

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

The King Gobbler and I



PLUS:

Talking Book Program

Brownies and Bars

Washington's Birthday Celebration, Laredo



BEST OF CO-OP COUNTRY CONTEST 2005

We invite you to participate in our third Best of Co-op Country contest. Print your choices, along with the location and phone number where applicable, in whatever categories you wish. Provide your name, address, telephone number and co-op. Mail this page or a copy to "Best of Co-op Country," 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or download the webpage from the September issue at texascooppower.com or e-mail to coopcountry@texas-ec.org.

Entries will be judged on the number and persuasiveness of nominations received. You don't have to explain your nomination, but comments might help us choose a winner. Photographs are also useful.

Because the volume of "Best" nominations has increased, we are changing the rules. Petitions are not allowed. Each nomination must be sent separately by mail or e-mail—except in the new student contest described below.

BEST OF CO-OP COUNTRY GENERAL CONTEST CATEGORIES	
1. Place to Take the Kids	5. Hamburger
2. Romantic Getaway	6. Scenic Bridge
3. Historic Site	7. Golf Course
4. Summer Camp	8. Dining Worth the Drive

BEST OF CO-OP COUNTRY STUDENT CONTEST	
Class or School Project: students from middle and high school may nominate one of the following:	
Best Town To Live In	Best Texas Writer
<p>Students must explain in writing why their choice is best. Quantity and quality of nominations will be judged. Teachers and parents are not allowed to write or edit the submissions. The winning school will receive a prize of \$1,000.</p>	

Your Name	Co-op
Address	City/Zip
Telephone Number	

The deadline for submitting nominations is March 15, 2005.
The results will be published in the September 2005 issue of Texas Co-op Power.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

In This Issue

Adventure Takes Many Forms

Whether you choose adventure in nature or fireside stories by great writers, we have something to suit you this month. The cover article is on turkey hunting during the spring season along a beautiful stretch of the South Pease River on the Texas Plains. Texas, USA is also about the Plains, where poet Walt McDonald remembers “stars so bright they buzzed.”

Our second article, by our own Carol Moczygamba, alerts eligible patrons to the state’s Talking Book Program. Adults and children with vision loss, physical limitations, reading disabilities or certain temporary medical conditions are among those who can receive recorded books and magazines. The users we highlight find the program invaluable.

Brownies and Bars is the Home Cooking topic, and the recipes include fabulous treats from our readers. Why sweets this month? Because of Valentine’s Day, of course, which also explains why Focus on Texas is about romance, Texas Style.

Enjoy!



Peg Champion
Vice President, Communications/
Publisher

Julie Johnston, who is nearly blind, is a participant in the state’s Talking Book Program.



WILL VAN OVERBEEK



For their 13th wedding anniversary, Dee Dee Trosclair surprised husband Steve with a horseback ride. “We thought it was very romantic,” Dee Dee says. “We rode beautiful horses along the lake at dusk, and toasted our special day.” The Trosclairs belong to CoServ Electric. For more “Romance: Texas Style” photos, turn to page 37.

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By Susan L. Ebert

Our writer stalks the elusive King Gobbler along the South Pease River.

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By Carol Moczygamba, Photos by Will Van Overbeek

The Talking Book Program provides recorded books and magazines for eligible Texans.

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Washington’s Birthday Celebration in Laredo.

Focus on Texas 37

There’s no such thing as going over the top when it comes to romance in Texas.

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By Walt McDonald, Photo by Wyman Meinzer

No Matter Where We’ve Been, Texas Plains.

Texas Co-op Power is published by your electric cooperative to enhance the quality of life of its member-customers in an educational and entertaining format.

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Texas Electric Cooperatives

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LETTERS

Stars No Longer Bright

I noted with sadness the photo on page 38 ["Nighttime Texas"] of the December Texas Co-op Power. As an amateur astronomer, I know that all the light that shows up in that photo is wasted light, using wasted power and wasting the precious resources that it took to produce that light. This "light pollution" also confuses native Texas wildlife and interferes with migratory birds. In spite of Professor Eyton's exuberance about the photo, the stars at night are no longer bright in most of Texas. Most people in Fort Worth, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio haven't seen the Milky Way in years!

RET. COL. BRADFORD L. RIZA,
United Cooperative Services

using full cut-off lighting, motion sensors and X10 technology, which can send an RF [radio frequency] signal inside your house to alert you when someone is prowling around.

I think the main reason you are not seeing more shielded outdoor lighting installed is the lack of local availability. But we all know we have to live with these choices for a long time, and therefore more effort should be put into decision making.

MIKE JENNINGS, Grayson-Collin EC

Editor's note: For further reading, see the Texas Co-op Power article from January 2002 [www.texasec.org/tcp/102star.html] on star-friendly lighting.

A full cut-off lighting fixture, when properly installed, directs all light down and to the sides as needed, rather than toward the night sky. The result is more light where you want it for less electricity cost.

Motion sensors are applied to outdoor lighting to instantly turn lights on when motion is detected. The sensors switch the lights off if no further motion is detected for a specified period of time.

X10 technology uses existing electrical wiring in your home (or any other building) to communicate with electrical devices that you want to control, allowing you to remotely control lighting, as well as many electric applications. Several X10 lighting options are offered: A basic receive-only light

switch, a two-way light switch that sends and receives (allows you to turn on multiple lights with one switch), and a motion-activated sensor that transmits radio frequency signals to turn on the lights when a person enters a room.

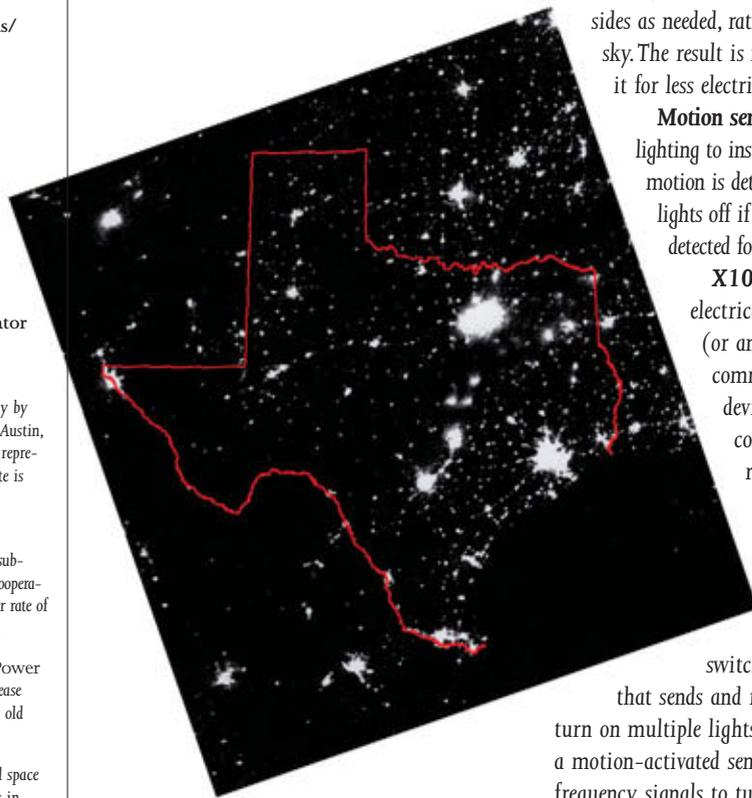
Face Full of Lights

You don't have to go as far as putting yourself into orbit to see that we have a lighting problem in Texas ["Nighttime Texas," December 2004]. For most Texans, all you have to do is stick your head out the front door or drive down any street to get a face full of bright lights and glare. Using unshielded all-night lighting mostly aids the "bad guys." For real security, we should be

Neither Rain Nor Lightning ...

Sometimes we need to brag, and this time it's on our electric company.

The week of Thanksgiving brought such damaging, treacherous rain and lightning to the El Campo area. When we lost electrical power in our home for two consecutive nights, I called Wharton County EC [WCEC], giving the necessary information to the



answering service. I asked them to please inform WCEC not to tend to our power loss at night—it was too dangerous in these awful storms. We were fine in the dark. I did not want those men to place themselves in any harm, as the lightning was terribly close and continuous. In less than three hours on both occasions, WCEC had our service running again. I was amazed!

Not only are we always greeted by smiling faces from the girls in the office, the linemen who work for WCEC are terrific. We are so fortunate to have these men working for us.

Thank you, Wharton County Electric Cooperative. May God always keep you safe while you are working to help others. You are appreciated.

WEIDA GADEKE, Wharton County EC

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, Texas Co-op Power, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704.

Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and will be printed as space allows.

S A F E L I V I N G

Carbon Monoxide: Odorless and Deadly!

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, tasteless, invisible gas that claims more than 2,100 lives each year, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Additionally, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission reports approximately 10,000 people annually seek medical attention for unintentional CO poisoning caused by a household appliance. Follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule to keep appliances working properly.

Do not leave your vehicle idling in an attached garage. The CO gas can seep into your home through doors and floorboards.

Be aware of these symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: dizziness, severe headaches, nausea, sleepiness, fatigue/weakness, and disorientation or confusion.

High concentration levels of CO can be fatal in a matter of minutes!

Follow these steps for the prevention of CO poisoning:

- Install CO alarms with a battery backup on every level of your home and in sleeping areas.
- If a CO alarm sounds in your home, never ignore it. Get your family out of the house immediately and open the windows to allow the CO to dissipate.



Emergency Kit

PACK YOUR EMERGENCY KIT NOW!

Have you taken steps to prepare for severe storms before they strike? Why not put together an emergency supply kit now?

