

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

*Business Is
Blooming!*



PLUS:

Parenting Your Parents

Spicy Foods

McDade Watermelon Fest

ON BOARD WITH BOATING SAFETY

Boating

Did you know that people who hunt or fish from boats have one of the highest boat fatality rates? Or that more people die from falling off small boats (16 feet and under) than larger ones? Here are some tips for accident-free boating:


Safety Rules for Boating:

- Be weather wise. Bring a portable radio to check weather reports.
- Bring extra gear you may need. A flashlight and extra batteries, matches, map, flares, first aid kit, sunglasses and sunscreen should be kept in a watertight container or pouch.
- Tell someone where you're going, who is with you, and how long you'll be gone.
- Ventilate after fueling. Open the hatches, run the blower, and carefully sniff for gasoline fumes in the fuel and engine areas before starting your engine.
- Anchor from the bow, not the stern. Use an anchor line at least five times longer than the water depth.
- Know your boat's capacity. Don't overload it or put an oversized motor on it.

Have fun on the water.
Boat safely!



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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

Hot Fun in the Summertime

This month's issue got me thinking about family. Our story on cut flowers reminded me of my grandmother, who came to live with us when I was just a little girl. To say that Granny had a green thumb was an understatement! She planted flowers everywhere and our house was always filled with the beauty and fragrance of cut flowers. Thanks to Texas growers like the Arnoskys, you don't have to have a green thumb to enjoy a house full of fresh flowers.

Our second feature is an excerpt from a book written by an acquaintance of mine, Jim Comer. I think you will find a real connection with the story that Jim shares with us. Most of us have had (or will have) the experience of caring for a sick or failing parent. With the experience comes an understanding of aging as an inherent part of the cycle of life as depicted by Frank Curry's beautiful photo-illustrations. For me, it confirms how precious and fleeting is the time we have to spend with our family.

Our recipe topic, Hot Stuff, also puts me in mind of my family. As kids, my brother and I used to compete to see who could eat the hottest pepper; usually, Lou won. But I still "like it hot" and I think you'll enjoy these recipes, too, especially Cheryl's Jalapeño Fudge.

The McDade Watermelon Festival and Water Gardens and Ponds were chosen to help keep you cool in the midst of another hot summer. And don't miss our own Carol Moczygemba's Texas, USA story about a different kind of "smoking gun"—the pistol packin' barbecue pit in Weimar. Enjoy!

Peg Champion
VP, Communications/Publisher



This water pond looked too much like a swimming hole to little **JULIE KNOX**. "She wanted so badly to get in the pond and play," says grandmother **CHARLYNN HOWINGTON**. She and her husband, **JODIE**, are members of San Patricio EC. For more Water Gardens and Ponds photos, turn to page 37.



RIK PATRICK

Elana Arnosky gathers cut flowers on her family's farm.

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Flower Farms Bloom in Texas 8

By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers, Photos by Rick Patrick
Texans spend approximately \$234 million on cut flowers and related products annually. However, less than 1 percent, or about \$2.3 million, goes to Texas farmers. Meet one of the farm families trying to expand Texas' share of the business.

Parenting Your Parents 14

By Jim Comer, Illustrations by Frank Curry
Writer Jim Comer moved from Los Angeles to Austin a decade ago to care for his father, who has had multiple strokes, and his mother, who has Alzheimer's. He shares some of the lessons he's learned along the way.

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Smoking Gun, Weimar.

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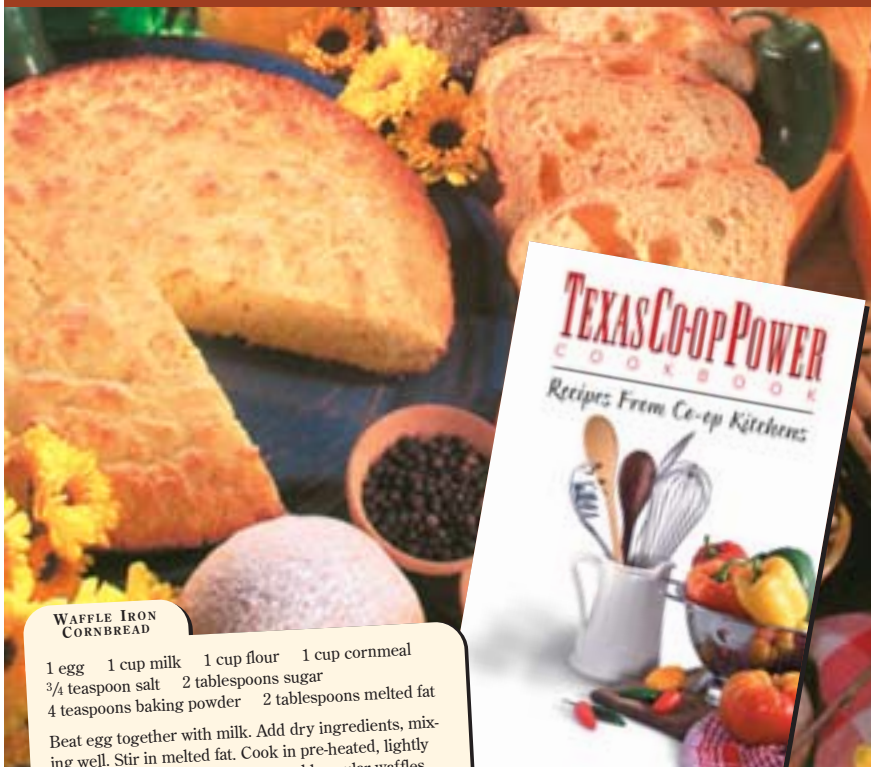
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Mouthwatering recipes from the heart of Texas



WAFFLE IRON CORNBREAD

1 egg 1 cup milk 1 cup flour 1 cup cornmeal
3/4 teaspoon salt 2 tablespoons sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder 2 tablespoons melted fat

Beat egg together with milk. Add dry ingredients, mixing well. Stir in melted fat. Cook in pre-heated, lightly greased waffle iron just as you would regular waffles.

Cindy Walton, *Big Country EC*

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Long May It Wave

On an unseasonably cold San Angelo Saturday morning in April, a small group of uniformed cavalrymen stood at attention before a whitewashed 56-foot-tall flagpole while one of their number worked a rope pulley, hoisting the 38-star version of Old Glory. Nearby, a handful of infantrymen waited for the final notes of the bugle player's "To the Colors."

As the last note sounded, the flag flew high and a cannon fired.

It could have been Fort Concho in 1874, the year the first flagpole was installed at the frontier military base.

In fact, it was Fort Concho in 2005, and the flag rose on a new flagpole, a precise replica of the 1874 model. Thanks to Concho Valley Electric Cooperative and Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC) Treating Division, Fort Concho, a National Historic Landmark, could once again fly the colors.

After lightning destroyed the fort's previous flagpole in 2004, the Fort Concho Museum Board put their collective heads together to figure out what to do. Without the Stars and Stripes waving above, the fort seemed almost soulless. Fortunately, Board President Tom Gregg Jr. had a good hunch about where to turn for help.

As the attorney for the Concho Valley EC Board of Directors, Gregg was

very familiar with the co-op's position on community involvement and promotion of economic development. A major tourist attraction and a stopping point along the Texas Forts Trail, Fort Concho was an important community asset—Concern for Community is Cooperative Principle #7.

When Gregg approached Concho Valley EC Executive Vice President/CEO Weldon Gray with the idea that the co-op get involved in the flagpole project, Gray was enthusiastic. As a customer of the TEC Treating Plant in East Texas, which manufacturers utility poles, Gray knew he had the right connections for building the perfect pole. He called Charlie Faulds, senior vice president of the Treating Division. Faulds liked the idea. He talked with Don Morton, peeling manager of the pole plant. Morton gladly got on board.

Thus began a cooperative effort to build a flagpole worthy of its historic role, a flagpole that would match in every detail its 19th century predecessor. The joint effort was a textbook case of Cooperative Principle #6—Cooperation Among Cooperatives.



CAROL MOCZYEMBA

In appreciation for their role in giving Fort Concho a new flagpole, Cavalry Post Commander Colonel Joe Hurd presents replicas of 19th century U.S. Army sabers to (left to right) TEC Treating Division Peeling Manager Don Morton, TEC President/CEO Mike Williams and Concho Valley EC Executive Vice President/CEO Weldon Gray. To the right of the honorees are Fort Concho Museum Director Robert Bluthardt, and President of the Fort Concho Museum Board of Directors and Concho Valley EC Attorney Tom W. Gregg Jr.

Because the original flagpole was actually two poles lashed together, Morton had to locate the right two Southern yellow pine trees from among hundreds of thousands in the pole plant's acres of timberland. Then came the meticulous sizing and trimming. As word of the project spread, individual employees joined in on their own time to lend a hand. Once the poles reached Concho Valley EC, ready to be painted, more than 20 co-op employees volunteered their time to wield a paintbrush just to be part of the historical undertaking.

SAFE LIVING

Children Must Be Protected Online

Children are taught at an early age to look both ways before crossing a street. Diligent parents also teach youngsters not to poke objects into electrical sockets or accept rides from strangers. Nowadays, there's another potential danger in children's lives: the Internet.

A new multimedia "Kids' Page" on Attorney General Greg Abbott's website (www.oag.state.tx.us/kids) is devoted to teaching kids how to

stay safe while online. Parents will find links to other websites, such as www.safekids.com, that offer useful information for keeping their families safe on the Information Superhighway.

Here are some tips to protect young web surfers:

- Place the computer in a public room so usage can be easily monitored.
- Teach children not to give out

personal information, such as their name, address and phone number, especially in a chat room.

