

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Russell Graves:

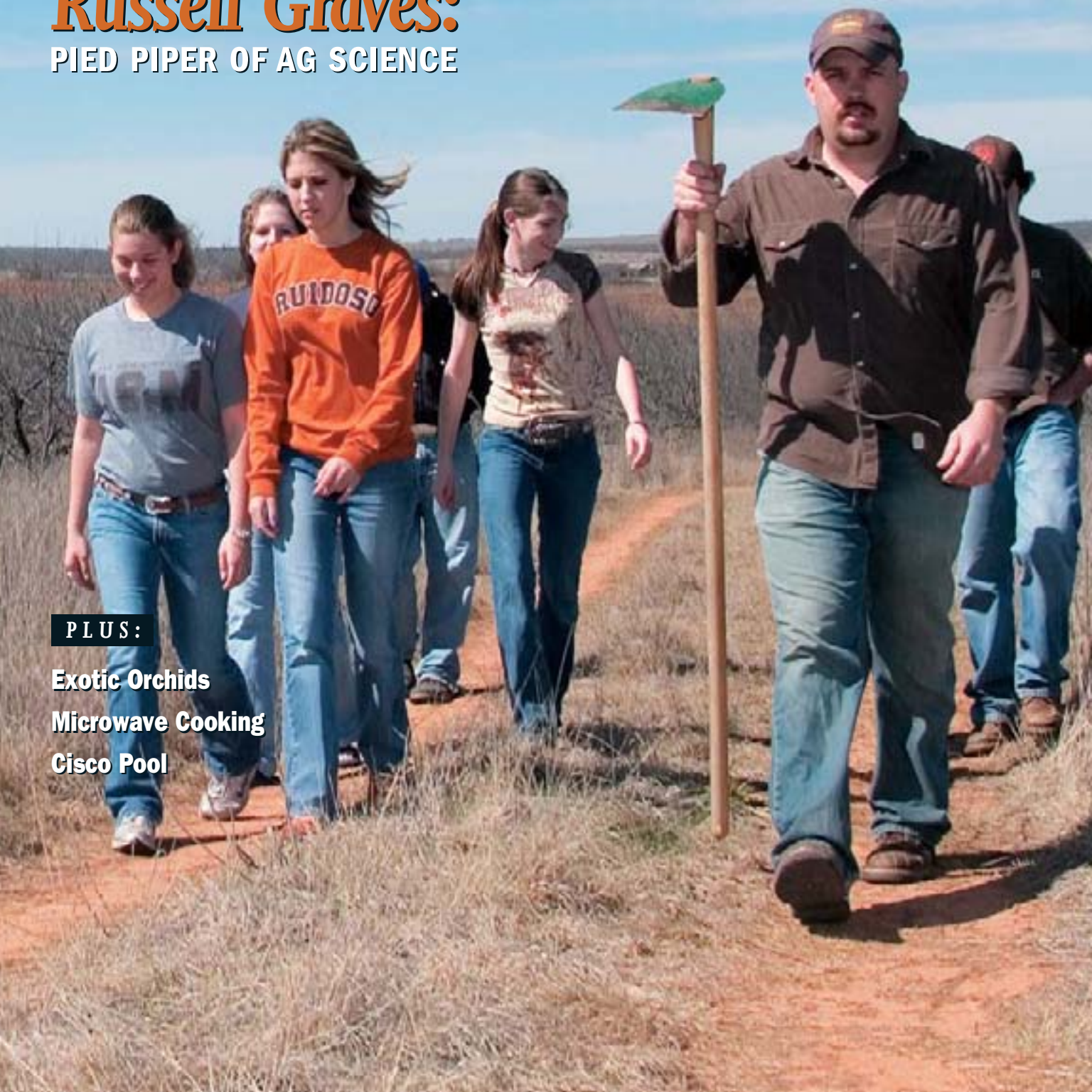
PIED PIPER OF AG SCIENCE

PLUS:

Exotic Orchids

Microwave Cooking

Cisco Pool



COOL TIPS FOR HOT WEATHER

It's time for another hot Texas summer. Time to enjoy all the outdoors has to offer. Take a little extra time to take precautions so you and your family can enjoy every day.


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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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

Hooray! Back to School!

I was one of those kids who always loved school. For me, this time of year brings memories of my favorite teachers. Long after graduation, they remain an important part of my life, because they made such a deep impression. They are models for me, even today.

Helping someone to realize their potential is one of the greatest triumphs that a teacher—or anyone—can achieve. Our August feature shines the spotlight on a very special Texas teacher, Childress High School's Russell Graves. In this small West Texas town, the "awesome" ag teacher is known for his innovative teaching methods and his boundless enthusiasm. His agriculture research projects not only educate students, they benefit the landowners in the community. The world needs more teachers like him.

I hope you will enjoy Shirley Raye Redmond's story about Elisabet Ney, a sculptor and independent thinker who lived in Hempstead and Austin during the late 1800s. Ney is another example of the kind of unique character attracted to Texas because of its independent and open spirit.

Our microwave recipes are easy and delicious—but more importantly, they help keep the kitchen cool in our continuing August heat! And, for our gardeners, we have a recipe for growing beautiful orchids.

Finally, you can honor your ancestors at New Boston's Pioneer Days, our featured festival, as well as relive your childhood in this month's Focus on Texas: Those Were the Days.

Enjoy!

Peg

Peg Champion
VP, Communications/Publisher



In the '30s, **IDA GARONZIK**, shown here, and her husband, **SYLVAN**, started Movie Snaps, a company that made snapshot postcards that sold for 25 cents each (or three for 50 cents). "I'll bet many old-time members still have some of his work in their scrapbooks," writes CoServ Electric member and son **ALLAN GARONZIK**. For more "Those Were The Days" photos, turn to page 37.



Kammie McKeever and Russell Graves prepare to transplant a cottonwood tree.

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By Joe Nick Patoski, Photos by Thomas Terry

The "Home of Champions" sign in front of Childress High School refers to its National FFA Organization chapter, not the football team. One of the reasons for the agriculture program's success is that teacher Russell Graves has led his ag students out of the box ... way out of the box.

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By Carlton Stowers

Before Six Flags, Cisco Pool.

COVER PHOTO: TEACHER RUSSELL GRAVES AND STUDENTS (FROM LEFT) SHELBY CLARK, JANA KAY WALKER, JESSICA SMITH AND MOLLY FUSTON. BY THOMAS TERRY.

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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Farm Safety

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.



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CULTIVATE FARM SAFETY

PEC Employee to the Rescue

On May 26, I was driving down Highway 306 toward Canyon Lake when a trailer truck hauling rocks passed me going south, and a large rock fell off the uncovered load and crashed into my windshield. This was on the passenger side where a friend was sitting. ... We were covered with shattered glass and I praise the Lord I was able to pull off the road to safety. We both sat there frightened when a nice gentleman stopped to help us. He introduced himself as Gabriel Casas, an employee of Pedernales EC. He was an eyewitness to this accident and he had followed the rock truck and written down the license number, the time of day, and the location. Mr. Casas helped us, brushing the glass off us so we could get out of the car. He checked to see if we were injured and waited with us until further help came. Thank you so much, Mr. Casas.

DOTTIE HOLMES, Pedernales EC

Bucher Brings Adventure to Life

Let us have more stories from Isabel Bearman Bucher ["Big Bend á la Canoe," June 2005]! Her style of writing in her Big Bend story is fantastic. She keeps you hooked with her use of words. I enjoyed the story immensely, since our family did a raft trip through Santa Elena Canyon last August after a great late-night thunderstorm over the park!

JOHN M. KREIDLER, Magic Valley EC

Keep Those Calls Coming

Thanks to Texas Co-op Power and Jody Horton for the nice article about our farm ["Peaches: Ripe Off the Tree," June 2005]. A thanks, also, to the many readers who visited our farm and for all the telephone calls we have



received. We have tried to return every call left on the answering machine, although some were garbled, some accidentally deleted, and some callers did not give their area code. To those callers, please call again. We appreciate every call received.

RUSSELL AND LORI STUDEBAKER
Central Texas EC

Electricity Was \$2.50 a Month

As I sit here today, my thoughts go back to when we signed up with what was then the REA [Rural Electrification

Administration]. Some months later, we got a go-ahead to have our house wired. ... We read our own meter; our bill was \$2.50 a month because lights were all we had. What a good thing when REA came to Marvin, which now is in Lamar County Electric Cooperative [territory]. We're still with them 63 years later.