Here's what your kit should include:

- First-aid kit
- Cash (banks and ATMs may be unavailable in a power outage)
- Battery-operated radio
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Important documents and records, photo IDs, proof of residence
- Three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Three gallons of bottled water per person
- Coolers for food and ice storage
- Fire extinguisher
- Blankets, sleeping bags and extra clothing
- Prescription medications, written copies of prescriptions, hearing aids and other special medical items
- Eyeglasses and sunglasses
- Extra keys
- Toilet paper, clean-up supplies, duct tape, tarp, rope
- Can opener, knife, tools



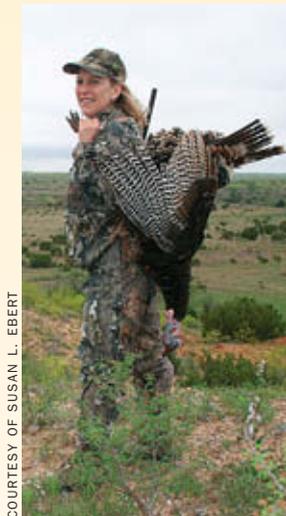
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THE KING GOBBLER AND I

BY SUSAN L. EBERT



COURTESY OF SUSAN L. EBERT

We arrive at the South Pease River Ranch Resort under an overturned bowlful of stars. The next morning I'm greeted by ranch owner Bob Stafford, a retired orthopedic surgeon who is fit, tanned and beaming with hospitality. Stafford bustles around preparing bacon, eggs, biscuits and coffee. Pouring myself a cup, I slip out on the porch and listen to the predawn choruses of coyotes.

I am here on the western edge of the Rolling Plains to pursue Rio Grande gobblers, including the elusive King Gobbler, with fellow outdoors writers Shannon Tompkins, Lee Leschper and Steve Lightfoot. To non-hunters, spring may seem like the wrong season to hunt turkey, but there are two turkey-hunting seasons, one in the spring and one in the fall. In the spring, only gobblers are fair game. Hens are protected because it is nesting season.

COLORS OF THE DAWN

After breakfast and still before first light, hunting guide Don Stuckey drives us to where we will hunt. "You will find turkeys," says Stuckey. "Where I see 'em most often is up by this windmill or down by the river, when they come off the roosts and go to water." Tompkins and I decide to try our luck in the South Pease River floodplain, while Leschper and Lightfoot choose the higher ground.

We unload our gear by a salt cedar and ease upstream in the emerging light. What appears from a distance to be a vast, featureless, empty land is actually teeming with color, texture and life. Ball-shaped flowers of *Mimosa borealis*, called catclaw here, glow a fierce magenta. Delicate bells of lacy pink foxglove, low-lying woolly purplish locoweed, neon-yellow common dogweed and bitterweed festoon the rock-strewn riverbank. The red bluffs above the Pease turn molten copper as the first shafts of sunlight find their forms. Peach-breasted scissortailed fly-



KATHY ADAMS CLARK

A magnificent Rio Grande gobbler.

catchers tumble and somersault through the air. It's an explosion of color and life.

Tompkins positions his hen decoy in a small open area, and we obscure ourselves in the brush. With a series of yelps and purrs from his slate call (a wooden striker on a piece of slate), interspersed with softer vocalizations from a diaphragm call (a latex whistle), he tries to entice a gobbler. After some time, a hen strolls by, pecking at grass seeds, totally uninterested in the plastic intruder we've planted in her path.

There! Did you hear that? Yes!

We each look toward the other to verify the gobble we've heard downstream to our left. "Let's circle around that point on the other side of the road," whispers Tompkins, "and I'll try to call him in for you." As silently as we can, we slip

through the brush along a cattle trail, which is laced with a multitude of turkey tracks. It looks like a veritable turkey highway!

I set up in a clump of hackberry while Tompkins disappears into a cedar outcropping above me on the point. With a pair of nippers, I quietly clip any branches that might give away my location if inadvertently bumped. Turkeys have very sharp eyesight, and tend to startle at the slightest movement. Having recently missed an Eastern turkey in the Appalachian foothills of Kentucky when fatigue set in and the approaching gobbler spotted my quivering gun barrel, I've acquired a top-of-the-line Redhead turkey vest for this hunt. With the high back support and comfortable seat, I can rest my shotgun on my right knee and sit here all day, if need be.

But that won't happen today. Tompkins strikes his call and the gobbler answers; he's headed our way.

I calm myself with steady breaths. I'm slouched down in my vest, the butt of my shotgun comfortably snuggled in the pocket of my left shoulder, the barrel resting on my right knee. The setup is perfect, and I see the ruby head of a gobbler rounding a patch of scrub to my right. Wait! There are two! Trailing the first gobbler is a somewhat larger bird, tailfan spread, as they make their way toward our silent plastic hen.

I line up the larger bird over my barrel and squeeze the trigger. He drops, barely fluttering, to the ground. The other bird, momentarily startled by the blast from my 20-gauge, is overcome with curiosity and returns to investigate his fallen comrade. Often, when gobblers are in pairs, the less dominant bird will return to the downed one and "give him a good lickin'," attacking his former rival with beak and spurs. He lingers a moment too long, and I aim and fire again. Two lovely gobblers the first morning out! My family will eat well.

We rejoin Leschper and Lightfoot. They, too, have met with success. Rio Grande turkeys are apparently plentiful here on the 13,000-acre South Pease River Ranch. We lay our trophies over a nearby fallen log and savor the morning's hunt.

The real prize of any South Pease River expedition is still at large. "The King Gobbler is still out there," says Tompkins.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

The afternoon allows us time for a nap, and a chance to explore our surroundings. Stafford has returned many of the once-farmed fields to native grasses as he develops the ranch as a hunting preserve. Mourning doves, bobwhite quail and upland sandpipers explode from the

grasses as we pass by. Clusters of yellow-headed blackbirds forage for seeds around a herd of grazing horses. A loggerhead shrike stands lookout on a barbed-wire fence nearby, peering through the grasses for lizards, insects or rodents.

Then, in the reddish earth of the arroyo near the dog kennels, we spot a slight movement. A burrowing owl is perched on a tree root emerging from the bank! I grab my binoculars to admire his brown and white dappled feathers, so like the sun-dappled earth behind him, and his large, glowing yellow eyes. He glowers at us as he stands sentinel over a burrow below, where a smaller female peers nervously from its opening. The only North American owl to nest underground, these diminutive creatures are becoming increasingly rare due to habitat loss and degradation. To see this healthy pair fiercely guarding their nest lifts our spirits.

This is the mythic rangeland of the Caprock escarpment, that crumbling-away zone between the High Plains and the Rolling Plains formed by erosion one to two million years ago. Not only Comanche, but Plains Apache and prehistoric nomadic peoples before them lived in this rugged yet prolific land. In 1541, the Spanish explorer Vázquez de Coronado came through here on his ill-fated quest for gold. Stretching before us, below the Caprock and into the vast Rolling Plains below, is the famed Matador Ranch, once the largest cattle-raising operation in the world. The Matador once encompassed 861,000 acres, from the Croatan Brakes southeast of Dickens to 60 miles north. It would not be unusual for the Matador to brand 20,000 or more calves each year.

PURSUIT AT PEASE POINT

The following dawn, Stuckey disgorges us from his truck high above the South Pease River. Our plan is to



COURTESY OF SUSAN L. EBERT

Can you see the author? She's comfortably ensconced in her well-braced turkey vest and other camouflage gear.

sidle down the gullies to the river, trying our best to avoid being sighted on the road by our sharp-eyed prey.

We break out of the cover of the brush and wade across the shallow river. After setting up briefly in a cedar brake to pinpoint the direction of gobbles we've heard, we return to the point that was productive the day before. This time, I take the high perch, with unloaded gun at my side. Tompkins sets up where I was the day before, next to the turkey highway. He calls, and a responding gobble echoes through the floodplain. Tompkins works his slate call and his mouth call simultaneously, simulating several hens at once to lure in the gobbler. It works—the gobblers become more frequent, more strident.

After what seems an eternity,

Tompkins breaks position and emerges from his lair in a clump of hackberry. "He was right over here," he points, "strutting, drumming and spitting. The King Gobbler I told you about yesterday. His beard was three fingers thick, and he was in full strut, with his head tucked against his puffed-out chest. It was a heart-pounding show. But he never quite came into shotgun range; there was something about the decoy that spooked him."

Or perhaps it was simply the vanity of a virile gobbler who expected this aloof little plastic hen to come running to him. With turkeys, you just never know; that's part of the allure of turkey hunting. From my vantage point above, the view was obscured to my right, so I never saw the glorious show.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Lightfoot, Leschper and I have each taken two birds rather easily, but Tompkins is focused on the mighty gobbler that has so cleverly eluded us. So, all but Lightfoot return the following morning, with Leschper in the high position and Tompkins in the low one. I find a hackberry to the right, place my vest deep into its shadows and settle into the berry-laden branches. I'm treated to a turkey-calling symphony, with both men casting the seductive sounds of amorous hens out into the grasslands below.

