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Texans and Their RVs



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- Don't attempt to walk through rapidly running water. As little as 6 inches can knock adults off their feet.
- Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a flashlight with extra batteries, drinking water and a battery-operated radio.
- If you have a cell phone, program the number for police or fire department rescue.

Take the high road when it comes to flood safety. Your life depends on it.



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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

RV Travel Issue

Let's Hit the Road

Who hasn't dreamed of living the RV life? Our annual travel issue is devoted to the whos, whats, wheres and whys of this booming recreational pursuit. My mom and dad had several RVs before eventually graduating to the "king of the road," the Airstream trailer. Dad, a Navy man, said the interior was just like a boat.

Managing Editor Carol Moczygamba, who wrote the RV article, is hoping to live the wandering life herself one day. It's amazing how many people from our own office have parents who live at least part of the year in RVs and trailers.

Also in this issue are wonderful recipes for cooking in cast iron—including a tongue-in-cheek gravy recipe from our friend and Lighthouse Electric Co-op General Manager Bill Harbin. Then it's on to a report from the Poteet Strawberry Festival, a story of a close call during a storm in Sulphur Springs, and two full pages of bluebonnet photos. We had so many wonderful bluebonnet images to choose from that we put them in categories. We had a terrific selection of dogs in bluebonnets, but limited ourselves to just one, plus a rabbit, a donkey and a ladybug. And, of course, we couldn't resist printing numerous photos of children posing with the Texas state flower.

Enjoy!

Peg Champion
VP, Communications/Publisher



All bluebonnets aren't necessarily blue, and HILCO EC members **LEE** and **MARILYN WILSON** say they are fascinated with the "blue" bonnets that dare to be different. For more beautiful bluebonnet photos, turn to page 44.



WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Bill and Dianna Foster and their daughter, Kellie, relax in their RV, complete with fireplace and marble floors.

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By Carol Moczygamba, Photos by Will Van Overbeek
The \$14-billion-a-year RV travel industry is becoming a multi-generational pursuit. It's estimated that one in 10 vehicle-owning Americans is also an RV owner.

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PETER GUGGINA, HIS WIFE, MICHELLE, AND SON, BRETON, WHO'S ALMOST 3, TRAVEL FROM THEIR HOME IN PORTER TO CAMP AT MCKINNEY FALLS STATE PARK. PHOTO BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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Energy Story Appreciated

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciated the February 2006 issue of the magazine. We need to know about these power issues, and the article [“The Rising Cost of Doing Business”], telling how our cooperative is working to keep costs down while still maintaining a high level of service, was quite informative. Of course the recipes and “Car Wash” were fun, too.

JOHN QUIGLEY
Hamilton County Electric Cooperative

Don't Spray a Horse

Please let your readers know that using a high-pressure sprayer to wash a horse is really a bad idea! Some sprayers can take the skin right off the horse, and “washing their face” is almost a guarantee for an eye injury.

DAVID UNNERSTALL, DVM
CoServ Electric

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks for the warning. The photo of a horse being sprayed was in the February Focus on Texas photo contest.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM OUR READERS.

Send letters to:

Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*,
2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704

Or e-mail us at letters@texas-ec.org

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.

My Family's Alamo Story

I have just finished reading your article “The Second Battle of the Alamo” [January 2006] and am not sure what version of the “truth” I believe. I have followed the story of the salvation of the Alamo for many years, but for personal reasons. My grandmother, Sue Cox Richards, told us her story of when she was a girl of 13 or 14. Miss De Zavala was her teacher at the time she decided to barricade herself in the barracks/convent of the Alamo, while Mrs. Driscoll went to Austin seeking help to stop the destruction of same. My grandmother took food to Miss De Zavala while she safeguarded that portion of the mission. Just a little aside from my family history that we cherish.

CECELIA ADAIR
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

EDITOR'S NOTE: “The Second Battle of the Alamo” did not appear in all editions of *Texas Co-op Power*. If you missed the article, you may look it up on <http://www.texas-ec.org>. Click on Texas Co-op Power to pull up a PDF of the January issue.

Remembering the Old Dance Halls

While reading “Texas Dance Halls” in the January issue of *Texas Co-op Power*, my brain kicked into gear. Memories returned about dating my wife of 48 years.

I met her in the latter part of '56 in Columbus, my hometown. She knew nothing about the dance halls and how much fun we could have. She was raised in Baytown. She would come to Columbus one weekend and I would

go to Baytown the next, to Sylvan Beach in La Porte. We alternated for a full year while dating unless “something special” interfered. Schulenburg, Dubina, Ammansville, Swiss Alp, New Bielau, La Grange Fairground, Fayetteville, Marvin's in Altair—sometimes we would make two or more halls in one night.

Dancing was our favorite pastime, even while raising our family. Still love to dance but we have slowed down. Maybe on our 50th anniversary we will visit some of the active halls and shuffle our feet a bit.

JOE GOLD
Sam Houston Electric Cooperative

Kudos for Children's Lit

As a writer of children's literature about Texas (as yet unpublished), I want to thank you for your excellent article “Once Upon a Time in Texas” [February 2006]. Your article was lively and informative, and offered a fine selection of Texas children's literature for all age groups. You presented the books in an appealing way that should make children want to read them and their parents want to buy them.

I subscribe to several national magazines, but when the mail comes, I always try to be first to grab *Texas Co-op Power* before somebody else gets it. I love your articles about Texas history, and the recipes have played havoc with my diet.

Thanks for putting in a plug for Texas writers!

MARTHA DEERINGER
McLennan County Electric Cooperative

S A F E L I V I N G

Be a Good Egg This Easter

Is the Easter Bunny planning to visit your house this month? The American Egg Board advises that you follow a few food safety rules when you decorate hard-cooked eggs.

Decide whether or not you want to eat the decorated eggs later. If you won't be eating the eggs, you can use any decorating materials you want and display the eggs anywhere for as

long as you like. If you do want to eat the eggs, follow these rules:

- Wash your hands between all the steps of cooking, cooling, dyeing and decorating.
- Be sure that all the decorating materials you use are food-safe.
- Keep the eggs refrigerated as much as possible. Return them to the refrigerator whenever you're

not working with them.

- Hide the decorated eggs where they won't come into contact with animals or lawn chemicals.
- Throw out any eggs that have cracked or have been at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Eat uncracked, refrigerated, hard-cooked eggs within a week of cooking them.



Romancing the Road:
TEXANS AND



BY CAROL MOCZYGEMBA
PHOTOS BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK

THEIR

RVs



summer night in 1958, headed west along U.S.

Highway 90, the warm wind blowing through the backseat of my family's 1955 Plymouth sedan, I looked up through the rear window at the stars. The rhythmic sound of tires whirring against blacktop, the breathing of my three sleeping brothers, the low voices of my parents talking about adult things, the twinkling sky and the steady motion of the car enchanted my 10-year-old imagination. We were on the road, going home. I was adrift in deep contentment.

My ever-resourceful father, anticipating the headache of driving all the way from Hinesville, Georgia, to San Antonio, Texas, with four young and rambunctious children in a confined

space, had transformed our little car into a makeshift RV (recreational vehicle). A piece of plywood extended the width and breadth of the backseat. It was covered with quilts. We had a playroom by day and a bed by night.

I can just imagine it on a showroom floor: "Two-door Plymouth Belvedere. Sleeps four. One-year limited edition in salamander pink."

By 2006 standards, our homemade RV was more than crude. The kitchen consisted of a cardboard box with sandwiches and bags of snacks. The bathroom ... well, we stopped frequently at gas stations.

My parents eventually joined the ranks of America's real RV enthusiasts, a way of life they enjoyed for more than 20 years. Which brings me to

this story about the ever-growing numbers of Americans, young and not so young, who drive the highways, homes attached, gathering in little villages of like-minded travelers.

U.S. ownership of recreational vehicles has reached record levels, and even escalating gas prices aren't putting a dent in the \$14-billion-a-year industry. It's estimated that one in 10 vehicle-owning Americans is also an RV owner. Across the country, some

PAGE 7: Rick and Marcia Sundberg and their daughter, Kristin, with Gizmo the dog, enjoy their RV trips to Texas parks. **THIS PAGE:** Sunset at Jim Hogg Park on Lake Georgetown. With 113 camping sites, Jim Hogg Park is a popular destination for RV travelers from throughout Texas as well as the rest of the country. The Army Corps of Engineers built and maintains the park.

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BELOW: Dominoes al fresco in Jim Hogg Park. From left to right: Dan Lay, Mike Watson, Tracy Taylor, Deloris Lay. BOTTOM: Sam and Linda Scott travel with their pet rabbit, Rex Tootsie.



16,000 public and private campgrounds offer facilities from the basics to resort-style amenities. On average, overnight camping fees range between \$9 and \$20. Not even the Bates Motel will give you a room that cheap.

RV travel has long been a post-retirement phenomenon in this country, with retirees comprising the largest segment of full-time vagabonds. Among them are the “snowbirds,” whose seasonal migrations from the North and Midwest to the sunny climes of the southern United States have long been documented (see our December 2005 issue).

Increasingly, RV travel is becoming a multi-generational pursuit. A 2005 University of Michigan study discovered that today’s typical RV owner is 49 years old and married. More RVs are owned by those 35 to 54 than any other age group, but during the past four years, those 35 and younger posted the largest gains in RV purchases.