MRS. L. CROOK, Lamar County EC

Gipson Got Married in the Morning

Your article about Fred Gipson, in the June 2005 issue, brought back memories. On January 22, 1940, Fred, my dad and I went deer hunting. ... The next day we went back into town. We later learned that Fred had married Tommie Eloise Wynn on that day we went back into town. During a long conversation around the wood heater the previous night, Fred had not said one word about getting married the next day. I wonder if he knew it.

DON ZESCH, Pedernales 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.

SAFE LIVING

Thunderstorms and Computers

Surge protectors for your sensitive electronics—computers, monitors, televisions, VCRs, satellite systems, telephones and microwaves—are invaluable, especially during thunderstorms. Each item should be protected with its own individual surge protector. Insurance claims are usually not considered unless equipment and appliances have surge protection.

For even more protection from electrical surges, a protective device should also be installed at the electric meter or main electrical panel to divert most of the surges. These act as a first line of defense against surge damage, and can specifically protect electro-mechanical equipment, such as refrigerator and freezer motors.

Remember, even though there is

no such thing as a "whole house" protector, the very best protection against lightning is to unplug any sensitive electronic equipment until the danger of lightning has passed.

Also, keep in mind that surge protectors can wear out over time. After many small surges—or one big one, such as a direct lightning strike—surge protectors lose their effectiveness.



RUSSELL GRAVES

.....
Pied Piper
of Ag Science

By
Joe Nick Patoski

.....
Photos by
Thomas Terry



Graves ushers his Childress High School students out of the box and into the field for sophisticated research projects on plants and animals. Graves leads (front row, right to left) Emily Morgan, Kammie McKeever, (back row, right to left) Carter Wilson and Travis D'Ewart on a field trip.





IF THE WALLS OF RUSSELL GRAVES' classroom could talk, they would practically scream, "This is no run-of-the-mill ag science class!"

On one wall, a reprint of a *New Horizons* (magazine of the National Future Farmers of America, or FFA) article cites Childress High student Kyle Christopher and his use of the Internet to research FFA projects. Above the reprint is an oversized check to the Childress Independent School District for \$48,000. A nearby article from *The Dallas Morning News* describes how the check came from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to purchase land for a black-tailed prairie dog enhancement program.

But most telling are the blue banners with gold lettering that crowd two walls above the classroom, especially the big ones with the words "First Ag-Science Fair," "Texas" and "National."

The "Home of Champions" sign in front of the school refers to Childress High's National FFA Organization chapter, not the football team.

RUSSELL GRAVES, THE BURR-HEADED, goateed, 35-year-old ball of energy in jeans and work boots responsible for much of the above, doesn't initially strike a visitor as an out-of-the-box thinker. But after spending a couple days with his Agri-

cultural Resources classes, where radio telemetry, global positioning systems, surveying instruments, fiber-optic endoscopes and remote viewing cameras have supplanted cows and plows, he sure comes off like one.

"Take your scripts, read through them," he says to a group of students sitting at desks arranged in a semicircle as he fidgets with wires connecting a digital video camera to a computer. Ten students are working on the timeline to a video documentary on the history of Childress County.

He reminds the class to show up at 7:45 the next morning for Ag Day, a show-and-tell for fifth graders in Childress and surrounding communities. The following week, many of the students will be heading to the FFA National Agriscience Fair in Louisville, Kentucky. Three projects from Childress have qualified for the nationals. One details the correlation between white-tailed bucks in rut and the deer harvest. By pinpointing the dates, Childress County businesses could

Above: Ty Moore and Graves cut a piece for a prototype car to study alternative energy sources. Next page: From left, Emily Browning, Denise Manley, Tracee Cummins, Jaqlyn Watson and Kimberley Sims work in front of a board displaying some of the high school's many agricultural awards. Bottom: The school owns a prairie dog town.



have a secondary boost in deer season business. Another investigates the impact of prescribed burns. Freshly burned pasture greens up quicker in the springtime, accommodating cattle grazing earlier in the season.

"All research projects we do have a community service aspect to them," Graves explains. "We need to be doing projects that people in the community can benefit from. Everything we've learned can be applied by landowners."

After the bell rings, Graves counts the heads in his next class and issues marching orders for the period: "Come on, let's go to the country!"

TWO MILES NORTH OF THIS WEST TEXAS town, Graves and his nine students veer off Highway 83 into 88 acres of prairie brush. The land, owned by the school district, was purchased with that \$48,000 grant Graves hustled for a black-tailed prairie dog habitat. The Texas Department of Transportation has already paved a pullover off the highway for public viewing, and inmates from the T.L. Roach Unit

of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice have erected a fence.

But the teacher has found other uses for the land, too. A wetlands is being created in a hollow, which Graves hopes to restore more rapidly with funding from a playa lakes



RUSSELL GRAVES

organization. An interpretive nature trail, wildlife feeders, bat houses, several experimental V-shaped antler traps and grass planting were done with volunteer help. "Because of our partners, the school system hasn't spent \$500 in three years," he says proudly.

Wielding a yardstick, Graves explains how and why the students are recording the height of recently planted triticale grass. Primarily, they want to determine how much is being foraged by wildlife, particularly white-tailed deer. "Each food plot has three kids on it," he says. "They've done soil testing and seed testing. Now they're trying to get a handle on how much wildlife activity the food plots attract. We'll be able to figure that out by measuring outside the cages and inside the cages, where wildlife can't get at the grass."

LARGE URBAN AND SUBURBAN SCHOOLS such as James Madison High School, an agriscience magnet school for San Antonio's Northeast Independent School District, domi-



Above: From left, Jana Kay Walker, Jessica Smith, Shelby Clark, Amanda Browning, Molly Fuston, Jared Session, Brittany Moore and Graves gather around a protected food plot. Below: Travis D'Ewart, Carter Wilson and Jared Session squeeze into a pickup.

nate secondary agriscience education in Texas. Childress is a small-town exception. Out of 290 students enrolled at Childress High School, 150 are in the agriscience program, 110 under Graves' tutelage. A nontraditionalist, he doesn't do show animals. "I don't teach ag production at all," he says. "Not that there's anything wrong with it. But as an educator, I believe you've got to give the kids what they need. Most of the kids in Childress aren't going to work on a

farm or ranch. I hope I'm giving them the tools and skills to succeed in whatever they do."

GRAVES GREW UP IN THE EAST TEXAS town of Dodd City (population 350). After graduating from East Texas State University, now Texas A&M-Commerce, in 1993, he decided to stay in Texas, preferably in a rural area where he and his wife, Kristy, could raise a family. They found what they wanted in this tidy commercial center on the Rolling Plains.

With the help of a supportive administration and high school counselor Liz Jones, Graves integrated wildlife study into the realm of agriscience and has since tried to introduce something new every year. He shares ag teaching duties at the school with Roy Novak.

"My first big project was in 1995, when we lobbied the state's legislature to make the longhorn the state mammal," Graves said. "Ten kids decided on the longhorn, contacted our legislator, and learned a bunch about how the process works."

After reading about a huge buffalo kill near Childress in an old Western



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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Above: Graves carries a lens and tripod through the land granted to Childress High School. Below: He adjusts a motion-sensing camera.

history book, Graves had students research Frank Collinson, the buffalo hunter from England who killed 121 buffalo in one day on a site just north of the high school. That led to a marble marker installed in front of the Childress County Heritage Museum in 1996. This year's Childress County history documentary is a legacy project that school kids will see long after these students graduate. Next year, white-tailed deer projects move to the front burner.

"I've never been afraid to fail," Graves says of his teaching method. "Like my dad said, 'They're not going

to take away your birthday if you mess up.'"

HIS SECOND CAREER AS A PHOTOGRAPHER/writer figures into the curriculum. A frequent contributor to *Texas Co-op Power* and *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazines, he has authored several books, including *The Prairie Dog: Sentinel of the Plains* (Texas Tech Press), which prompted the grant application for a prairie dog habitat. For the record, Graves thinks prairie dogs have their place in the local ecosystem. "Unfortunately, you've got two camps on prairie dogs," he says. "One that thinks all of the Texas Panhandle should be one big prairie dog town, and the other that wants to kill them all. There must be some middle ground."

ON AG DAY, 165 FIFTH GRADERS from Childress, Paducah, Memphis and Turkey Valley schools are bused into the Fair Park Auditorium (a block from the high school) where 60 high schoolers in identical blue Ag Day "All the Cool Kids Are Doing It ..." t-shirts, along with 40 adults from various agriculture agencies, are waiting. There are tractors to climb; a cow-milking demonstration to watch; displays devoted to beef, cotton, wildlife and soil erosion; a chuckwagon lunch; and



even show animals, with longhorns and buffalo joining the usual assortment of pigs, goats and rabbits.

