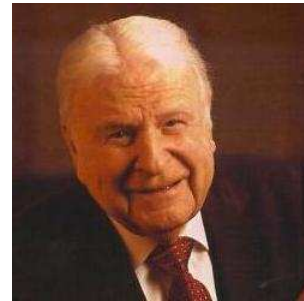
Turning left from Elm on one of these streets, I discover something

legendary (well, in my circles): First Baptist Dallas. One of the first American "mega-churches".

Everything you see is First Baptist, from the neon sign to the airwalk between the Christian Education building and the Spurgeon-Harris building, all the way down to the parking garage.



First Baptist was founded in the mid 1800s, but grew tremendously under George Truett (left), who, among other things, was particularly concerned for cowboys (not unlike my former pastor, Ron Hart of First Southern Baptist Tucson). Then W. A. Criswell (right) came on the scene, who in our time would have been like a cross between Jerry Falwell and Rick Warren, and led the church to "mega-church" status.









The original building from the 1800s, now obviously too small for regular operations, but used for weddings and funerals and special (small) occasions.

The many buildings occupied by First Baptist house its ministries, including a Crisis Pregnancy Center. They are realists as well; I note the security cameras at the corners of the Spurgeon-Harris building.







The Burt Building, south of the original structure, houses part of the Academy, a Christian school. And day-care, from the looks of the window contents.

The main building behind the original structure is where the main auditorium is located. I think it would be wild (in a religious tourist sort of way) to visit on a Sunday Morning and participate in worship at First Baptist Dallas!



The Spurgeon-Harris building also contains more of the Academy, Special Needs ministry, parking garage (for Sunday visitors) and a barber shop. I suppose the latter means that First Baptist is an urban landlord, and rents office space to unaffiliated businesses. I'm guessing that, like the huge bank buildings, First Baptist rents office space in the

upper stories; that would be a *tremendous* amount of vertical

floorspace to be used just for church functions.

Like the Youth Building, a multi-story monster that even Saddleback's youth ministry would get lost in. Across the street is the Adult Bible Study building, another 12-plus story edifice. Or the Christian Education building next door. Just astounding.



Now, I read on their website ([www.firstdallas.org](http://www.firstdallas.org)) that they have plans to demolish the tall buildings on the east side of the street, and build a unified contemporary structure around the original 1800s building that looks more like a megachurch. I guess that would be impressive from a certain point of view. Their goal is to look less like the surrounding urban landscape. I think it is far more significant that, up to now, they *have* integrated so well into the surrounding environment in an obviously functional way.

I also note from their website that... they have no weekly corporate prayer functions.





Just a bit south is Thanksgiving Square, which includes this Normal Rockwell art as a mosaic and an unabashed acknowledgement of "the Lord". Probably has the ACLU and secularists frothing. If such are active in Bible-Belt North Texas.

Turn right at the mosaic, walk through the big ring sculpture, and through or around the carillon, here in its place among the tall buildings. Don't know if they play during the day, although it is clearly functional.





And just a bit further, one descends into Thanksgiving Square proper, a very pleasant little park or grotto in the heart of the city. Closed now; it's after 5:00pm.

Then I continued south, past Commerce, to the Library, then City Hall, and the Convention Center. The westmost point of the Convention Center is Pioneer Park. The sidewalk sports brands from the great Texas ranches, and by a pool is a big inlay of the State of Texas with the cattle drive routes marked out. And of course, on the other side of the pool, is a bronze cattle drive.

Longhorns, of course,  
with attending  
cowboys herding in  
mavericks.



Over the hill is a  
cemetary, apparently  
the original Dallas  
burial area, with  
markers similar to  
those at the Maple  
Hill cemetary in  
Huntsville with bios  
of the grave  
occupants. I note  
that a lot of these  
Dallas settlers were  
from Kentucky, were

Freemasons, and were officers in the Confederate armies.