George Haist is a sales representative for one RV manufacturer whose RVs are parked inside the Austin Convention Center for the Texas Towable RV 2006

RV PEOPLE ARE BEAUTIFUL ... THEY'RE VERY FRIENDLY; THEY'LL COME UP AND TALK AND VISIT.

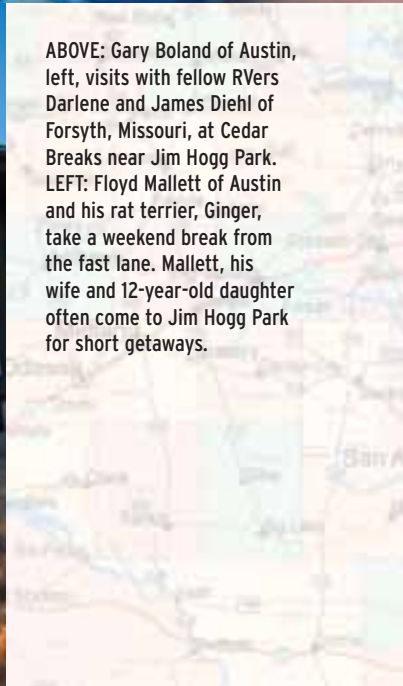
Extravaganza. He has a theory about all the young buyers he’s been working with over the past several years.

“It was 9-11,” he says, referring to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. “People started focusing on family togetherness. They began to realize that tomorrow’s not guaranteed.” Retired folks, he said, were ahead of the curve on that one.

Young families without the time or resources of the retired RVers enjoy weekend trips closer to home. Floyd Mallett is the father of a 12-year-old. He, his wife and daughter make frequent trips from their home in Austin to Jim Hogg Park, a 178-acre Army Corps of Engineers park and camping



ABOVE: Gary Boland of Austin, left, visits with fellow RVers Darlene and James Diehl of Forsyth, Missouri, at Cedar Breaks near Jim Hogg Park. LEFT: Floyd Mallett of Austin and his rat terrier, Ginger, take a weekend break from the fast lane. Mallett, his wife and 12-year-old daughter often come to Jim Hogg Park for short getaways.





THE SHIP THAT LAUNCHED A THOUSAND RVs



Americans' romance with the road precedes actual roads. The pioneers who moved families and belongings across the country in covered wagons forged their own highways and set the cultural precedent for a mobile nation.

Itinerant peddlers, horse traders, musicians, fortune tellers and snake-oil salesmen made their livelihoods along the rural roads of early 19th century America.

Ironically, it was the sinking of a ship that historians say was the genesis for auto travel that included the trappings of home. Until 1915, wealthy Americans considered a tour of Europe a necessary venue for the well traveled. But the German torpedo attack on a British luxury liner, the *Lusitania*, made overseas travel seem too dangerous. Travelers' focus turned homeward.

When soldiers returned from World War I, they faced a national housing shortage and turned to trailers for shelter. Homes on wheels had another advantage, which quickly became a popular truism: "A rolling house gathers no mortgage."

In the 1920s, half of all vehicles on the road were equipped with some kind of sleeping and cooking capabilities. The establishment of the National Park Service in 1916 and the opening of millions of acres of land in exotic places such as Yosemite and Yellowstone provided desirable destinations. In 1922, *The New York Times* estimated that more than 1 million auto campers were traversing the nation's roads carrying pots, pans, pillows and other comforts of home.

The precursor to today's RV campsites were municipal "wagon yards," areas set aside and equipped with lean-tos, shelters, outhouses and firepits for farmers traveling from the outlying countryside to do business in town. As Model As replaced horses, the wagon yards gave way to auto campgrounds.

In 1924, campers were sporting luxuries including canvas bathtubs, two-seater outhouses such as the Imperial Toilet Tent, and massive radios with kites that served as antennas. RV historian David Woodworth says: "The things that drive the RV industry today are the same as in the '20s. Behind the wheel of their own vehicle, people didn't have to deal with inflexible train schedules or rude porters—they could go where they wanted."

— Historical information courtesy Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont

facility about 50 miles away. "My daughter can ride her bike here and be safe. There are always other kids around she can play with," Mallet says.

Jim Hogg Park, like all Corps of Engineers parks (<http://corpsslakes.usace.army.mil/visitors/visitors.cfm>), is on a man-made lake, offering fishing, water sports, hiking trails, bird watching and beautiful scenery. On a Friday afternoon in January, the remaining vacant campsites are filling up. Full-timers like Doris and John Gupton, who winter at Jim Hogg Park, sit back in their lawn chairs under the wooden pavilion adjacent to their travel trailer and take stock of the slow-moving parade of motor homes, tag-alongs and fifth wheels. (See page 16 for RV types.) They have license plates from Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana. Others come with kids' bikes and fishing poles in the pickup bed for a family weekend getaway.

John Gupton is affectionately known as the "mayor" of Jim Hogg. He and his wife own a home only 20 miles from the park, but prefer to spend January through April at Campsite 73. Returning Midwesterners who come for the winter or stop for a few days on their way to South Texas all know John and Doris.

Carol and Harold Tooker, farmers from Merrill, Iowa, met the Guptons six years ago. They stay in touch year-round. When the Tookers come back to Jim Hogg Park, the couples pick up where they left off. Carol and Harold, like several other regulars, have their own mugs hanging on wooden pegs in the Gupton's outdoor makeshift dining room.

Russell and Delores Brownell, Campsite 72, started their annual trip to Baffin Bay from Rhinelander, Wisconsin, just before Christmas. They've been wintering at the same place for 10 years. "We like to take our time getting here," says Delores. "Last year we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary on the road. I don't remember where." The Brownells have traveled in their RV to every state park along the Gulf of Mexico, visiting fellow RVers along the way.

Are they deterred by high gasoline prices? Russell says no. Delores explains that Russell has survived two

Continued on page 17

TOP: At age 12, B.W. Northcott Jr. (father of Editor Kaye Northcott) goes car camping in 1928.

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A FEW RV RESOURCES

Books

RV Retirement: How to Travel Part-Time or Full-Time in a Recreational Vehicle

By Jane Kenny, Roundabout Publications, 2006.

Recounts the experience of the author and her husband who adopted the RV lifestyle as retirees. A handy reference, with information on RV terms, maintenance tips, trip planning, finding medical care on the road, and many other facets of RVing, whether for full-timers or vacationers.

The RVer's Bible: Everything You Need to Know About Choosing, Using, & Enjoying Your RV

By Kim and Sunny Baker, Desktop Direct Marketing, McGraw, 1995.

Advice for choosing the best RV and understanding its mechanics. Safety tips sprinkled throughout, along with occasional illustrations and checklists, loading pointers, and discussions of pets and crossing borders. Includes a section on RV equipment for the physically challenged.

Websites

National Parks Pass

www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm

A \$50 annual pass providing admission to any national park charging an entrance fee. More than 80 percent of proceeds from the sales of National Parks Passes go directly into supporting national parks projects.

National Parks Golden Eagle

www.nps.gov/fees_passes.htm

For an additional \$15, a Golden Eagle sticker can be affixed to the National Park Pass. It

allows access to sites managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Golden Age Passport

<https://buy.nationalparks.org/golden.asp#age>

For citizens or permanent residents of the United States ages 62 or older. This lifetime pass allows the same access as the Golden Eagle, and also provides a 50 percent discount on federal use fees charged for facilities and services such as camping, swimming, parking, boat launching and tours. Must be obtained in person at a federal area (national park, historic site, wildlife refuge, etc.) where an entrance fee is charged. One-time \$10 processing charge.

Golden Access Passport

<https://buy.nationalparks.org/golden.asp#age>

This lifetime pass is for citizens or permanent residents of the United States who are blind or permanently disabled. It offers the same features as the Golden Age Passport and must also be obtained in person.

Texas State Park Pass

www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/parkinfo/passes/parkpass/

The Texas Parks Pass is a \$60 annual pass that allows unlimited visits to more than 115 state parks and state historic sites without paying the daily entrance fee. Members receive discounts on camping, lodging, park store merchandise and recreational equipment rentals, and are eligible for special promotions. Members also receive 12 free issues of *Texas Parks & Wildlife* magazine.

The pass is available at most state parks and historic sites, and through the Customer Service Center, (512) 389-8900.

Texas Parklands Passport (also known as the Bluebonnet Pass) www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/parkinfo/passes/#blue

Persons 65 years of age and older, veterans who meet specific eligibility requirements, and permanently disabled individuals are entitled to 50 percent reduced entry fees at state parks and historical sites. Persons who turned 65 years of age before September 1, 1995, are entitled to waived entry fees at state parks where entrance fees are collected. To receive a Texas Parklands Passport, you must apply and provide proof of eligibility at any Texas State Park site.

Recreation Vehicle Industry Association www.rvia.org

Comprehensive consumer information about buying, renting and enjoying an RV. Descriptions of the range of options, from \$9,000 pop-ups to \$400,000-plus motor coaches.

Good Sam Club www.goodsamclub.com

The world's largest RV owners' association. Membership discounts, travel guides, trip planning, member events and insurance.

RVing Women www.rvingwomen.org

Support, information and networking for female RVers. Directory of members in United States, Canada and Mexico available.