Three of Graves' students explain how ag science has changed their lives. Rance Jeter, the FFA chapter president, says he's improved his speaking skills and made a network of friends while earning scholarships that will help underwrite his pursuit of a biology degree. Jeter probably could win scholarships for playing football, but, he says, "It isn't something I'm going to pursue in life. Biology is."

Amanda Browning and Alayna Siebman, two juniors manning the beef exhibit, won the agriscience nationals in 2003 and will return this year with an updated version of their prescribed burn study. Browning will apply the scholarship money she's won at Tarleton State University, where she'll study pre-med in hopes of becoming a plastic surgeon. Siebman wants to take pre-law courses at Wayland Baptist University and perhaps run an adoption agency to work with pregnant teenagers. Both say Graves' ag program has prepared them for those futures.

"It's taught me a bunch about interviewing, speaking and writing papers," Siebman says. "It's made me so much more confident," adds Browning. Besides, Siebman points out, no matter what they do, everything goes back to agriculture. "It's where stuff comes from."

AND GRAVES? "HE'S AWESOME," THEY reply in unison. Their teacher doesn't hear them. He's with another student who's holding a digital camera with a long zoom lens. "Just remember, don't lose it, break it, loan it or give it away," he tells her.

"Russell is proof innovative teaching and enthusiasm will draw kids," Childress ISD Superintendent John Wilson says. "All around the state people are having to work to get students in vocational ag programs. With Russell Graves and Roy Novak teaching our program, we have to turn kids away."

The highlight of Ag Day is the Ice Cream Dance. Following the chuckwagon lunch, Katie Morgan, Kammie McKeever and Meredith Simpson lead

the dance by distributing individual baggies with cream, vanilla and sugar inside a bigger baggie filled with rock salt and ice. After five minutes of dancing to "Salt Shaker" on a boombox, everyone enjoys a cold dessert. The unusual method for making ice cream was clipped out of a magazine, and Graves added the dancing part to jazz up the task of shaking.

Like a lot of things involving students and agriculture in Childress, the Ice Cream Dance is an idea Russell

Graves brought to town. Outside the box, straight into the tummy.

Greenbelt, Lighthouse and South Plains ECs serve Childress County.

Joe Nick Patoski has written biographies on Stevie Ray Vaughan and Selena, as well as two nonfiction books: *Texas Mountains* and *Texas Coast* (fall 2005 publication). In 2005 his byline appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, *Field & Stream*, *TimeOut New York* and *Texas Parks & Wildlife*. He lives in Wimberley.

Hurricanes

Any time a hurricane approaches the Texas coast, you're likely to be reminded to take precautions. But the time for planning should begin well before hurricane season arrives.

Follow these tips to prepare yourself and your home for hurricanes:

- Remove weak and dead trees and tree limbs on your property.
- Know whether your home is in a zone that could be flooded.
- Have a "grab and run" bag ready with important papers (like your homeowner's insurance policy) and prescription medicines in the event you have to evacuate.
- Have a plan in place for where you will go if you evacuate, the route you will take, and how others can contact you.
- Have a survival kit ready with nonperishable food, water, a first-aid kit and other things you may need.
- Keep a battery-powered radio handy. And don't forget the extra batteries.

Keep this information readily available in case of the threat of a hurricane.



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DON'T BLOW OFF HURRICANES

FROM LEFT:
CATTLEYA
PHALAENOPSIS
CYMBIDIUM



O R C H I D S

Romantic, Exotic and a Challenge

BY ANN K. ANDERSON • PHOTO BY RICK PATRICK

Since ancient times, the exotic, mysterious orchid has been treasured above other species of flowering plants. Confucius praised the orchid's delicate beauty 2,500 years ago. The ancient Greeks dried its roots to use for medicine.

And medieval cultures thought orchids had magical aphrodisiac qualities.

In modern times, orchids have been associated with weddings, Mother's Day or other memorable occasions.

Once the sole province of expert growers, orchids are now available to everyone ... as houseplants.

I'VE BEEN GROWING ORCHIDS SINCE the 1970s with varying degrees of success. I must be honest—orchids are not as easy to grow as begonias or geraniums, but with such spectacular, long-lasting blooms, the rewards are much greater.

There are between 25,000 and 35,000 naturally occurring species of orchids. The size and shape of the exotic-looking flowers vary even within each genus.

Phalaenopsis (pronounced fowl-ah-nop-sis) or moth orchids are the most common variety seen in gro-

cery stores and home improvement stores, and are one of the easiest orchids to grow and re-bloom. Phalaenopsis flowers can be 3 to 4 inches across and are flat with rounded white, pink or vari-colored petals. The weight of such large flowers can snap an unsupported

stem, so, if you decide to buy a *Phalaenopsis* orchid in bloom, be careful how you transport it.

ONCE HOME, CHECK THE PLANT for dampness. Poke a finger into the hole at the bottom of the plastic pot. If it feels cool and damp, wait a few days before watering. **If it's dry, give your plant a good soaking in the sink. Allow water to run through the planting medium for up to a minute. Drain thoroughly.**

Proper lighting is an essential ingredient in orchid growth and flowering. *Phalaenopsis* need moderate light. **To test if the light in your display area is adequate for these beauties, hold your hand about a foot above the plant on a bright day. If you see a fuzzy shadow, the lighting is about right.** If you see a clear hand shape that allows you to differentiate fingers, it may be too bright for *Phalaenopsis* but just right for other orchids such as *Cattleyas*, *Dendrobiums* and *Oncidiums*.

Renée Haase, owner of Spring Orchids in Spring, north of Houston, says taking care of orchids isn't difficult—it starts with watering **your new plant properly to help keep the blooms lasting as long as possible.** Haase has grown orchids commercially for nine years.

"Depending on the planting medium, **plants in bloom may need to be watered two or three times a week when in a dry home setting,**" Haase says. "Back off to once a week when they stop blooming. Be careful not to overwater. More people kill their orchids with overwatering than with underwatering."

If you find dark brown soft roots, the product of overwatering, cut them off and withhold water from the plant for several weeks until healthy white roots with green tips appear.

To maintain blooms as long as possible, Haase says, all orchids appreciate being placed on a tray of pebbles filled with water. Evaporation provides the humidity these epiphytic (growing in trees) plants

enjoy in their natural habitat. Just don't let the pot touch the water.

Though most orchids need filtered light, your plants don't have to stay indoors hidden behind lace curtains. Don't be afraid to move orchids to a shaded spot in the garden as soon as nighttime temperatures stay above 45 degrees. According to Haase, most orchids love our hot, steamy Texas days and nights, as long as they're protected from direct sunlight.

"Fertilize your orchid weakly, weekly," suggests Haase's husband, Denny, co-owner of Spring Orchids and the mastermind behind their orchid-breeding program. Most orchids are happy with a 7-9-5 mix or even a sprinkle of dry, slow-release fertilizer, he says. If your orchids are potted in a bark-based mix, it doesn't hurt to fertilize with a 30-10-10 solution at the beginning of the growing season. A tip-off that your plant's growing season has arrived is the appearance of new green-tipped roots.

Although I don't approach orchid growing as scientifically as the Haases, **I've had great success by watering monthly with a commercial bloom-boosting fertilizer high in phosphate (10-52-10).** A slipper orchid (*Paphiopedilum*) brought into bloom using this method has held its showy maroon blossom for well over two months.

WHILE *PHALAENOPSIS* ORCHIDS may be the most commonly recognized and easiest to grow orchid, other varieties are now showing up for sale in local stores. *Dendrobiums* generally have 2- to 3-inch blooms and pointed petals in shades of purple, lavender, pink and white. Tall stalks of smaller, often yellow and brown spotted flowers with a large "lip" and a swollen "pseudobulb" stem are possibly *Oncidiums* or *Ondontoglossoms*. Also seen for sale are the classic corsage orchids, the sometimes-fragrant *Cattleyas* or the tall, heavy-blooming, waxy *Cymbidiums*.

Each species and genera has its own special cultivation requirements. That's part of the fun and challenge of growing orchids. Let's say you've done your homework and kept your plant healthy for over a year, but it still hasn't produced a flower.

"It can happen," Denny says. "Each species has different needs. You have to keep *Dendrobiums* on the dry side to induce them to bloom, since they bloom naturally in their dry season. And *Vandas* need a lot more light than you'd think. Sometimes all you need is a fan blowing near (not on) the plant to increase the air movement."