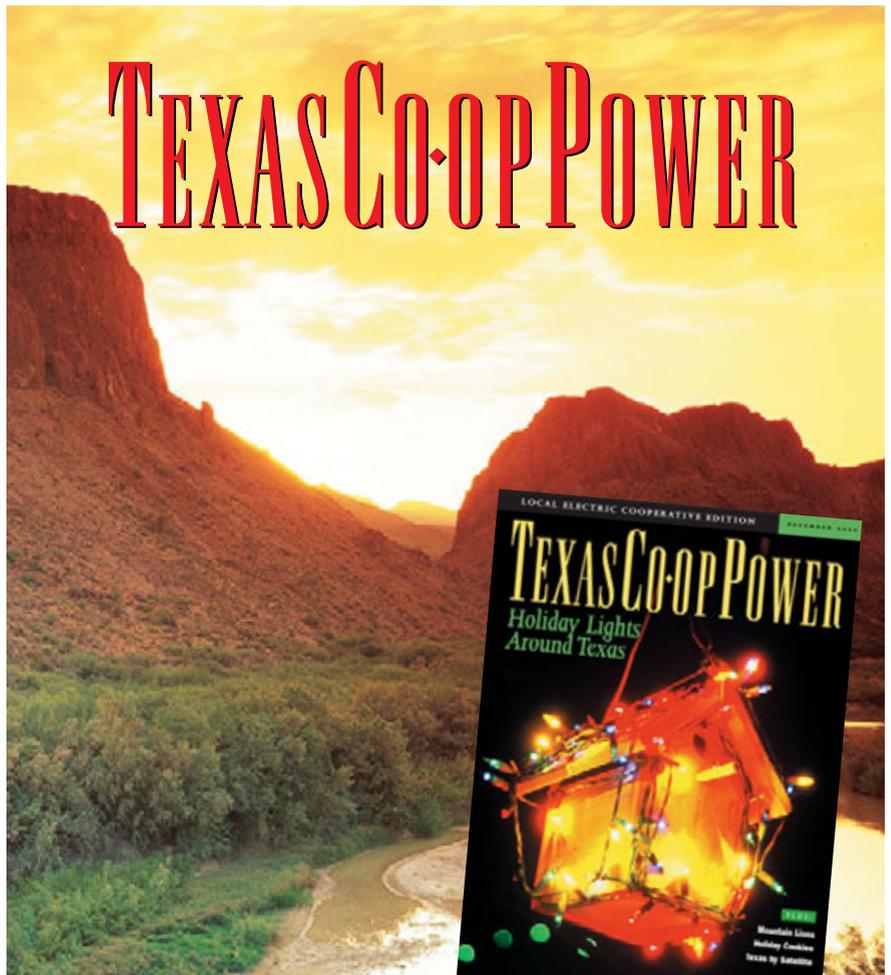
Perhaps 80 yards out, we see a shape, another, and then another move across the landscape. It's a flock of jakes (young male turkeys), at least 16 of them. Some attempt to strut, posturing like teenage boys in the Dairy Queen parking lot. Three more approach from our right, prancing up to our mute hen and stop, seemingly to confer with each other. "You gonna ask her out? Naw, are you? She doesn't seem to like us much." They gather their composure after being rejected by our ersatz hen and amble away.

Then, a ruby glow draws my eye to a small glade about 100 yards to my right. It's the King Gobbler, his crimson head illuminated by a ray of sun that hits him like a stage spotlight. His back gleams metallic green and bronze as he stands immobile, gigantic. He's watched us here now for three days, wary and alert. My heart pounds in my throat and I shiver with delight. My fellow hunters and I agree—just seeing his splendor is reward enough.

Contact the South Pease River Ranch Resort at 1-877-794-2333 or www.southpeaserverresort.com.

South Plains EC serves the area open to hunters.

Susan L. Ebert is a lifelong outdoorswoman and the former publisher and editor of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine.



SHARE THE POWER!

Texas Co-op Power is the Texas living magazine with a rural, suburban and small town focus. Each month you will read entertaining articles about Texas people, Texas history, Texas nature, Texas travel and Texas food.

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NAME: Marilyn Kennicutt, 74, Austin **OCCUPATION:** Vietnam veteran, International Training and Communication speaker, hospital volunteer **FAVORITE BOOKS:** Biographies, histories, classics
FAVORITE AUTHORS: James Michener, Irving Stone **TALKING BOOK PATRON SINCE:** 2001

Talking Books

An estimated 350,000 Texans live with disabilities that prevent them from reading. Adults and children with vision loss, physical limitations, reading disabilities or certain temporary medical conditions are among those eligible to receive recorded books and magazines through the Talking Book Program of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. Texas Co-op Power introduces you to four very different people who all share a love of books and an inability to simply take one off the shelf and read to their hearts' content. Each is a patron of the Talking Book Program.

Marilyn Kennicutt is short of stature, long on energy, and big on adventure. As a child in St. Paul, Minnesota, she once heard a song about a slow boat to China that planted itself in her imagination and inspired an abiding wanderlust.

She started a teaching career after graduating with a degree in speech and education, but it didn't take long before cabin fever set in, so in 1959 she took a job with the American Red Cross' SRAO (Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas) unit. As one of the so-called "Donut Dollies," Marilyn helped coordinate recreational activities for post-Korean War GIs recuperating in military hospitals.

Years later, Marilyn returned to Asia as a hospital field director dur-

ing the Vietnam War. In one year, she served in three hospitals in Cam Ranh Bay, Bin Tuy Air Base and Phu Bai. "My trunks didn't even catch up with me," she recalls. She barely had time to catch her breath between assignments, but her enthusiasm for her work never lagged. "We had to be very inventive. With a couple of muumuus and hula hoops, we could put together a Hawaiian party," she says. "We used whatever we could get ahold of."

Ingenuity got her through Vietnam, but it wasn't enough to rescue her from the loss of her eyesight. Several years ago, Marilyn was beset with a series of small strokes, resulting in damage to her optic nerve. "The biggest trauma was not being able to read," she says. "I was the kind of person who always had a book in my hand. In supermarket lines, bank lines, in the doctor's waiting room, I was reading something. A big part of my life was torn out."

Eventually, she began piecing her life together again. An award-winning speechwriter and speaker, she continued participating in International Training and Communication, formerly known as the International Toastmistress Club. She resumed her volunteer work with the Texas Association of Vietnam Veterans, the Veterans' Hospital in Kerrville, and Seton Hospital in Austin. She learned to get around with a white cane. But she was still struggling with not being able to read.

When she learned about the Talking Book Program, Marilyn immediately signed up. "It's a godsend," she says. "I don't know what I'd do without it."

"I can be folding laundry or doing other things, and listen to a book or articles from *Reader's Digest*," she says. Once again, Marilyn can enjoy a good story while waiting at the doctor's office. Only now it's on tape.



NAME: Jason Wierzbicki, 15, Austin **OCCUPATION:** High school student, ice hockey player
FAVORITE BOOKS: *The Lord of the Rings series*, *The Hot Zone*, *the Redwall series*
FAVORITE AUTHORS: Bryan Jacques, J.R.R. Tolkien **TALKING BOOK PATRON SINCE:** 2001

Jason Wierzbicki was a smart kid. He could remember anything you told him, anything he saw. So it was odd that he was such a poor reader. “He loved books,” his mother, Cynthia, says. “He would carry them around and look at the pictures, but he had never read one cover to cover.”

By the time Jason was in fifth grade in private school, he was still having trouble reading. “I was concerned,” his mother recalls. “School was stressful for him because he felt he was different, but his teachers believed he would read when he was ready.”

They also thought he simply wasn’t working hard enough. “I was doing the best I could,” Jason remembers,

“but it took me so long to read the assignments, I was always handing things in late.” Trying to find a reason for his difficulty in school, his parents took him from one specialist and therapist to the next. “We did everything but swing a dead chicken over his head,” his mother laughs.

In the meantime, Jason was proving to be very good at roller blading. He got his first pair of roller blades when he was 6. At 7, he began playing roller hockey. By fourth grade, Jason was playing ice hockey. “He’s a beautiful skater,” his mother says. “It really gave him a lot of confidence.”

Jason was finally diagnosed as dyslexic. “We were so relieved,” said Cynthia. “We thought, ‘Oh, that’s all it is. He just has to learn other ways.’” Listening to words instead of reading them turned out to be one of those ways.

Jason’s first Talking Book was *The*

Call of the Wild. “He was plugged in all the time,” says his mother. “He would take the tape player with him and listen to the same tape over and over. He really started understanding what literature was.”

Jason tells how he tried reading the Harry Potter books, but struggled with following the story. “Then I got them on tape and everything started to piece together.

“At first I didn’t want people to know I’m dyslexic,” Jason says. “But now, it’s no big deal. I would tell other kids who have trouble reading to think of a book they didn’t quite understand and call the number [for the Talking Book Program] and order it. You’ve got to feel secure about admitting it, and once you admit it to yourself, you know it’s not really a big deal. You’re better at other stuff.”

Yeah. Like playing ice hockey with the Austin Roadrunners.

W

hen James Martin retired from the Dallas Fire Department in 1977 he had 20/20 vision and dreams of running cattle on the family ranch just outside his boyhood home of Buffalo. He was ending a 20-year career of safely maneuvering speeding fire engines during thousands of emergencies. For relaxation he would read, sometimes staying up all night to finish an especially engrossing story.

Only two years into his life as a rancher, James realized something was wrong. He couldn't see like he used to. Objects directly in front of him seemed to be slowly evaporating into a dark haze. "I found out I had macular degeneration, and there wasn't a thing they could do for me," he remembers. "I couldn't even see to make coffee."