TOP: Day is done. Friends drop by for an evening cup of decaf and conversation with John and Doris Gupton at Jim Hogg Park near Georgetown.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RVs

The term "RV" covers a lot of territory, as do the vehicles that can be motorized or towable. Below are the major categories.

Towable RVs

Designed to be towed by family car, van or pickup truck. Can be unhitched and left at the campsite while you explore in your auto.



Conventional Travel Trailer

Travel Trailers

- Wide range of floor plans and sizes
- Affordable homelike amenities
- Sleep up to 10
- Typically \$8,000 to \$65,000 new



Fifth-Wheel Travel Trailers

- Spacious two-level floor plans
- Towed with a pickup truck
- Sleep up to six
- Typically \$13,000 to \$100,000 new



Travel Trailers with Expandable Ends

- Ends pull out for roomy sleeping
- Lightweight towing
- Sleep up to eight
- Typically \$4,000 to \$13,000 new



Folding Camping Trailers

- Fold for lightweight towing
- Fresh-air experience with RV comfort
- Sleep up to eight
- Typically \$4,000 to \$13,000 new



Truck Campers

- Mount on pickup bed or chassis
- Go wherever your truck can go
- Sleep up to six
- Typically \$4,000 to \$26,000 new

Motorized RVs

Living quarters are accessible from the driver's area in one convenient unit.



Type A Motorhomes

Motorhomes

- Generally roomiest of all RVs
- Luxurious amenities
- Sleep up to six
- Typically \$58,000 to \$400,000 new



Type B Motorhomes

- Commonly called van campers
- Drive like the family van
- Sleep up to four
- Typically \$41,000 to \$74,000 new



Type C Motorhomes

- Similar amenities to Type As
- Optional sleeping space over the cab
- Sleep up to eight
- Typically \$48,000 to \$140,000 new



Sport Utility RVs

- Available motorized and towable (as travel trailers or fifth-wheels).
- Built-in "garage" for hauling cycles, ATVs and other sports equipment
- Sleep up to eight
- Typically \$21,000 to \$58,000 new

Conversion Vehicles



Van, Pickup Truck and Sport-Utility Conversions

Conversion vehicles are manufactured by an auto maker, then modified for added comfort and recreational use by a company specializing in customized vehicles. These changes may include windows, carpeting, paneling, seats, sofas and accessories. Ideal as RV tow vehicles, conversion vehicles are sold by auto dealers rather than by RV dealers. Typically \$27,500 to \$60,000 new.

Continued from page 12

heart surgeries, and “after something that’s a matter of life or death, other things are not as important. It’s amazing what you can live without.”

On an unusually warm December afternoon at Palmetto State Park near Gonzales, Nikki Vincent, 31, relaxes in her lawn chair, munching popcorn and reading a magazine. She’s 60 miles from home, but wants for nothing. She’s within 10 feet of bed, bath and kitchen. Her young niece and nephew are inside watching a favorite video before going for a hike. A wooden sign hangs on the nearby oak tree: Camp Vincent. Red, white and blue rope lights are strung around her RV and looped through tree branches. Wind chimes jingle in the breeze.

Vincent, a high school athletic trainer, bought a 28-foot motor home with her parents five years ago. On weekends, it provides a convenient retreat from the demands of a stressful job, city traffic and household chores. In the summer, it becomes part of a longstanding Vincent family tradition—two weeks at a state park with parents, siblings, children and in-laws. “It’s fun without spending a lot of money,” says Vincent. “You’re surrounded by nature, you can take long, quiet walks, go floating on the river, hiking, riding bikes, dancing, or just enjoy the scenery.”

Then there’s the legendary good nature of the RV crowd. “RV people are beautiful,” Vincent says. “They’re very friendly; they’ll come up and talk and visit. We’ve been seeing some of the same families every year.”

That affection is consistently echoed by RVers. “You won’t find a nicer bunch of people anywhere,” says my dad, who’s met RVers in each of the lower 48, plus Alaska and Canada. “In all the years we traveled, we only met one sourpuss. And I don’t even remember who it was.”

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

PREVIOUS PAGE, LEFT: 15-month-old Aidan Miksch of Schulenberg at the RV Extravaganza Expo in Austin. Aidan’s grandmother is Johnelle Minzenmeyer-Miksch of Fayette Electric Cooperative. RIGHT: “Toy Haulers” double as living space and garage for motorcycles, 4-wheelers and bicycles.

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TAME YOUR TREES

Tree Trimming

We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and safety concerns.

Here are some rules to follow:

- If a tree or a large branch is touching or falls on an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.
- Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call your electric co-op for assistance and guidance.
- Don't allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- When planting a tree, plan ahead. A tiny tree may eventually grow large enough to damage power lines and possibly interrupt power during storms. At maturity, your trees should not be within 10 feet of a power line.
- Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.



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A Man With a Conscience

BY JEFF HAMILTON, AS TOLD TO LENOIR HUNT

As both a U.S. senator and governor of the new state of Texas, Sam Houston was fiercely opposed to the Southern secessionist movement; he freed his own slaves in 1862. He was deposed from the governorship for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy. Jeff Hamilton, a former slave and personal valet to Sam Houston, provided this first-person account of those difficult days.

At last, the day came upon which Mr. Lincoln was elected our president.

For some months I had noticed that my master [Sam Houston] was aging fast. At times he would walk with a crutch, and used his cane all the time now. But his eyes were clear, and his mind as keen and sharp as ever. He was almost 68 early in 1860. His old wounds, which I had dressed hundreds of times, were painning him more than usual, especially during the cold, damp winter months. ...

It was on January 28 that the State Convention of Secession met at Austin in the capitol building. They drew up an ordinance of secession without wasting any time, and set February 1 as the date for the delegates to vote on it. Just before twelve o'clock noon that day, the convention decided to ask the General [Houston] to appear before it.

They knew that nearly every one of the delegates was for secession and that the General couldn't change a single vote at that late date. But they wanted to show him a courtesy on account of his long fight for Texas independence, and annexation and all he had done for the State.

I followed my master and the committee up the stairs, but they hurried into the House of Representatives, and someone slammed the door in my face. But I had made up my mind nothing would keep me from the room. I ran up the stairway that opened into the balcony, and managed to get in without anyone seeing me. I

crawled behind one of the posts where I could see and hear everything but where I could not be seen from the floor of the house. ...

The General was given the seat of honor beside Judge Oran M. Roberts ... who was then chief justice of the Supreme Court.

My master rose to speak. You could have heard a pin drop. I can remember only a few of the things he said, but I best remember how he said them and how he acted. He began by saying:

"All of you know that I am



GIL ADAMS

opposed to secession, and all of you know my convictions on the subject. I have taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and its flag and the Constitution of Texas and its flag. I almost died fighting for that flag, and I almost died fighting for the Texas flag. I have served Texas under both of those flags for a long time. Gentlemen, you cannot forget those two flags—you cannot withdraw from the Union.

"... If you go to war, it will take the flower of the country—the young men ... "

My master's voice choked with emotion, and tears—the biggest tears

I ever saw in my life—rolled down his cheeks.

There was a deep silence, when Colonel Rogers rose and asked the General: "Well, Sam, do you believe that your wife and daughters ought to scrub their clothes at a wash-tub and cook meals in pots over a hot fire? Before I would suffer my wife and daughter to cook and scrub, I'll wade in blood up to my neck!"

My master answered that washing and scrubbing were honorable and that no white woman had ever died from honorable work.

Then, Mr. Montgomery got up and raised a secession flag over the General's head, and asked him if he would rather give up the governor's office or join the secession plan.

Houston answered that he would relinquish his office.

The convention then voted to adopt the Ordinance of Secession, which carried by a vote of 174 to 7 votes. The ordinance was then submitted to a vote of the people ... and the vote was 46,129 for secession to 14,697 against secession. March 5 was the day fixed for Texas to join the Confederate nation, and March 16 the time for state officials to take the oath of office.

I felt like the end of the world had come, but my spirits began to revive when I saw the grand way my master was hiding the grief I knew he must be suffering every time he thought about his own Texas leaving the Union and his fear that the Union would be wrecked. I was old enough now to have a pretty good idea of what was causing the war, which everybody knew would start any time. I could also have some idea of the terrible suffering that would come with it.

This account is in *My Master: The Inside Story of Sam Houston and His Times* (1992), published by State House Press, www.mcwhiney.org/press/press.html.

INSULATION LOWERS ENERGY BILL

Common sense tells you that closing windows and doors keeps your air-conditioned air from leaking out of the house, but there's a bigger passageway to the outdoors right above you—your attic.

While the attic might not be the first place you think of when you crank up the A/C this summer, a properly insulated attic can save money on your cooling bill and help ensure a consistent temperature throughout the house.

Begin by checking to see how much insulation your house already has. Check the insulation's R-value, which determines how well it holds back heat. Look for attic insulation with an R-value between R-38 and R-44, or visit the Department of Energy's website to find the recommended insulation for your area (www.ornl.gov/~roofs/Zip/ZipHome.html).

Consider calling a certified contractor to install insulation properly.

If you're a do-it-yourselfer, follow the directions for proper safety and ventilation.

Consider these tips when installing insulation:

- Properly seal ceiling edges and cracks.

- Install the insulation so it is continuous and even.