- Establish ground rules for Internet usage, including the hours they may surf and the sites they can visit.
- Emphasize to children that they must never agree to a face-to-face meeting with someone they meet online.

Saving Them Instead of Shooting Them

Kudos to Texas Co-op Power for the heart-warming article, "Fossil Rim: Where Endangered Species Live the Good Life" [May 2005]. I'm an old country boy who used to hunt, but haven't done it for decades. I don't want to get into the ethics of hunting, but it's great to see ranchers who are committed to saving animals instead of shooting them. I showed the photo of the baby cheetah to a friend who doesn't like cats, and even she agreed that it was precious.

CHARLES WUKASCH, Austin

Panhandle Horseman a Stirring Sight

Sixty years of our lives were spent in the Texas Panhandle. We enjoyed reading the article "Texas Legacies" [May 2005], especially since it pertained to the "Grand Canyon of Texas." Seeing the man on horseback race across the ridge's edge, carrying the Texas flag, makes one proud to be a Texan and an American. Living in Pampa, we knew numerous individuals who acted,

danced or helped with lighting in the show, "Texas." Thank you for bringing back wonderful memories for us. You have a great magazine.

DON AND SHIRLEY STAFFORD, Trinity Valley EC

Drug Store With Soda Fountain

In the article on small Texas museums ["Ten Small Texas Museums," April 2005], I was disappointed that you left out my favorite, the Yellow Rose Drug Store, located in downtown Van Alstyne. There you can travel back to the turn of the century and visit a drugstore complete with working soda fountain. You can enjoy a delightful lunch topped off with their specialty, the banana split malt. Then stroll through stalls and stalls of antiques and crafts in their adjacent antique mall. It is a real treat, not to be missed.

MAXINE WILLOUGHBY, Grayson-Collin EC

No Buffalo Soldiers at Palo Duro

While the black soldiers of the Ninth and Tenth U.S. Cavalries did do many years of service on the Texas frontier,

they were not involved in the battle of Palo Duro Canyon, as suggested by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers in your May issue ["Battle of Palo Duro Canyon"]. In that particular engagement, Colonel Randal Mackenzie led the famed Fourth Cavalry to victory over Quanah Parker's Comanches.

E.R. WALT, Comanche EC

Editor's response: We regret the error. "Battle of Palo Duro Canyon" did not appear in all local editions of Texas Co-op Power. Read these and other articles you might have missed on our website, www.texascoopower.com.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM OUR READERS.

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Because many pieces of farm equipment reach heights of 14 feet or higher, always remember to look up when entering fields and barn lots to make sure there is enough room to pass beneath electric lines. Electric contact accidents can result in loss of limbs or even death.


Farm Safety Rules:

- The number one electrical farm hazard is the potential contact from a grain auger to a power line. Always look up before raising or moving an auger.
- The same is true of metal irrigation pipe, often stored along fence lines under an electric line. Never raise or move irrigation pipe without looking up. A few seconds of caution can mean the difference between life and death.
- Be sure hand tools are in good working order and use them according to manufacturers' instructions.
- Ensure that the wiring in your workshop is adequate to handle your tools. And never operate any electric tools near water.
- Read labels and handling instructions carefully and follow them when using chemicals and herbicides. Never leave chemicals where children or animals can get into them; store them in a locked cabinet if possible. Safely dispose of containers.

CULTIVATE FARM SAFETY



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A close-up photograph of a hummingbird hovering over a vibrant pink flower. The bird's wings are blurred from motion, and its long beak is extended towards the center of the flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow, suggesting a garden setting. The text "flower farms" is written in a white, cursive font, and "BLOOM" is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font, both centered over the image.

flower farms
BLOOM

Zinnias such as these are one of the Arnoskys' best sellers. From left are Pamela, Elana, Hannah Rose, Janos and Frank Arnosky.



BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS • PHOTOS BY RICK PATRICK

IN TEXAS

Buckets of vibrant yellow sunflowers.

*Piles of rich pink, purple, orange
and red zinnias.*

Bundles of bright marigolds, celosia, lilies and gomphrena. In the early morning sunlight, standing amidst the floral wonders, Pamela Arnosky shears leaves, sorts blossoms, and assembles bouquets of flowers that customers in Austin and San Antonio will display in their homes by afternoon.

“Andrew Weil, in his book *8 Weeks to Optimum Health*, says you should eat broccoli once a week and buy yourself fresh flowers every week, too,” says Pamela as she slides a bouquet into a plastic sleeve. “We keep a copy of his book at our farmers’ market booth and tell people to follow Dr. Weil’s instructions!”

Not that they need a lot of encouragement. Texans spend approximately \$234 million on cut flowers and

related products annually. However, less than 1 percent of that, or about \$2.3 million, goes to Texas farmers. Pamela and her husband, Frank, have one of approximately 35 cut flower farms in Texas.

“The cut flower industry in Texas has a long way to grow,” says Richard De Los Santos, state coordinator for Horticulture and Forestry Marketing with the Texas Department of Agriculture.

The reasons are varied.

“Growers are small, and some are not able to fill large orders or maintain a steady supply,” explains De Los Santos. “Some are also limited to seasonal production, and customer recognition has not been established.” So, at least for now, approxi-



Pamela and Hannah Rose make bouquets in the packing shed.

At first, they raised bedding plants. In 1992, they planted 2,500 delphiniums as an experiment.

“All but 10 died,” he recalls. “But instead of saying we can’t grow them, we looked at the 10 that survived, and they were stunning. So through trial and error, we figured out how to grow them.” By the next year, their business, Texas Specialty Cut Flowers, was wholesaling bouquets to Central Market stores in Austin and San Antonio. Along the way, they also built a bright blue frame home by their fields.

mately 60 percent of cut flowers sold in the United States are imported from other countries. The remaining 40 percent are grown primarily in California, Florida, Colorado, Hawaii, Michigan and Washington. Growers, as well as the Texas Department of Agriculture, are working to increase product recognition and slowly build the market here.

THE BUSINESS

Flower growing requires knowledge of farming, not to mention strong marketing and business skills, and major investments of money and time. The work is often grueling, and financial returns can’t be guaranteed. Despite the odds, people like the Arnoskys and their four children, who farm for a living east of Blanco, can’t imagine doing anything else.

For them, it’s a way of life that began in 1990 when they bought 12 acres of rich bottomland. “We carved a road in with a chain saw, pitched a tent, and went to work,” Frank says.



Earth laughs in flowers. —RALPH WALDO EMERSON



The Arnosky family finishes a day's harvest by 7 or 8 a.m.



These days, the family works 40 acres of land throughout the year to cultivate more than 60 types of flowers and a variety of vegetables. From before daybreak to past dusk, Pamela and Frank cut and package flowers, tend 14 greenhouses, and plow fields. In addition, Pamela homeschools Hannah Rose, 15; Janos, 13; and Elana, 12. The three join their parents at work after classes. Oldest son, 18-year-old Derrick, who attends George Washington University, pitches in whenever he's home. "The whole family gets into it," Pamela says.

In 2004, the Arnoskys sold approximately 30,000 bouquets. They primarily wholesale to grocery stores and florists in Austin, San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. They also sell vegetables and flowers at farmers' markets in Austin—the Sustainable Food Center downtown and Sunset Valley Farmers Market. Customers love the locally grown bouquets, which last longer in

water than older imported blossoms that are already several days old.

"Florists love our flowers," Frank says. "We've had them grab the flowers out of the bucket and start singing to them!"

To further diversify, the Arnoskys have opened a farm stand at the intersection of FM 2325 and RR 165 near Blanco. In addition to cut flowers by the stem and bouquets, the market sells vegetables, cheeses, herbs and plants. Visitors can also tour 20 acres of plowed production fields, and children can enjoy a small petting zoo featuring farm animals. Because their business has grown so much, the work is more than the family can handle alone. From April through November, they have 10 full-time employees and three part-time drivers.

THE CHALLENGES

Getting advice and dealing with Texas' unpredictable weather are the



Hannah Rose, left, and her brother, Derrick, assist customers at Austin's downtown farmers market.




advice from the Arnoskys

The Flower Farmer: An Organic Grower's Guide to Raising and Selling Cut Flowers by Lynn Byczynski is the single best start-up guide (order from Ball Publishing, 1-888-888-0013).

Join organizations, such as the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers (www.ascfg.org).

Label bouquets as "Texas grown." Join the Texas Department of Agriculture's "Go Texan" program, which promotes Texas products (www.gotexan.org or 1-877-99-GOTEX).

The ability to have a greenhouse and start your own plants is essential.

Plant tight beds, which reduces evaporation and the need for mulching.

Know what market you're shooting for and look at the competition.

Consider a subscription bouquet service—selling flowers to customers on a regular basis.

Use computerized bar codes when pricing bouquets.

Track your costs and charge enough for bouquets.

Have a mental attitude of abundance and prosperity. If you're tight with fertilizer, your flowers will show it.

Read the Arnoskys' book, *We're Gonna Be Rich! Growing Specialty Cut Flowers for Market* (Fairplain Publications Inc., call 1-800-307-8949 to order).



Arnoskys' greatest challenges.

"Two years ago, we had tornadoes, an ice storm and a big flood—everything but an earthquake!" Frank remembers. "Then, grasshoppers ate 50 percent of our flowers. There's never a dull moment out here, that's for sure."