Which explains the monument by the Daughters of the Confederacy, which every major Southern city seems to have. I think it's great, but I wonder if the Daughters of the Confederacy still exists, or would be deemed "politically incorrect", even "racist" in these days, and would be forbidden to honor or even mention the "wrong" side of the Civil War. In fact, I wonder if, like the Confederate flag which is considered "racist" and "incorrect", these Confederate monuments would be opposed and demolished in an effort to "purge" our national history.



It is now 8:00pm! Daylight Savings Time... Here is the Dallas skyline lit by the setting sun, and it's time for me to mosey back up Market Street to where I saw some interesting restaurants.



Which includes Sonny Bryan's Barbeque, est. 1910 ([sonnybryans.com](http://sonnybryans.com)). Pretty darn good Texas BBQ. Not quite as good as Big Bob Gibson's in Decatur Alabama, but not the epic portions of that award-winning establishment. I enjoy pulled pork, brisket, and sausage with an excellent sauce as I watch urban Dallasites busy with life. And on the televisions, the Democrats in Washington congratulating themselves upon the passage of the healthcare "reform" bill. Pecan pie ala mode afterwards. Then it's back into the night.

Dallas in the daytime is an attractive city. Dallas at night is even more so. Walking is fine, again not too much traffic of any sort, and the buildings stretching up into the night sky are trimmed with neon. Some of the big office buildings have illuminated waterworks, like this fascinating garden of glowing fountains. My primitive photo can't do it justice.



After peeking around a little bit, at the Methodist Church building and the Dallas Museum of Art (closed after 5:00pm), I run up St. Paul Street just a little way and catch the McKinney Avenue Trolley just as it reaches the end of its line. The Trolley is an old-fashioned "functional antique" thing, very much like the Old Pueblo Trolley back home, but unlike the imported antique Japanese and Belgian trolley cars run by OPT, *this* car saw service in the area until it was bought by a local rancher and used as a dwelling (!) until it was bought back, refurbished, and put back in service. It appears to be a free ride. The operator clearly enjoys the job, and displays his pride in his city by stopping occasionally, turning off the car interior lights, and pointing out features of the area. In this way, I learn

- The big route on the north side, 366, the "Woodall Rodgers Freeway", which is already below ground level, is getting a cover which will hold a park. Very, very nice.
- The Seven-Eleven Corporation is based in Dallas, and occupies one of the big downtown buildings marked at night with a big neon square.
- Another big building, the Chase Bank building, has a "sky-lobby"



observation deck which is open for visitors before 5:00pm.

The trolley rattles and lurches down McKinney Avenue. Stores are open (as far as I can tell), there's much more motor and foot traffic - it looks very much like an extended outdoor shopping mall. Very much alive. I notice that some of the storefronts are gyms, and through the windows I can see younger people on treadmills. I wonder why they would not rather be outside actually walking in their pleasant city.



The trolley reaches its other terminus - the Cityplace Station on the Red and Blue Lines. There must be a hill here, for I have to descend a flight of stairs and two long escalators to reach the platforms. After a bit of a wait, the train arrives, and I and another passenger board a mostly-empty train for another

pleasant hour's ride through a night-time metropolitan landscape back to the Plano station. It's been a great day visiting the heart of Texas' flagship city.

## Downtown Plano and McKinney

The next day's meetings end, and I decide to visit downtown Plano. Of the northern towns in Collins County, Plano is the largest, much more so than McKinney, the county seat. Surely it must have a large and interesting downtown area.

Downtown Plano is located on 15th Street, starting at this beautiful park with a gazebo.



It seems the Dallas area has long had rail transit, once provided by cars like this, until the dominance of the automobile made it uneconomical. I'm glad to see rail service becoming popular again, even if it is largely subsidized by local governments. This car is part of the Plano intermodal transportation museum (closed after 5:00pm).



And finally, what I came here to see - *Downtown Plano!* ...this is it. From the rails to the traffic light, about one block of red-brick street and old storefronts, most of which are empty and the rest of which



close up at 5:00pm. There are two or three restaurants which are still open, and appear to be targetted at the trendier young people.



