

Former Big Bend superintendent to discuss wilderness push in Midland

By **B. Kay Richter**
STAFF WRITER

Keep Big Bend Wild is a collaborative effort by people who share an appreciation for Big Bend National Park and want to ensure its wild character continues to thrive for generations to come.

Bob Krumenaker, the national park's former superintendent and organizer of the nonprofit, will return to Midland to discuss the grassroots effort by Keep Big Bend Wild next week. In three separate speaking engagements over two days, Krumenaker hopes to educate Midlanders about the national park's need for a wilderness designation, which it has never received.

In a previous interview with the Reporter-Telegram, Krumenaker said that the idea of wilderness at Big Bend started in the 1930s. "It got a lot of momentum in the '70s as well," he explained.

Despite the absence of legislative action expected in the current session, Krumenaker said that at this point in time, KBBW efforts are focused on gathering public and bipartisan support.

"We have spent the time continuing on the path to build additional support," he explained. "We do that by introducing these kinds of public meetings, like we are doing in Midland."

Additionally, Krumenaker said KBBW has been talking to staff from various legislative offices, including U.S. Reps. Tony Gonzales and August Pfluger.

"We know better than to ask them to submit a bill at this point; they would not be ready to do that," he said. "We describe the bipartisan support we are getting (for KBBW) and how we believe this is good for the economy and good for the things that people in West Texas want."

With the current govern-

ment shutdown in effect, Krumenaker emphasized his understanding of the Permian Basin audience and the importance of gaining nonpartisan support for KBBW.

"I understand that when people voted a year ago, they voted for change, but I don't think many people voted for the destruction of their public lands, for their national parks," he told the Reporter-Telegram. "I am not going to shy away from that if people ask."

"National Parks are absolutely American and absolutely democratic," Krumenaker said. "They represent America at our best."

Additionally, the former national park superintendent pointed to the recent re-emergence of black bears. In August 2024, a report by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department indicated that the black bear was making a significant comeback in Texas. While the report warns

some of the sightings could be false, other reports have confirmed that the endangered species, despite any efforts by federal or state programs, have migrated into the Big Bend area, primarily the Guadalupe and Chisos mountains.

Krumenaker said that the visitor numbers for Big Bend have spiked again. According to new metrics for the national park, 2024 visitation jumped to 561,000.

"There's a real chance this pattern will continue and that next year Big Bend will break the record of 581,000," he explained.

Amid the current government shutdown, Krumenaker said that the park is still operating, but with limited staff.

"One of the things that I've been saying a lot is the park is open, but it's operating with a skeleton crew," he explained. "The emphasis of the administration is to make sure that the public-facing visitor experi-



Stacey Campbell/Getty Images

Keep Big Bend Wild talks are scheduled for Nov. 10-11 in an effort to build support for a Big Bend wilderness designation.

ence is as unchanged as possible, with a caveat that any structures like visitor centers that are normally closed will remain closed."

Krumenaker said that while you can go into the park, you cannot pay a fee, resulting in the park losing revenue daily.

"Visitor centers are closed, but the bathrooms are open, and I understand they are being serviced, but nothing behind the scenes is happening," said Krumenaker. "So there's no trail maintenance, there's no road maintenance, there's no building maintenance."

He added that law enforcement is working, so people should understand that the rules still apply and that they will be enforced, although, he noted, "People are not going to see very many (park) rangers."

On Nov. 10, Krumenaker plans to speak at the Sibley Nature Center at noon and at Manor Park at 3 p.m. On Nov. 11, he plans to host another session at 11:30 a.m. at the Petroleum Museum. All of the KBBW speaking engagements are free and open to the public.

To learn more visit keepbigbendwild.org.

QUAIL

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tem. Hole 10 will be shifted from a par-3 to a par-4, and a water hazard that had been removed from Hole 12 will be reintroduced. Since the renovation plan was announced to the public in July, slight modifications were made based on feedback from Midlanders, most notably a few new practice areas in the master plan, but the design has stayed largely the same.

"There's a lot of history on the Quail Course, so keeping that history was something the city and we wanted to do," said Kemp. "We're just looking at making minor modifications to the actual routing of the course: keeping the character, making things more fun, adding forward tees for the beginning golfers out there and actually adding a few longer tees just for those high school (and) college kids just to give a little challenge."

Kemp also says that golfers will notice the increase in turf quality due to the new grass and irrigation, and that the difference between the back and forward tees is about 600



Luke Dias/Midland Reporter Telegram

This photo shows the groundbreaking for Quail Golf Course. Renovations of the Courses at Hogan Park have begun, beginning with the Quail Golf Course.

yards.

"What we have proposed is, the forward tees will be less than 5,000 yards, all the way back to over 7,000 (yards) for the better golfers, so there will be a lot more variety," he said. "I think just for everybody, playing will be a lot more fun."