There are no universal rules when it comes to orchids. The Haases agree that *Phalaenopsis* are the easiest for a beginner to start with. They can reward you with two or three flower spikes a year if properly cared for.

HERE IN TEXAS WE HAVE THE added advantage of a climate that mimics the natural growing conditions of many tropical orchids, so be sure to move your orchids outdoors in the spring to give them a natural boost. Experiment a little with different light conditions and fertilizer. Try watering less often or more often, read a book on orchid care, or do some research on the Internet. Just don't give up. Re-blooming your first orchid is an experience you'll never forget.

But be careful. You could get hooked. Renée Haase raised orchids as a hobby for five years before becoming a commercial grower. Before you know it, you, too, could have three huge greenhouses, a house and an office all full of orchids. Such is the power of the romantic, exotic, and now readily attainable, orchid.

Writer Ann K. Anderson lives in Conroe. She has combed the countryside looking for orchids in Europe, Crete, North Africa, Kenya, the Seychelles, Madagascar and Peru, not to mention the United States.

WHEN HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES WEAR OUT THEIR WELCOME



Safety and environmental considerations must be taken into account when disposing of old electrical household appliances, according to the experts at *Safe Electricity*. Computers, televisions, stereos, refrigerators, water heaters and many other smaller electrical appliances are wonderful, life-enhancing conveniences, but when the time comes to replace and dispose of them, they should be discarded properly.

"Unfortunately, many unsafe secondhand appliances wind up in other people's homes as electrical shock or fire hazards," says *Safe Electricity* Executive Director Molly Hall.

Never attempt to use a malfunctioning or previously discarded electric appliance, and beware of old appliances sold in flea markets and garage sales. "Such appliances may pose a fire or electrocution hazard, and may be no 'bargain' in the long run," cautions Hall. However, many reliable repair shops offer good, used appliances.

Take advantage of local recycling opportunities. Before throwing away electronics, check on programs such as those that collect and repair unwanted phones and computers for contribution to charitable organizations and schools. Many communities sponsor collection events that accept electronic appliances.

Guidelines for safe appliance disposal:

- Have a qualified professional remove Freon, PCBs and mercury switches from old appliances. For assistance, contact your local public works department or appliance service provider.
- After removal of unsafe materials and components, arrange to have the old appliance taken to a scrap yard where the metal can be salvaged for recycling. High steel prices have made old appliances attractive to scrap dealers.
- Never leave or store an unused or damaged appliance in an open, unsecured area. Discarded appliances are a safety hazard, especially for children. In addition, discarded appliances may provide shelter or a breeding place for vermin.
- Before disposal, remove electrical cords from damaged items so they can't be recycled or reused by someone else.
- If larger household items—such as washers, dryers, stoves and refrigerators—need to be replaced, have the dealer remove the old appliance.

"Don't keep old, inefficient appliances that are costly to operate and will pose a future disposal problem," says Hall. "Replace old, worn appliances with new, high-efficiency models, and make certain that all new electrical equipment you purchase is safety-tested and bears the Underwriters Laboratories label."

For more information on electrical safety, visit www.SafeElectricity.org.

Source: *Safe Electricity*



SAVE METER READERS SOME HASSLE

Clear Shrubs, Keep Dogs Away

Meter readers trudge through the rain, snow and summer heat to make sure you get an accurate bill from your electric cooperative. Return the favor by making your reader's job a bit easier.

● Ask your electric cooperative when a meter reader will drop by. If you're not home when the reader arrives and your meter isn't accessible, the cooperative may have to estimate your electricity use for that month's bill.

● Keep dogs and other pets on a chain or indoors when your reader is scheduled to visit your home.

● Clear trees, shrubs and plants from around your meter, and shovel snow out of the way in winter. The meter should be easy to reach and clearly visible so a reader won't have to search for it.

Some electric cooperatives are installing digital meters, which the utility can read remotely. That will cut down on the number of times a meter reader has to come to the homes of their member-consumers—and it will reduce the number of estimated electricity bills those member-consumers receive.

Different kinds of digital meters work in different ways. Some contain small transmitters that can send information about a home's electricity use to a specially equipped power company truck driving through the neighborhood. Meters using "turtle" technology transmit figures on electricity use from the home to the electric cooperative over power lines. Others use a customer's telephone lines to send data to the utility's computers.

PROTECT PETS FROM SWELTERING SUMMER WEATHER

Just as you try to keep yourself cool on sunny summer days, you should make sure your pets are comfortable, too.



Many of the same summer rules for humans apply to your furry friends as well: Don't exercise when it's too hot outside; drink plenty of water; avoid overexposure to the sun; and find a shady outdoor spot or move indoors to enjoy the air conditioning when the temperature spikes.

Here are some tips that will help keep Fluffy or Rover happy and healthy this summer:

- Do not leave your pet in a parked car, even for a couple of minutes. An

85-degree day can heat up the interior of a car to 120 or 130 degrees in less than 30 minutes. That kind of heat can kill a dog or cat in a hurry.

- Pack plenty of cool water for your pet before heading to the beach or out for any day-long trip. A dog can drink up to three times its normal amount of water on a hot day.

- Pets suffer from heat exhaustion and heatstroke, just like humans. Don't exercise your animal when it's really hot.

- Keep old, overweight and sick

dogs, and those with snub noses, like pugs, bulldogs, Boston terriers, Lhasa apsos or Pekingese, indoors in the air conditioning as much as possible.

- Bring outdoor pets inside where it is air conditioned during the worst heat of the day. Make sure they have ready access to shade and cool water when they're outside.

- Groom animals more often during summer. Cut long hair to within no less than an inch of the skin so your pet will be cool but still have protection from the sun.

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY: A TIMELINE

Computer technology has come a long way since the first personal computers hit the market in the mid-1970s.

NASA's Apollo 11 guidance computer weighed 70 pounds and had a 2.048-megahertz (MHz) processor. By comparison, an original Nintendo entertainment system, released in 1985, had a 1.79-MHz processor.

The Cray-IA, one of the first commercial supercomputers, weighed 5.5

tons and needed a Freon-based cooling system. Essentially, the Cray-IA had the equivalent of an 80-MHz processor and eight megabytes of storage.

A top-of-the-line desktop computer today has a processor more than 40 times faster, with upwards of 12,000 times the storage space.

The Internet was invented so military computers in distant locations could share information. That early Internet precursor, ARPAnet (Advanced Research

Projects Agency) came out in 1969.

Integrated circuits (ICs) allow computers to fit on our desks. Before ICs, computers used vacuum tubes, followed by transistors. Even the smallest of these computers could take up an entire room.

The IC came into use in the early 1960s. The first ones had a transistor, capacitor and three resistors, and were the size of a finger. Today an IC can fit more than 120 million transistors and is smaller than a penny.

Carving an Independent Life

BY SHIRLEY RAYE REDMOND

ILLUSTRATION BY ALETHA ST. ROMAIN

The terms “daring” and “visionary” have been used to describe the statues of Texas heroes Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin at the state capitol in Austin. The words could also be used to define Elisabet Ney, the saucy German-American sculptor who created them. When critics pointed out their differences—Austin is considerably shorter than the towering, robust Houston—Ney reminded them that she had merely reproduced their likenesses. “Any dissatisfaction should be taken up with God,” she said.

Born in Munster, Westphalia, in 1833, Ney once declared that she did not intend to be like her mother, living “the sweet, uneventful life of a German hausfrau.” She shocked her conventional, middle-class Catholic parents by proclaiming she would be a sculptor. Ney’s father was a stonecutter, so Elisabet had grown up playing with clay and sculpting tools.

Nineteen-year-old Ney went on a hunger strike until her parents relented. Ney’s skill soon earned her a place at the prestigious Munich Academy of Art as the first woman to study sculpture at the academy.

Two years later, she became one of the favorite pupils of Berlin’s Christian Rauch, one of Europe’s foremost sculptors. Her talent earned commissions from famous men of the day, including King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck, fairy-tale collector Jacob Grimm, and philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.

With her intelligence and zest for philosophy, art and politics, she became a beloved confidante to many of her favorite subjects. She coddled the impatient King Ludwig II, reading him poetry when he became restless. The two would often talk long into the night. When Ludwig offered her jewels, Ney declined and requested flowers instead. The “mad” king filled her studio at his court with fresh flowers every day.

In 1863, Ney married Edmund Montgomery, a Scottish medical stu-

dent studying in Heidelberg. Ney said she was instantly attracted to the tall young man with flowing blond curls whom she described as “like a hero just stepped out of the pages of some splendid book!” Independent and proud of her aristocratic and artistic heritage, Ney kept her maiden name and introduced her husband as “my friend, Mr. Montgomery.”