The story's much the same out west near El Paso where Waynelle Strachan raises long-stemmed bluebonnets for the cut flower market. She planted her first commercial crop in 1995. The following January, a huge storm with high winds destroyed her greenhouses. Out of more than 2,000 plants, she salvaged and replanted approximately 700. None bloomed,

and most hardly grew, but their hardiness impressed Strachan. "I thought, 'Gosh, that's really a strong little flower. It deserves to be our state flower!'" she recalls.

That fall, she rebuilt the greenhouses and replanted, this time with great success. Today, the Old Alazan Company ships Texas bluebonnets worldwide. One customer sends a dozen to First Lady Laura Bush for her birthday every year. Strachan also ships 500 to 1,000 stems to Pasadena, California, where they are used to decorate floats in the annual Rose Parade.

"It's been a learning process," Strachan says. "We are where we are on the basis of that flower's beauty and strength, by word of mouth, and our website. People are so happy when they receive our flowers, and that makes us happy."

NICHE MARKETS

Finding a niche market or specialty—such as growing Texas bluebonnets—is critical in making a profit in cut flower farming.

A niche market is absolutely important, says Tana Kent, a Pedernales EC member who cultivates wildflowers on 3 of her 10 acres near Driftwood.

Every flower is a soul blossoming in nature. —GERARD DE NERVAL

“You also need to make sure it suits your personality. Once you find your niche, then you have to focus on it and do all your homework.”

Kent started with herbs, saffron and edible flowers in 1995. Inspired by the Arnoskys, she planted her first commercial crop of zinnias three years later and sold bouquets to a local barbecue restaurant. In 1999, a harried bride asked Kent for help with her wedding, which was two weeks away. Kent agreed and found her niche.

“It was an extraordinary amount of work, but I quickly saw that my eye for floral design would add great value to each and every stem grown on my farm,” says Kent, who has now provided flowers for more than a hundred weddings. “Since that time, I have developed my skills not only as a farmer coordinating crops for harvest for a nine-month season, but as a designer of special-event flowers as well.”

Assisted by one part-time worker and a part-time floral designer, Kent grows wildflowers such as bluebonnets, columbine, gaillardia, coreopsis, mealy blue sage and black-eyed Susans.

ENJOYABLE WORK

At the 36-acre Oak Tree Farm in Northeast Texas, Tommy and Gwynn Tucker plant 2 acres of zinnias, marigolds, sunflowers, Mexican tuber roses and perennials to sell on site. The income supplements Tommy’s full-time teaching position at nearby Pittsburg High School and Gwynn’s part-time work in her father’s insurance business. She’s also a master gardener.

The empty nesters moved to the farm near Winnsboro in 1998 and started growing cut flowers the following year. One weekend, they loaded up buckets of fresh blooms to take to their grown children in Dallas and while there, decided to visit some small retail floral shops. Much to their surprise, one florist bought all their flowers and asked for more.

For several summers, the Tuckers grew and marketed their flowers 125 miles away in Dallas. Then gas prices shot up, and the amount of work increased, too. Growing cut flowers, once an enjoyable activity, had become stressful. So last summer, the

couple kept flower sales local by offering cut-your-own bouquets and providing flowers for weddings.

Now they’re having fun again growing flowers. “We enjoy what we do,” Tommy says simply.

So do the Arnoskys.

“We get to be our own boss,” Frank says. “We work harder for ourselves than we would for any one else.”

The Arnoskys are members of Pedernales EC. You can find Texas Specialty Cut Flowers online at

www.texascolor.com or call them at (830) 833-5428. Tana Kent is also a Pedernales EC member. Learn more about her designs at www.tanasterrains.com or by calling her at (512) 301-3299. You can order bluebonnets from the Old Alazan Company online at www.texasbluebonnet.com or by phone at (915) 851-1238. The Tuckers of Oak Tree Farms are members of Wood County EC. You can reach them at (903) 365-2311.

Sheryl Smith-Rodgers of Blanco is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.

Rick Patrick is an Austin-based photographer.



Hot Weather

Keep cool—you could save a life

- Take frequent cooling-off breaks in the shade or air conditioning.
- Drink plenty of water before starting any outdoor activity, and drink water during the day. Drink less tea, coffee and alcoholic beverages.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothes.
- Limit your physical activity during the hottest part of the day.
- Kids, cars and heat make a deadly combination. Never leave a child—or pet—in a vehicle, even for “just a few minutes.” That’s long enough for a closed vehicle to heat up to dangerous levels, even on a 60-degree day.

If someone has heatstroke-related symptoms—nausea, fatigue, muscle cramps, confusion, dizziness—act rapidly: Remove excess clothing and lower the person’s temperature with cold, wet sheets or a cool bath. Call a doctor immediately and transport the person to the nearest hospital—this is an emergency. This summer, don’t sweat it. Keep cool.



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Parenting **Your** Parents

BY JIM COMER • ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK CURRY

John Comer, Jim Comer's dad, at 5 years old. (Inset) Anne Comer, Jim Comer's mother (left), with her mother, Mema, and sister Estelle in 1914.

Nine years ago, at age 51, I became a parent for the first time. Mine was not a planned parenthood. I was awakened in Los Angeles by a call from my parents' next-door neighbor in Dallas. She said my father was wandering up and down the street in a daze. During the next few hours, he suffered a series of strokes. Caring for my mother, who has Alzheimer's, had taken its toll on him.

As the surviving brother and only child since 1970, I became the designated decision maker. The hospital staff let me know I would need to find a rehabilitation center within a week. It couldn't be in Dallas because we had no family there. Our relatives were in Central Texas. I flew to Austin in a rain-

storm and visited four rehab centers in one day. I chose St. David's Rehabilitation Center because a nurse smiled at me.

Mother flatly refused to come to Austin, so I packed for her and got her into the car by telling the first of many white lies. I said we were going for ice cream. Mother never turns down ice cream, not even at 9:30 on Monday morning. She put down her coffee cup, walked away from her home of 34 years and never saw it again. My cousins, assuring their eventual sainthood, cared for her while I tried to figure out what to do.

For six months, I flew into Austin every other weekend. The first time I visited the rehab center, I found Dad alone in

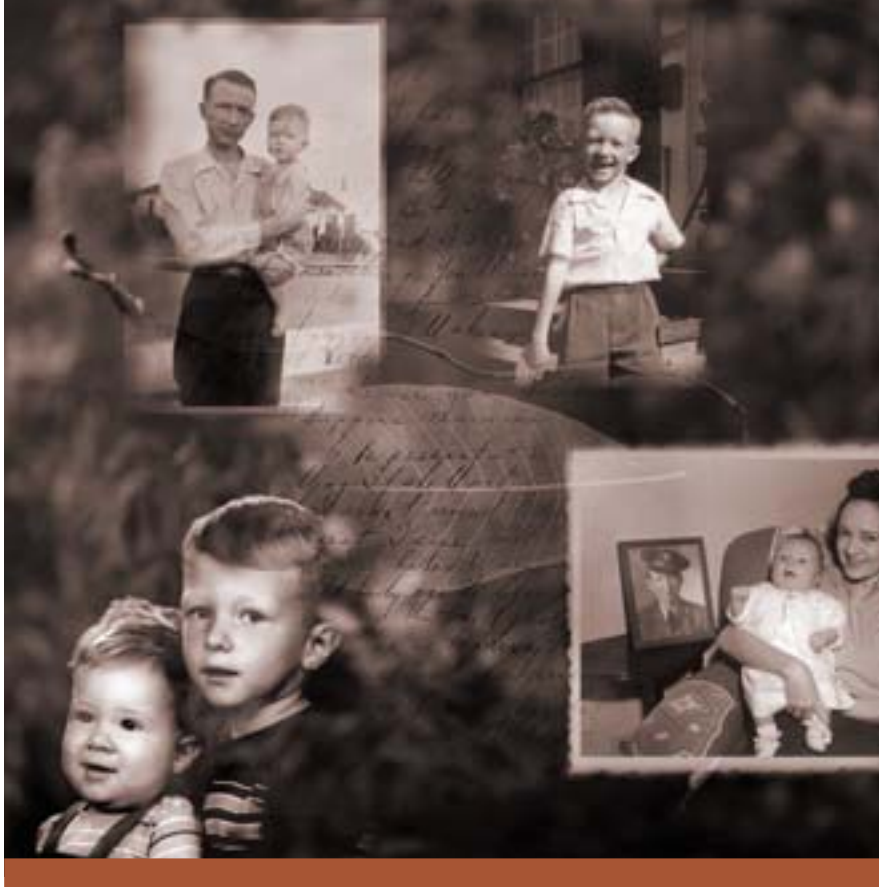
his room. He was unable to walk, make sentences or control his bodily functions. But his mind was fully alert. He gathered his strength and forced out three words: Get ... me ... pills." He was not talking about aspirin. He wanted me to get pills so he could end his life. No one had prepared me for this moment. Not really believing it, I said, "Dad, you're going to walk again." Two weeks later the doctors performed an operation on his prostate that allowed him to use the bathroom on his own. That's when my father decided he wanted to live.

For the first time, I experienced "parent-teacher" calls. They were not about why Johnny can't read, but why John Comer was raising so much hell on the fourth floor. Bending the truth once again, I told exasperated social workers that I would "talk" to my father. Fat chance. Dad was hard of hearing before his stroke and totally deaf after it. Just when he decided to get well, St. David's kicked him out for bad behavior.

Finally, I realized I couldn't do what needed to be done from a distance of 1,300 miles. I quit my job, sold most of my furniture, rented a U-Haul, and moved back to Texas after a 30-year absence.