While the appearance will stay largely the same, the irrigation system will take up the bulk of the work. The new irrigation system will use a reverse osmosis (RO) process, which will purify the water as it is used on the turf. Though primarily designed for Quail, Rodgers

says it will be able to service all 36 holes at Hogan Park.

"Half of the game is around the greens," Rodgers said. "And so, when the greens are being rebuilt, and (with) the new RO system going in, we need to spend extra care and give it the best water possible. The RO system that we have will be able to bring different levels at (specific) times of year."

A unique challenge for Rodgers was designing the pipes such that all holes would be able to receive adequate water and tying it all together under one irrigation system. However, he

said it will also use some of the preexisting systems, and that the long-term benefits will be particularly crucial to subsequent phases of renovation. He hopes to have the RO system completed by May or June 2026.

"There's a lot of things being done for the existing course in addition to this course, so it's not just fully here," he said. "And when the next phase comes, the bill will be a lot less because so much more infrastructure money has (already) been spent here."

Regarding funds, the Courses at Hogan Park is supported by an enterprise

fund, meaning that it is self-supported. As described by City Councilman John Norman, whose District 2 includes Hogan Park, funding for the project comes directly from memberships and other monetary purchases directly given to the park, rather than via taxes.

"That's a good thing where it's not just everybody within the city that's paying for it (including those) who might not golf," Norman said. "Instead, it's the people that are (playing golf) that will be paying for it, and they'll be enjoying it as well."

Overall, completing the renovations to the Courses at Hogan Park is being touted as a major boost to the quality of life in Midland, especially in the wake of other golf courses around the city shutting down, with Hogan Park's course being the only public one left in Midland County.

One particular example is Ranchland Hills Golf Club next door, which was shut down to make way for the new Midland High School campus. Norman admitted that he would go to Ranchland Hills and has never played on Hogan Park Golf Course. Howev-

er, he and the rest of City Council have unanimously supported focusing on Hogan Park, and he said he is looking forward to playing there soon.

"Hogan Park is the largest park in Midland, (and) it's a staple in the community where we have families that come out every day," he said. "I live (basically) right around the corner, and so I see people here every day. It's been a collaborative effort from a lot of people (and) I'm just happy to be a part of that, and being able to get these improvements done."

Kemp plans for Phase I to take about 10 months and be completed by Labor Day 2026, with play to resume the following month. While work is being done, Quail Course will be closed but the rest of the Courses at Hogan Park will remain open to the public. The full renovation project is expected to be completed by early September 2028.

"This project has sparked a broader, ongoing commitment to ensure that our parks and recreation system here at Midland continues to grow with our community," said Midland parks and recreation director Laurie Williams.

LIFE TRIBUTES

BETTY RUTH WILHOIT

10/23/1929 - 11/02/2025

Betty Ruth Wilhoit, 96, of Midland, passed away on Sunday, November 2, 2025. Services will be at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, November 8th, 2025 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Midland.

Betty was born on October 23rd, 1929, in Megargel, Texas, to Thelma Frances and Samuel Edwin King. She was married for 73 years to the love of her life, James Willard Wilhoit, on May 31st, 1949. Growing up, she was a conscientious student. In her late teens, she graduated from Draughon's Business College. Following her graduation, she was employed at GMAC. Shortly, she and James had a daughter, Ruth Ann. Nine years later, they welcomed a son, Ronald Edwin, into the family. Betty was a virtuous wife, one that her husband could trust completely, she was a devoted mother and friend to her two children. Having become a Christian at an early age, church attendance was very important to her. She and her husband joined the Methodist Church early on in their marriage. They lived in Wichita Falls, where their children grew up, until James took a new position in the Los Angeles, California area. Their stent did not last long, for they greatly missed their families. Betty worked as a secretary during that time. Upon their return, they joined St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Midland, where she served in various offices in her Sunday School class, as well as helping with funeral meals. Betty loved making cards for people and baking sweet breads for shut ins. She was a sweet



friend and a good example to others. Her children rise up and bless her!

Betty is survived by her sister, Gay Nell Stone, her daughter, Ruth Ann, her son, Ron Wilhoit and his wife, Rosie, and her granddaughter, Myca, her nephews and their families: Carl and Tammy Stone and their children, Cheyanna and Colt; David Stone and his children, Bailey and Joel.

She is preceded in death by her husband, James, and her parents, Thelma and Ed King.

The family would like to express their gratitude towards her dear caregivers and Hospice of Midland.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to Hospice of Midland or St. Luke's UMC Care Ministry.

Arrangements are under the direction of Nalley-Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Midland. Online condolences may be made at www.npwelch.com.



RALPH GRANZIN SR.