Well, that was disappointing. Plano is a very large city, with lots of (contemporary, non-historic) businesses and merchant establishments, so maybe somewhere else there is a "core" to the town, and this is the "historic district" more than "Downtown". But no, City Hall *is here*, just a block north of this street. Very odd.





To give it a fair shake, I keep walking. I come upon First Baptist Plano, which is a large but very traditional operation with lots of "First Time Guests" parking spots. And this old house. Very nice.

Often, fine old houses get turned into Bed and Breakfast places, like this one. Several old houses in McKinney are this way. I note that several old houses in the Tucson area are also B&Bs.



To drown my disappointment, I head up Local Route 5 back to McKinney. I know McKinney has a very nice downtown area:



Of course, the difference may be having a focus. Like Huntsville, McKinney is a square about the county courthouse. Or what used to be the county courthouse; Collins County long ago outgrew this little building, which has now been repurposed as a "performing arts center". All the same,

the old storefronts are nearly all occupied with shops and museums and restaurants. Mostly closed after 5:00pm.

In fact, the interesting restaurants appear to only serve lunch, for they close at 2:00pm. The restaurants that are still open are "pubs" and

wine cellars targetted, again, primarily at younger, trendier people rather than families or older folk. It was my intention to dine in Downtown McKinney, but instead I go back to the hotel and walk over to Braums. *THE* place to see Real Texas. And get a great fudge-and-brownie sundae!

## Downtown Fort Worth

Well, the meetings ended yesterday. The fellows from Huntsville had their flight home last night, and we pretty much did everything we needed to do (and then some). I'm not about to pay the money and take the risk and bother trying to reschedule my flight, so I'm just going to enjoy the day until I have to return to DFW in the afternoon.

My choices are

- Go back to Dallas and check out the Chase Building and maybe see McKinney Avenue in daylight, or see some attractions (like the tourist info place) when they're open,
- Visit Downtown Grapevine, which appears to be interesting and "reinvented" to appeal to visitors (well, at least wine-drinking ones), or
- See Downtown Fort Worth. Randy and I had driven through it last year, after seeing the Stockyards, but we didn't really see much.

I choose the last. Fort Worth is pretty much a straight shot down 121 from McKinney, and it takes just under an hour. There is parking around the downtown area, some more expensive than others, including multi-level garages, and some reserved lots that aren't marked as such, but I eventually dump the car near the train station and stuff a \$5 through the slot for my numbered stall in the metal panel near the entrance. Kind of like what we have in Tucson. And then I'm off.

Like Dallas, Fort Worth has three main longitudinal streets; Commerce, Main, and Houston. Like Dallas, the Old Red Courthouse is at the end of Main. Unlike Dallas, you can see the Courthouse at the end of Main from the other end of Main where it ends at the Convention Center.