Parenting my parents has not been easy. I've had to learn the language of Medicare, change hearing aid batteries, and handle 50-pound wheelchairs. I've experienced three-doctor days—audiologist, gynecologist and eye doctor, one after the other. Now I understand how waiting rooms got their name. Woody Allen said the most important thing in life is showing up. He should have added that you'd better bring along a good book.

Once Dad put his mind to it, he made a remarkable recovery. He was walking and talking normally in six months. By



the fall of 1996, my folks moved into the Wesleyan Retirement Home in Georgetown, two blocks from my aunt and uncle's house. This was the dreaded "home" I'd been suggesting they visit for years. Dad always grunted when I brought up the Wesleyan, saying it was a place for "old people."

They loved it.

Dad made sure Mother didn't wander and got to meals on time. As a result, he regained a sense of purpose. Although I bought his spotless Buick LeSabre from him, he eyed it carefully each time I came to visit. He noticed a missing hub cap before I did. He still tells me how to drive.

My greatest challenge was dealing with mother's memory loss. When I lived in California, I could ignore her lapses. Up close, day after day, my mother's dementia was taxing. Her repeated questions tested my patience and sanity. I could not cope with her loss of logic. Mother had 60 dresses in her closet but would only wear five of them. When I asked her why, she said, "They aren't mine. They belong to someone else." No amount of coaxing or cogent argument could change her mind.

In desperation, I asked an Alzheimer's expert what to do. She said, "Don't try to keep her in your world. Go into her world." And that is what I have done. Instead of worrying about the dresses she wouldn't wear, I tried to keep the ones she would wear clean. When mother wanted to visit her long-dead sister in Smithville,



The collage above includes Jim and his brother, Chris, as well as the house in which his mother, Anne, was born in Smithville. The collage at left shows Jim's father and mother circa World War II.



Jim and his mother at Wesleyan Nursing Home in Georgetown; Jim's dad wearing a U.S. Air Force cap.

I said, "We'll go next week." Next week never came.

Despite Dad's devotion and my best efforts, Mother's universe slowly shrank. She asked the same questions over and over. Sentences were left half-finished. She searched for the right word and, not finding it, moved on. I learned to fill in the blanks.

Mother busied herself watering plants, both real and artificial ones. Her memory is fragile, but she still dazzles me with her wit. When told that a 90-year-old fellow resident had praised her charms, she quipped, "Honey, that's the kind I attract!" Mom often asks if I am working because she

remembered when I was an actor and often wasn't. Each time I visit, she wants to know, "How are you fixed for gas?" She probes relentlessly and "full tank" is the only acceptable answer. There is an upside to this prodding. I haven't run out of gas in nine years.

Four years ago, just as I thought I had mastered caregiving, Mother broke her hip. Seven months later, Dad broke his. Going from a retirement home to even a good nursing home was a shock for us all. It was like leaving the Ritz Carlton and moving into a Motel 6 with a matron. There were unpleasant sights, strange smells and discordant sounds. It took me months to see past the wheelchairs and hear beyond the buzzers. In time, I learned to transcend the externals. Only then could I see the caring of the staff, get to know other residents, and realize that even here, there could be laughter and love.

My view of life has changed immeasurably. I've discovered how much I have in common with the octogenarians who share my parents' lives. I see that dignity comes in many shapes, including bent, wrinkled and walker-assisted. I've learned that there's no end to parenting—no vacation, no sick leave. This is no cameo appearance. I'm here for the long run. We are in our tenth year. Mom is almost 93 and Dad was 95 on March 1. Neither shows any inclination to leave the planet.

Mother likes to tell people that Austin's Seton Hospital only charged her "four dollars a day" when I was born—and I'm worth every penny of it. I'm trying to live up to her investment. I'll admit that I didn't expect to be a nursing home regular at this stage of my life. There are, however, unexpected benefits. When someone asks me how my parents are doing, I know the answer. I can look into a mirror without flinching. And, as I walk into the room and see their faces light up, I realize I'm in exactly the right place.

Jim Comer is a speaker, speech coach and writer living in Austin. His book, *Parenting Your Parents*, is available at www.parentingyourparents.com.

Hard Won Lessons I Have Learned

- Remember that, no matter our age or achievements, we will remain forever our parents' children.
- Do not ignore the elephant in the living room. Bite the bullet and talk about what's really happening.
- Don't sidestep hard topics. Good parenting is not about avoiding issues, but facing them.
- Never remind an Alzheimer's patient that he has asked you the same question before. Answer the third time or the sixtieth.
- If your parent is happier not wearing a hearing aid and missing your witty repartee, accept that as a legitimate choice.
- Respect your parents' daily routine. It is an island of certainty in a world where they have little control.
- If you move into your parents' home to take care of them and find yourself considering double murder, make other living arrangements.
- If your parents' driving becomes dangerous, take away the car keys and get them an account with a local taxi company.
- Never say: "Things can't get any worse." Yes, they can. Your mother can break a hip on Christmas Eve.
- Remember that the quality of your parents' meals is more important to them than the quality of your conversation.
- Try not to tackle everything at once. Don't plan a garage sale while your parents are in intensive care.
- When you start to feel sorry for yourself, put things in perspective. You are not in North Korea.

Tree Climbing

**DON'T GO
OUT ON
A LIMB!**

Your safety is a top priority at your electric co-op. And it's even more important when it comes to our kids. They don't always know—or remember—what can be dangerous, so it's up to all of us to watch out for their safety.


Safety Rules for Trees:

- Don't plant trees or install tall playground equipment under or near power lines.
- Don't build tree houses in trees near electric lines.
- Don't allow children to climb trees growing near electric lines.
- Teach your children always to look up to check for power lines before climbing trees or any tall objects.
- Keep children away from ladders, poles or work equipment that may be near power lines.
- Set a good example by following these rules yourself.

And the Number One safety rule for everyone to remember is this: Don't touch a power line or anything that's touching the power line. No one can tell simply by looking at a line whether it is energized or not, and contact with a power line can be deadly. Remember, electricity always seeks the easiest path to reach the ground, and, unfortunately, human beings are good conductors of electricity. Look up and live!



**Texas Electric
Cooperatives**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

This public service message is brought to you by your local electric cooperative. For more information, visit your local co-op.



LISTEN TO LIGHTNING ON THE RADIO

Thunderstorms plague the United States more often than any other nation, especially between April and July.

Lightning can reach temperatures of 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit. By comparison, the sun's surface is about 11,000 degrees.

Thunderstorms kill about 200 Americans and injure another 700 every year. In 2003, lightning killed 43.

With the right equipment, it's possible to "hear" lightning on the radio. Lightning creates powerful radio waves that can be detected across the planet. After about 3 a.m. any morning, listen at 3 MHz to hear static dispersions of lightning as they bounce across the earth's atmosphere.

Lightning can carry between 100 million and 1 billion volts and is typically the same diameter as a quarter. Lightning paths are usually between two and 10 miles long.

Estimate the distance between you and a thunderstorm by counting the seconds between a lightning flash and a thunderclap. Divide this number by three to get the distance to a storm in kilometers. For example, an interval of six seconds would suggest a distance of two kilometers (roughly 1.2 miles).

Between 1940 and 2003, 8,956 people died from lightning strikes. The most deaths in a year occurred in 1943, when 432 people died. The fewest—41—occurred in 1992.

SOAK SAFELY IN YOUR HOME SPA

- Never use a hot tub during a thunderstorm.
- Keep electrical devices far from the hot tub. This includes radios, TVs and phones with cords. Advise wet bathers not to handle them. Use battery-powered electronics when possible.
- For indoor hot tubs, install a ventilation fan to prevent the buildup of heat and moisture in the room. Check the tub's water level before using it. A spa without enough water could damage the heater and pumps.
- Consult local building codes to ensure your hot tub is located a safe distance from electrical outlets. A licensed electrician should handle all electrical connections in the hot tub and check the condition of underwater lights. Faulty lighting systems can electrocute bathers.
- The National Electrical Code requires hot tubs to be located within 15 feet of a manual cutoff switch.
- And according to the National Spa and Pool Institute, a 15-minute soak at 104 degrees is the maximum safe limit for an adult, but children should not soak for more than 10 minutes with water no hotter than 95 degrees. Exposure beyond these limits can raise body temperatures beyond safe levels.

REMINDER



Happy Holiday!
Your Electric Cooperative Will Be Closed July Fourth.

PLANT PROPERLY; KEEP POWER ON

If your home loses power, the most likely culprit is a tree. Help reduce the chance that a tree will land on a power line and cut power in your neighborhood by properly planting and maintaining the foliage in your yard.

- Know how tall your new trees will grow. Plant trees at least 25 feet from power poles if they will eventually grow to 25 feet or less.

- Plant taller trees—those that might grow to between 25 feet and 40 feet—at least 40 feet from power lines. And leave at least 60 feet between a power line and a tree that will reach more than 40 feet.

- If you already have a tree that might be too close to power lines, report it to your electric cooperative. Do not try to trim the tree or remove it yourself.



HOLIDAY BAKING CONTEST

Hey, have you heard that we're giving away \$5,000?

That's right, the grand prize winner of the first-ever Texas Co-op Power Holiday Baking Contest will win \$3,000, and four runners-up will win \$500 each.

Do you have a holiday specialty your family loves? If so, enter the recipe!

How? See the ad on page 28 of this issue for full details or visit www.texascoopower.com/bakingcontest.html.

We know our co-op members are the best cooks in the state, so enter today!

MAINTAIN YOUR AIR CONDITIONER

With proper care, your central A/C or window units can provide years of carefree and cost-effective cool.

Central Air Conditioner

A central air-conditioning system can last 15 years—and remain efficient—if you maintain it properly.

