

Billy Bob's Texas is toast of Paris. And Sweden.

Written by Fort Worth Star-Telegram
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The alcohol was flowing a few nights ago in a fishing-pier restaurant on the west coast of Sweden, where the August sun doesn't set until 10 o'clock and an autumn chill is in the air.

Lifting cordial glasses, the five men and one woman at the next table seemed to be telling stories.

The language might have been Swedish, or German, or Dutch, but the names were familiar around the globe.

With glasses raised for a schnapps toast, one of the men told a story about something in "Dah-las."

The entire table drank and laughed.

Then, another man told a story that included three English words: "White Elephant Saloon."

They snickered, then yee-hawed when a third man shouted a story about "Bee-lee Bob's!"

Next, the men turned to the young woman.

One man lifted his glass her way for a toast.

I could only make out one word: "tequila."

She blushed.

Halfway around the world, and halfway to the Arctic, I sat down in Gothenburg, Sweden, next to some Stockyards tourists.

(Don't get the wrong idea. This wasn't a media junket. Anybody can go to Sweden free if you buy one of their Volvos. I recommend August.)

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From the airline logo on one man's shirtsleeve, I'd guess the crowd was a KLM crew overnighing in Gothenburg, like an Austin on an arm of North Sea between Oslo and Copenhagen.

Back home at Billy Bob's, co-owner Pam Minick said she's not surprised that the World's Largest Honky-Tonk comes up around the world.

She's home from her first trip to Monaco and France, where Disneyland Paris has a Billy Bob's club and restaurant.

"People there talked about going to the 'real' Billy Bob's," she said.

About 1 in 25 guests at our Billy Bob's is from another country, she said. According to the city tourist bureau, most European visitors come from Britain, Germany or France.

"People come from these European countries where they embrace their history, and what they want to see is the real history we have in the Stockyards here," she said.

And make their own history.

Bud Kennedy's column appears Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Twitter @budkennedy

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