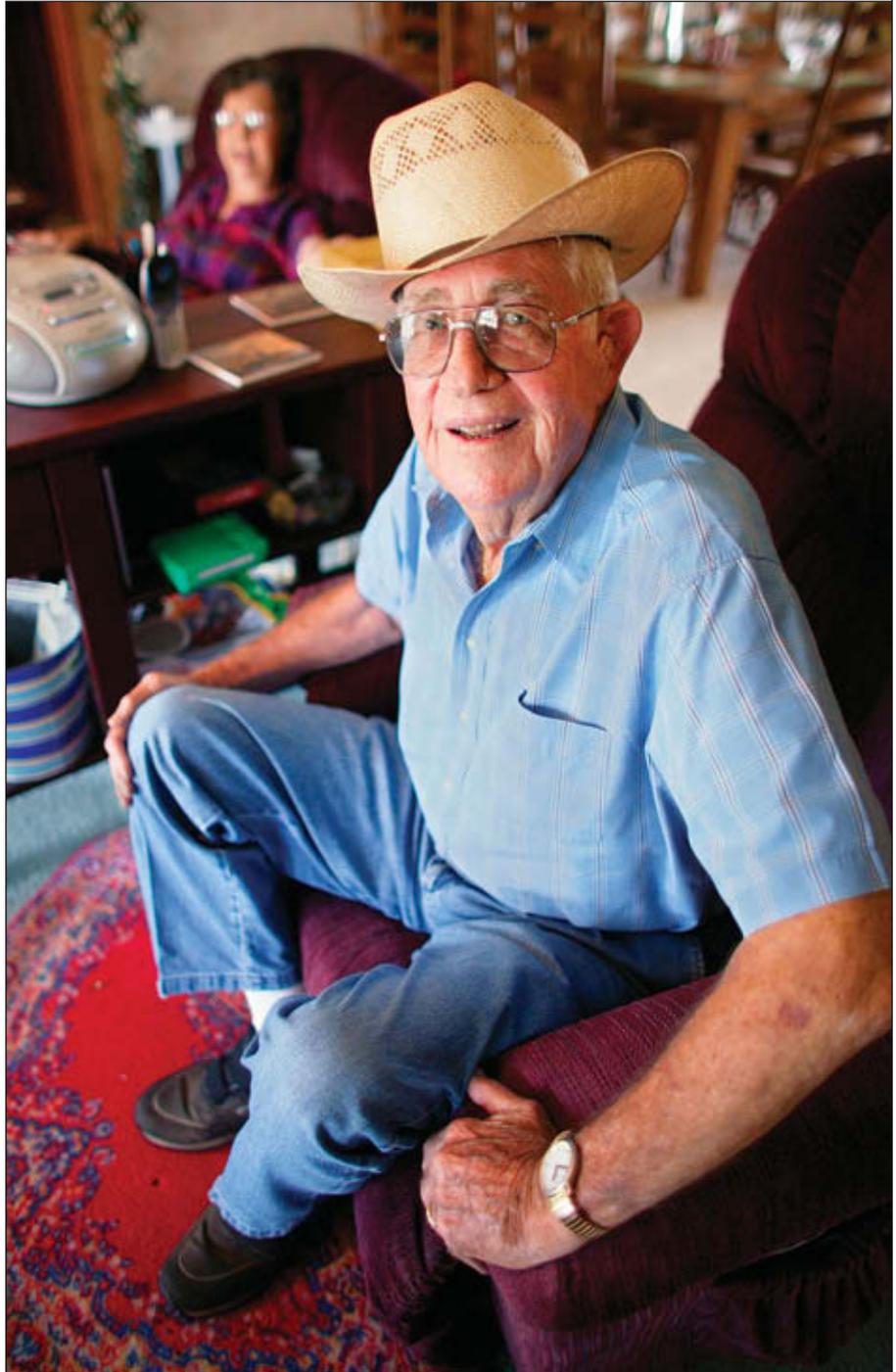
Reading, of course, was out of the question. James set about adapting himself to a life essentially without vision. He still had enough peripheral vision to work in the yard. He and his wife, Bonnie, enjoyed listening to Rangers games on the radio. And, every once in a while, he'd get in his beige Chevrolet pickup and take a slow, bumpy drive through the fields. He's got the scratches and scrapes to prove it. "That gate wasn't as wide as I thought," he laughs.

The small amount of peripheral vision didn't do James any good at all when it came to reading. Books had always been such a big part of his life, even in high school when he became so attached to Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* that he conveniently "forgot" to return it to the library. When James and Bonnie went in search for books on tape, they were disappointed that so few Westerns and historical adventure novels were available.

So when he heard about a program that offered free books on tape with an extensive catalog of

James' favorite titles and authors, he was elated. "I can't drive or read or write, so those tapes they send me, they're a godsend. As soon as I listen to one, I send it back and they send another one. If I run out, I'm lost.

"It's a different life, but I know I've lost my eyesight. If you can't see, but you can hear, the Talking Book Program is the best thing in the world. I do love the stories—I'm happy as a dead pig in the sunshine."



NAME: James Martin, 79, Buffalo **OCCUPATION:** Dallas Fire Department (retired), rancher **FAVORITE BOOKS:** Westerns, frontier adventures **FAVORITE AUTHORS:** Zane Grey, Jack London
TALKING BOOK PATRON SINCE: 2001



NAME: *Julie Johnston, 20, Kingwood* **OCCUPATION:** *Public speaker, college student*

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Classics, Pride and Prejudice* **FAVORITE AUTHORS:** *Jane Austen, Louisa May Alcott*

TALKING BOOK PATRON SINCE: *1990*

Julie Johnston is a vivacious, attractive, intelligent 20-year-old. When she says over the phone that she's 3 feet tall, there's a slight lilt in her voice. Then, she admits, "Well, without my shoes, I'm 2 feet, 11 inches. But I always wear my shoes." Julie will readily tell you she has a form of dwarfism, but her size seems almost incidental when you consider her lifelong struggle with near-blindness, several rounds of surgery, and prolonged captivity in a body cast to correct joint problems.

To help her get through school, Julie joined the Talking Book Program when she was a first grader.

She was always a fast learner and

took advantage of adaptive equipment, such as the talking Braille typewriter. "I was always surrounded by equipment," she says. "Starting in middle school, I had a laptop with a printer on a huge desk, like a computer desk on wheels, so I could do my assignments on the keyboard because writing wasn't easy for me. I couldn't see my own handwriting." The sight of little Julie and all her appliances was daunting to the other students. "They felt like I wasn't part of the class," she says.

That's when one of Julie's teachers encouraged her to talk with her fellow students. "The next day I was up in front of the class, telling them who I am, why I was short, and about my blindness. I encouraged them to ask questions, and it was so much fun," she says. "I made a lot of friends. They didn't hesitate to come and talk to me." Julie was so

much at ease in front of the class, she discovered a natural talent for public speaking. Soon, other teachers asked her to talk with their classes about differences and disabilities. Most gratifying of all, she realized that she could open minds and hearts simply by talking candidly about herself. Since then, Julie has addressed church congregations, senior citizens and school assemblies, even traveling as far as Florida for a speaking engagement.

She plans to major in communications and continue her public speaking. She knows it won't be easy, but at least one part of her life will remain uncomplicated. "I'll keep ordering Talking Books," she says. "It's so worth it and so easy. All you have to do is call and find out if they have a book or author you like. It's so relaxing and enjoyable to let someone read for you."

Signing Up With Talking Books

Talking Book patrons may order books and periodicals free of charge from an extensive list of titles, many in Spanish, that cover the gamut of genres from Texana to cookbooks to classic literature to romance novels. More than 80 national magazines, including Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, Money, People, Ebony and Seventeen, are available on audio cassette, in large print, or in Braille.

Tapes are shipped with a cassette recorder specifically calibrated for Talking Book recordings. Patrons receive postage paid shipping cartons to return the tapes after use. All it takes is a simple phone call to get started.

Peggy Rudd, director and librarian of the program, says more than 800,000 volumes of taped books and magazines reached nearly 20,000 Texans last year, but that's only a fraction of the eligible population.

"People tell us the service is a lifeline, and I know they mean it in several different ways," Rudd says. "Of course, they're so glad to be able to read when they thought that was something they'd never do again. But when they call, there are people on the other end who understand what they're going through, and who are sensitive to their needs and the disability challenges they face."

The National Library Service (NLS) provides most of the materials in the Talking Book program. Volunteer readers in Austin and Midland

studios record books by Texas authors, books about Texas, and books in Spanish to supplement the NLS collection.

Eligibility

Individuals qualify for the Talking Book Program if they:

- Have prescription glasses, yet are unable to read standard print material without additional magnification devices;
- Have physical limitations that prevent them from holding books or turning pages at all or for an extended period of time;
- Are legally blind;
- Have reading disabilities due to an organic dysfunction;
- Have temporary disabilities, such as incapacity due to stroke or severe fatigue due to illness; or
- Are in hospice care.

A public librarian, optometrist, physical rehabilitation therapist or nursing home activity director may

certify visual and physical disabilities. Learning disabilities need to be certified by a medical doctor.

Institutional Membership

Institutions such as schools (both public and private), nursing homes, assisted living facilities and hospitals may become institutional members, as long as at least one student or resident meets a disability eligibility qualification listed above.

Contact Information

Phone: Toll-free 1-800-252-9605

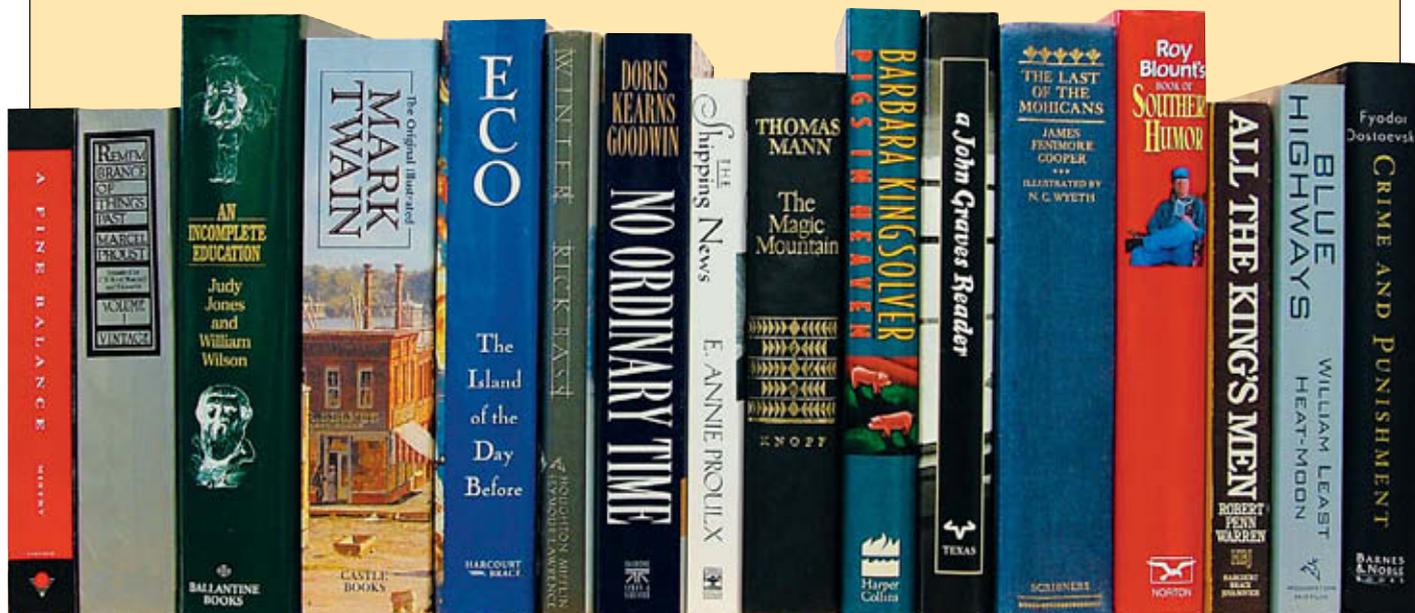
E-mail: tbp.services@tsl.state.tx.us

Book listings online:

<http://nlscatalog.loc.gov/>

Address: Talking Book Program, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, P.O. Box 12927, Austin, TX 78711-2927

Carol Moczygamba is managing editor of Texas Co-op Power. Will Van Overbeek is an award-winning, nationally recognized documentary and portrait photographer based in Austin.