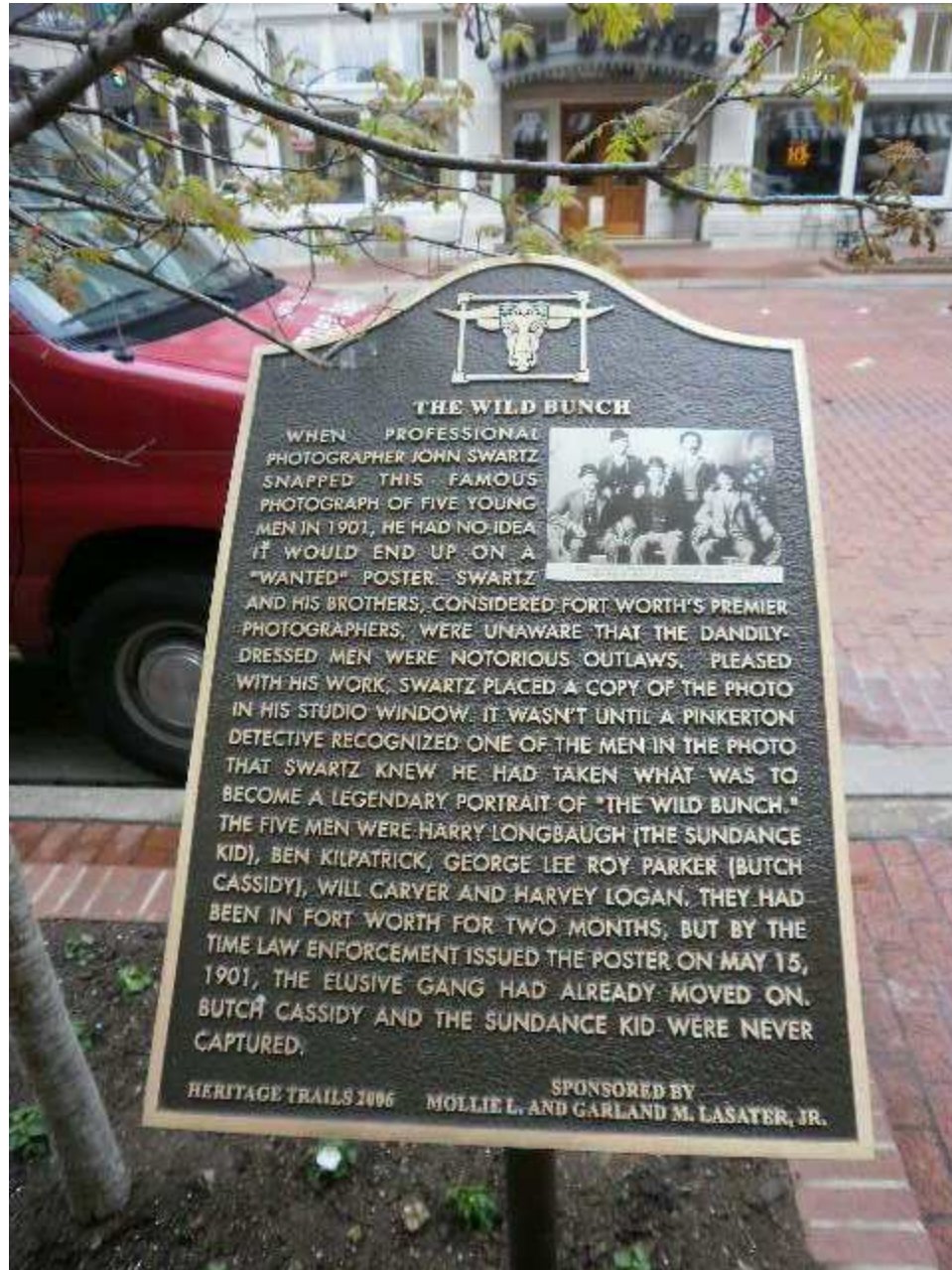


Main Street still has its red bricks. And lots of trees and planters. And some topiary cowboys and steers. And the usual Texan fixation with their Lone Star.



Fort Worth is very artsy. This is the Bass Performing Arts Center. There are several theatres and cinemas downtown. It doesn't strike me that there is quite enough parking for the draw, and there is no real mass transit. I note a free "Molly the Trolley" motorized coach that circulates, but not that frequently, and it doesn't hold that many passengers.

Unlike Dallas, Fort Worth is very conscious and proud of their history, and they have these historical placards up and down Main Street. I had seen this famous picture of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, but I didn't realize before now that this famous picture had been taken right here in Fort Worth!







In Tucson, we have the Daniel's Jeweler clock on Stone Avenue. Here, they have the Halton's Jeweler clock, next to the Halton's store, est. 1893. The building was formerly the Knights of Pythias "Castle", and there's still the suit of armour up at the point of the roof.

A major part of Fort Worth's history is being on the Chisholm Trail, as this mural celebrates.



Central Fort Worth is called "Sundance Square", kind of a renewal or business association with shops, restaurants, galleries, and cinemas. The mural, and the parking lot beneath it, appear to be the central focus of Sundance Square.

Some of the Sundance Square shops. A mix of the old and the new. Or the weird, if the structures on the roof are any indication.