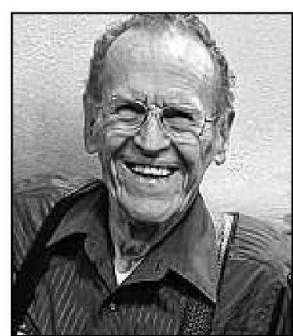
05/14/1940 - 10/30/2025

Ralph Ray Granzin, Sr. (Corky) of Midland, Texas returned to his home to be with the Lord on October 30, 2025, following a lengthy illness. Ralph was born in Georgetown, Texas on May 14, 1940, son of Adolph and Sophie Granzin.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Sue Ellen Middleton Granzin and three children, Ralph Granzin, Jr. (Scooter) and wife Sheila both of Longview, Gerri McGilvray (Gee Gee) and husband Richard of Kilgore, Jeffrey Granzin and wife Pam of Longview, six grandchildren, Gunnar Granzin, Rikki McGilvray-Bock, Makenzie Granzin, Dustin McGilvray, Cole McGilvray, Aaron McGilvray, six great grandchildren and his brother Larry Granzin, wife Peggy and nephew Wayne Granzin.

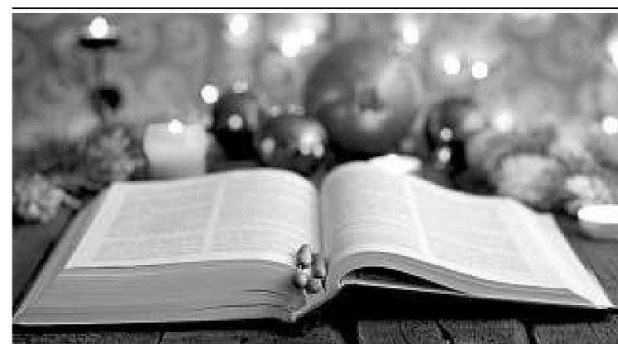
Services: Cook-Walden Davis Funeral Home in Georgetown, Texas. Visitation from 6 to 8:00 p.m. November 11, 2025. Funeral Service on November 12, 2025, at 12:00 p.m. Committal at Killeen Central Texas State Veterans Cemetery at 2:00 p.m. A Midland, Texas memorial service will be scheduled at a future date.

Ralph served 4 years in the Marines and is best known for



his likeable personality, profound sense of humor, wit, and his remarkable memory. He loved hunting, fishing, reloading and smoking BBQ. Lifetime memberships include VFW, NRA and others including years of service in Lutheran Churches. You would always see Ralph in western cowboy clothes and boots with a smile on his face. His childhood hero was Roy Rogers. His family loved him dearly. God bless you, Happy Trails and Semper Fi beloved husband, Dad, Pop, Papa.

Cook-Walden Davis
Funerals & Cremations
2900 Williams Dr.
Georgetown
(512) 863-2564



KARIN SUZANNE PARKER

10/08/1952 - 10/31/2025

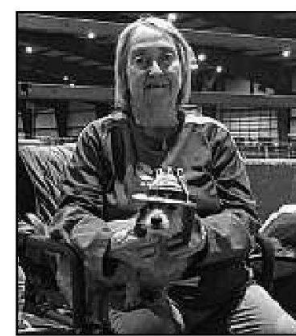
Karin Suzanne Parker, 73, passed away October 31, 2025.

Born October 8, 1952 in Wichita Falls, Texas, she was the daughter of Otho William Parker Sr. and Mary Theresa Gebhart Parker. She attended Midland High School graduating in 1970 and West Texas State University graduating in 1974. Karin has spent recent years in Fort Worth near her family.

While in Midland, Karin worked as a Landman and Division Order Analyst at various companies in and around Midland. Her travels as a Landman gave her some of her best memories.

Throughout her life, Karin would also train and show horses as well as agility train and show dogs. They were truly the love of her life.

Preceded in death by her parents, Karin is survived by her brothers, Otho W. (Bill) Parker Jr. and his husband,



Jim Fritsch of Fort Worth, and Chris Parker and his wife, Margo of Dallas; and her four-legged friend, Tillie the Dachshund.

Friends are invited to a Rosary at 1:00 p.m. and Mass of Christian Burial at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 13, 2025 at St. Michael Catholic Church, 3713 Harwood Road, Bedford, TX 76021

Interment is planned at a later date in Resthaven Memorial Park, Midland, Texas.

DR. ANTHONY LYLE TALBERT

Dr. Anthony Talbert, 81, of Odessa, TX, passed peacefully from this life on November 3, 2025, in Odessa, Texas.

A rosary will be held on Saturday, November 8, 2025, 6:00 PM at American Heritage Funeral Home.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on November 10, 2025, 10:00 AM at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Odessa.

Arrangements are entrusted to American Heritage Cemetery Funeral Home Crematory in Midland.

ELLIE ALICE ROMO

Ellie Alice Romo, 1, of Odessa, Texas, passed away on November 3, 2025, at Odessa Regional Medical Center. A memorial service will be held at 2:00 PM on Monday, November 10, 2025,

at First Baptist Church in Odessa, officiated by Pastor Byron McWilliams. Arrangements are by American Heritage Cemetery Funeral Home Crematory of Midland.