Ney and Montgomery fled political intrigue in Europe, finally settling in Texas in 1872, where they purchased the dilapidated Groce plantation near Hempstead, renaming the property Liendo. The eccentric “Miss” Ney raised eyebrows from the moment she arrived in the Lone Star State. Her clothing—a black Prince Albert frock coat, white britches and knee-high boots—were considered as unfeminine as her shocking habit of riding astride rather than sidesaddle. Because she did not share her husband’s last name, many assumed the couple were “living in sin.”

Ney took a two-decade hiatus from sculpting while she practiced what she called “the more important art of molding flesh and blood.” Firstborn Arthur

died at age 2 from diphtheria, and Ney kept her younger son, Lorne, dressed in so many frills that for years the neighbors were unsure of his gender.

Her career resumed in 1891 when the committee women of the World’s Fair Exhibit Association asked her to create statues of Sam Houston and Stephen F. Austin for the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Ney decided she needed her own studio, purchased land in Austin’s Hyde Park district, and began building Formosa, a structure that combined the elements of a Greek temple and a German castle.

Even before it was complete, Ney started working on the statues. She collected photographs and engravings of the two famous Texans and again raised eyebrows when she began her quest for a human skeleton to help her better understand anatomy. The Houston sculpture made its way to the World’s Fair, but a disappointed Ney did not complete the Austin commission in time for display.

At Formosa, Ney sculpted “Lady Macbeth,” a supposed self-portrait considered by many to be her greatest masterpiece, now on exhibit at the Smithsonian. Traveling to Formosa became a pilgrimage for many young artists, and Ney’s studio became a salon where Austin’s elite gathered for intellectual stimulation.

Ney died of a heart attack in 1907 at the age of 74 and was buried at Liendo. Four years later, friends founded the Texas Fine Arts Association in her honor.

Today, her magnificent Austin studio is the Elisabet Ney Museum. Her memorials for Austin, Houston and Albert Sidney Johnston can be seen at the state capitol. A marble copy of her Austin statue resides in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C.

The Elisabet Ney Museum is located at 304 E. 44th Street in Austin. Call (512) 458-2255 for more information.

Shirley Raye Redmond, who lives in Los Alamos, New Mexico, writes books for children and adolescents.

Whoa, Marvin!

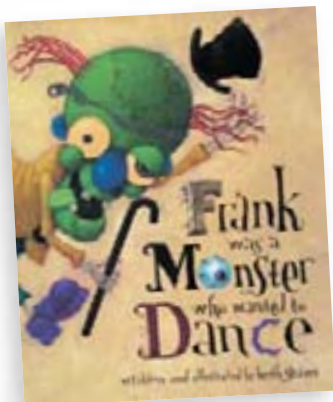
Marvin, it's never, ever OK to stick anything except a plug into an electric outlet. Surely, everyone besides you and your gullible assistant, D-Wayne, knows that.

Those funny-looking holes in the wall are not for conducting goofy experiments. They are only for delivering electric current to the appliances around your house: lamps, radios, toasters, vacuum cleaners, etc. Sticking something else in them—something that isn't a plug—can result in a shock, a severe electrical burn or even death! That includes fingers. The human body is about 70 percent water, which makes us excellent conductors of electricity.

It's a good idea to keep unused outlets covered with a protective device made for that specific purpose. These covers are especially important if there are small children around the house.

Also, if the outlet and wall around it are warm to the touch and you notice a burnt smell, or if a plug doesn't fit tightly into the wall outlet, it may be time to repair or replace it. A loose-fitting outlet can overheat and present a real fire danger. Have your parents call a qualified electrician to inspect the outlet and repair or replace it if necessary.

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.



BAD SPORTS

BY MELISSA GASKILL • ILLUSTRATION BY A.J. GARCES

My first glimpse of the problem came when I walked to the neighborhood Little League field to watch a friend's son play baseball. Prominently attached to the fences were signs stating, in essence, that anyone yelling at the umpires would be asked to leave.

Things hit closer to home at one of my oldest daughter's kickball games a year or so later, when the game screeched to a halt while the grown-ups huddled around a thick rule book, trying to decide whether to call a player out for some minor infraction I can't even recall, like taking 5 seconds too long to step up to bat. I didn't remember kickball having so many rules when I was 10.

After a couple of years of fairly low-key recreational soccer, my son made a "select" team. Not every kid gets on these teams. The coaches are paid professionals, the rules strict. It's costly, upwards of \$1,000, plus uniforms and travel, which can be extensive. The first indication that the ante had been upped was when the team mom handed out lollipops to keep the parents quiet.

There were teams with matching bags precisely lined up on the sidelines, games where parents berated officials the entire time (obviously, they hadn't brought lollipops), coaches who positioned parents at intervals along the sidelines to yell at their players. When my youngest daughter made one of these teams, she sometimes came home from practices and games in tears, devastated by the comments of a teammate or because she'd disappointed her coach. A particularly rainy fall left the team of sixth graders trying to make up games well into December. I asked if we couldn't just let those games go (hello, it's almost Christmas!), and was told that would mess up season statistics.

I think we are taking youth sports way too seriously. Programs like Little League and Pop Warner Football were originally founded on the principles of letting every kid play and having fun, but many youth leagues now resemble miniature versions of professional sports. The frightening "do whatever it takes to win" mentality includes yelling at children, playing through pain, and even trying to injure other players. Winning has become more important than the kids having fun, more important than the kids themselves.

Maybe we need to be reminded that these are just kids. Our kids. I remember T-ball—my son and his teammates spent their time in the outfield pulling up dandelions or digging in the dirt. The grown-ups often hollered at these 5- and 6-year-olds to pay attention. Now I wonder why. We shouldn't have cared who won, just that the kids were outside and having fun.

I figured I was alone in my alarm until I read *Why Johnny Hates Sports* by Fred Engh. Engh says 70 percent of all youngsters drop out of organized sports by age 13 because of unpleasant experiences. Seventy percent. By age 13! Frankly, that seems to me about the age kids should start team sports, not already be burned out and quitting.

Sports, and team sports in particular, have a lot to teach children—when they're ready. Let's face it, 11-year-olds can get distracted or tired. So can 15-year-olds, but they usually have the developmental ability and maturity to push through it and give that extra effort. That feels like a real accomplishment, and teaches perseverance. But pushing an 11-year-old to act 15 won't make her develop or mature any faster. It might, however, make her drop out of sports.

Fortunately, my youngest has decid-

ed to move on to another sport rather than quit. My dandelion-picking son seems to have let all that yelling go in one ear and out the other (an annoying skill in so many arenas), going on from baseball to soccer, basketball, football and, finally, lacrosse. My oldest daughter has dabbled in a variety of sports as well (her favorite: Ultimate Frisbee, a game that defies rules and organization).

I'm glad about this. I'm not against sports or competition, just against taking them too seriously. Too much competition sucks the fun out. An undue emphasis on winning and losing—and not on teamwork, self-improvement and good sportsmanship—takes away from the benefits sports can offer, like cooperation, respect for teammates and opponents, even compassion for the loser. I want my children—and their future co-workers, neighbors and spouses—to have exposure to those things, too.

Finally, I don't think we should sacrifice the fun of childhood. No one should know better than my success-oriented generation that you only get to be young once. I don't think my kids will look back from that vaunted front-porch rocking chair and say, "Gee, I wish I'd won more soccer games when I was 11." I know I won't.

In addition to the emotional and psychological consequences of our overzealous attitudes, there are potential physical ones. Stress fractures, growth plate disorders, cracked kneecaps, frayed heel tendons and back problems were previously seen only in adults. Now injuries like these are reaching epidemic proportions in young teens, as more kids play one sport year-round and focus on single skills like kicking or throwing. Their still-growing bodies simply can't take it. Some parents justify pushing their



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THEMSELVES.**

kids for scholarships, but a kid with injuries probably won't be able to play, scholarship or no.

The American Academy of Pediatrics even issued a formal statement: "Those who participate in a variety of sports and specialize only after reaching the age of puberty tend to be more consistent performers, have fewer injuries, and adhere to sports play longer than those who specialize early."

Kids won't acquire skills faster just because they start younger. A lot of skill and ability is a function of age and development, not more practice. Former NBA player Bob Bigelow, who

wrote *Just Let the Kids Play*, didn't even play basketball until high school. World Cup star Mia Hamm didn't focus on soccer until age 16. That gawky 10-year-old who can hardly run and breathe at the same time could grow up to be the next Mia if given a chance. A lot of kids never discover their talent because they're told at age 9 or 10 that they aren't good enough.

