

## LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Clint Orms started out as a belt maker until he realized that no one hands down a belt to the next generation. But a belt *buckle*, now that's an heirloom—especially a handcrafted work of art in silver and gold. As Orms puts it, "I wanted to make something that would last." And so, 17 years ago, the artisan opened **Clint Orms Engravers & Silversmiths**, a company based in Ingram that fashions handcrafted pieces from sterling silver, high-quality gold, or both.

In a bright storefront on Old Ingram Loop, which is home to a colony of Hill Country crafters, Orms and his team turn out belt buckles, cufflinks, money clips, bolo tie ornaments, earrings, and more. It's one-of-a-kind, high-end work: One of his Pecos buckles is priced at \$13,620. San Saba money clips start at \$440.

Ornate with filigree, often sprinkled with precious stones and other accents, each piece in the Orms line is rich, solid-looking, and flaunts a Texas flair. The creations are ornamented with some of the state's best-known icons, longhorns and stars first among them. Other popular motifs feature bronc riders, crescent moons, and horseshoes.

Orms says that part of the appeal of his designs, which are popular with high-profile Texans, such as George W. Bush and Tommy Lee Jones, is that "you really can recognize them across the room." And folks wear his buckles and cufflinks with suits as easily as they do with Wranglers.

What his customers want most of all, Orms believes, is a piece they can have for the rest of their lives and then leave to their heirs. "They want something with heart to it, something that will create memories," he says.

Custom pieces take about three months to complete. Prices start at \$300. (830) 367-7949; clintorms.com. —JENNIFER ROOLF LASTER



Clint Orms



## MASTER OF HAT TRICKS

As the cowboy saying goes, "It's the last thing you take off and the first thing people notice." Cowboy hats have been woven into centuries' worth of Texas lore, culture, and fashion. **Standard Hat Works** in Waco held its own place in that history from 1909 until 1993, when a fire destroyed almost everything.

Lenny Lawson, the current shop owner, got hooked on hat making in the course of the shop's rebuilding, when he was the shop manager. "I was really intrigued by the history behind it," he says. "We couldn't find replacement equipment because everything we use is 1920s or older."

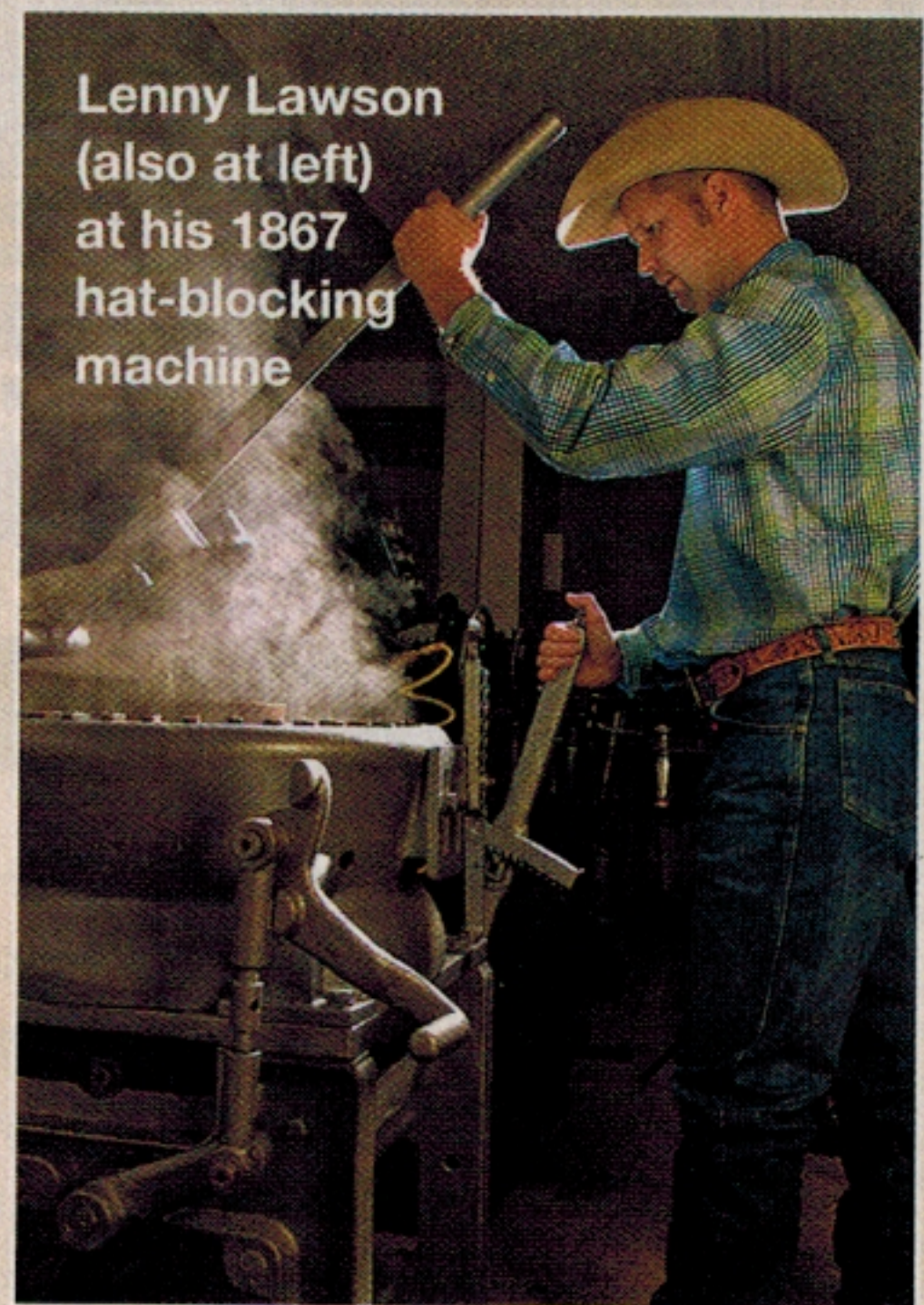
It took more than 10 years and several cross-country trips to locate and restore replacement equipment. "It was really important to me to bring the heritage back. There's only a handful of us left who truly make a custom hat. We're part of a dying art," he says.

Unlike mass-produced hats, which are machine-made in one step, the process of making custom hats typically requires between 75 and 200 steps and many hours of work instead of seconds. "A customer can get exactly what he wants if he doesn't mind waiting a few weeks for it," Lawson says.

For Lawson, the cowboy hat represents a lifestyle and a person's history. "It's an extension of someone's personality," he says. In addition to his custom work—his clients include country singers Johnny Lee and Aaron Watson—he also restores hats. "A lot of people bring in their granddad's or great-grandfather's hat, and it might be the only thing they inherited from him," he says. "To be able to restore it for them, to see their joy . . . I get a lot of satisfaction out of it."

Manufacturing takes about three weeks. Prices start at \$150. (254) 754-4287; standardhatworks.com. —YVONNE DUTCHOVER

Lenny Lawson (also at left) at his 1867 hat-blocking machine



ROBERT BAUMGARDNER (2)