TRY THIS QUICK TEST FOR AIR LEAKS

Among the quickest routes for heated air to escape from your nice, warm home during the winter are the same ones where cold air finds its way in: through windows and doors.

Air leaks are a waste of energy, and they can occur around windows and frames and even right through the glass.

To find leaks, try this test: On a windy day, light a stick of incense and hold it next to a window. If the smoke

travels horizontally, you've found a leak. You can use the same test to find leaks around doors, plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets and other potential escape routes for heated air.

Once you find a leak around a window or a door:

- Caulk and weatherstrip. Caulk is an airtight filler for cracks and holes. Weatherstripping takes the form of a narrow piece of foam, metal, vinyl,

rubber or felt that seals window joints between the sash and frame, but doesn't interfere with opening and closing the window.

- If you have single-pane windows, install storm windows over them.

- As an alternative, tightly tape clear plastic film to the inside of the window frames when it's cold.

- Replace your curtains with insulating shades, shutters or drapes.



THE SUPER BOWL ON HIGH-TECH TV

The best place to watch Super Bowl XXXIX on February 6 might be in the comfort of your own home.

Makers of television sets have introduced an enviable array of huge screens, clear pictures and high-tech features just in time for the big game. Some examples:

- Philips Ambilight flat TVs project ambient light onto the wall on either side of the television. The manufacturer says manipulating the color helps reduce glare and improves the contrast and color of the picture. You may select from a palette of colors or let the TV adjust the color itself, based on the action on screen.

- Although it's not brand new, TiVo can add to your Super Bowl-

watching experience. If you're in the kitchen getting a cold one and you miss the "Hail Mary" play, you can essentially rewind the game and see what you missed.

- Some new Sony televisions come with a built-in chip that allows viewers to zoom in, pan or tilt the angle of the image on the screen. The gadget is called the DRC-MFv2, or Digital Reality Creation Multifunction.

- Plasma TVs are just a few inches thick, no matter how large the screen. Traditional models get thicker as the screen gets larger. Plasma sets offer high resolution and exceptional color. Most models can display more than 16 million colors. That's more than the human eye can register.

AUTOMATED HOMES ENTER MAINSTREAM

The automated home is just about ready to make its debut with upper-middle class homeowners.

Technology market research firm ABI Research says homes that combine entertainment, communications and "smart" appliances historically have appealed only to the wealthy and to computer whizzes. But the market is shifting because large technology companies are starting to make the components that go into integrated homes.

- Control centers for automated homes will either be PC or television based.

- Microsoft and Hewlett Packard are working on a "Windows Home Concept," which will automate home media and communication.

- Motorola is developing "Home Media Architecture," which focuses more on entertainment.

- To help the vast number of gadgets in a home to communicate, the Open Services Gateway Initiative Alliance will standardize how these devices "talk" to each other.

- The Computing Technology Industry Association offers special training for installing and maintaining automated home components.

BRIGHTEN LIGHTS, BRIGHTEN MOOD

Bright office lights can brighten the moods of the people who work under them.

A study by Circadian Technologies, a firm that monitors the performance of shift workers, says bright lighting may increase employee performance by up to 20 percent.

In the study, Circadian exposed people to five different lighting conditions: two with constant light intensity and three with varying intensity.

Researchers tested participants for alertness, mood and performance before, during and after each application.

The results showed increases of 10 percent to 20 percent in performance, with mood and alertness improving most noticeably during morning hours.

Better performance, one study author says, could offset the cost of changing over to high-intensity lighting.

CUT ENERGY BILLS \$400

The average homeowner spends \$1,400 on energy every year, according to the federal Energy Star program, but using energy-efficient products can cut that bill by \$400.

Appliances that bear the Energy Star label have been rated by the government as super energy-efficient.

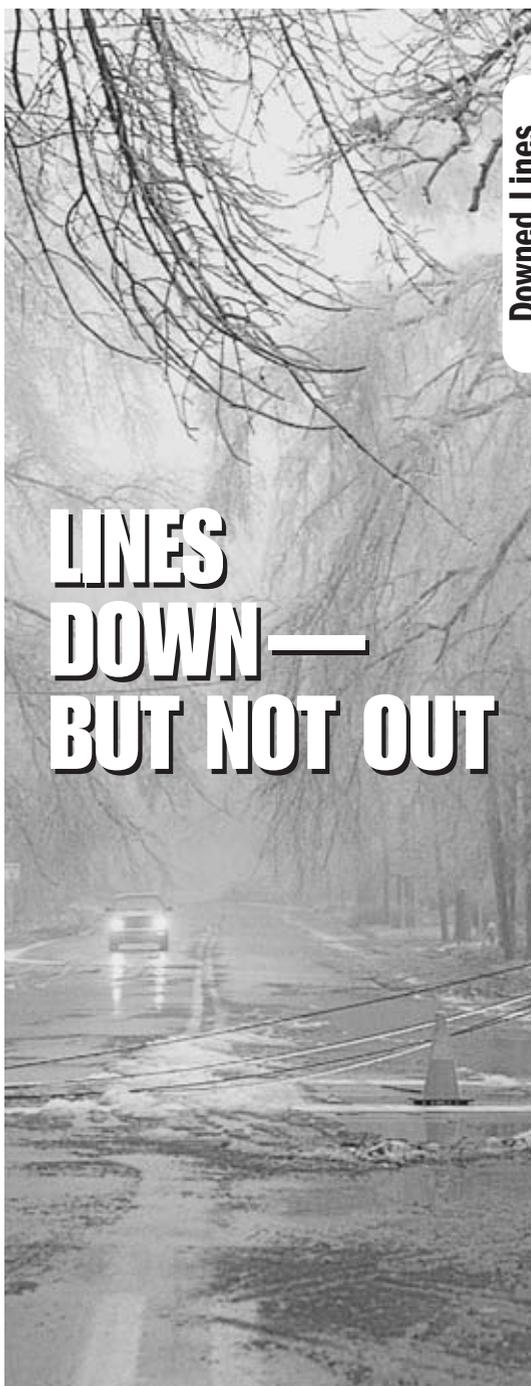


Among the appliances eligible for an Energy Star sticker are:

- Refrigerators
- Clothes washers
- Dehumidifiers
- Dishwashers
- Window air conditioners
- Heat pumps
- Boilers
- Central air-conditioning systems
- Ceiling fans
- Furnaces
- Thermostats

Thousands of home electronics, including cordless phones, DVD players, computers and televisions have Energy Star ratings.

When you shop for a new appliance, look for the yellow-and-black Energy Star label. Choosing an energy-efficient appliance could save you enough money on energy bills to cover the difference in price between an Energy Star model and an energy guzzler.



Downed Lines

Weather and car accidents are the main causes of downed power lines. Always stay away and warn others to stay clear of power lines. Even if they don't hum, spark or "dance," downed lines can be dangerous—they can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death.

Follow these rules:

- If you see a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it.
- The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times to minimize the chance for a human path of electric current.
- If someone is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. Call 911 instead.
- Don't try to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object such as a broom or stick.
- Don't drive over downed power lines.



Texas Electric Cooperatives

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This public service message is brought to you by your local electric cooperative. See your local co-op for details.

Nine Flags Over Nacogdoches

BY BILL CRAWFORD

In December 1826, ornery American land speculators hoisted a red and white flag over the Old Stone Fort in the piney woods of East Texas. The conspirators were unaware that their newly founded Republic of Fredonia would last but a few weeks, and that the Fredonia flag would be consigned to the scrapbook of history, just one of nine flags to fly over the turbulent political hot spot of Nacogdoches.

Wait a minute. Nine flags? Everyone knows that only six flags have flown over the Lone Star State—the flags of France, Spain, Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederate States of America, and the good old U.S.A. Claiming three extra flags seems like an oversized boast, even for the oldest town in Texas.

Nacogdoches, in deep East Texas, was the first Texas settlement designated as a *pueblo* or town by Mexican authorities. The Spanish trader Antonio Gil Y'Barbo (also spelled Ibarvo) resettled the former Caddo Indian settlement and Spanish mission in 1779.

Nacogdoches quickly became a wild, booming border town. Adventurers clogged the streets, trading in all kinds of goods, legal and illegal, and spreading rumors as they tried to gauge the shifting political winds blowing through Mexico City, Madrid, New Orleans and Washington, D.C.

The most ambitious of these adventurers were buccaneers of the piney woods, better known as filibusters, soldiers of fortune looking for a profitable fight. Since Nacogdoches was

the only settled part of Texas at the time, the town naturally became “filibuster central.”

The first of these flag-waving dreamers to take action was Augustus W. Magee, a disgruntled 24-year-old former U.S. Army lieutenant. Working with Mexican revolutionary Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, Magee recruited a volunteer army in Louisiana and routed the Spanish forces in Nacogdoches on August 8, 1812. Magee’s Republican Army of the North marched under an emerald green flag to victory over the Spanish in San Antonio before dissatisfaction and desertion destroyed the volunteer force. In retaliation, the Spanish marched east and almost completely destroyed Nacogdoches.