Remember that old saw about variety being the spice of life? I don't want my children to spend their youth hammering away at one thing, no matter what it is. This is the time of life

(maybe the only time) they can and should try many things—a variety of sports, musical instruments, dance, horseback riding, camping, biking, scouts. I don't know about you, but I'm just darned bored watching yet another soccer game. I could go for a little softball for a change, or a picnic, a game of cards, or a hike in the woods.

In short, let's lighten up and let our kids be kids while they still can. We'll all have more fun.

Melissa Gaskill's most recent contribution to Texas Co-op Power was the May 2005 cover article, "Rhinos at Fossil Rim."

Treats in a Hurry

Microwaves are great for a number of things: defrosting, reheating, baking potatoes, popping popcorn ... but not so great for other things. I tried a couple of recipes from different books for this column that I was not impressed with, especially one for a coffee cake made in the microwave. Yuck. However, I did find two really good recipes to pass along to you. The first is from our new communications assistant, Irene Good. Her mother used to make caramel corn in the microwave as a special treat. We made it for Irene's birthday, and we agree that it's fantastic. It's fast and easy, and there's almost no cleanup. The perfect recipe! Plus, the kids can have fun passing the bag around and shaking the popcorn—just make sure they use pot holders because that bag gets pretty warm.

The second recipe is for a peanut butter and chocolate fudge made in the microwave. Again, it is almost too easy, but really tastes good. Either of these would be a fast way to make treats for an impromptu gathering of kids.

I'm glad to have the modern convenience of a microwave, but I also make sure mine knows its place. I'll never again try to bake a cake in it, but if I need to melt chocolate for the icing, I know just where to turn.

Microwave Caramel Popcorn

4 quarts popped popcorn
(plain or butter flavored)
1 cup brown sugar
1 stick margarine
1/4 cup corn syrup
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Put popcorn in large paper grocery sack. Put brown sugar, margarine, corn syrup and salt into a large microwave-safe bowl and bring to a boil by cooking 2 minutes on high in microwave. Stir, then cook 2 more minutes. Stir in baking soda. Dump hot mixture over



CHANDLER PRUDE

popcorn in sack. Shake bag well. Microwave bag on high for 1 1/2 minutes. Remove bag and shake again. Return to microwave and heat for 1 more minute on high. Take bag out and shake really well. Cut open bag and allow to cool. Loosen pieces (or make balls) and eat! Makes 8 servings.

Note: Experiment with light or dark brown sugar and light or dark corn syrup. Light will make a more traditional caramel corn, and dark will make something more like Cracker Jacks.

Serving size: 2 cups. Per serving: 260 calories, 2 grams protein, 12 grams fat, 38 grams carbohydrates, 365 milligrams sodium, 0 milligrams cholesterol

Microwave Peanut Butter Fudge

1 1/2 cups smooth or crunchy peanut butter
1 bag (12 ounces) semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk

Line 8x8-inch pan with wax paper. Set aside. In microwave-safe bowl, combine chocolate and peanut butter and melt by cooking in microwave on high for 3 minutes. Remove and stir. Add sweetened condensed milk, stirring until well blended. Pour into 8x8-inch pan and refrigerate for 1 hour. Cut into small squares. Makes 25 squares.

Serving size: 1 square. Per serving: 197 calories, 5 grams protein, 12 grams fat, 20 grams carbohydrates, 85 milligrams sodium, 5 milligrams cholesterol

The subject for November's recipe contest is **Cooking With Wine**. Some of the best sauces, marinades and even desserts need that specific flavor that only wine can impart. The inclusion of wine gives dishes an air of elegance, so they're often special occasion dishes. Send us your best recipes in which wine is an ingredient by August 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.

The winning recipe for this month's contest is Microwave Peach

Butter, sent in by Rita Blanca EC member and employee **JENNIFER GERGEN**. Her recipe is an easy way to make those end-of-summer peaches last a little longer. It's delicious spooned it over ice cream or spread on toast. Jennifer will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook*, and a gift pack compliments of Adams, which the runners-up whose recipes appear below will also receive.

Microwave Peach Butter

8-10 fresh peaches, peeled and sliced

3 tablespoons fruit pectin

3/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon allspice

2 1/4 cups sugar

Purée peaches in blender or food processor. In a 2-quart microwave-safe bowl, combine peach purée, pectin, cinnamon and allspice, mixing well. Microwave on high for 6 minutes, stirring every 2 minutes.



Add sugar and mix well. Microwave on high for 6 more minutes, stirring after 3 minutes. Stir again and microwave 1 more minute, then ladle into 4 clean 8-ounce jars. Cool slightly and refrigerate.

Note: You may substitute 2 16-ounce cans of peaches for fresh peaches. Drain the peaches and cut the sugar down to 1 3/4 cups.

Serving size: 2 ounces. Per serving: 145 calories, trace protein, trace fat, 38 grams carbohydrates, 6 milligrams sodium, 0 milligrams cholesterol

Continued on page 28

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Holiday Baking Contest

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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 texascooppower.com and click on **Baking Contest Official Rules**, or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.



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MANUFACTURER'S COUPON EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 30, 2005



Continued from page 27

Microwave Banana Pudding

1 cup sugar
1/3 cup flour
2 cups milk
3 egg yolks
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon vanilla
Vanilla wafers
1 or 2 bananas

Mix together sugar and flour in microwave-safe bowl and set aside. Combine milk and egg yolks and mix, then add to sugar/flour mixture. Microwave on high for 5 minutes. Remove and stir well. Microwave again for 2 minutes. Remove and stir. If not thick, continue to cook in 1-minute increments until desired consistency is reached. When done, add butter, let melt, then add 1 teaspoon vanilla. Mix well, then pour into bowl lined with vanilla wafers and bananas. Serve warm or cold. Makes 8 servings.

ELLEN GRAHAM, Trinity Valley EC

Serving size: 1 small dessert bowl. Per serving: 301 calories, 5 grams protein, 10 grams fat, 50 grams carbohydrates, 108 milligrams sodium, 96 milligrams cholesterol

Kathy's Candied Apples

8 tart apples, peeled and sliced
Water

1 package (8 ounces) red hots

Put apple slices in a microwave-safe dish. Add just enough water to cover. Cook about 4 minutes in

microwave. Add red hots and cook until apples are tender and red hots dissolve (about 6-10 minutes depending on microwave power). Store in refrigerator. Great with ham. Makes about 2 pints.

KATHLEAH OWENS, Navasota Valley EC

Serving size: 1/2 cup. Per serving: 170 calories, trace grams protein, trace grams fat, 44 grams carbohydrates, 3 milligrams sodium, 0 milligrams cholesterol

Potato-Sausage Casserole

1 package (14 ounces) smoked sausage
4 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch squares
1/2 medium onion, diced
1/2 bell pepper, chopped
1 can (15 ounces) cream-style corn
1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

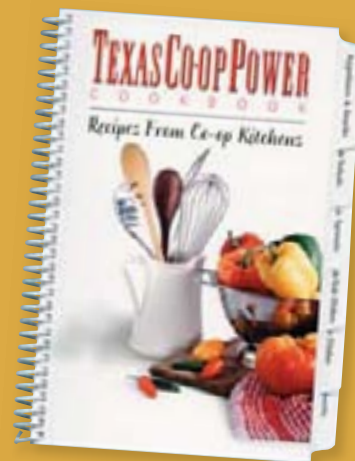
Spray a 2-quart microwave-safe casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside. Cut the sausage into 1/4-inch slices and cut those into halves or fourths. In a bowl, combine the sausage and the rest of the prepared ingredients. Pour into casserole dish. Microwave on high for about 25 minutes or until potatoes are done. Stir every 8 minutes. Serves 4.

SUSAN MONTRY, Pedernales EC

Serving size: 1/4 of recipe. Per serving: 573 calories, 21 grams protein, 35 grams fat, 45 grams carbohydrates, 1,337 milligrams sodium, 85 milligrams cholesterol

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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!