- Clean the outside compressor with a hose, and vacuum vents and replace filters every month during the summer to maximize airflow.

- Have the ductwork cleaned and inspected every two or three years. Leaky ducts can lose as much as 30 percent of the air that flows through them.

- Avoid setting the thermostat extra-low to cool the house quickly. It doesn't cool things off any faster than leaving the setting at a comfortable, higher temperature, and it wastes energy.

- Move lamps and heat-producing appliances away from the thermostat. The heat they produce tricks the thermostat into "thinking" the home is warmer than it is, which makes your air conditioner work harder.

- Install ceiling fans, which allow you to set your thermostat a few degrees higher in the summer. For every degree you raise your thermostat, you save up to 8 percent in cooling costs.

- Consider replacing your central air-conditioning system after about 10 years. Newer models are up to 40 percent more energy efficient.

Window Air Conditioner

Even individual window air conditioners need attention every year. By doing some routine maintenance, you can keep yours humming for up to 10 years.

- Angle window units slightly downward (one-quarter to one-half inch) toward the outdoors so condensation won't leak inside.

- Clean filters once a week to minimize dust buildup in your home

and in the unit. This will reduce the amount of maintenance your air conditioner needs, as well as the airborne dirt in your home. Steam-clean the whole unit every one to three years.

- Close the vents to heating ducts in a room with a window unit so cool air doesn't escape through them.

- Shade the outside portion of a window unit to help it run better, but don't block the airflow on either side of the unit. Units with good airflow run more efficiently than units blocked by plants or furniture.

- Install your unit on a north-facing window to minimize the amount of sunlight hitting the unit, allowing it to cool more easily.

- Do not plug a window unit into an extension cord. Most extension cords cannot supply window units with enough power, which can damage the compressor.

The Underrated, Underappreciated Mule

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

Let's talk about mules. Horses are quick to grab Texas history's glamour and glory, leaving little attention for their homelier, obstinate cousin. Can you imagine the Lone Ranger charging to the rescue on a mule? While acknowledging the mule's notable lack of charisma, old-timers are quick to point out that the horse/donkey half-breed is a forgotten hero.

"A lot of people never think about it, but mules made the United States," says Clements W. "Speedy" Duncan in the book *Harder Than Hardscrabble*, an oral history about growing up on the lands now occupied by Fort Hood. "They [mules] built all the railroads, and they

come with a 100,000-mile warranty or cash-back rebates. Texas led the country for a few years in the production of mules—well over a million of them in 1926, about the time that newfangled internal combustion engine really started catching on.

Willie Huber of Belfalls, 96, recalls that his first, most important purchase when he started farming for himself seven decades ago was a team of mules. He found four for sale at a farm about 10 miles west of Gatesville and went to have a look. He liked what he saw in three of the mules, but he had his doubts about the fourth one. He was right about the first three.

Unfortunately, he was right about the fourth one, too.

"That fourth mule wasn't no count," he ruefully admits some 70 years later.

In *Harder than Hardscrabble*, T.A. Wilhite described the traits he looked for back in his mule-trading days.

"You wanted them to have muscle, and you wanted them to have the right kind of disposition," he said.

"You might get scalped many times 'til you learned what to look for."

The U.S. Army recognized the value of mules early on. Mules served in every American conflict between 1820 and 1945. They were essential to both the North and the South in the Civil War. A thousand marching soldiers required at least 25 wagons to carry supplies and haul heavy artillery from one battle site to another, and mules pulled most of those wagons.

When told that Confederate soldiers had captured 40 mules and a Union general, Abraham Lincoln reportedly responded, "I'm sorry to lose those mules."

In *Shavetails and Bell Sharps: History of the U.S. Army Mule*, author Emmett M. Essin

writes that the Army found mules to be stronger and more agile than either a horse or a donkey, able to carry heavier loads longer distances over more difficult terrain. "Mules were also sensitive, intelligent animals, more so than their parent stock. They quickly recognized approaching danger and knew by instinct how to avoid it," he wrote.

On the battle lines, however, mules often became conscientious objectors, recognizing the high probability of death the battlefield presented. Maybe that's why you never saw a lot of mules charging into battle.

Gradually, tractors replaced mules on the farm, leaving them with nothing more than a reputation for being stubborn. But a few places still pay homage the mule's contribution.

Texas is one of those places. The National Mule Memorial is in—where else?—Muleshoe, and was financed with private donations, including 25 cents from a mule driver in Uzbekistan. The mule gets its "just credit" in Muleshoe.

The mule is recognized also in the Coryell County town of Topsey, which is named for an early farmer's favorite mule. Mule Ear Peaks, in the Chisos Mountains of West Texas, is an easily recognizable and aptly named geographic feature.

Still, even with its own monument, even with towns and landmarks named in its honor, the mule remains the Rodney Dangerfield of the animal world, getting no respect. To make matters worse, it is often confused with other equine critters, like donkeys.

Remember, a donkey is just a donkey. A mule is a cross between a horse and a donkey, usually a male donkey and a female horse, but not necessarily. A cross between a male horse and a female donkey is called a hinny. Just don't be a jackass and call a mule a donkey. Mules deserve a little more respect than that.

Clay Coppedge is the regional reporter for the Temple Daily Telegram.



did all the farming, and they pulled them wagon trains across the country. They don't get their just credit, mules don't. The cotton-picking old mule is the most unappreciated thing that ever happened to this country."

Christopher Columbus appreciated mules enough to take some on a 1493 voyage to what is now Haiti. George Washington bred horses, but started the mule industry in this country when the King of Spain gave him a mule as a gift. Washington felt that horses "ate too much, worked too little, and died too young" to be of much use on the farm.

To early Texas farmers, buying mules was as important as buying a car or truck is today, but mules did not

History Tales and Kite Tails

It's great that Marvin and D-Wayne are interested in playing characters out of history, but the tale of Benjamin Franklin and his kite in a thunderstorm is just that—a tale, not fact. There's no way Ben could have held on to the string of a kite while it was hit with lightning without being fried.

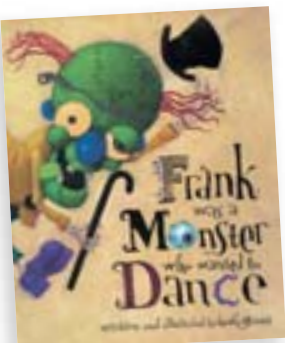
Marvin didn't do his homework, though, and tried this dangerous stunt—complete with an electricity-conducting key attached. Now, maybe you didn't know it was just a story, but surely you weren't going to try catching lightning by a kite tail. You know lightning is dangerous.

- Be cautious when lightning is in the air.
- Get inside if possible.
- Inside a car is relatively safe, but don't touch metal objects.
- Avoid water, high ground, open spaces and trees.
- If you're inside, avoid talking on the phone, using the computer, or taking a shower or bath when lightning is nearby. Any of these activities can conduct a lightning strike, and you don't want to be on the receiving end of that. Look what happened to Marvin!

Ben Franklin did lots of experiments on the nature of electricity and lightning. As he found out, lightning IS electricity—don't play around with either one.

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.



Hunters Cache in on Small-Town Treasures

BY JANELLE DUPONT AND MARIE WATTS

We walk slowly around a collection of restored vintage windmills. High above us, dozens of big wheels spin against a cloudless blue sky. But we don't look up. We look down at a global positioning system (GPS) device the size of a cell phone. We are tourists on a mission.

We're determined to find a "geocache," one of five small containers hidden in the Panhandle town of Spearman. The countdown on the GPS display—80 feet, 79, 78—assures us we are headed in the right direction. When we're just a few feet away, we spot a black film canister wedged between the boards of a windmill base. "Here it is! Here it is!" We jump up and down like kids on an Easter egg hunt.

Geocaching, the high-tech sport that turns tourists into treasure hunters, has arrived in small-town Texas.

Chamber of Commerce officials in Spearman, 90 miles northeast of Amarillo, and officials in the Central Texas town of La Grange have hidden a series of boxes (called geocaches, or just caches) to draw visitors off major highways and toward local attractions. As travelers locate the caches, they discover little-known small-town delights revealing the area's history and attractions.

Gina Gillispie, the Spearman chamber member who promoted geocaching, thinks big. "It's such a great tool to bring people into your community. It opens it up to the whole world," she says.

In a way, she's not exaggerating. Geocaching is a worldwide sport for outdoor enthusiasts who use GPS devices to look for 150,000 caches in 214 countries—4,500 of them in Texas at last count. If you go to www.texasgeocaching.com, you can find listings for geocaching sites in state parks and national forests and grasslands, plus geocaching groups by area and other information. Most caches are waterproof containers big enough to hold paper and a pen for visitors to write their names and the date of the find. Many geocachers also post the find and their comments on the website.

