

A Cigar With Kinky

BY JENNIFER MCKENZIE FRAZIER

Two things serve as his trademarks: There's the fat cigar, ever-present in Kinky Friedman's hand, and the black cowboy hat he's just thrown (again) into the gubernatorial ring. He's an author, musician, businessman, and animal crusader. Today, chewing on one of those cigars, Kinky talks about politics in the Lone Star State, his books, and why music is his first vocation.

Q Another run for governor in 2010? People are still talking about your race in '06.

I'm running as a Democrat with the idea being that I will get a sizable amount of Republican, Independent, and Libertarian support as well. I want to make this state a better place to learn in, grow up in, and a more peaceful place. A place people can dream in. And I want to return power to the people.

Q What makes you a good choice?

There needs to be one man of the people in the race, and that appears to be me. The other guys are super-rich, private-jet guys, and I'm a Southwest Airlines kind of guy.

Q You're also founder of Utopia Animal Rescue Ranch, a nonprofit, no-kill animal shelter. How many pets?

I now have only three dogs. I just lost my beloved Perky. She was 20 years old. She was put together by a committee. Now I'm on the road so much it is difficult.

Q What word best describes you?

Musician. It's a step down from a musician to a politician because, for one thing, you can't tell jokes. Also, you just might blurt out the truth. I'm a drinker with a writing problem.



Kinky puffs (and talks) on his back porch at the ranch near Bandera.

Q Speaking of writing, talk about your books.

There are 29 in all, an index of an empty life. I've got two new ones. The first is *Heroes of a Texas Childhood* (available only at kinkyfriedman.com). The other is *Kinky's Celebrity Pet Files*, a study of 41 people and their animals.

Q About the cigars—how many do you smoke?

I'm down to three or four a day. It used to be a lot more.

Q How do you feel about Texas?

I live here, I'm from here. I'm a Texan. The state's in the black, but the people are all in the red. I plan to fix that. *



To read the entire interview with Kinky and for more on Jennifer McKenzie Frazier's visit with him, visit our blog: southernliving.com/talesfromtheroad.