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AROUND TEXAS

August

2. Brush Country Music Jamboree, **Three Rivers**, (361) 786-3334
2. Abendkonzerte, free band concert, **Boerne**, (830) 537-4367
- 2-6. Wood County Old Settlers Reunion, **Quitman**, (903) 763-4411 or www.quitman.com
4. Aggie Family Fun Night, **Brenham**, (979) 830-7338
4. Concert in the Park, **Conroe**, (936) 539-4431 or www.cityofconroe.org
4. Presidential Libraries Commemorative Stamp Unveiling, **College Station**, (979) 691-4038 or bushlibrary.tamu.edu
5. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 5-6. East Texas Sacred Harp Singing Convention, **Henderson**, (903) 657-4303
- 5-6. Kids' Fishing Tournament, **Port Aransas**, (361) 749-4096 or www.portaransas.org
- 5-7. Highway 290 Trade Days, 3 miles west of **Burton**, (979) 249-3501

- 5-7, 12-14. "Jake's Women," play, Greenhouse Theatre, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-0575
6. Market Day, **Port Lavaca**, (361) 552-0917
6. Eastern Star Arts and Crafts Show, **Bastrop**, (512) 303-5733
6. Brother-In-Law Roping, **Athens**, (903) 677-6354
6. Ice Cream- and Lemonade-Making Demonstrations, Varner-Hogg Plantation, **West Columbia**, (979) 345-4656
6. Concert Under the Stars, **Bowie**, (940) 872-6246
6. Vintage Car Show, **Denison**, (903) 892-2379
6. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
6. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
6. Market Day, **Kyle**, (512) 268-4220
7. Holy Cross Church Celebration, **D'Hanis**, (830) 363-7268
7. Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church Festival, **Frelsburg**, (979) 732-3430
7. Biscuits & Gravy Road Race, **San Angelo**, (325) 949-4757
7. Annual Blessing of the Fleet, **Kemah**, (281) 334-9880 or www.kemahboardwalk.com

8. McDade Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307
- 8-13. Pioneers and Old Settlers Reunion, **Alvarado**, (817) 790-3503
- 11-13. Sutton County Days, Outlaw Pro Rodeo, **Sonora**, (325) 387-2880 or www.sonoratxchamber.com
- 11, 25. Pea Pickers Square and Round Dance Club, **Athens**, (903) 675-1665
12. Fish Fry Fundraiser, **Livingston**, (936) 327-8711
13. Globe of the Southwest Theatre 30th Anniversary Oprea, **Odessa**, (432) 580-3177
- 12-13. Good Ole Days Festival, **Hitchcock**, (409) 986-9224
- 12-14. Auto Swap Meet, **Hico**, (254) 796-4422
- 12-14. Trade Days, **McKinney**, (972) 562-5466
- 12-14. Flea Market, **Jewett**, (936) 348-5475
- 12-14. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
13. Market Trail Days, **Castroville**, (830) 741-5887
13. Texas Open Chili Championship, **Conroe**, (713) 475-1660
13. Market at Drinking Swamp Farm, **Kempner**, (512) 556-8000
13. American Music in the Texas Hill Country,

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH BY JIM GRAMON

Pioneer Days: New Boston, August 17-20

Our hectic lives make it easy to forget the past and the people who helped shape our present. For 35 years, New Boston has taken time to honor their ancestors with Pioneer Days.

The festivities include rodeos and street dances on Friday and Saturday

nights, antique car and motorcycle shows, fiddler's contest, "42" domino tournament, gospel singing, art show, and plenty of arts and crafts booths.

New Boston is located just off I-30, on U.S. Highway 82, 21 miles west of Texarkana in central Bowie

County. The town is on the Missouri-Pacific Railroad route, which played a significant role in New Boston history.

Legendary singer-songwriter Steven Fromholz wrote beautifully in his epic "Texas Trilogy" about the town of Kopperl, particularly the negative impact on this agricultural community when the trains no longer

stopped there. Farmers were no longer able to get their products to and from markets. Trains were the business lifeblood of early Texas, and also influenced the history of New Boston.

In the summer of 1876, when the railroad was being constructed four miles north of the town of Boston, it was clear to many businessmen in Boston (now Old Boston) that their town would wither without the railroad. So those industrious folks packed up, moved four miles, and created the town of New Boston.

The New Boston Pioneer Days Festival will be at the T&P Trailhead Park in downtown New Boston. Tell 'em Jim says, "Hi."

New Boston is served by Bowie-Cass EC. If you need additional information, please contact the New Boston Chamber of Commerce, (903) 628-2581 or www.newboston.tx.org.

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



Travel back to the days of the pioneers with food, fun and fiddling in New Boston this month.

Fredericksburg, (830) 997-2835 or www.pioneermuseum.com

13. Martin Memorial Open Car Show, **Junction**, (830) 634-2698
13. Gospel Music Concert, **Whitney**, (254) 694-2582
13. Indian Artifact Show, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-5172
13. Fun Run Car Show, **Waxahachie**, (972) 291-2958
13. 87 on 87, garage sales from **Abernathy** to **Canyon**, (806) 584-4069 or 839-2642
13. Texas Open Chili Championship, **Conroe**, (713) 475-1660
- 13-14. Farmers & Artisans Market, **Johnson City**, (830) 868-2711
14. Second Sunday Summer Serenade, **Kerrville**, (830) 257-0809 or www.kfumc.org
14. St. Michael's Harvest Feast, **Weimar**, (979) 725-9511
17. Campfire Concert, **San Angelo**, (325) 481-2646
18. Third Thursday, **Llano**, (325) 247-3348
- 18-20. MDA Rodeo, **Athens**, (903) 489-2652
- 18-21. Singles in Agriculture National Campout, **Amarillo**, (817) 598-1322 or www.singlesinag.org
19. Bluegrass Show & Jam, **Cleburne**, (817) 373-2541
19. Country Opry, **Victoria**, (361) 552-9347
19. Hot Art After Dark, **New Braunfels**, (830) 629-8022
- 19-20. Last Chance Barbecue Cook-Off, **Mt. Vernon**, (903) 717-0328
- 19-21. Balloon Festival and Fair, **Highland Village**, (972) 539-7158 or www.hvballoonfest.org
- 19-21. Big Bands Weekend, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-9830
- 19-21. Trade Days, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 990-4900 or www.fbgtradedays.com
- 19-21 and 26-28. **Texas Hill Country Wine Trail**, 1-866-621-9463 or www.texaswinetrail.com
20. Symphony of Horses, **San Angelo**, (325) 658-5877
20. Community Fair, **Doss**, (830) 669-2325
20. Texas Bluegrass Event, **Linden**,



COURTESY SUTTON COUNTY DAYS/OUTLAW PRO RODEO

With this fun-loving committee leading the way, there will be good times for all at the Sutton County Days/Outlaw Pro Rodeo in Sonora.

- (903) 756-9934 or www.musiccitytexas.org
20. Jamboree, **The Grove**, (512) 282-1215
20. Summer Model Train Show, **New Braunfels**, (830) 935-2517
20. Pinewoods Pickin' Parlor Concert, **Mineola**, (903) 569-8037 or www.pinewoodspickinparlor.com
20. National Homeless Animals Day, adoption clinic, **Schertz**, (210) 658-6607
20. Trent Willmon Party in the Park, **Spur**, 1-877-271-3149
- 20-21. Festival of Glass/Antique Show, **Rosenberg**, (281) 342-4876 or www.houstonglassclub.org
- 20-21. Old Gruene Market Days, **Gruene**, (830) 629-6441
- 20-21. Steel Drum Festival, **Kemah**, (281) 334-9880 or www.kemahboardwalk.com
21. St. Louis Day, **Castroville**, (830) 931-2826
- 26-28. Ballunar Liffot Festival, **Kemah**, (281) 488-7676
- 26-28. UKC Dog Show, **Conroe**, (281) 651-7211 or www.rrrtc.org
27. Market at Drinking Swamp Farm, **Kempner**, (512) 556-8000
27. Texas Women Anglers Tournament, **Port Aransas**, (361) 882-6000 or www.gofishtx.com
27. Trades Day, **Coldspring**, (935) 653-2009
27. Cultural Dance & Music Festival, **Rockdale**, (512) 446-6680
27. Municipal Airport Fly-In Breakfast, **Granbury**, 1-800-950-2212 or www.granburytx.com
27. Skeet Shoot, **Cisco**, (254) 442-2537
27. Bluegrass Music Show, **Quitman**, (903) 763-4411 or www.quitman.com
28. Anderson Mill Gardeners' Open House, **Volente**, (512) 258-2613
28. Sts. Cyril & Methodius Church Picnic, **Marak**, (254) 593-3021
- 30-Sept. 3. Red River Valley Fair, **Paris**, (903) 785-7971 or www.rvvfair.org

September

- 1-5. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or www.oldmillmarketplace.com
2. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
- 2-3. Oatmeal Festival, **Oatmeal** and **Bertram**, (512) 355-2197
3. '50s, '60s & '70s Classic Car Cruise-In, **Winnsboro**, (903) 342-0684
3. Market Day, **Port Lavaca**, (361) 552-0917
3. Market Days, **Rockdale**, (512) 446-0649
3. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
3. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
- 3-4. Westfest, Czech festival, **West**, (254) 826-5058 or www.westfest.com
- 3-4. Labor Day Rodeo, **Mt. Vernon**, (903) 632-0122
- 3-4. Zydeco Festival, **Kemah**, (281) 334-9880 or www.kemahboardwalk.com
4. Sacred Heart Church Picnic, **Hallettsville**, (361) 798-5888
4. Sausage Festival, **New Berlin**, (830) 420-3185
4. St. Mary's Festival & Homecoming, **Nada**, (979) 758-3218
4. St. Joseph's Catholic Church Bazaar, **New Waverly**, (936) 344-6104

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., October submissions must be received prior to August 10. Events are listed according to space available. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they can-



Indian artifacts will be on display in Lampasas on August 13.