Once the sport of techies, geocaching has become an entertaining pastime for families and weekend trav-



JOHN WILSON

Offbeat Geocache Sites in Texas

Geocachers say the appeal of the high-tech sport is venturing off the beaten path and discovering unusual, scenic or historic places they would have otherwise overlooked. Here are some offbeat sites of hidden geocaches in Texas and their zip codes:

- ★ A building made entirely of salt in Grand Saline, east of Dallas, 75140
- ★ A 190-foot cross in the Panhandle town of Groom, believed to be the largest cross in the northern hemisphere, 79039
- ★ A Hindu temple south of Austin, 78620
- ★ Barney's Toilet Seat Museum in San Antonio, 78209
- ★ A wagon trail near Moffat, off Highway 36 near Temple, where you can see wagon wheel ruts embedded in rocks, 76503
- ★ A monument to helium in Amarillo, 79106
- ★ Lake Palo Duro in the Panhandle, a nesting site for the American bald eagle and other migratory birds, 79081
- ★ A 300-year-old hanging tree near Progreso in South Texas, 78579
- ★ A scenic, wooded stretch of Texas Highway 11 between Hughes Springs and Linden in East Texas, the inspiration for the Eagles' song, "Seven Bridges Road," 75563
- ★ A remote, challenging hiking trail in Panther Canyon (in Big Bend Ranch State Park) where, amidst breathtaking desert scenery, you can find an out-of-place kitchen appliance, 79852

elers. They select cache locations by entering a zip code or city on www.geocaching.com. Searchers enter the cache's coordinates (by latitude and longitude) into their GPS device, which receives satellite signals to help pinpoint both their present location and their destination. Since the GPS is accurate to only within 10 to 50 feet, the challenge is finding the container itself, sometimes quite small and cleverly hidden. There may be small trinkets inside for geocachers to exchange, but the thrill is in the hunt itself, rather than the contents of the box.

In Spearman, visitors are led from one cache to another, beginning at the town's windmill park and ending at the courthouse at the end of Main Street. Another cache can be found at a museum complex that features a railroad stationmaster house, a rural schoolhouse and a replica of an 1875 trading post.

"We know that 3,252 vehicles a day drive by Spearman," Gillispie says. "We had to think of a way to get them to stop." Her hope is that, instead of whizzing by the grain storage tanks on the edge of town, motorists will stop to eat a meal or browse Spearman's Main Street stores. She hopes geocaching can add a new source of income to the county, where cattle ranching dominates the economy.

As we located cache sites in and around Spearman, we discovered hidden historical gems. We leaned against a barbed-wire fence on a segment of

the Dodge City Trail near the ghost town of Hansford. On the side of a highway, we stood near the pasture where aviator Charles Lindbergh landed to refuel during a 1934 cross-country flight. (He asked the farmer's wife: "Lady, can I park my plane in your backyard?") Later, we gazed over the hallowed ground of the 1874 Battle of Adobe Walls, where the last Indian war in North America began. As Hansen noted, geocaching "brings out the Indiana Jones in all of us."

Officials in La Grange have similar dreams of attracting more visitors. Most drivers sail by La Grange on the Highway 71 bypass between Austin and Houston. La Grange business leaders hope that a series of 11 geocache sites (called multicaches) will lure motorists to the road less traveled—one that leads to this historic town's upscale restaurants, newly renovated courthouse, and elegant bed-and-breakfast establishments.

The La Grange multicache starts at the Old Jail Museum, then leads searchers to 10 other sites, including the oldest brewery in Texas and the "muster oak," the tree on the courthouse square where young men rallied before going off to war. Each location has its own appeal. Visitors can picnic in a secluded park on the Colorado River or search for clues on grave markers in the historic city cemetery. At each site, geocachers learn about the history of La Grange and Fayette County and receive the coordinates to the next site.

"At first, I thought the idea of setting up a multicache was a bit far-fetched," says Margo Johnson, La Grange Chamber president. "But when I saw my first geocacher out there wandering around, I got excited. The neat thing about geocaching is it attracts a different type of visitor who may not know about our town and the wonderful things to do here. I see this activity as particularly attractive to the younger, techie group and families looking for an activity to do together."

Searchers who discover all 11 La Grange caches and answer questions on the chamber website receive a "Go-Geo" t-shirt. The Spearman multicache also offers an incentive: In the last box at the Hansford County Courthouse is a \$25 certificate in "Hansford bucks," redeemable at local restaurants and gas stations.

Gillispie says that geocaching as a tourism strategy may be ahead of its time, but she believes any town that dismisses it is "missing the boat."

To view the Spearman geocache sites, go to www.geocaching.com and key in the zip code 79081 at top right. For the La Grange geocache sites, use zip code 78945. See www.spearman.org and www.lagrangetx.org for other visitor information.

Rita Blanca and North Plains ECs serve parts of Hansford County. Fayette EC serves the La Grange area.

Janelle Dupont is a freelance writer based in Austin. Marie Watts is a writer and human resource consultant living near Muldoon.



©FOODPIX

Hot Stuff

Learning to like hot peppers is a Texas rite of passage. It's how we separate the real Texans from the imported, especially among men. I have male friends who will "trade bites" off habaneros as other men might trade punches. This sweaty, red-faced contest is somehow a testament to their manhood. Not so with women. Most of us like things just hot enough, but not so hot that you can't taste anything else. You have to know your peppers to strike just the right balance. Some give zing, whereas others give POW!

You can get that zing from milder peppers, such as the anaheim, poblano and jalapeño. That's right, jalapeños are actually mild on the Scoville heat index, a measurement of capsaicinoids in peppers. Below you'll find common peppers with their Scoville heat score. The highest ever recorded was a habanero that reached 577,000 Scoville units, which is about 150 times as hot as a common jalapeño. Use a habanero if you want POW!

Capsaicinoids are powerful alkaloids found in the tiny bubbles in the wall

of a pepper. When you cut a pepper and break those bubbles, heat in the form of capsaicinoids is released. The more you cut, the more are released. So, if you want a mild heat in a pot of beans, cut a jalapeño in half and toss it in. If you want a really spicy pico de gallo, chop that same jalapeño into tiny pieces and add those to your tomatoes and onions. The more you cut, the hotter it gets.

What can you do to tame that heat? Researchers have found that milk is the best remedy for a burning mouth, but a sugary drink will work, too. Those capsaicinoids not only get into your mouth, but all over anything that touches the cut pepper. Always wash your hands, knife and cutting board thoroughly after slicing peppers, or even wear gloves. Here is one of my favorite recipes that really highlights peppers, as there are few other ingredients. It is our Field Editor Cheryl Tucker's recipe for Jalapeño Fudge (named for its fudge-like consistency; there's no chocolate involved). It is popular at any gathering. In fact, she just made six batches of it for her son's graduation party.

Jalapeño Fudge

4-6 jalapeños, chopped (fresh or pickled, to taste)
1 pound cheddar cheese, grated
2-3 eggs, beaten

Mix all until it holds together; pat into 9x13-inch Pyrex pan. Do not oil pan! Bake at 300 degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour (until slightly browned around edges). Cut into small squares. Best served when still warm.

Serving size: 1 square. Per serving: 93 calories, 6 protein, 7 grams fat, trace grams carbohydrates, 131 milligrams sodium, 67 milligrams cholesterol

PEPPERONCINI

100-500

ANAHEIM

500-1,500

POBLANO

1,500-2,500

BANANA PEPPER

2,000-4,000

JALAPEÑO

2,500-8,000



100

500

1,000

2,500

5,000

MILD

SCOVILLE



The subject for October's recipe contest is **German Food**. I know there are a lot of good German recipes out there that reflect Texas' Teutonic heritage—send us your family's favorites by July 10. The top winner will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a gift pack from Adams. Others whose recipes are published will also receive a gift pack from Adams. 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.

LAURA MULLEN, a member of Central Texas EC, sent in the winning recipe for this month's contest, **Roasted Five Pepper Hummus**. She writes, "This is the way we do roasted peppers: Wash and dry peppers. Rub them with a little extra virgin olive oil. On a gas stove top, turn burner on high and place pepper directly onto the grates. On an electric range, broil the peppers with the oven door slightly ajar. Use tongs to turn pepper

cool, remove from bag and scrape the burned skin from the pepper with a sharp knife. Remove stem and seeds. Slice the pepper into strips and use, or place in a container with a little olive oil to coat and store in refrigerator for 1 to 2 weeks. You may also freeze the peppers with waxed paper between the layers." Laura will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a gift pack compliments of Adams, as will the runners-up whose recipes appear below.

Roasted Five Pepper Hummus

- 1 can (16 ounces) garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup lime juice (freshly squeezed)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 3 tablespoons tahini*
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 large red bell peppers, roasted, deseeded and coarsely chopped
- 2 large yellow bell peppers, roasted, deseeded and coarsely chopped
- 5 red jalapeño peppers, roasted, deseeded and coarsely chopped
- 2 red serrano peppers, roasted, deseeded and coarsely chopped
- 1 habanero pepper, coarsely chopped

Combine all ingredients in a food processor until smooth. Serve with appetizer-type crackers.

*Tahini is sesame seed paste and is used in many Middle Eastern dishes. You may substitute toasted sesame seed oil.

Serving size: 1/2 cup. Per serving: 316 calories, 13 protein, 12 grams fat, 43 grams carbohydrates, 156 milligrams sodium, 0 milligrams cholesterol

Sweet Potato Gratin With Smoked Chiles

- 2 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon chipotle purée*
- 3 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced thin

Salt and pepper
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine the heavy cream and chipotle purée in a small bowl. In an 8x8-inch baking dish, arrange a fourth of the sweet potatoes. Season to taste with salt and pepper and pour a fourth of the cream mixture over it. Repeat with the remaining potatoes and cream, forming 4 layers. Bake for 1 hour or until the cream has been absorbed and the potatoes are browned. Remove from the oven and let sit 10 minutes before serving. Makes 6 servings.

*You can make chipotle purée using canned chipotle peppers in adobo sauce. Purée several peppers in a food processor or blender.

