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Meet Joe Roughneck



**Texas artist Torg Thompson created
“Joe Roughneck” for an advertisement.**

His rugged mug has symbolized the best of the oil patch since 1955. His sculpture has been dedicated in parks, saluted by Texas governors, and featured in newspaper and magazine articles.

Joe Roughneck - presented annually as the U.S. petroleum industry's "Chief Roughneck Award" – honors one individual whose achievements and character represent the highest ideals of the oil and natural gas industry.

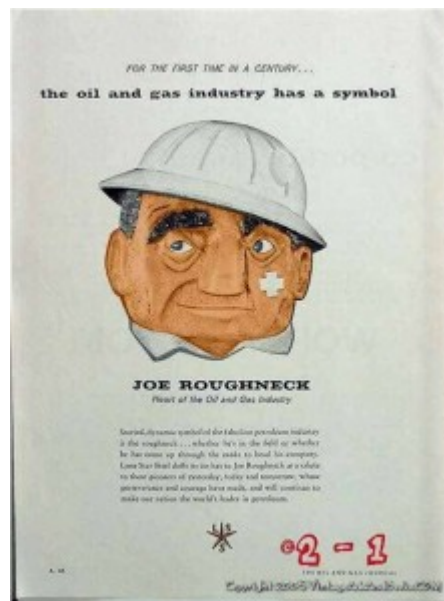
Thus far, Joe's bronze bust has been presented to 57 Chief Roughnecks. Charles Davidson, chairman and CEO of Noble Energy, received the 2012 award during a November meeting of petroleum producers.

Sponsored by U. S. Steel Tubular Products (formerly Lone Star Steel Company), a subsidiary of United States Steel Corporation, the yearly event is a well known and popular event among the petroleum industry's independent producers.

The award is recognized as one of the most meaningful honors in the industry; the award and the character behind it symbolize the spirit, determination, leadership and integrity of individuals who have made a lasting impression on the energy industry.

See “Chief Roughneck Award Winners.”

The traditional Joe Roughneck bust – originally created by noted artist Torg Thompson – and presented to each Chief Roughneck recipient, began life in Lone Star Steel print advertising. The oil patch character became popular and was soon adopted by the industry at large, prompting the company to declare, “Joe doesn’t belong to us anymore. He’s as universal as a rotary rig.”



In 1959, Lone Star Steel Company, an oilfield tubular goods manufacturer, produced this magazine advertisement featuring Joe Roughneck, the “Heart of the Oil and Gas Industry.”

Joe began his career on the scratch pad of Thompson, best known for his 124-by-20-foot mural, “Miracle at Pentecost,” at Biblical Arts Center in Dallas (the mural was destroyed by fire in 2005). For Lone Star Steel Company ads, Thompson portrayed Joe with the rugged countenance of a man who had spent long hours working in oilfields.

“Joe’s jaw was squarely set to denote determination, his nose flattened as a souvenir of the rollicking life of a boomtown. His eyes indicate the kindness and generosity of his breed. His mouth wore the trace of a smile, but there was a quizzical expression of one who had to see to believe,” notes a museum in the East Texas oilfield. “When the completed picture came into being on canvas, there was no doubt Joe was the heart of the oil patch.”

The **Depot Museum** in Henderson adds that Joe has been saluted by two Governors of Texas, named “Man of the Month” by a popular magazine, and has been the subject of countless newspaper articles, along with many radio and television commentaries. He is also the mascot of a high school football team in White Oak, another East Texas oilfield community.

“Joe’s likeness has adorned the world’s largest golf trophy and once decorated an international oil exposition,” the Depot Museum concludes. He still serves as a symbol for petroleum clubs that “recognize the pioneers of yesterday and today whose perseverance and courage made out nation the world’s leader in petroleum.”



At the Gaston Museum in Joinerville, Texas, a Joe Roughneck memorial is dedicated “to the pioneers of the Great East Texas oilfield.” The October 1930, discovery well, drilled by Coumbus “Dad” Joiner, is just 1.75 miles away — and still producing for the Hunt Oil Company.