Fort Worth was very sensitive to the danger from fire to their wooden buildings, and early on they established a volunteer fire department. Fire Station No. 1 is still here, and now serves as a museum of Fort Worth history.





Inside, I learn that Fort Worth really has a colorful history, moreso than nearby larger Dallas.

- Originally, part of the buffalo hunting grounds of the Plains indians.
- Fort Worth started as a *fort*, by American Dragoons intent on defense against indians. It was named after General Worth, a war hero who was in command of the Texan military district, but never saw the town given his name!
- There were waves of Mexicans who came and settled to escape political unrest in their own country. Sounds familiar...
- The Kiowa and Comanche indians operated in the area, who were known to capture white women for themselves, such as Cynthia Parker, mother of the last Comanche chief, Quanah Parker.
- Fort Worth was very much on the side of slavery up through the Civil War.
- Afterwards, the cattle drives, particularly the Chisholm Trail, benefitted Fort Worth, which became known as Cowntown.
- During this time, the southern part of town became known as "Hell's Half-Acre" for the lawless carousing of cowboys, outlaws, and even young citizens looking for adventure. The town tolerated it because it was economically advantageous.
- The town almost died after the cattle drives ended, until the railroad made it to town in 1876. A newspaperman made a comment that he saw a panther asleep in the streets, to point out the deadness of the town. Fort Worth became known as Panther City as a result.
- At the turn of the twentieth century, Fort Worth became a hub of the new Texas oil industry.
- In the 1920s, Fort Worth became an important aviation center, and World War II aircraft factories were located in the area.

Wow. No wonder they are proud of their city!



If I hadn't gone in the museum, I would not have understood the significance of the sleeping panther statue near the courthouse.

Texans really have a fixation over their Lone Star.



At the end of Main Street is the beautiful and very functional Tarrant

County Courthouse. Inside (you have to go through the usual security scan) is a little museum of the Fort at Fort Worth, which was formerly located just to the right of this picture.







Main Street continues on north across the Trinity River, pretty much straight to the Stockyards.

On the steps of the  
courthouse, looking  
back down Main  
Street to the  
Convention Center.