- Look for the Energy Star® label when purchasing insulation. The Energy Star designation means the product has passed rigorous government standards for energy efficiency.

FORM	METHOD OF INSTALLATION	WHERE APPLICABLE	ADVANTAGES
Blankets: Batts or Rolls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiberglass • Rock wool 	Fitted between studs, joists and beams	All unfinished walls, floors and ceilings	Do-it-yourself Suited for standard stud and joist spacing, which is relatively free from obstructions
Loose-Fill (blown-in or spray-applied) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rock wool • Fiberglass • Cellulose • Polyurethane foam 	Blown into place or spray-applied by special equipment	Enclosed existing wall cavities or open new wall cavities Unfinished attic floors and hard-to-reach places	Commonly used insulation for retrofits (adding insulation to existing finished areas) Good for irregularly shaped areas and around obstacles
Reflective Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foil-faced paper • Foil-faced polyethylene bubbles • Foil-faced plastic film • Foil-faced cardboard 	Foils, films or papers fitted between wood frame studs, joists and beams	Unfinished ceilings, walls and floors	Do-it-yourself All suitable for framing at standard spacing; bubble-form suitable if framing is irregular Effectiveness depends on spacing and heat flow direction

SHUTTING TV OFF MAKES TIME FOR LEARNING

When your children run home from school today and plop down in front of the TV, think twice about letting them. Turning off the TV could help your child find more productive activities—and save you money on your electric bill.

April 24-30 is TV Turnoff Week; consider observing it! Children spend more hours watching TV than they do in school every year, according to the TV Turnoff Network, and a new study indicates watching television could increase your child's chance of becoming a bully.

So turn off the TV and take your kids to the public library to help

them find books that match their TV show interests. Or encourage a neighborhood TV Turnoff Day and organize play groups for all of the children on your street.

Get the most out of your TV-free time. Appliances such as TVs and VCRs still use electricity while they're turned off to display time or respond to remote controls, so unplug your TV and don't even think about taping your favorite show. When you realize how much more free time you have without the TV—the average American watches about four hours a day—you won't even care that you missed it.



**HAPPY EASTER
FROM YOUR
LOCAL ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE**

A TRIBUTE TO TOASTERS

BY JAMES DULLEY

Dear James: My husband claims it is better to use the oven broiler than a smaller toaster oven to toast bread and bagels and to prepare small dishes. I think he is wrong and I want to get an inexpensive small toaster oven. Who is correct?

—Diane L.

Dear Diane: Chalk up one for the lady of the house. The large oven in a range is designed for baking, roasting or broiling large food items or casseroles. Generally, for efficiency and time considerations, use a microwave oven whenever possible, followed by a countertop appliance, and then the large range oven as the final option.

There are many reasons it is better to use a toaster oven, or other small countertop appliances, than to use the large oven/broiler in your range. For toasting slices of bread, bagels, waffles, etc., using a pop-up standard toaster is even better, more efficient and faster than using a toaster oven. Some of the new toasters even have automatic defrost and toast cycles in one operation.

Using a toaster or toaster oven saves money on your monthly utility bills. The electric heating elements in your range oven can use more than 3,500 watts of electricity. The heating elements in a typical toaster use only about 900 watts, and the ones in a toaster oven use from 1,350 to 1,500 watts. Also, it takes much less time to preheat a small toaster oven, if you are going to bake or roast something, so the elements are on for a shorter period of time.

Each kilowatt-hour of electricity an oven uses becomes 3,416 Btu of heat inside your home.

During the summer, your air conditioner has to run longer to remove extra heat created

by the oven broiler so it is double extra expense. During the winter, this helps heat your home, but it is a much less efficient heat source than a heat pump or furnace.

I would recommend you purchase both a toaster and a toaster oven. You should be able to find simple toasters for as little as \$15 at discount stores. A regular toaster will toast bread or bagels faster than a toaster oven and is the best choice when toasting just one or two slices. To toast four or six slices, using a toaster oven makes more sense.

If your budget is not limited, consider purchasing a toaster with digital controls instead of knobs. This type of control provides more accuracy and consistency in the darkness of the toast. Since you mentioned bagels, select a model with a “bagel” setting. On this setting, it toasts the bagel on only one side as opposed to bread on both sides. If the thickness of the slices of bread varies, such as with homemade bread, look for a model with self-centering slots.

When selecting a toaster oven, consider a more expensive one with digital controls. As with toasters, these provide more precise heating and temperature control. The electronic control readouts are also easier to see when your eyes may not focus as well in the morning. Before making a purchase, measure the size of

a slice of bread you typically toast. This will help you determine if the toaster oven will accommodate four or six slices at a time. The number of slices indicated on the packaging is not necessarily accurate for all loaf sizes.

A good-quality toaster oven can be used for most of your smaller baking and roasting needs. A model that includes a convection fan feature will circulate the heated air throughout the oven to cook items faster. These models cost more, so if saving time is not a major issue for you, you may prefer a standard model. Toaster ovens labeled as “infrared heating” will toast bread faster. If you frequently broil hamburgers or other fatty meats, look for an easy-to-clean nonstick or porcelain interior surface.

James Dulley is a nationally syndicated engineering consultant based in Cincinnati. Send inquiries to James Dulley, Texas Co-op Power, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.



SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Lightning

Lightning strikes kill more Americans than tornadoes or hurricanes. Don't take chances with this deadly force of nature.


Lightning Safety Rules:

- Move to low ground.
- Avoid open fields.
- Do not seek shelter under a tree. Trees are easy targets for lightning.
- At the beach, or in a swimming pool, get out of the water immediately.
- Go inside a building and stay away from windows and doors.
- Stay away from metal objects.
- Avoid electric appliances and metal plumbing.
- Get off the phone.
- Do not touch metal objects, such as golf clubs or bicycles.
- Inside a car is relatively safe, but don't touch interior metal.
- If your hair stands on end, you may be a target. Crouch low on the balls of your feet and try not to touch the ground with your knees or hands.

Stay aware and play it safe during thunderstorms. Don't be a lightning rod.



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

University Bound

Marvin and D-Wayne—college material?

Who'da thunk it!

We're not sure they understand what they are getting into. There's a big difference between being a professor and being a specimen. A professor teaches. A specimen is the subject of experiments.

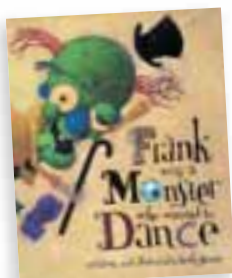
Perhaps Dr. Voltage has a subscription to *Texas Co-op Power* and has kept up with Marvin and D-Wayne's various electrical mishaps. If so, he knows they have survived dozens of electric jolts and other avoidable accidents. Most folks as careless as our duo would be pushing up daisies by now.

In just two years, these reckless fellows have dropped an electric toaster into their wading pool, been hit by lightning, stuck a screwdriver into an electric outlet, run over the electric cord of their lawnmower, tried to balance on an overhead electric wire, snipped off the ground prong of a plug, and overloaded indoor and outdoor extension cords. In addition to being scalded in a homemade hot tub, they have set their pajamas on fire by standing too close to an electric heater, and burned down a Christmas tree.

We sincerely doubt that Dr. Voltage and the University of Electrical Technology are recruiting Marvin and D-Wayne for their brains. Dr. Voltage and his associates will be devising new trials and tribulations for our boys. We wish them all the best. There's nobody better at teaching by bad example.

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.





A LANDLOCKED MEMORI

BY LARRY TRITTEN • PHOTOS BY RICK PATRICK

Texas is as full of surprises as a huge piñata, and one of those surprises is Fredericksburg, a little Hill Country town settled by German immigrants in 1846. Its heritage is so well-preserved that visitors might think they are in a small Bavarian town.

A surprise within a surprise is Fredericksburg's National Museum of the Pacific War, an unlikely museum in an unlikely place. Most museums with a military theme are at battlefield sites or in big cities, but the National Museum of the Pacific War is in Fredericksburg because that's where Chester Nimitz was born and raised. The museum was originally dedicated in 1983 to tell the story of Nimitz, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy who went on to become a Five-Star Fleet Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific theatre during World War II.

The distinctive architecture of the museum's main building on Fredericksburg's Main Street recreates the original steamboat-shaped hotel, once a stagecoach stop, built by Nimitz's grandfather. Exhibits tell the story of

the Nimitz family in early Fredericksburg and narrate the life of Chester Nimitz, from his birth in 1885 to his death in 1966.

Although the original focus of the museum was on Nimitz, the growing public interest in World War II has resulted in a series of additions. Today the museum encompasses a 9-acre Texas historical park and includes the George Bush Gallery, the History Walk of the Pacific War, the Plaza of the Presidents, the Surface Warfare Plaza, the Veterans Walk of Honor, the Memorial and Victory Walls, the Japanese Peace Garden, and the Center for Pacific War Studies. There is 24,000 feet of indoor exhibit space; outdoors, authentic period tanks, aircraft and artillery pieces are displayed.

Among the visitors to the museum are silver-haired men whose comments identify them as veterans of the battles described in the exhibits. They are, in a very real sense, an extension of the exhibits as they recall their experiences on islands with odd-sounding names. They remember young friends who died in those bat-

ties more than six decades ago. These veterans charge the atmosphere of this museum with a strong emotional presence—the survivors of epic battles now in their twilight years.