Presented at the annual meeting of the **Independent Petroleum Association of America**, Joe’s rugged visage now sits atop four oilfield monuments in Texas: Joinerville (1957), Conroe (1957), Boonsville (1970), and Kilgore (1986) – where he greets visitors to the East Texas Oil Museum.

Joinerville Joe Roughneck

This, the first Joe Roughneck monument, was erected in Pioneer Park at the **Gaston Museum** in Joinerville, seven miles west of Henderson. It includes a time capsule sealed at the dedication on March 17, 1957, and to be opened in 2056. The capsule will tell future generations about the giant East Texas oilfield discovered by Columbus Marion “Dad” Joiner in early October 1930.

Joiner’s Daisy Bradford No. 3, discovery well for this prolific field, is nearby – less than two miles from the Gaston Museum. Production from the East Texas field exceeded *five billion barrels* of oil by 1993. Stripper wells still produce from the field.

Conroe Joe Roughneck

In Conroe, about 40 miles north of Houston, Joe Roughneck rests on a monument in Candy Cane Park at the Heritage Museum of Montgomery County. He commemorates the discovery of the 19,000-acre Conroe oilfield by George Strake in 1931 – “and others who envisioned an empire, dared to seek it, and discovered the Conroe oil field.”



The Joe Roughneck monument in Conroe, Texas, is next to a miniature derrick protected by Plexiglas — and information about Montgomery County, where “whispers of oil discovery

started in the early 1900s. Gas and oil seeps had been noticed near the center of the present day oilfield. Local men formed several companies and started exploration in 1919 through 1924 but were unsuccessful.”

The monument recognizes the completion of Strake’s Conroe oilfield discovery well in June of 1932. The “Conroe Courier” headlines proclaimed, “Strake Well Comes In. Good for 10,000 Barrels Per Day.”



A Boonsville, Texas, plaque notes: “Dynamic symbol of the petroleum industry is Joe Roughneck, who is hereby appointed guardian of this memorial commissioned by the Wise County Rouchnecks Club. Dedicated by Preston Smith, Governor of Texas, Oct. 26, 1970.”

The Conroe oilfield will lead to major technology developments after Strake finds the oil sands to be gas-charged, shallow – *and dangerously unstable*. By 1993, the 17,000-acre Conroe oilfield will have produced more than 717 million barrels of oil. Read the historical society article **“Technology and the Conroe Crater.”**

Boonsville Joe Roughneck

Governor Preston Smith dedicated Boonsville’s Joe Roughneck on October 26, 1970 – the 20th anniversary of the Boonsville natural gas field discovery.

The field's 1945 discovery well, Lone Star Gas Company's B. P. Vaught No. 1, produced 2.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas in its first 20 years. By 2001, the field – located in the Fort Worth Basin in North-Central Texas – had produced 3.1 trillion cubic feet of gas and 17 million barrels of condensate from 3,500 wells in the field.

Boonsville's Joe Roughneck statue can be found on Farm to Market Road 920 about 13 miles southwest of Bridgeport in southwestern Wise County.

Kilgore Joe Roughneck



Joe Roughneck greets visitors outside the East Texas Oil Museum in Kilgore, which opened in 1980.

Kilgore hosts a Joe Roughneck erected on March 2, 1986, in Sesquicentennial Plaza, celebrating the “boomers” who settled in Kilgore during the 1930s. Unfortunately, when Kilgore’s monument committee first approached Lone Star Steel, it learned that the Joe Roughneck cast had been destroyed in a fire. Lone Star let Kilgore use the original mold to produce this monument.

During the East Texas boom, Kilgore had the densest number of wells in the world. Today’s World’s Richest Acre Park displays a pumping unit and the city has restored dozens of derricks from Kilgore’s boomtown birth – a story told at the **East Texas Oil Museum**.

As the Depot Museum concludes, Joe Roughneck remains rough and tough, sage and salty, capable and reliable, shrewd but honest. “Joe has throughout his lifetime symbolized the determination of the American petroleum industry, reaffirming the indomitable spirit of Chief Roughnecks the world over, past, present and future.”