Those Were the Days

Take a few moments to wax nostalgic as you peruse this month's images of times gone by. We're sure you'll identify with several—if not all—of these readers' photos ... and find yourself thinking, "Yes, those were the days!"

Pumpkin Patch is the topic for our October issue. Send your photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to "Pumpkin Patch," Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before August 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).



It was a family tradition for the VINCENT and FRANCISKA SHILLER family and their friends to travel by wagon from Wood Hi to Indianola Bay where they would camp for a couple of weeks each summer. This photo shows the Shillers with their children, FANNIE and JOHN, and unidentified friends. Victoria EC member MARTHA NICHOLS submitted this photo of her mother's grandparents and friends.



Can you spot ELNORA PURSELL SCOTT in this Thanksgiving 1954 photo of her third-grade class? She's an "Indian princess," second from the left, wearing a paper-bag costume and two white feathers in her head-dress. Elnora and BARTON SCOTT are members of Taylor

Pedernales EC member GINA RONHAAR fondly recalls yearly trips to Port Aransas. "While the men fished, we sat on the beach and let the waves roll up and wash our worries away," she said. Beach beauties shown circa 1968 are, from left, JAMIE BURNAM, Ronhaar's best friend; TERI HAWSEY, her niece; Ronhaar; and NANCY FOWLER, her sister.



Blanchard's Grocery in South Mountain was a popular spot to stop after a hard day's work for the "cinder block crew," according to JUSTIN and AMY VEAZEY of Hamilton County EC. From left, DON BLANCHARD, BILL JACK BLANCHARD, BILL VEAZEY, CARL LACY and Uncle ROLAND BLANCHARD are shown here in a 1940s photo taken outside Uncle Roland's store.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
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
March	"Oops!"	January 10

"Those were the days ... when gas was 42 cents a gallon!" writes Pedernales EC member MAE BETH HOOTER. The gas pump photo was taken at the Nix Store, a fixture in Nix, Texas, since 1875.





Before Six Flags

It was a time before summer fun meant Six Flags, SeaWorld, Wet 'n' Wild, multiplex matinees or shopping mall game rooms. In the carefree summers of my childhood, the highest hope of West Texas youngsters was for a trip to the Eastland County community of Cisco. Three miles north of town, beneath what historians assured us was the world's largest hollow dam, was Lake Cisco Recreation Park—Cisco Pool, for short.

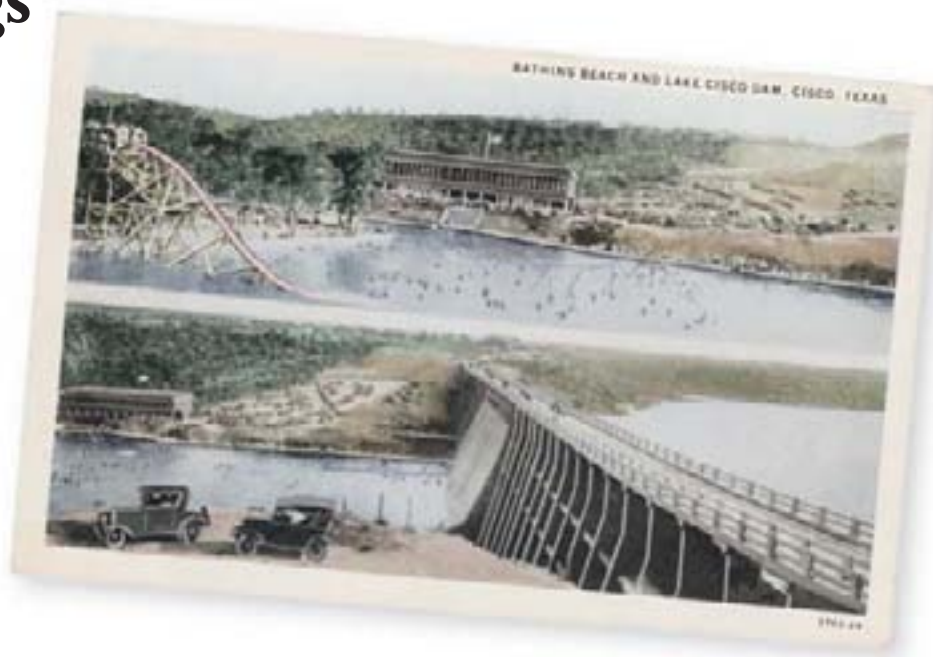
As a 13-going-on-14-year-old, I was awed by the pool's grandeur. It was said to be the world's largest concrete swimming pool—700 feet long, 300 feet wide, and filled with 14 million gallons of cool, crystal-clear water. I clumsily demonstrated my timid version of derring-do on the diving boards and towers, swings and slides, secretly hoping to impress the pretty sunbathers lounging on the small, grass-carpeted island that separated the shallow and deep ends. Popular music blared from the adjacent two-story wooden building that housed dressing rooms, a concession stand and a roller-skating rink upstairs.

After swimming, there was miniature golf on a challenging course, minus the hokey windmill and clown-face hazards of latter-day layouts. For smaller tykes, there were amusement rides. A stone gazebo was the centerpiece of the tree-shaded picnic area, and a zoo with native wildlife ranging from a panther to javelinas was tucked into the nearby bluffs.

In adventurous moments, out of my parents' protective sight, I climbed the steep steps of the entryway to the dam's spooky interior and followed a concrete concourse from one end to the other. In the privacy of the dark, damp tunnel, more than one first teenage kiss was exchanged. Or so I'm told.

At night, young and old danced under the stars to the music of legends like Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys.

Families wanting to make a weekend of it could rent one of the small



stone cabins at the base of a nearby hillside. A 25-cent permit was all my father needed to fish for perch, crappie and bluegill on the backside of the dam. On Fourth of July weekends, visitors could attend the annual Miss Independence Day beauty pageant sponsored by the park owners. Cisco was the place to go for family reunions, company picnics or school trips.

On summer Saturdays, cars would be backed up along Highway 183, waiting to pay the \$1 a head admission and enter the rural playground.

The park was built in 1929, flourished well into the '60s, and finally closed in 1975. By the time Cisco's city fathers and the state Health Department agreed that the pool was in need of a prohibitively expensive facelift, the glory days were already gone. So were the zoo, the amusement rides, the celebrity entertainers—and the crowds. The guest cabins were boarded up. A few years ago, fire destroyed the building that housed the roller rink.

On a recent stop, I found only its skeletal remains. The pool now holds a few feet of murky water that feeds the flourishing weeds and bushes. Snakes sun themselves along the pool walls. Finding the miniature golf course

required wading through waist-high weeds, and the iron bars that once housed the zoo animals are tangled and rusted, protecting nothing. The walls inside the dam are scarred with ugly graffiti.

Cisco Pool's ghostly legends are all that have survived the passage of time. Some people still insist that a construction worker helping build the massive dam fell to his death, his body not retrieved but simply buried beneath the tons of cement being poured. And there are those who maintained that for years they could hear the plaintive screams of a black panther that escaped the zoo and wandered among the chalky cliffs.

I take such tales with a grain of salt. Still, when one visits the old park and stands quietly, gently nudging the imagination, he can hear the laughter of children, the gleeful splashing, and the music wafting through the mesquites. And in doing so, he can once more feel the carefree warmth of summers long past.

Cisco is in the Comanche EC service area.

Carlton Stowers lives in Cedar Hill. His latest book, *Where Dreams Die Hard*, a look at small-town Texas and the sport of six-man football, will be published in the fall.