The principal building of the museum is the George Bush Gallery, honoring former President George Bush, who served as a Navy pilot in the Pacific War and was shot down and rescued after bombing the island of Chichi Jima. The Bush Gallery gives an overview of the war, from Pearl Harbor to the signing of the peace treaty on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri. There are more than 5,000 artifacts, ranging from such odd memorabilia as beer passes from Mog Mog Island and a gunsight from the U.S.S. Ward which fired the first shot at Pearl Harbor, to the flight helmet of Saburo Sakai, Japan's leading ace pilot, and a 15-foot model of the aircraft carrier Nimitz (CV-68).

One exhibit shows a B-25 light bomber (one of the few still available for display) aboard the aircraft carrier Hornet moments before taking off to

TOP: Boys are in awe of this two-man submarine from World War II.



AL TO THE PACIFIC WAR

GOD GRANT ME THE COURAGE NOT TO GIVE UP WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT EVEN THOUGH I THINK IT IS HOPELESS. —ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ

bomb Tokyo in 1942, with background murals recreating the other planes involved in the raid and ships in the convoy. Another exhibit depicts a scene from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal with a Navy Wildcat fighter as the focal point. (The aircraft was recovered from the bottom of Lake Michigan after nearly 60 years in the water.) Lighting, music, sound effects and animatronic figures create a graphic experience.

A recent 3-acre addition, the Pacific Combat Zone, is one and a half blocks from the George Bush Gallery. Here visitors view a World War II Avenger torpedo bomber on the hangar deck of an aircraft carrier, watch a vintage wartime Movietone news clip, then visit the South Pacific PT boat base as one of the boats gets ready to embark on a night mission. You can see an island invasion from both the U.S. and Japanese points of view and visit a hospital Quonset hut to learn about treatment of casualties.

The History Walk of the Pacific is devoted to staging realistic battles. Each of these programs is highlighted

by a recreated small arms assault on a simulated enemy bunker.

The pain and sadness of war are dramatized by the museum's exhibits, but an unexpected and upbeat counterpoint to these is the Japanese Garden of Peace, a gift from the people of Japan. More than just a striking contrast with the battle exhibits, the Garden of Peace symbolizes the terrible irony of war from a historical perspective, something this writer knows well: A cousin of mine was killed on one of those Pacific islands, Tarawa, at the age of 17. As I write this, his posthumous Purple Heart certificate is on a table behind me. The medal was given in exchange for his life fighting the Japanese; over the years I've watched newsreels and Hollywood movie recreations of Tarawa countless times on a Sony TV set (made in Japan!). And I, myself, was once a young soldier stationed on an island where tens of thousands died during the war, and where I came to befriend many Japanese.

The Center for Pacific War Studies

contains more than 100,000 Pacific war photos, an extensive collection of private papers, official documents and manuscripts, and a research library of more than 3,000 volumes. With the current interest in World War II, donations of new items are frequent and expansion plans for the museum project that the center will occupy the entire second floor of the facility.

For anyone interested in World War II, the museum's bookstore/gift shop has a mother lode of fascinating material—not just books, but model airplanes and ships, CDs and tapes, games, sculptures and signed limited-edition posters. The Admiral Nimitz Foundation seeks to raise \$14 million to expand the museum, which is already a striking testament to the battles fought on the islands and in the jungles of the Pacific theatre.

For more information on the National Museum of the Pacific War, go to www.nimitz-museum.org.

Central Texas Electric Cooperative is based in Fredericksburg.

Larry Tritten, a travel writer based in San Francisco, loves his frequent forays into Texas.

TOP LEFT: The National Museum of the Pacific War began as a salute to Admiral Chester Nimitz and his Fredericksburg family. The Nimitz Museum portion resembles the steamboat-shaped hotel built by the Nimitz family. The modern George Bush Gallery is located behind the museum. TOP RIGHT: Visitors can get up close and personal with some of the exhibits, such as this 5-inch dual-purpose naval gun, which was mounted on many different types of ships during World War II.

Cast Iron: Quality and Elegance



Once again, it turns out that your mother was right. You should always have quarters in your pocket-book. (What if your cell phone battery dies?) You should turn off the lights when you leave the room. (It's a good way to save electricity!) And that old cast iron skillet really is the best pan. (There are new concerns about the chemicals in nonstick cookware.)

That old workhorse, cast iron, is seeing a resurgence these days. It's not only the eternal standard for cornbread, but also is becoming a haute cuisine favorite. Chef David Bull of the legendary Driskill Hotel in Austin used a cast iron skillet to create a recipe for peach cobbler that pairs the sweetness of peaches and caramel with the earthiness of cornmeal. You'll find this and other tempting recipes in the new cookbook, *The Driskill Hotel*, by Bull and Turk Pipkin (www.driskillhotel.com, (512) 391-7133).

Peach Cobbler With Cornmeal Streusel and Vanilla Ice Cream

Peach Cobbler Filling

7 medium fresh peaches, cut into wedges
1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1 tablespoon cinnamon, ground

Peel and cut up peaches. Place into a bowl. Add sugar, cornstarch and cinnamon to peaches and toss together. Set aside.

Cornmeal Streusel Topping

2 cups + 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1³/₄ cups cornmeal
1¹/₄ cups sugar
2¹/₂ tablespoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/3 cup butter, unsalted
1³/₄ cups heavy cream
8 cups Peach Cobbler Filling

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixer with paddle attachment, combine the all-purpose flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda. While the mixer is on low speed, slowly add the butter. Mix until it

resembles a coarse meal. Add the cream slowly on low speed until well combined. Place the peach cobbler filling into a greased cast iron skillet. Crumble dough on top of peach filling. Bake for about 20 minutes or until golden brown. Reserve hot for assembly.

Caramel Sauce

1¹/₄ cup sugar
1 tablespoon water
1-2 tablespoons heavy cream

Combine water and sugar in a saucepan. Heat on high until sugar begins to caramelize and turn an amber color. Carefully pour heavy cream into saucepan and stir. Remove from heat; reserve warm for assembly.

Vanilla Ice Cream

Store-bought vanilla ice cream will be fine for this recipe, but for the adventurous chef:

4 cups heavy cream
1¹/₃ cups sugar
12 egg yolks
2 vanilla beans
2 cups milk

Prepare an ice water bath and set aside. Whisk the yolks and the milk together and set aside. In a pot, bring the heavy cream, sugar and vanilla beans to a boil. Slowly add the heavy cream mixture to the egg mixture while you whisk it. When combined, place back into pot over low heat and stir constantly until it thickens slightly. Quickly place in ice water bath and stir slowly until cool. Chill for about 2 to 3 hours. Turn in an ice cream machine until firm but soft. Ice cream will continue to set in the freezer; freeze for about 2 hours before serving.

For the assembly:

Serve the peach cobbler in the cast iron skillet hot. Using a spoon or serving utensil, scoop the peach cobbler out of the cast iron skillet and place onto a plate. Top with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and drizzle with caramel sauce. Serves 8.

Getting good cast iron recipes from our readers was like shooting fish in a barrel! Texans love cooking with cast iron skillets and Dutch ovens. In fact, I've decided to save all the Dutch oven recipes for a future contest because camp cooking is so different from kitchen cooking. All the winning recipes below are for cast iron skillets.

Before announcing this month's winner, I want to share a bit of humor with you from the general manager of Lighthouse Electric Cooperative in Floydada, **BILL HARBIN**. This is his "easy" recipe for gravy, which captures the fickle nature of that creamy accompaniment:

Uncle Bill's Cowboy Gravy

Mess of quail

Lard or vegetable oil

Flour

Salt

Pepper

Milk

Fry up mess of quail (breaded in flour) in an experienced black iron skillet in lard or oil. Pour off some of the oil but leave just enough with the crumbles from the quail. Put some flour in your real hot skillet. Put in some salt and pepper and stir until it is scorched a little bit. By now you should have sort of a paste. If it is too thick, you may want to add a little more of the drippings (you should have kept them), or if it is too thin, maybe add just a little more flour (or maybe not).

Now add milk. If it doesn't go "Shhhhhh!", your skillet was not hot enough. Keep stirring while the milk is boiling. Now this is the

tricky part: The gravy will get thicker as it cooks, but you don't want it to get too thick, but you want it to cook long enough for it to be gravy and not just milk with flour in it. So if it gets too thick too quick, you just add a little milk, but if it doesn't get thick enough, you maybe add a little flour (or maybe not), and you probably want to add some more salt (unless it is already too salty). Take it off the fire at just the right time. It will also get thicker as it cools down. Add more pepper if you want to. It's easy.

Makes about 2 to 40 servings unless it is not fit to eat, in which case you will want to feed it to the dogs, but sometimes they won't eat it either. (Sometimes it's real good!)

This month's recipe contest winner is **GAYNELLE FARQHAR**, a member of Wise Electric Cooperative, for her Ranch-Style Meatloaf. This was a real favorite of the guys!