But the filibuster dream refused to die. Just seven years later, Dr. James Long, a U.S. Army surgeon from New Orleans, recruited a group of soldiers and took over Nacogdoches in June 1819. Long quickly retreated back into Louisiana at the approach of Spanish troops. His empire lasted just long enough to fly a flag of red and white stripes and a single white star over Nacogdoches, the first Texas flag to feature a lone star. Long’s next attempt at revolution led to his execution in Mexico City, but his wife, Jane Long, survived to become a hero of the Texas revolution, known as the “Mother of Texas.”

Filibuster and real estate impresario Haden Edwards claimed title to all the

lands surrounding Nacogdoches in 1826. This claim annoyed area citizens already living on the land. When Edwards learned that the Mexican authorities were marching toward the area to settle the dispute, he realized that there was only one way he could save his investment. He declared himself the leader of an independent nation and raised the flag of Fredonia over Nacogdoches.

The Republic of Fredonia flag featured the words “Independence, Liberty, Justice” and two thick bars of red and white, symbolizing what Edwards hoped would be an alliance between his new nation and the Cherokee Indians to the north. The alliance fell apart and so did Fredonia, as Mexican forces (with the full support of Stephen F. Austin) marched into Nacogdoches on January 31, 1827, forcing Edwards to retreat to Louisiana. Nine years later, Texas won its independence and the filibuster era came to an end.

The name “Fredonia,” fashioned from the word “freedom,” embodies the revolutionary spirit. The people of Nacogdoches honor their short-lived republics with the Nine Flags Festival each fall, and patrons of the Nine Flags Bar at the Fredonia Hotel continue to celebrate the filibuster spirit.

Austin-based writer Bill Crawford’s most recent book is *Please Pass the Biscuits, Pappy: Photos of Governor W. Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel*, published in 2004 by the University of Texas Press.



Spain
1519-1685, 1690-1821



France
1685-1690



Magee's Republican Army
1812



Long Expedition
1819



Mexico
1821-1836



Fredonia
1826-1827



Republic of Texas
1836-1845
State 1845-Present



United States of America
1845-1861, 1865-Present



Confederate States
of America 1861-1865

Don't Cut the Third Prong

The third prong on electric cords has a purpose! Marvin may think it's "about as useless as hair on a biscuit," but D-Wayne probably begs to differ. He's the one who was seriously zapped because Marvin snipped off the third prong to make a new plug fit into an old outlet.

Maybe we can better understand what Marvin has done if we think of electricity as water. When plugged in, the two flat prongs on a power cord allow the electricity to flow in and out of an appliance like water. This flow allows the appliance to operate. If there's a fault, or a break in the connection, the electricity looks for another path to ground.

This is where the third prong goes to work. Much like a hose will catch water from a dripping faucet, the third prong will provide a safe path for electricity that is leaking from an appliance. This helps protect equipment such as television sets and toasters and, more importantly, you.

Inside the outlet, the third prong attaches to a ground wire that usually connects to a ground rod at the electric service panel. In the event of a short circuit, electricity should flow to the ground rod instead of you.

Depending on the conditions, the path of electrical current flowing through a body can do a lot more than just shock. It can—and does—kill.

So, kids, don't be like our armadillo friend, Marvin. Never cut the third prong.

Cartoonist Keith Graves is a popular artist and author of children's books. Among his greatest hits are *Frank Was a Monster Who Wanted to Dance*, *Uncle Blubbafink's Seriously Ridiculous Stories* and *Loretta: Ace Pinky Scout*. He lives in Austin with his wife, Nancy, and the twins, Max and Emma.



GALAXIES - JUST

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ROY HAMRIC



CLUB MEMBERS INSTALL THE 24-INCH MIRROR TELESCOPE.

A group of men and women cluster around a computer screen gazing at a dense mass of white encircled by red and yellow spirals, surrounded by the darkest night.

"That's M31, a neighboring galaxy to the Milky Way. It's about 2.2 million light-years away," says Peter Mack, who constructed the astronomical telescope that is sending the image to the computer screen. A few more clicks, and there's M42, an area known as a birthplace of stars inside our galaxy.

Everyone is giddy, knowing more real-time images of the near universe are only a few computer clicks away—all because of a professional quality, 24-inch mirror telescope, recently purchased and installed on a remote

cedar-covered hilltop west of Clifton in Coryell County.

The robotic, automated telescope is the centerpiece of an ambitious project by the Central Texas Astronomical Society, a group of amateur stargazers who plan to make the telescope available to classrooms in Texas and all over the world via the Internet.

It will be possible for students and others to make e-mail requests and to receive back full-color digital images of supernovas, asteroids, meteors, comets and other objects. In addition, interested parties can get information about the brightness and physical characteristics of distant objects, which could lead to professional research papers.

Dean Chandler, the society's project coordinator, explains that the telescope's range extends about 500 million light-years. Five hundred million light-years is to the age of the universe (10 billion years) as 5 yards is to a 100-yard football field.

By professional standards, the telescope is small, but the idea behind it is innovative: to bring distant space into classrooms. Members hope to ignite an interest in astronomy among young people who largely rely on television or movies for their images of our universe.

Chandler sees the telescope as a classroom tool for teachers from elementary grades to the university level. Libraries, housing projects, astronomy clubs or virtually anyone, anywhere, could also access the telescope.

"This will bring astronomy to them in an easy, demystified way," says Chandler. "We're the first amateur group in the country that I know of—and maybe in the world—to do what we're doing. The key element is that we've created a facility to allow the public to access a first-class telescope over the Internet."

The society will also compile an archive of images that can be downloaded on request. Chandler envisions serving as many as 100 requests a day.

"It will even be possible, on occasion, to transmit real-time images into a classroom," he says, "and to use the telescope during daylight hours to show images from the moon, Jupiter and other locations."

The society plans to dedicate up to 45 percent of the telescope's time to Central Texas classrooms. In addition, it will work closely with Hands On Universe at the University of California at Berkeley, an organization that offers space images (at about \$50 each) and other data to the public.

The society hopes to reduce that per-unit cost to around \$5. So far, the society has done everything through

initiative, hard work and generous, private donations from people living in Central Texas. Its remaining goal is to build a public education center on the grounds.

It all started in 1992 when Mike Green, a student at McLennan County Community College, asked his astronomy teacher, Paul Derrick, to start an astronomy club. Derrick was busy writing a column on astronomy that appeared in newspapers across the state. Derrick said he didn't know of any astronomers in the area, but suggested that Green should try to organize a group himself.

Green put the word out, and soon six founding members were gathering regularly at area parks for stargazing parties. Today, the society numbers about 200 members.

About four years ago, the members began a search for a darker location. An unexpected donor entered the picture. Charles and Dorothy Turner of Waco said they might have land available. A "darkness study" determined the location was acceptable for serious astronomy, and the Turners donated 15 acres. Now, all the society lacked was a professional-grade telescope.

The Paul and Jane Meyer Family Foundation of Waco stepped in and donated \$325,000 to buy a telescope and construct the two-story observatory.

It took two years for Peter Mack, the president of Astro-nomical Consultants and Equipment in Tucson, to design, build and install the telescope and train society members on its use.

Shortly before Christmas, the Turners and the Meyers gathered with society members at a "lighting of the scope" party for the first peek through the telescope. They were able to see objects 500,000 times fainter than objects visible to the naked eye.

"My wife and I hardly knew where the North Star was," recalls Turner. As



THE PAUL J. MEYER TELESCOPE IS FINALLY MOUNTED.

they viewed the moon through the telescope's eyepiece, they were amazed. "It was very rough and stark—the telescope brought it up in great detail," he says.

Paul and Jane Meyer said they felt awe looking into the universe. Meyer, who made his fortune in the self-improvement industry, said his main goal in funding the society's efforts was to motivate youth.

"It will be incredible for young people," Meyer says. "Think of the thousands of young people and disadvantaged youth in Central Texas and elsewhere who can become involved in astronomy."

The website for the Central Texas Astronomical Society is www.centexastronomy.org.

McLennan County EC serves the Paul J. Meyer Telescope.

Roy Hamric is editor of The Desert Mountain Times in Alpine.



THE BUBBLE NEBULA IS IN THE CONSTELLATION CASSIOPEIA.

CENTRAL TEXAS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Brownies and Bars

BY SHANNON OELRICH

Salads and Salad Dressings is the recipe contest subject for May. Some people make the tastiest salads or homemade dressings. Are you one of them? If so, send us your recipe before February 10. The top winner will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a gift pack from Adams Extract. Others whose recipes are published will also receive a gift pack from Adams Extract. Be sure to

include your name, address and phone number, as well as your co-op affiliation. Send recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You can also fax recipes to (512) 486-6254 or e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org.

There were so many wonderful entries for Brownies and Bars that we decided to devote both pages this month to readers' recipes. The favorite recipe was for the decadent *Outrageous Brownies*. Chocolatey with a punch of coffee, these are a crowd pleaser and, with a recipe that makes two 9x13-inch pans of brownies, they're a crowd feeder, too.

TINA MATTHEWS, a member of United Cooperative Services, submitted her Aunt Vickie's recipe. She wrote, "My family recently had an old-fashioned hayride. It was cold and cheery, and afterwards my Aunt Vickie had made these brownies and they were definitely 'the rave'—oh my gosh, melt in your mouth! Everyone wanted the recipe." Tina will receive a *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a gift pack from Adams Extract. Other readers whose recipes are published below also will receive a gift pack from Adams Extract.