Serving size: 1/6 of pan. Per serving: 410 calories, 3 protein, 37 grams fat, 19 grams carbohydrates, 142 milligrams sodium, 136 milligrams cholesterol

JUDI GIANGIULIO, Hamilton County EC
(continued on page 28)



for even charring. When pepper is mostly blackened, place in a freezer bag and seal. When

SERRANO
7,000–25,000

CHILIPIQUIN
30,000–60,000

THAI (BIRD) PEPPER
50,000–100,000

HABANERO
100,000–325,000

RED HABANERO
225,000–577,000



10,000

25,000

50,000

100,000

500,000

RATING

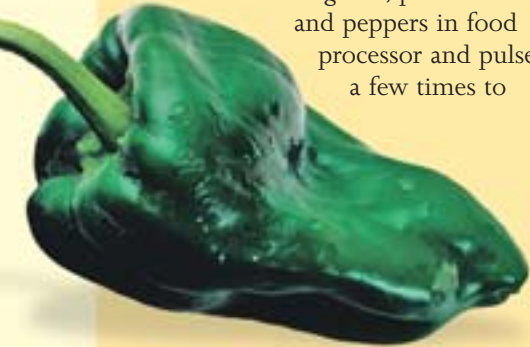
HOT

(continued from page 27)

Our Cilantro Pesto Spread

- 2 garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup toasted pecans
- 2 fresh serrano peppers, seeded
- 1 whole bunch washed fresh cilantro, stems and all
- 2 tablespoons lemon or lime juice
- 2-3 tablespoons good quality grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/8-1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons flaxseed oil (may substitute olive oil)
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

Put garlic, pecans and peppers in food processor and pulse a few times to



chop well. Add cilantro, juice, cheese and salt and process while pouring oils through opening on top of food processor. Process to a paste. Serve with corn chips, crackers, bread or pasta.

Serving size: 1/4 cup. Per serving: 145 calories, 1 protein, 15 grams fat, 2 grams carbohydrates, 63 milligrams sodium, 1 milligram cholesterol

RALPH AND ANN SMOOT, Bluebonnet EC

Yoli's Wonderful Green Enchiladas

- 5 small or 3 large whole, unseeded jalapeño peppers
- 24 corn tortillas
- 1 1/2 pounds ground meat
- Chopped garlic to taste
- Chili powder to taste
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- One large onion, chopped
- Grated cheddar cheese

Cut stems off jalapeños and boil in enough water to cover until soft. Set aside. Fry tortillas until soft in a little oil. Drain on paper towels.



Brown ground meat and garlic lightly. Add chili powder to taste. Blend soft cooked jalapeños and soup until smooth. Add water as needed for consistency. Roll meat in tortillas and lay seam side down in baking dish. Cover with sauce. Sprinkle with chopped onions. Cover with a layer of cheese. Bake about 20 minutes at 350 degrees. May be refrigerated and baked later. Any leftover sauce makes a wonderful dip for chips. Makes 12 servings.

Serving size: 2 enchiladas. Per serving: 352 calories, 15 protein, 21 grams fat, 26 grams carbohydrates, 349 milligrams sodium, 60 milligrams cholesterol

PATSY STEWART, Central Texas EC

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Holiday Baking Contest

\$5,000 in Total Prizes!

SPONSORED BY ADAMS EXTRACT

GRAND PRIZE WINNER TAKES HOME \$3,000. FOUR RUNNERS-UP WILL EACH WIN \$500.



We're looking for the best baked goods from your holiday celebrations. All recipes must be original and the ingredients must include an Adams Extract flavoring. Winners will be announced in our December issue.

Up to three entries are allowed per person. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper and include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your electric cooperative. All entries must be postmarked by September 10, 2005. Send entries to Holiday Baking Contest, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or fax to (512) 486-6254. To enter by e-mail (recipes@texas-ec.org), you must include "Holiday Baking Contest" in the subject line and submit one recipe per e-mail, not an attachment.

For official rules, visit texascoopower.com/bakingcontest.html or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.



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MANUFACTURER'S COUPON EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 30, 2005

COOL SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Swimming


Don't be all wet. Remember these rules for safe pool-time fun this summer:

- Keep electric radios, TVs, clocks, barbecues, lights and other electrical appliances at least 10 feet from a pool and wet surfaces. Use battery-powered appliances whenever possible.
- Electric appliances should not be used outdoors unless they are equipped with a heavy-duty cord and three-prong plug.
- Swimming pools should be well away from electric wires to avoid the risk of hitting the wires with long-handled cleaning equipment.
- All outdoor electrical outlets should be weatherproof and equipped with a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). This is especially important in damp locations where more protection is necessary.
- Check with your electric co-op before you dig to make sure you know the location of buried electrical lines.
- Label power and light switches for pool, hot tub and spa equipment.
- If you think you are being shocked while in the water, move away from the source of the shock. Get out of the water, if possible, without using a metal ladder.

**Stay safe this summer.
Don't swim with shocks!**



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Cooperatives**

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AROUND TEXAS

July

- 1. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 1-3. Heritage Classic Morgan Horse Show, **Athens**, (903) 677-6354
- 1-4. July Fourth Celebration & Rodeo, **Belton**, (254) 939-3551 or www.rodeobelton.com
- 2. Independence Day Celebration & Fireworks Show, **Kyle**, (512) 268-5341
- 2. Market Day, **Port Lavaca**, (361) 552-0917
- 2. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
- 2. July Jubilee, **Leakey**, (830) 232-5222 or www.friocanyonchamber.com
- 2. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
- 2. July Fourth Celebration, **Rusk**, (903) 683-4242
- 2-4. Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Festival, **Granbury**, 1-800-950-2212 or www.granburychamber.com
- 2-4. Spirit of America Weekend, **Conroe**, 1-877-426-6763 or www.lakeconroetx.org
- 2-4. July Fourth Celebration, **Luckenbach**, 1-888-311-8990 or www.luckenbachtexas.com
- 3. July Third Celebration, **Caldwell**, (979) 567-4615

- 3. Sts. Cyril & Methodius Church Picnic, **Weimar**, (979) 725-9511
- 3-4. Crape Myrtle Festival & Driving Trail, **Waxahachie**, (972) 937-2390
- 4. Fourth of July on the River Concert, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-8387
- 4. Old Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration, **Huntsville**, (936) 295-8113 or www.huntsvillemainstreet.org
- 4. Freedom Festival, **Rising Star**, (254) 643-2394
- 4. Fourth of July Parade, **Schertz**, (210) 658-6607
- 4. Fourth of July Parade, **Castroville**, (830) 931-4070
- 4. Fourth of July Celebration, **Graham**, 1-800-256-4844
- 4. Independence Day Celebration, **Jasper**, (409) 384-2626
- 4. Celebration & Fireworks, **Onalaska**, (936) 327-4929
- 4. Fireworks and Celebration, **Mineola**, (903) 569-2087 or www.chamber.mineola.com
- 4. Picnic in the Park, **Winnsboro**, (903) 342-3666 or www.winnsboro.com
- 4. Fourth of July Flotilla, **Hawkins**, (903) 769-3085 or www.hawkinschamberof

- commerce.com
- 4. Celebrating Independence, **Richmond**, (281) 343-0218 or www.georgeranch.org
- 4. Fourth of July Celebration, **Jefferson**, 1-888-467-3529 or www.jefferson-texas.com
- 4-10. Spring Ho Festival, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-5301
- 5. Brush Country Music Jamboree, **Three Rivers**, (361) 786-3334
- 6-10. Summer Jubilee, **Athens**, (903) 677-6354
- 7-10. Deep Sea Roundup, **Rockport**, (361) 749-6339 or www.deepsearoundup.com
- 8. Annual Aley Picnic, **Kemp**, (903) 498-6482
- 8-9. What-A-Melon Festival, **Center**, (936) 588-3377 or www.shelbycountychamber.com
- 9. Market Trail Days, **Castroville**, (830) 741-3841
- 9. Founders' Day Celebration, **Marble Falls**, (830) 798-2157
- 9, 23. Market at Drinking Swamp Farm, **Kempner**, (512) 556-8000
- 9. Antique Tractor Show & Pull, **Glen Rose**, (254) 396-3156
- 9-10. National Depression Glass Show & Convention, **Waxahachie**, (972) 286-2699
- 11. McDade Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307
- 14-16. Leonard Picnic, **Leonard**, (903) 587-3334

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH BY JIM GRAMON

McDade Watermelon Festival: July 9

The peaceful town of McDade has quite a surprising past. Between 1875 and 1884, McDade experienced more shootings, stabbings, assassinations and cattle-rustler lynchings than Tombstone and Deadwood combined!

Yep, McDade was a rowdy frontier town. For years, there had been a running battle between the honest citizens of McDade and the cattle-

rustling Notcher Gang. Around 1875, folks fed up with lawlessness hung two suspected outlaws, whose gang then murdered two of the vigilantes, which was followed by the hanging of a third outlaw. Retaliation sparked more retaliation. The feuding continued until Christmas Eve 1883, when three members of the Notchers were hanged by local citizens. That night's events led to a gunfight in front of a McDade saloon on Christmas Day that left three more men dead. Although things were relatively quiet for a few years after that, gunfights were still documented all the way up to 1912.

Since those frontier days, things have calmed down quite a bit in McDade. But on Saturday, July 9, this

small town 30 miles east of Austin will be sizzling again.

For over 50 years, folks have gathered to celebrate the Annual McDade Watermelon Festival. Activities include an antique vehicle show, parade, barbecue meal, arts and crafts show, children's activities, music, prize melon auction, seed-spitting contest and barbecue cook-off.

If you can't have fun with all that going on, you're just not trying.

If you have traveled Highway 290 between Austin and Houston and can't recall seeing McDade, it's not surprising. Not that McDade is that small, it's just that scenic downtown McDade is a little north of the highway. Watch for signs.

McDade is served by Bluebonnet EC. For more information on the McDade Watermelon Festival, call (512) 273-0018.