Ranch-Style Meatloaf

1½ pounds ground beef
 ¾ cup bread crumbs (leftover hot dog or hamburger buns are great for this)
 5 tablespoons ketchup
 3 tablespoons prepared mustard
 3½ tablespoons brown sugar
 1 teaspoon salt
 1½ teaspoons black pepper
 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 2 teaspoons minced fresh garlic (or ¼ teaspoon garlic powder)
 2½ teaspoons onion flakes (or ¾ teaspoon onion powder)
 ⅔ cup chopped celery
 4 tablespoons chopped onion



⅓ cup each chopped red and green bell pepper
 ⅓ cup water

Mix together all ingredients, using your hands, until they are mixed evenly into the meat. Spray a 9- or 10-inch cast iron skillet with canola oil. Pat meat mixture into skillet evenly. Bake at 375 degrees for 45 to 50 minutes, until top is very brown.

If you like a sauce, use your favorite tomato sauce, or for a nice cheese sauce, mix 1 cup dry white wine and 1 can cheese soup. Mix and heat in a saucepan and serve on the side. Serves 6-8.

Serving size: 1 wedge. Per serving: 344 calories, 16 grams protein, 23 grams fat, 17 grams carbohydrates, 605 milligrams sodium, 72 milligrams cholesterol

Traveler's Rest Skillet Apple Pie

1¼ cups sugar
 ¼ cup all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
 ⅛ teaspoon salt
 3 tablespoons butter, melted
 7 cups peeled, cored and thinly sliced apples
 Pastry

Combine first 6 ingredients in large bowl, mixing well. Add apples and toss gently. Roll half of pastry to ⅛-inch thickness on a lightly floured surface; fit into a 10-inch cast iron skillet. Spoon filling evenly into pastry shell. Roll remaining pastry into

JULY RECIPE CONTEST



Some people like it green and mild. Others like it red and hot. Some prefer roasted, others fresh. We want to try them all in July's recipe contest! Send your favorite **Salsa** recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6254 or e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The deadline is April 10. The top winner will receive a copy of the *Texas Co-op Power Cookbook* and a selection of spices from Adams. Others whose recipes are published will also receive spices from Adams.

1/8-inch thickness. Cut into 3/4-inch-wide strips, and arrange in lattice fashion over filling. Seal edges to side of skillet. Bake at 400 degrees for 40 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Serves 8-10.

Pastry

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup shortening
- 1/2 cup cold butter, cut into small pieces
- 6-8 tablespoons cold water

Combine flour and salt; cut in shortening and butter until mixture resembles coarse meal. Sprinkle water evenly over mixture; stir gently with fork until mixture forms a ball. Chill 30 minutes.

Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 424 calories, 4 grams protein, 18 grams fat, 63 grams carbohydrates, 263 milligrams sodium, 34 milligrams cholesterol

LAURA MONTGOMERY
Wise Electric Cooperative

Texas Goulash

- 1 pound ground chuck
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/2 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) petite-diced tomatoes
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon ketchup
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 1/2 teaspoons steak sauce
- 1 cup uncooked elbow macaroni

In 3-quart saucepan, heat 2 cups water on medium heat.

In a deep (3-inch) cast iron skillet, crumble ground chuck. Cook over medium high heat, stirring and breaking up meat, until there is no longer any pink.

Remove meat from skillet and drain fat; set meat aside.

Add olive oil to skillet; heat over medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper and celery. Cook, stirring often, until vegetables are translucent. Add meat to vegetables and pour in hot water and remaining ingredients, except macaroni. Let sauce simmer for 20 to 30 minutes.

While sauce simmers, refill saucepan with water and cook macaroni according to package directions. Drain macaroni and add to meat/sauce mixture and stir. Serve with crusty, homemade bread, French bread or cornbread (cooked in a cast iron skillet, of course). Serves 4-6.

Serving size: 1 bowl. Per serving: 298 calories, 16 grams protein, 18 grams fat, 17 grams carbohydrates, 716 milligrams sodium, 57 milligrams cholesterol

MARILYN O'DONNELL
Wood County Electric Cooperative

TEXAS CO-OP POWER
Holiday Recipe Contest

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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 8, 2006. Send entries to Holiday Recipe 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 Recipe Contest" in the subject line and submit one recipe per e-mail (no attachments). For official rules, visit www.texascoopower.com or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.

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AROUND TEXAS

April

- 1. Citywide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307
- 1. Billy the Kid Day & Classic Car Show, **Hico**, 1-800-361-HICO
- 1. Hogs Hunt 50K/25K Trail Run, **Huntsville**, www.hillcountrytrailrunners.com
- 1. Spring Market Day Arts & Crafts Festival, **Comfort**, (830) 995-3131 or www.comfortchamberofcommerce.com
- 1. Kerr County Wild Game Dinner, **Kerrville**, (830) 257-7611
- 1. Ole Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or www.pearlbluegrass.com
- 1. Bloomin' Fest, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-5172 or www.lampasaschamber.com
- 1. Riverbend Rendevous with Bob Rohm, **Marble Falls**, (830) 693-6632 or www.riverbendfineart.com
- 1. Henderson County Livestock Show, **Athens**, (903) 677-6354
- 1. Home and Garden Show, **Burnet**, (512) 756-6180
- 1. Crawfish Crawl 5K Walk and Crawfish Festival, **Clear Lake**, (281) 488-7676 or www.clearlakearea.com
- 1. Paws on the Bayou, **Jefferson**, (903) 665-2672 or www.jefferson-texas.com

- 1-2. Elgoatrod, **Eldorado**, (325) 853-2434
- 1-2. Montgomery County Fair and Rodeo, **Conroe**, (936) 760-3631 or www.mcfa.org
- 1-2. Winedale Spring Festival and Texas Crafts Exhibition, **Round Top**, (979) 278-3530 or www.winedale.org
- 1-2. Classic Boer Goat Show, **Sonora**, (325) 387-7046 or www.sonoratx-chamber.com
- 1-2. Quilt Show, **Port Lavaca**, (361) 553-6896
- 1-2. Bluebonnet Blues and Fine Arts Festival, **Marble Falls**, (830) 798-1041 or www.bluebonnetblues.com
- 1-2. Dogwood Trails Celebration, **Palestine**, 1-800-659-3484 or www.visitpalestine.com
- 1-2. Brazos Valley Kennel Club Dog Show, **Navasota**, (979) 776-6216
- 1-2. Kingsland House of Arts and Crafts Spring Show, **Kingsland**, (325) 388-6159 or www.kingslandcrafts.com
- 3-23. Wildseed Farms Wildflower Celebration, **Fredericksburg**, 1-800-848-0078 or www.wildseedfarms.com
- 6-15. Golden Triangle Fair, **Beaumont**, (409) 838-3435 or www.beaumont-tx-complex.com
- 7-8. Pecan Fest, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382 or www.seguintx.org
- 7-8. Bow-Wow "Flea" Market/County-Wide Garage Sale, **Coleman**, (325) 625-4724 or

- www.HumaneSocietyCC.com
- 7-8. New Vintage Wine Trail, **Grapevine**, (817) 410-3195 or www.grapevinetexasusa.com
- 7-9. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, 1-866-433-6683 or www.oldmilltradedays.com
- 7-9. Sand Sculpture Competition, **Port Aransas**, (361) 949-9531 or www.texassandfest.com
- 7-9. Flea Market Days, **Jewett**, (936) 348-5475
- 7-9. Cowboys on the Coast Motorcycle Rally, **Beaumont**, (409) 951-5400 or www.fordparktx.com
- 7-9. Bayou City Crawfish Festival, **Houston**, (713) 761-9413 or www.bayoucitycrawfishfestival.com
- 8. Vintage USO Show, **Columbus**, (979) 732-8385 or www.columbus-texas.org
- 8. Spring Scenic Cycling Tour, **Cuero**, (361) 275-0099 or www.dewittwildflowers.org
- 8. Easter Parade and Egg Hunt, **Onalaska**, www.cityofonalaska.us
- 8. Herb Festival, **Huntsville**, (936) 436-1017
- 8. Trades Day Firefighting Volunteers Fundraising Festival, **McLeod, Huffines and Kildare Junction**, (903) 796-7854
- 8. Boys Ranch Ball, **San Angelo**, (325) 947-4870
- 8. Cornfield Bazaar, **Hutto**, (512) 759-5068
- 8. Commemorative Air Force Bluebonnet Airshow, **Burnet**, (512) 756-2226
- 8. SpringFest 2006, **Oak Point**,

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- (972) 294-2312 or www.oakpointtexas.com
8. Bluebird Festival, **Wills Point**, 1-800-972-5824 or www.willspointbluebird.com
8. Bluebonnet Farm and Ranch Tour, **Bellville**, (979) 865-0000 or www.bluebonnetranchtour.com
8. Tour the Navidad Valley, 20-, 40- or 70-mile bike tours, **High Hill**, (979) 561-8616
8. Lions Club Annual Auction, **Utopia**, (830) 966-3778
8. Rubber Ducky Race for Literacy, **Burnet**, (512) 756-7337
8. Gospel Music Festival, **Canton**, (903) 316-8936
- 8-9, 22-23. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
- 8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30. Scarborough Renaissance Festival, **Waxahachie**, 1-888-533-7848 or www.ScarboroughRenFest.com
- 8-9. Bluebonnet Festival, **Chappell Hill**, (979) 836-6033
- 8-9. Hill Country Agility Dog Show, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-4728
- 8-9. Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival, **Eagle Lake**, (979) 234-3021, ext. 12
- 8-9. Crawfish Festival, **Kemah**, (281) 334-9880 or www.kemahboardwalk.com
9. Coin and Sports Card Show, **College Station**, (979) 575-4669
10. Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307



MARY STONE PHOTOGRAPHY, BUDA

The Weiner Dog Races at the Buda Lions Club Country Fair (April 29-30) have garnered national media attention this year.