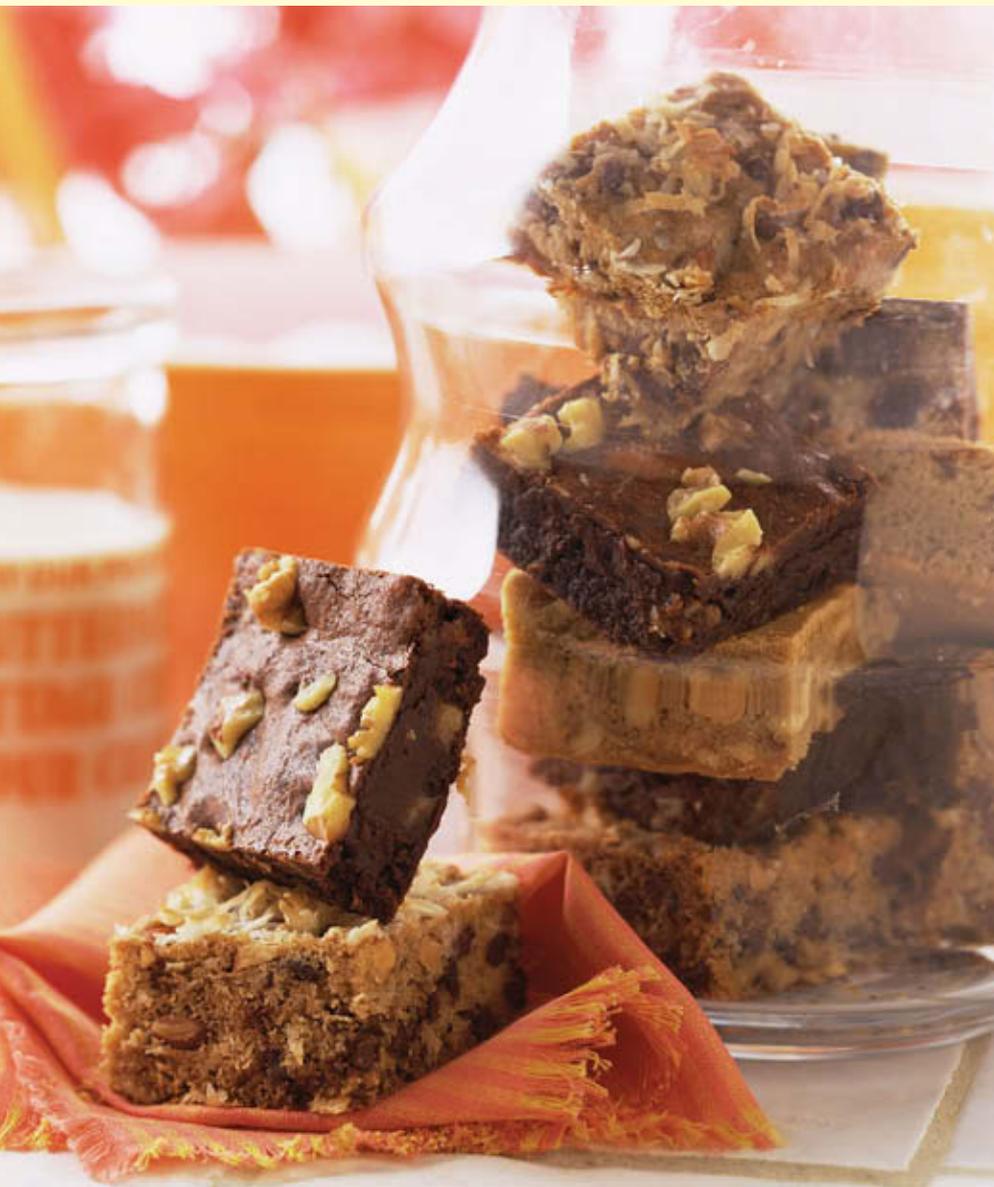
Outrageous Brownies

- 1 pound unsalted butter
- 6 squares (1 ounce each) semisweet baking chocolate
- 1 pound plus 2 cups chocolate chips (divide in half)
- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 6 extra large eggs
- 3 tablespoons instant coffee crystals
- 2 tablespoons real vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt (you may use regular salt)
- 1 large bag walnuts or pecans, about 3 cups
- 2 tablespoons flour

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a double boiler, melt butter, 6 squares chocolate and half the chocolate chips. When melted, set aside. Mix sugar, eggs, coffee crystals and vanilla in a bowl. Do not overmix. Mix flour, baking powder and salt in another bowl. Put other half of chocolate chips and nuts in a third bowl. Add 2 tablespoons flour to coat nuts and chips well.

When chocolate/butter mixture is cool, pour in egg mixture and stir together. Add flour mixture and mix well. Fold in chips and nuts. Spread in a greased and floured 13x18-inch pan (or two 9x13-inch pans). Bake for 30 minutes. Do not overbake. Makes 4 dozen.

Serving size: 1 brownie. Per serving: 288 calories, 4 grams protein, 19 grams fat, 29 grams carbohydrates, 80 milligrams sodium, 44 milligrams cholesterol



© FOODPIX

Macaroon Brownies

1 cup margarine
2 cups sugar
4 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup baking cocoa
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

In a mixing bowl, cream margarine and sugar. Add eggs and vanilla; mix well. Combine flour, cocoa and cream of tartar. Gradually add to creamed mixture. Stir in nuts. Spread half into a greased 9x13-inch baking pan.

Macaroon filling:

1 package (14 ounces) flaked coconut
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
2 teaspoons vanilla

Combine all three ingredients. Carefully spread over chocolate layer. Top with remaining chocolate mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

Frosting:

3/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup milk
2 tablespoons margarine
1 cup miniature marshmallows
1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine sugar, milk and margarine in a saucepan. Stir over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Add remaining ingredients. Stir until marshmallows and chips are melted. Cool 25 minutes. Spread over brownies. Cut into finger-sized rectangular bars as these are very rich. Makes 4 dozen.

Serving size: 1 small bar. Per serving: 167 calories, 2 grams protein, 8 grams fat, 22 grams carbohydrates, 81 milligrams sodium, 18 milligrams cholesterol

NELDA MINCHEW, Navasota Valley EC

Best-Loved Chocolate Bars

1 package (about 18 ounces) chocolate cake mix
1 cup graham cracker crumbs (about 16 squares)
1/2 cup peanut butter (do not use reduced-fat)
1 egg
3 tablespoons half-and-half
1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
1 jar (about 12 ounces) hot fudge ice cream topping

1 package (about 12 ounces)
milk chocolate chips

1 cup salted peanuts

In a bowl, combine the dry cake mix and graham cracker crumbs. Cut in peanut butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. In a bowl, whisk egg and half-and-half. Add to the crumb mixture just until moistened. Set aside 3/4 cup for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture into greased 9x13-inch pan.

In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until smooth. Add hot fudge topping; mix well. Spread over pressed crumb mixture. Sprinkle chocolate chips, peanuts and reserved crumb mixture over top. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes or until set. Cool on wire rack. Cover; refrigerate at least 4 hours. Cut into squares. Refrigerate leftovers. Yield: 2 dozen.

Serving size: 1 bar. Per serving: 332 calories, 7 grams protein, 19 grams fat, 38 grams carbohydrates, 337 milligrams sodium, 22 milligrams cholesterol

EDNA RADFORD, Coleman County EC

Honey Bars

3/4 cup oil
1/4 cup honey
1 cup sugar
2 cups sifted flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 egg, well beaten

Mix together first three ingredients. Sift remaining dry ingredients, then add to mixture. Add egg and mix well. The dough will be crumbly. Spread into a 9x13-inch pan—no need to grease first. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes. Frost while warm. Makes 24 bars.

Frosting:

1 cup powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2 tablespoons melted margarine
1 tablespoon water
Dash of salt

Stir all ingredients together until smooth. Spread over warm bars.

Serving size: 1 bar. Per serving: 169 calories, 1 grams protein, 8 grams fat, 24 grams carbo-

hydrates, 47 milligrams sodium, 8 milligrams cholesterol

SANDY WATSON, Bartlett EC

Apple Brownies

1 large egg
1 cup sugar
1 stick margarine
1 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 large apple, diced (I prefer a Macintosh)

Cream together egg, sugar and margarine. Add flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Fold in diced apple. Put in a greased 8x8-inch pan and bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes. Serve warm. Great à la mode! Makes 16 brownies.

Serving size: 1 brownie. Per serving: 137 calories, 1 grams protein, 6 grams fat, 20 grams carbohydrates, 158 milligrams sodium, 12 milligrams cholesterol

JILL RIPLEY CAUFFMAN, Pedernales EC

Cherry Almond Toffee Bars

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup powdered sugar
3/4 cup cold margarine or butter
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
1 egg, beaten
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 package (6 ounces) toffee chips
1 cup slivered almonds
1/2 cup coconut
3/4 cup dried tart cherries
or cherry-flavored raisins

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour and sugar; cut in butter until crumbly. Press firmly on bottom of 9x13-inch baking pan. Bake crust for 15 minutes and set aside. Blend condensed milk, egg and almond extract in large mixing bowl. Stir in toffee chips, almonds, coconut and cherries. Spread over prepared crust. Bake for 25 minutes until golden. Cool in pan on wire rack. Cut into bars and store covered in refrigerator. Makes 36 bars.