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



Hay-bale-sized melons at the McDade Watermelon Festival.

MICHELLE ROTHER

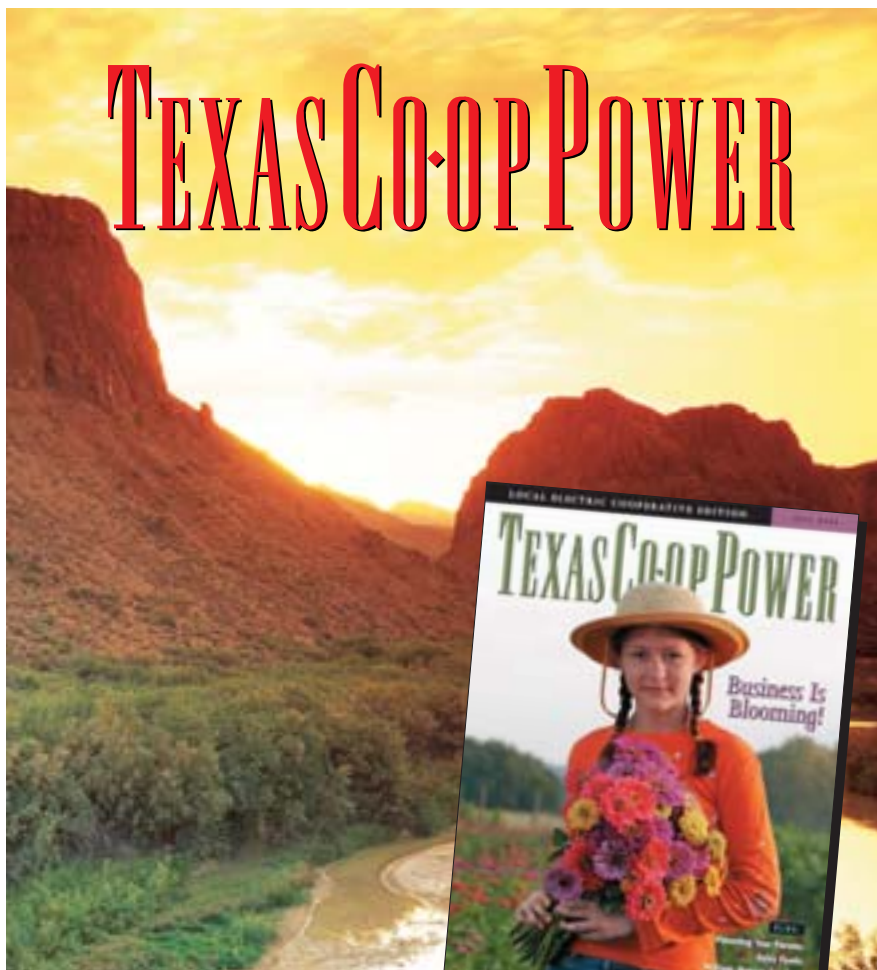
TEXAS CO-OP POWER

15. Country Opry, **Victoria**, (361) 552-9347
15. Bluegrass Show & Jam, **Cleburne**, (817) 373-2541
- 15-17. Trade Days, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 990-4900 or www.fbgtradedays.com
- 15-17. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3757 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
16. Jamboree, **The Grove**, (512) 282-1215
16. Market on Main Street, **Marlin**, (254) 803-3331
16. Catfish Festival, **Yantis**, (903) 383-2610
16. Market Days, **Victoria**, (361) 485-3200
16. VFD Fish Fry/Flea Market, **Possum Kingdom Lake**, (940) 779-4124
16. Christmas in July, **Cleveland**, (281) 592-6673
- 16-17. Arts & Crafts-Antiques-Collectibles Show, **Uvalde**, (830) 278-2846
17. Coin & Collectibles Show, **College Station**, (979) 575-4669
17. Buzzie's Hill Country Open Car Show, **Comfort**, (830) 634-2698
- 22-24. Antique Farm Equipment Show & Pull, **Brenham**, (979) 836-5014 or www.sharecropperstx.com
23. Trade's Day, **Coldspring**, (935) 653-2009
- 23-30. Texas International Apple Festival, **Medina**, 1-800-596-9484 or www.medinatexas.com
25. Lockhart Opry, **Lockhart**, (512) 268-5341
- 28-31. First Monday Trade Days, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445
- 29-30. Watermelon Festival, **Naples**, (903) 897-2037
30. Somerfest, **Somerville**, (979) 272-1835
- 30-31. Running of the Bull, **Eldorado**, (325) 853-3109

August

- 1-6, 8-13. Shakespeare Under the Stars, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-6969 or www.emilyann.org
2. Brush Country Music Jamboree, **Three Rivers**, (361) 786-3334
- 5-6. East Texas Sacred Harp Singing Convention, **Henderson**, (903) 657-4303
6. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
6. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
6. Market Day, **Port Lavaca**, (361) 552-0917
7. Holy Cross Church Celebration, **D'Hanis**, (830) 363-7268
7. Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church Festival, **Frelsburg**, (979) 732-3430
7. Annual Blessing of the Fleet, **Kemah**, (281) 334-9880 or www.kemahboardwalk.com

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., September submissions must be received prior to July 10. Events are listed according to space available. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.



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.

And, in every issue we feature a personal look at chosen towns in "Texas, USA" along with "Around Texas," featuring selected events around the state.

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Water Gardens and Ponds

It's the time of year when we'd like to be close to water, if not splashing away in some "cement pond." Sitting near water and listening to its music soothes, relaxes and entertains. Enjoy these scenes of water gardens and ponds brought to you from our readers.

Bridges is the topic for our September issue. Send your photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone,

co-op affiliation and a brief description—to "Bridges," Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before July 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org. Check your camera's operating manual if you have questions.



UPCOMING in Focus on Texas		
ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
September	Bridges	July 10
October	Pumpkin Patch	August 10
November	The Big Hunt	September 10
December	Santa Claus	October 10
January	Windmills	November 10
February	Car Wash	December 10

1: An early October morning creates a striking scene at CARLTON GETTY's pond. He is a member of Cherokee County EC. **2:** DALE MARQUIS, a Pedernales EC member, happened by this pond at the right moment and spied this frog catching a ride atop a friendly alligator. "The alligator's not real, just molded," Dale adds. Lucky for the frog! **3.** MARY SIMS couldn't resist modeling a lily pad and yellow blossom while on a swamp boat ride outside of Orange. "This is my favorite photo of my mother!" writes PEGGY WALLER. She and her husband, STAN, are members of Sam Houston EC. Mary and BILL SIMS belong to Deep East Texas EC. **4:** "Even though our pond is not large, the surrounding beauty in autumn makes it a majestic picture of nature's beautiful colors!" writes ELIZABETH ALFORD, a member of Bowie-Cass EC. **5.** Hot day, hot dog! Which means it's time to hit the "water garden." SAYRAH, who lives with PATSY SACHTLEBEN, shows how. Both belong to Pedernales EC.



Weimar's Smoking Gun



THOMAS TERRY

If you're cruising along Highway 10 between Flatonia and Columbus and a six-shooter the size of a pickup truck appears plumb out of nowhere, you must be close to Weimar.

And if you just have to turn around to make sure you really saw what you thought you saw, join the crowd. You won't be the first one to exit the highway and go back the other direction for a second look at Joe Wood's 6-foot-11 barbecue pit, built in perfect proportion to a pistol owned by his buddy, Dale "Mr. Six-Shooter" Rerich.

It all started two years ago when Joe and his wife, Lynn, bought a little piece of Texas countryside near Weimar. With rolling pastureland for their cattle, plenty of space for Lynn to raise her American bulldogs, and a fishing pond for Joe, it was the perfect place. There was even a shop where Joe, a professional welder, could pursue his hobby of creating furniture and household fixtures from horseshoes, iron pipe, scrap metal and just about anything he could weld together.

Then came the moment when inspiration struck. At a duck-hunting club gathering in Altair, Joe laid eyes on a little barbecue pit that looked like a pistol. Within days, he was in the driveway on his hands and knees with a piece of sidewalk chalk, sketching plans for a barbecue smoker that would shoot all the others out of the water.

"I wanted to make a six-shooter because that's the classic gun of the old Texas West," said Wood. He and Rerich did the math. To be built to scale, the barrel would have to be 10 feet long and 8 inches in diameter. The cylinder would take a 3-foot-by-6-inch-by-30-inch piece of pipe. The bullets would be 5-inch stainless steel caps. The whole thing would be 15 feet, 4 inches, from the tip of the handle to the tip of the barrel, and 6 feet, 11 inches, from bottom to top at the highest point.

The giant red oak handle houses a double-walled, insulated firebox where the smoke starts its path through the cylinder, cooking whatever is on the grill, then curling out the

enormous barrel.

It took two years and 1,100 hours (900 "thinking about it" and 200 in the shop), more than two tons of red oak, stainless and carbon steel, and lots of ingenuity before Wood was ready to declare the project complete. "It did get a little big," he says. Then, with a twinkle in his eye, he adds, "That's what happens when a cowboy stops drinkin'."

But can it cook?

The judges at Shiner Brewery's 2004 Bocktober Fest, held in Green-Dickson Park just north of Shiner, thought so. The Woods received a first place ribbon for their "six-shooter chicken."

Don't expect to see any replicas of Joe Wood's six-shooter smoker anytime soon in a hardware store near you. But if you just have to have one, you can put \$30,000 on the barrelhead and give Joe a call at Wood's Welding Service at (979) 263-4306.

The Woods' ranch is served by Fayette EC.

Carol Moczygamba is managing editor of Texas Co-op Power.