12. Egg-Stravaganza & Easter Carnival, **Kyle**, (512) 268-5341 or www.cityofkyle.com
12. Silver Bluebonnet Day, **San Angelo**, (325) 949-4757
- 12-15. Antique Tractor and Engine Show, **Henderson**, (866) 650-5529 or www.henderson.tx.us
14. Good Friday Fish Fry, **Ennis**, (972) 935-7273

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AROUND TEXAS

- 14-15. Easter Fest on the River/Chili & BBQ Classic, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-8094
- 14-16. Trade Days, **Livingston**, (936) 327-3656 or www.cityoflivingston-tx.com/tradedays
- 15. Mutt Strutt, **San Marcos**, (512) 353-4745
- 15. Easter Egg Hunt in the Park, **Alba**, (903) 765-3278
- 15. Community Barbecue, **Krum**, (940) 482-3120
- 19-22. Big Bend Open Road Race, **Fort Stockton to Sanderson**, (432) 336-8525, ext. 16
- 20-22. Wood County Junior Market Show, **Golden**, (903) 768-2972
- 21-22. San Jacinto Festival, **West Columbia**, (979) 345-3921 or www.westcolumbiachamber.org
- 21-22. Mercado Days Festival, **Port Arthur**, (409) 983-4006
- 21-23. Annual Texas Wine and Food Festival, **San Angelo**, (325) 653-6793
- 21-23. Cotton Gin Festival, **Burton**, (979) 289-3378 or www.cottonginmuseum.org
- 21-23. General Sam Houston Folk Festival, **Huntsville**, (936) 294-1832 or www.SamHouston.Memorial.Museum
- 21-23. Antique Alley and 15 Mile Sale, **Grandview to Cleburne**, (817) 866-3987, (817) 641-0183 or <http://alley.cleburne.com>
- 21-23. Knap-in, **Fredericksburg**, (254) 634-3264
- 21-23. Bluebonnet Trails Festival, **Ennis**, 1-888-366-4748 or www.visitennis.org
- 21-23. 25th Annual Heritage Jubilee, **Terrell**, 1-800-877-TERRELL or www.terrelltexas.com
- 21-23. Spring Herb Festival, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 997-8615 or www.herb-farm.com
- 21-24. National Ceramic Competition Weekend, **San Angelo**, (325) 653-3333 or www.sanangelo.org
- 22. Goat Cookoff, Car Show & 5K run, **Goldthwaite**, (325) 648-3619 or www.goldthwaite.biz
- 22. North Texas Book Festival, **Denton**, (940) 464-3368
- 22. Butterfly Festival, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-6969 or www.emilyann.org
- 22. Market Days, **Canyon Lake**, (830) 964-3003 or www.crrcofcanyonlake.org
- 22. Gaines-Oliphint House Pioneer Day, **Hemphill**, (409) 787-4088
- 22. Mesquite Daze, **Anson**, (325) 823-3259
- 22. Sunset Center Quilt Show, **Brady**, (325) 597-2946
- 22. Iris Show, **Cleburne**, (817) 326-2239
- 22. San Jacinto Day Festival, **La Porte**, (281) 479-2431 or www.tpwd.state.tx.us
- 22. Neches River Festival Parade, **Beaumont**, (409) 835-2443 or www.beaumontcvb.com
- 22-23. Texas Barbecue Festival, **Vidor**, (409) 769-6339
- 23. Spring Chicken Affair, **San Angelo**, (325) 223-6364
- 23. Blooms Above the Blanco, **Kyle**, (512) 268-9981
- 26-30. North American Bluebird Society Convention, **San Antonio**, (512) 268-5678 or www.NABS2006.com
- 27. Country Opry, **Mason**, (325) 597-2119 or www.hillbillyhits.com
- 27-30. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903)

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH BY JIM GRAMON

Strawberry Festival: Poteet, April 7-9

What happens when you combine World War II veterans, Texans' desire for fun, and delicious Poteet strawberries? You end up with one of my favorite Texas festivals.

In 1948, after the end of the Second World War, the farmers of the Poteet region, just south of San Antonio, needed their soldiers to come home and work. The folks in Poteet decided that a fun festival might provide enough enticement to lure some of those soldiers back.

When organizers wondered, "What kind of festival should it be?" the answer was easy: strawberries. Not just any strawberries. They wanted to get the word out about their very special, big, sweet Poteet strawberries.

It was a good idea. Today the Poteet Strawberry Festival is one of the oldest, most popular events in the state, recognized as the largest agricultural festival in Texas and one of the best in the nation.

This year marks the 59th anniversary of the festival, so the

hard-working volunteers have ironed out most of the wrinkles. There are fun things to do, plenty of entertainment, food, parking (free and close), reasonable prices, clean restrooms, handicapped accessibility, RV facilities and tent-covered activities during the weekend.

The Poteet Strawberry Festival takes place on a 100-acre site on Highway 16, 20 miles south of San Antonio. The action starts at 6 p.m. on Friday, April 7, and runs through Sunday night. Mel Tillis, Ruben Ramos, Los Amables, Los Desperados and Joe Nichols are among this year's musical offerings.

Other fun events include a large carnival, arts and crafts, strawberry-eating contest (sign me up!), jugglers and magicians, duck races, fiddlers' contest, the South Texas Gunfighters, cloggers, folklorico dancers and much more.

Bet you didn't know that Poteet, the official "Strawberry Capital of Texas," was named for its first postmaster, Francis Marion Poteet, who

began operating the post office out of his blacksmith shop in 1886.

Karnes and Medina Electric Cooperatives serve the Poteet area. For more information about the Poteet Strawberry Festival, visit www.strawberryfestival.com or call 1-888-742-8144.

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



PHOTO COURTESY POTEET STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION

"Freckles" will greet visitors at one of the most popular events in the state this month.

- 567-5445 or www.oldmillmarketplace.com
- 28-29. Old Time Ways, **Coldspring**, (936) 653-2009 or coldspringheritage.org
- 28-29. Art Show, **Athens**, (903) 677-4729
- 28-30. Wildflower Trails Festival, **Linden, Hughes Springs and Avinger**, (903) 796-3003 or www.lindenwildflowertrails.com
29. Kite Fest, **Kyle**, (512) 268-5341 or www.cityofkyle.com
29. Fifth Saturday Flea Market, **Junction**, (325) 446-3789
29. Main Street Trade Days, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382 or www.seguintx.org
29. Barbecue Cook-Off, **Canyon Lake**, (830) 964-2223 or www.canyonlakechamber.com
29. Scenic Loop VFD Golf Tournament, **Coldspring**, (936) 967-5529
29. Craw Fest, **Flatonina**, (361) 865-3920 or www.destinationflatonina.com
29. Art Festival, **New Ulm**, (979) 992-3699
- 29-30. Jewelry, Gems, Rocks, Minerals and Fossil Show, **Lubbock**, (806) 894-1584
- 29-30. Kidzfest, **Conroe**, (936) 538-7112 or www.conroekidzfest.com
- 29-30. Heart of Texas Quilt Show, **Brownwood**, (325) 643-9527
- 29-30. Country Fair and Wiener Dog Races, **Buda**, (512) 295-9999 or www.budalionsclub.com
- 29-30. Grayson County Frontier Village Arts and Crafts Show, **Denison**, (903) 463-2487
- 29-May 1. Balcones Songbird Festival, **Lago Vista**, (512) 339-9432 or www.balconessongbirdfestival.org
30. 175th Anniversary Celebration, **Industry**, (979) 357-2190
30. St. Michael Spring Festival, **Weimar**, (979) 263-5251 or www.weimartx.org
30. Volunteer Fireman's Feast, **Ellinger**, (979) 378-2941
30. Oaks Historic District Spring Home Tour, **Beaumont**, www.otnabeaumont.org