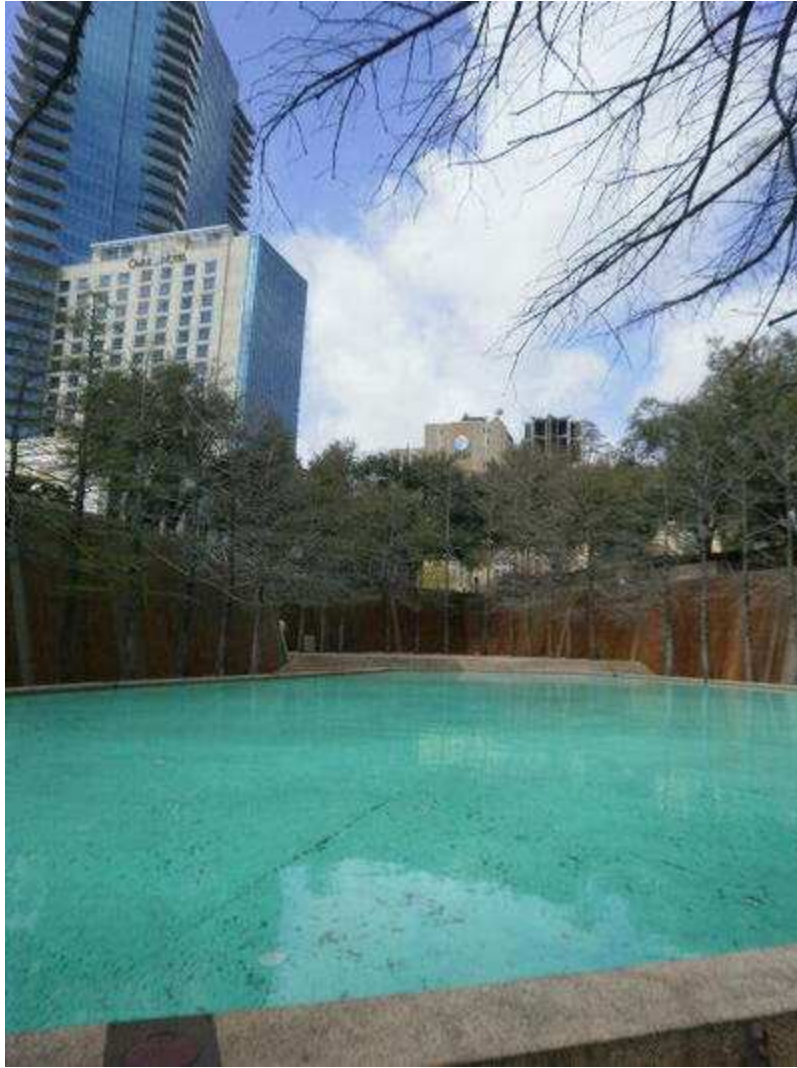


I've spent about three hours walking all over Fort Worth, and it's time to join the sheriff's deputies and the lawyers and bankers for lunch. More barbeque, along with some onions and a sweet jalapeno. Note the longhorn and the elk head between the windows, through which you can watch the activity on Main Street.

After lunch, I go back south on Throckmorton, and come to a landmark that Randy and I saw last time: St. Patrick's Cathedral. Seems kinda small for the main Catholic operation here.







Right behind the Convention Center, built on what used to be "Hell's Half-Acre", is the Fort Worth Water Gardens. This one is a quiet pool, and water flows down the slopes behind the cypress trees (whose roots are growing under and lifting up the pavement; good thinking, Mr. Artist).

But I like this one better, with steps down into the fountain, where you can sit and enjoy the waterfall sounds.



But this one was a bit weird, just a lot of spray heads. Of course, each site had a placard with the artistic interpretation. What is it about abstract art that it always needs help with an interpretation?

Leaving downtown, back to my car, I pass the train station. The Trinity River Express shuttles passengers between Union Station in Dallas and here, and points in between (including Hurst!). But this isn't the TRE, which is a short train with blue and white livery.



This is Amtrak! So Fort Worth is another stop on the Amtrak line. Hmm...

I have about an hour before I have to start back toward DFW. Fort Worth boasts three "districts": The Stockyards, Downtown, and the Cultural District. I've now seen two, so I will whip through the last just to say I've been there.



Seems there are three things here, the Will Rogers complex, a university, and a collection of art museums. Some weird sculptures outside of this museum.



Fort Worth is still the center of the regional livestock industry, and the annual Livestock Show is a big event at the Will Rogers Coliseum. This is the Will Rogers Auditorium, very art deco. Also very closed.

Here's a sculpture I don't need an interpretation for! Well, except that all four of the horse's legs are on the ground, so Will died peacefully. It amuses me that the Fort Worth livestock complex honors Will Rogers, who was not exactly a cowboy (so much as a humorist and a commentator), and not exactly a Texan (but rather an Oklahoman, from our area near Tulsa, around Pryor, Adair, and Claremore).



So that's the end of my trip, and I zip back through Fort Worth, back onto 183, and into the south end of DFW Airport. Dallas is a fascinating city, lots to see and do (as long as you do it before 5:00pm). Fort Worth is a beautiful city, somewhat less sophisticated than its larger and more active neighbor, but more laid back and comfortable. Both are very walkable and accessible. And in both, the citizens are proud of their city, and welcoming to visitors.

(Which, actually, is refreshing. Tucsonans kind of fall in two groups - those that don't have any sense of our history, don't care about downtown, regard it as an eyesore and a bottomless sink for Rio Nuevo and Light Rail money, and those who have an appreciation for downtown, advocate for its renewal, and smile ruefully at each other about the incompetent attempts of our City Council to do anything useful. There's a bit of pride, even a bit of friendliness, but it's... diluted. I didn't see this *at all* in the Twin Cities of North Texas.)