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Also a poet . . .

## Teacher forms Saddle Tramp productions

C. J. Berkman, English instructor at Tivy High School, recently formed Saddle Tramp Productions, which he will operate in conjunction with his publishing firm, Saddle Tramp Press. The new firm, located at 600 Tivy Street, currently serves as talent coordinator and booking agency for three area entertainment spots, and also books bands and single entertainers for private parties and family gatherings.



Berkman formed his first company, Saddle Tramp Press, in late 1985 to insure that his current book of poetry, "No More Dues To Pay . . ." was properly designed, printed, and marketed. Once the book was printed, Berkman began marketing his own product. "I saw musicians producing and selling their own albums, and that was what I decided to do with my book. I'd get into my pick-up, find a book or record store or some place that looked interesting, just take some copies inside and ask to leave them on consignment. I also did my own press, mailing out copies to reviewers whom I thought might be interested in Texas poetry. One example is

Judith Rigler, who won the Texas Publishers Association Media Award this year for her "Lone Star Library" column. She's reviewed the book twice, and has gotten me some readers I normally wouldn't have been in touch with. For example, the Pharr Library ordered a copy this week. Pharr's a long way from Kerrville."

Although the reviews helped, Berkman's mainstay was performing his work on stage with friends who are musicians. Bill ed as "The South Texas Redneck", Berkman began performing between sets with such noted performers as Townes Van Zandt, B. W. Stevenson, Ponty Bone, Augie Meyers, and Rusty Wier.

"I'd been on radio shows in Austin, San Antonio, Kerrville, Dallas, and Chicago. I was in contact with the state's leading songwriters and performers, and all of them asked me the same question — why wasn't I doing gigs in Kerrville, and why weren't they doing gigs in Kerrville? I didn't have an answer, but I had some ideas."

Berkman approached Rocky Hernandez, owner of Rocky Joe's Patio Cafe, in April about the possibility of building a small stage and putting live music into his restaurant. "Rocky was willing to give it a try, and soon all the Kerrville folks I'd been running into at Leon Springs and San Antonio an Austin were staying home on weekend nights, since we were bringing them major acts like The Austin Lounge Lizards and Ponty Bone and the Squeezetones. In a way, I guess you could say I was interested in keeping Kerrville folks home on weekend nights instead of seeing them spending their money out of town."

In July, he took over as booking agent for John Adams at

Neighbors, a new entertainment spot located between Kerrville and Ingram. He has recently been contacted by several local businesses about booking entertainment for private parties, and said "my best advertisement is my reputation. Most folks ask Rocky or John where they're getting such good groups, and they put the person in contact with me. We then decide what the person wants, what kind of budget we have to work with, and once they're satisfied, book the engagement. I represent groups to fit any budget, starting at \$100 per night."

On September 6, Berkman is producing a dance and show starring Darrell McCall and his Tennessee Volunteers at Neighbors. "Darrell and Diane, his wife, are excited about playing in this area again. Because of limited seating, we've limited the dance to 300 tickets, which I think will sell out within a few days. My goal is to bring a major country dance band into Kerrville once a month, and Darrell was my first choice to get me started." Based on McCall's large following in the area, Berkman should be correct in his predictions.

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