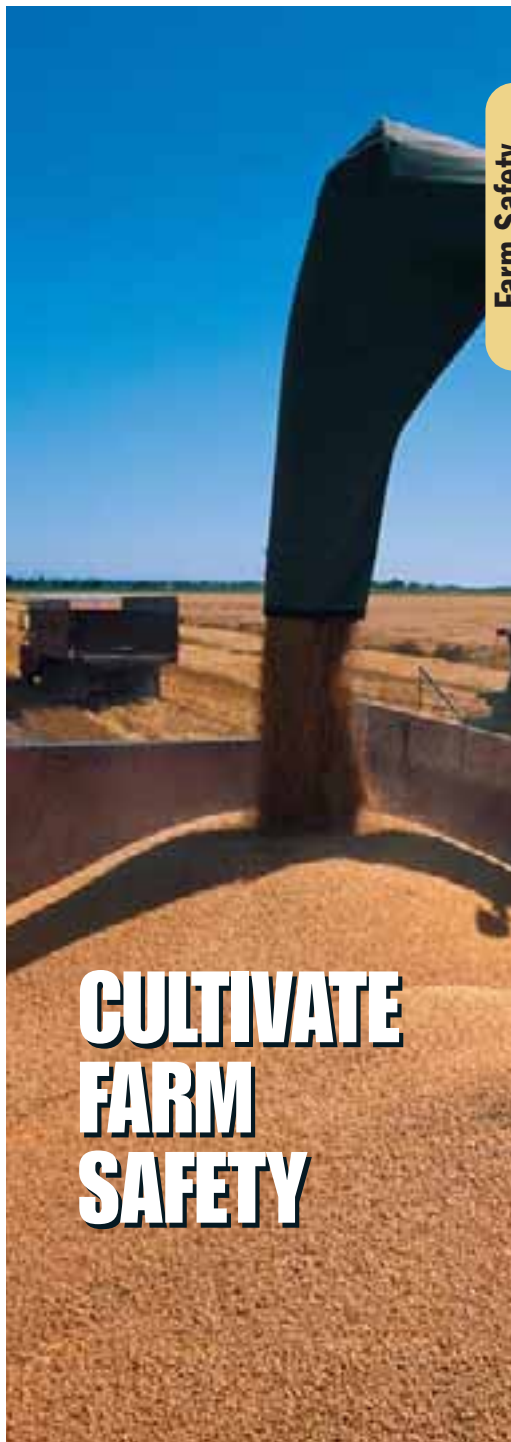
May

5. Cinco de Mayo, **Fort Stockton**, (432) 336-7562
5. Lion's Carnival, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382 or www.seguintx.org
- 5-6. Cinco de Mayo, **Lockhart**, (512) 398-9600 or www.lockharthispanicchamber.org
- 5-6. Mesquite Tree Festival, **Coolidge**, (254) 786-4814
- 5-7. Wildflower Trail Ride, **Mason County**, (325) 347-5598
- 5-7. Cinco de Mayo Celebration, **Sonora**, (325) 387-2880
6. Fire Department Barbecue Fundraiser, **Mason**, (325) 347-6440
6. Mayfest/Car Show, **Creedmoor**, (512) 243-3117 or www.CreedmoorCCFA.org
6. Blanco National Bank's 100th Anniversary, **Blanco**, (830) 833-4538 or www.blancobank.com
6. Civil War Grand Ball, **Jefferson**, (903) 665-2672
6. Cowboy Capital MS Trail Ride, **Stephenville**, (254) 445-2001

6. Ice Cream Festival, **Brenham**, 1-888-273-6426 or www.brenhamtexas.com
6. Airing of the Quilts, **Huntsville**, (936) 294-0212 or www.tallpinesquiltguild.com
6. May Day, **Sebastopol**, (830) 379-6382
6. Blackjack Grove Day Festival, **Cumby**, (903) 994-2892
- 6-7. Nautical Flea Market, **Rockport**, (361) 727-0125
7. Boys Haven Crawfish Festival, **Beaumont**, (409) 866-2400 or www.beaumontcvb.com

Event Submissions

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



Farm Safety

CULTIVATE 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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A Springtime Sea of Bluebonnets

No other flower in Texas could possibly be photographed more than the **Bluebonnet**, if the response to this month's topic is any indication. You may already know that the bluebonnet became the state flower in 1910. And you may even be aware that a single bluebonnet plant can produce up to 40 blooming flower heads and nearly 100 seeds. But did you know that the white spot on each flower, which attracts bees, turns red after it's been pollinated so the next bees will know to go to another flower? We hope you enjoy these beautiful photos, along with a bit of trivia thrown in at no extra charge!

Summer Fun is the topic for our June issue. Send your

photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Summer Fun, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before April 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). **Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.** If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org. (If you have questions about your camera's capabilities and settings, please refer to the operating manual.)



▲ Cousins CHLOE DARLENE SMITH and EMILY GEORGIA GAUWITZ are all gussied up for their very first photo session in the bluebonnets. Unfortunately, Emily just doesn't feel at home like Chloe does. Coserv Electric member (and proud grandmother) FRANCES GLEASON wonders if it's because Emily, who is from Oklahoma, "just doesn't appreciate bluebonnets like a true Texas girl does."

Taylor EC member JODY PAGE stopped by the side of the road to snap this photo of a donkey munching away near the bluebonnets. "This donkey didn't mind posing one bit!" said Page. ▼



Fayette EC members MICHAEL and TESSA EASLEY submitted this unusual photo, taken from directly above the flower. Their photo provides a different perspective of a familiar subject.



JAQULYN HOES took this shot of a friendly ladybug visiting the bluebonnets outside the Rio Vista post office last spring. Hoes is a member of HILCO EC.



◀ GARRETT and HEATH MILLIKEN enjoy a barefoot spring-time break in the bluebonnets. This photo was submitted by HILCO EC member SHERRY MILLIKEN.



▲ One-year-old LEAH DANIELLE RODRIGUEZ was surprised when she found a different wildflower among the bluebonnets. Leah is the daughter of NASARIO and DORA RODRIGUEZ, members of Medina EC.



LISAL, LILLIAN MORRIS' "grand-dog," was visiting last spring and proceeded to bury herself in the bluebonnets covering the front yard. Morris belongs to Pedernales EC.



Looking for all the world like his chocolate counterpart, LENNY, the baby Easter bunny, obligingly poses for BTU member ANNE-MARIE LINDSEY.



▲ Central Texas EC members LANCE and CRISTINA JOHNSTONE used this photo of their daughter, SARAH KAY, in the bluebonnets for their 2004 Christmas card. "This was taken before we had a digital camera, so it took a whole roll of film and it was still luck!" said Cristina.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
June	Summer Fun	April 10
July	Close Calls	May 10
August	Classic Vehicles	June 10
September	Murals	July 10
October	Scarecrows	August 10
November	Mailboxes	September 10



Split-Second Miracle in Sulphur Springs

Playful chatter and laughter filled the room as eight members of my family sat down to a simple supper of meatloaf, mashed potatoes and sweet corn. My brother, five sisters and I crowded around the table while Mother filled iced tea glasses and scooped little mountains of mashed potatoes onto each plate.

The year was 1969, and the children in my family were spaced two years apart with me, at age 8, stuck smack in the middle. As I glanced

the windows. When the wind blew hard, I could hear it whistling through the many cracks in the walls and around the doors.

The house was not really ours. We rented it from our neighbors, who had been using it for storage. It was on 9 acres, about 7 miles east of Sulphur Springs, guarded by seven powerful oak trees, one bois d'arc and a mimosa. I loved to climb the trees and hang from the limbs until my mother would spot me and yell for me to get

home to its core.

My mother suddenly realized that my brother, Allen, was still at the table, nonchalantly polishing off his meatloaf. She shouted for him to come to the kitchen. I peeked around my mother's skirt and into the dining room just in time to see him step away from the table with his plate in his hand.

Crash!

Daggers of broken glass exploded across the table as I stared in disbelief. Wind and rain slashed through a gaping black hole that just seconds before had been a closed window. My brother turned in astonishment to see his chair covered with shards of razor-sharp glass.

My mother grabbed Allen and pulled him into the kitchen as we all offered silent prayers of gratitude that he was not hurt. We huddled there for what seemed like hours, waiting for the storm to pass.

Then, just as quickly as it had begun, the rain slowed to random drops tapping out a rhythm on the roof. The thunder sounded like a bass drum growing fainter and fainter in the distance. A sharper drip, drop, drip filled the air as Mother positioned pots and pans beneath new-sprung leaks in the ceiling. My knees felt weak and shaky as I gingerly helped Mother pick up broken glass, sweep the floor, and cover the window with a sheet. Then Mother distracted us with songs and games until we finally grew sleepy and headed for bed.

As I drifted off to sleep that night, I thought about how brave my mother was, and I wondered at the miracle that prompted her to call to my brother at that precise moment to move him out of harm's way. She seemed very wise and wonderful to me, as she still does to this day.



FRANK CURRY

around the table, I noticed that my oldest sister had taken Daddy's spot at the head of the table. He worked the late shift as a tool grinder at Rockwell International in Sulphur Springs and was seldom able to join us for our evening meal. Monday through Friday, it was up to Mother to manage the household. We looked to her for meals, advice, help with homework, and discipline. She seemed to handle our rowdy family in stride.

A rumble in the distance jarred me from my reverie, and I noticed that darkness had fallen suddenly. The rumble sounded again, a bit closer this time, and I reasoned that a storm must be headed our way. The window behind my brother's chair brightened from a distant flash. Our little house in Northeast Texas was austere—bare walls, basic furniture and no fuss or frills, not even curtains or blinds on

down. My clothes were hand-me-downs, and I had only one pair of shoes, but I didn't know I was poor. It seemed I had everything an 8-year-old could need.

As we sat around the table that night, we continued to chatter loudly while the mimosa branches scraped randomly against the roof. A sudden gust of wind shook the house with incredible force, silencing us. The windows rattled alarmingly, and my little sister screamed as a jagged streak of lightning shot crazily from the sky. A deafening clap of thunder followed—it seemed to echo through my body.

Mother began to herd us into the kitchen like a hen protecting her chicks. We pressed in close to her, praying for safety as branches snapped and lightning crackled between claps of thunder. Rain pelted the house and pounded the roof, shaking our flimsy

Farmers Electric Cooperative serves the Sulphur Springs area and Hopkins County.

Rebecca Boggs teaches English as a second language at Sulphur Springs High School as she works on a master's degree.