Serving size: 1 bar. Per serving: 154 calories, 3 grams protein, 9 grams fat, 17 grams carbohydrates, 67 milligrams sodium, 24 milligrams cholesterol

SHIRLEY BUNTING, South Plains EC

February

1. Brush Country Music Jamboree, **Three Rivers**, (361) 786-3334
- 3-5. Southwest Farm and Ranch Classic, **Lubbock**, (806) 798-7825 or 1-888-818-9250
- 3-5, 10-12, 17-19. "Love, Sex and the IRS," **Bryan**, (979) 823-4297
5. Globe Theatre Opree, **Odessa**, (432) 366-3240
4. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 4-6. Civil War Reenactment: The Battle for Long King Creek, **Livingston**, (936) 327-5242 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com
5. Corsicana Opry, **Corsicana**, (903) 872-8226
5. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013
- 5-6. Rocky Raccoon 100-Mile Endurance Run, **Huntsville**, www.hillcountrytrailrunners.com
- 5-6. Texas Treasure Hunt Antiques Show, **Conroe**, (281) 548-6679 or www.texas-treasurehunt.com
- 10-13. Midessa Boat, RV, Sport and Gun Show, **Odessa**, (432) 381-3324
- 11-12. Hug-In, **Luckenbach**, 1-888-311-8990 or www.luckenbachtexas.com
- 11-13. Horseman's Club Rodeo, **Victoria**, (361) 788-6157
- 11-12, 25-26. Chicken House Flea Market,

- Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 11-13, 18-20. Wine Lovers Trail, **Hill Country**, (830) 868-2321 or www.texaswinetrail.com
12. Hill Country Doll Show & Sale, **New Braunfels**, (830) 606-5868
12. Black History Festival, **Victoria**, (361) 576-5650
12. Mineola Museum Open House, **Mineola**, (903) 569-2087 or www.chamber.mineola.com
12. Southwest Bluegrass Club Winter Show, **Grapevine**, (817) 358-0594
12. American Music in the Texas Hill Country, concert series, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 997-2835 or www.pioneermuseum.com
12. Bluebird House Day, **Paris**, (903) 785-5716
- 12-13. First Annual Guitar Festival, **Round Top**, (979) 249-3129 or www.festivalhill.org
18. Country Opry, **Victoria**, (361) 552-9347
- 18-20. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
- 18-20, 25-27. "Bedroom Farce," Globe Theatre, **Odessa**, (432) 332-1586
19. Miss Athens Pageant, **Athens**, (903) 675-3908
19. Pineywoods Pickin' Parlor Concert, **Mineola**, (903) 569-8037 or www.pineywoodspickinparlor.com
- 24-28. Livestock Show, **Victoria**, (361) 576-4300

26. Bluegrass Music Show, **Quitman**, (903) 763-4411 or www.quitman.com
26. Barn Opening/Family Day, **West Columbia**, (979) 345-4656 or www.tpwd.state.tx.us
26. North Texas Farm Toy Show, **Gainesville**, (940) 759-2876
26. Steeplechase Park Creek Cleanup, **Kyle**, (512) 268-5341 or www.cityofkyle.com/parks
26. Municipal Airport Fly-In, **Granbury**, (817) 579-8533 or www.granbury.org
27. Bach Festival Benefit Concert, **Victoria**, (361) 570-5788

March

1. Brush Country Music Jamboree, Bob Wills tribute, **Three Rivers**, (361) 786-3334
- 1-20. Livestock Show & Rodeo, **Houston**, (832) 667-1200 or www.rodeohouston.com
- 3-6. BorderFest 2005, **Hidalgo**, (956) 843-8686
4. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 4-5. Stitches in Time Needle Art & Quilt Show, **Lampasas**, (512) 932-3886
- 4-5. Piecemakers Quilt Show, **Uvalde**, www.uvaldeaac.org
- 4-6. NORBA National Texas Supergrind, moun-

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH

BY JIM GRAMON

Washington's Birthday Celebration: Through February 20, Laredo

When I was a kid, they had a parade for my birthday every year, right down the middle of Congress Avenue in Austin. I wasn't

those years, folks had been celebrating February 22 because of him, not me. Well, it's OK with me, as long as there is a lot of fun and a parade.

celebrate with sister-city Nuevo Laredo, they found a common hero in Washington.

Besides being a grand salute to our first president, Washington's Birthday Celebration spreads international goodwill between Mexico and the United States. The International Bridge Ceremony begins with a symbolic *abrazo*, or hug, in which two Laredo children embrace two Nuevo Laredo youths. Leaders from the two cities then follow and unite on the international bridge. Next comes the Grand National Parade, with entries from both Mexico and the United States. The Illuminated Parade features 10,000 students from area schools whose lighted creations make a beautiful presentation.

The nearly monthlong celebration has grown into South Texas' largest event, expected to draw over 200,000 visitors this year. There are 31 events, with activities for every age group. The most glamorous galas are the black-tie

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Laredo is the unlikely site of colonial splendor.

really sure why they didn't have parades for the other kids, but I certainly wasn't going to rock the boat.

It was in about the third grade that I found out about a guy named George Washington. Seems that all

Folks still celebrate George Washington's birthday. As a matter of fact, they have the largest celebration in the nation for George in Laredo. This event is so large that it encompasses two cities, two nations and two parades.

Why Laredo? Washington was revered not only in the United States, but in areas to the south as well, where he is seen as the forerunner to Latin American liberators. In 1898, when the Laredo chapter of the patriotic Order of the Red Men, whose members included Laredoans of Mexican and American heritage, looked for a cross-cultural holiday to

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- tain bike races, **Boerne**, 1-888-842-8080 or www.boerne.org
5. Corsicana Opry, **Corsicana**, (903) 872-8226
5. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013
5. Johnson County Lawn & Garden Show, **Cleburne**, (817) 793-4625 or www.JCMGA.org
11. Country Opry, **Victoria**, (361) 552-9347
12. Hearts and Barks Benefit Dinner & Silent Auction, **Bosque**, (254) 675-7712
12. Market Days, **Georgetown**, (512) 868-8675 or www.discovergeorgetowntx.org
- 12-13. Central Texas Ceramic Expo, **West**, (214) 327-8984
- 12-13, 26-27. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 12-22. Rio Grande Valley Livestock Show, **Mercedes**, (956) 565-2456

Event information can be mailed to Around Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, faxed to (512) 486-6254, or e-mailed to aroundtx@texas-ec.org. It must be submitted by the 10th of the month two months prior to publication. E.g., April submissions must be received prior to February 10. Events are listed according to space available. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.

Colonial Ball and Princess Pocahontas Pageant and Ball, which feature Laredo debutantes wearing colonial costumes and Native American regalia. Some gowns require two years of research and preparation.

There are also plenty of entertaining events, like the Jalapeño Festival, with a mariachi contest, Some Like It Hot recipe contest, and a jalapeño-eating contest. A Taste of Los Dos Laredos gives everyone a chance to sample some good border food. There is also a 5K run, a carnival, an air show and the Charreada, a Mexican-style rodeo.

How do you get to Laredo? Nothing simpler. Go south on I-35 till it ends, and you're there! Call the festival organizers at (956) 722-0589 or find more information on their website, www.wbcalaredo.org.

Jim Gramon is the author of FUN Texas Festivals and Events. Jim@JimGramon.com, www.JimGramon.com.



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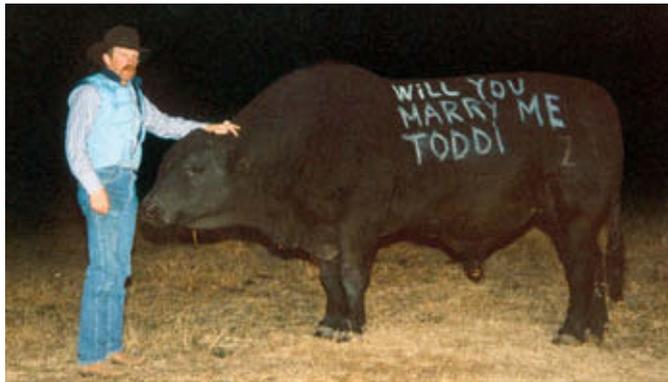
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Romance: Texas Style

Thanks to our readers' photos, we're able to share some romantic moments and stories this month. Romance takes many forms across the Lone Star State, but one characteristic is constant: Texans are just a bit grander about it.

Gardening is the topic for our April issue. Send your entries—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Gardening, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before February 10. For digital photo requirements and e-mail instructions, go to www.texas-ec.org/tcp/faq.html. We will return photos when a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included with your entry. Please allow 4-6 weeks for your photos to be returned.



If you think romance is just a lot of bull, you might be right. Seven years ago, when Bill Beazley enlisted Charlie, his 2,000-pound bull to become a walking "bullboard" on Christmas Eve, how could Toddi, Bill's intended, resist? Bill and Toddi Beazley are members of Taylor EC.



Newlyweds Margret Elisabeth and Otto Jurgen Hoffman were photographed at the family farm in Kyle in 1952. Wise EC member Barbara Yerby submitted the photo of her parents.



Johnny and Florence Hoffmann have had 60-plus years of romance. They met when she was in first grade and Johnny was in third. "We are true Texans," writes Florence. "We have had 57 years of happy marriage." The Hoffmanns are members of Medina EC.



When their British friends asked Trinity Valley EC members Dick and Jan Browning if they could have a Texas wedding in their backyard by the lake, how could they say no? It was a Texas event by any standards: The guests sat on hay bales, ate plenty of barbecue, and the giant boots and horseshoe made the perfect backdrop.



Lin Sutherland and Brad Bradshaw celebrated their romance during their Texas-style honeymoon. The new Mr. and Mrs. Bradshaw spent a week horse-camping and riding with friends. Pedernales EC members P.W. and Larry Magnuson submitted the photo.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

Issue	Subject	Deadline
April	Gardens/Gardening	February 10
May	Caught Napping	March 10
June	Picnics	April 10
July	Water Gardens & Ponds	May 10
August	Those Were the Days	June 10
September	Bridges	July 10



No Matter Where We've Been

I swore I'd never come home
to the Plains, eight hundred acres
and stars so bright they buzzed.

I said I'd work these rows only for sport,
maize for a pair of calves.
Goats and hawks are hobbies, a pond

with bass once in a hundred casts.
Old Uncle Bubba told me
no matter where I've been,

it's home. Our boys make a fortune
dragging home rattlers in towsacks.
The prairie crawls with tarantulas,

hawks in all weather, gliding on thermals
There's little we could lose, here,
little we could hide. We've almost

stopped pretending clouds are mountains,
here where rain is rare as trees.
If we can't accept these fields,

our souls with all their wind
and cactus, we ought to leave.
Even at night, our shadows sprawl:

that moon is up for hours. On fields
this flat, someone's easy to find
and always calls us friend.



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