

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

RIPPED OFF!

Tips To Protect Yourself

PLUS:

Disaster City

Texas Steak Cook-Off in Hico

Shade Tree Vendors

ON BOARD WITH BOATING SAFETY

Boating

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


Safety Rules for Boating:

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

Have fun on the water.
Boat safely!



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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

A MAGAZINE ABOUT TEXAS LIVING

Avoidable Consequences and Other Tales

Last fall it certainly seemed like “Disaster City” around our office. Someone had stolen Kaye’s bank checks and was gaily spending her hard-earned cash all over town, while another thief was driving around in Carol’s pretty silver Volvo.

After a lot of time and trouble, Kaye’s accounts were finally squared away and Carol got her car back. While we recognize that no security system is completely fail-safe, we hope to spare you the kind of anxiety and inconvenience our editors experienced by offering some simple safety suggestions.

Our second feature explains what’s being done to keep all Texans safe in the event of a terrorist attack or natural disaster. Texas A&M’s Disaster City, the first heavy-rescue facility in the state, is home to Texas Task Force 1, an elite 265-member group of experienced emergency responders. These “masters of disaster”—and others from around the world—come to Disaster City for specialized training in search and rescue, structural collapse, and disaster medical services. By taking the view of “when,” not “if,” emergency responders gain the high level of preparedness that helps us all sleep easier at night.

This month’s Focus on Texas takes a humorous view of “Close Calls.” True Texan and Food Editor Shannon Oelrich shares her “Life in Salsa,” while Bill and Red show us another way to live—and work—under the shade of a live oak tree in Texas, USA.

Enjoy!

keo

Peg Champion
VP, Communications/Publisher



This field mouse’s prayers were answered when **SHEBA** the cat finally got distracted and let it go. Sheba belongs to United Cooperative Services member **JEAN CRAWFORD-KEARLEY**. For more photos of “close calls,” turn to page 37.



TERRY TIDWELL

Common sense and a few preventative tips can help cope with crimes from the basic home burglary to the most sophisticated computer fraud.

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By Kaye Northcott and Carol Moczygemba

Illustrations by Terry Tidwell

Bad guys steal our stuff, checks, credit cards and valuable information they can use to impersonate us. There are safeguards you should know.

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By Staci Semrad, Photos by Bud Force

When your local first responders need training, Texas A&M University’s Disaster City can provide simulated earthquakes, train wrecks, building collapses ... just name your poison. A recent course on structural collapse was a solid grounding for situations rescuers might face during the upcoming hurricane season.

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Salsa recipes, plus the Texas Steak Cook-Off, Beef Symposium and Tourist Trap in Hico.

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By Jan R. Carrington

Bill and Red, Shade Tree Vendors, Santa Anna



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CHANCE
TO
ORDER!**

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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Novella Newman's Wild Plum Jam and Jelly

EDITOR'S NOTE: In May, Texas Co-op Power published a photo essay on wild plum picking and canning called "Plum Delightful." Readers made it perfectly clear that they also need a reliable, specific recipe for making jam and jelly, and a source for ordering the prepared product. Novella Newman, who was pictured in the story, has provided not only a recipe but also information on how to get her jam and jelly.

Begin with sterilized jars. Prepare fruit as directed.

For Jam: Remove stems but do not peel 4 pounds washed raw plums. Place in saucepan with ½ cup water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 5 minutes. Remove pits. Save 6 cups of cooked, pitted plum fruit and juice.

For Jelly: Remove stems but do not peel 4 pounds washed raw plums. Place in saucepan with ½ cup water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer 5 minutes. Strain in three layers of cheesecloth to collect 6 cups of juice and to remove pulp and pits.

Measure exactly 6 cups prepared fruit (for jam) or prepared juice (for jelly) into 6- or 8-quart pot.

Measure exactly 8 cups sugar into separate bowl. (Reducing sugar or using sugar substitutes will result in set failures.)

Stir 1 box pectin into fruit or juice in pot. Add ½ teaspoon butter or margarine to reduce foaming.

Bring mixture to full rolling boil on high heat, stirring constantly.

Stir in sugar quickly. Return to full rolling boil and boil exactly 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim off any foam.

Ladle quickly into prepared jars, filling to within ¼ inch of tops. Wipe jar rims and threads. Cover with two-piece lids. Screw bands tightly. Place jars on elevated rack in canner. Lower rack into canner. Water must cover jars by 1 to 2 inches; add boiling water if needed. Cover, bring water to gentle boil. Process jam 10 minutes; jelly 5 minutes. Remove jars and place upright on towel to cool completely. After jars cool, check seals by pressing middle of lid with finger. (If lid springs back, lid is not sealed and refrigeration is necessary.)

Let stand at room temperature 24 hours. Store unopened jams and jellies in cool, dry, dark place up to 1 year. Refrigerate opened jams and jellies up to three weeks.

Yields: 10 cups jelly or jam

Novella Newman sells her Wild Plum Jam and Wild Plum Jelly at Newman Farms at 112 Chandler St. in downtown Brownwood. She lives in neighboring May and belongs to Comanche County Electric Cooperative. To order her jelly, contact her daughter, Sylinda Hunter-Meinzer, through wyman@wymanmeinzer.com.

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.

Bats Do Bite

In response to "Why We Like Bats" in the May 2006 issue, I wanted to tell you about my recent experience on my ranch in Hays County. A bat bit my hand and flew away. I didn't think much of it until the Austin American-Statesman had a news item about a young person in Houston who was bitten by a bat and died.

I went to my doctor who gave me

two shots of human rabies immune globulin and started me on a five-shot series of rabies vaccine. The immune globulin and the rabies vaccine cost in excess of \$800.

So I, for one, still like bats, but not nearly as much as I did before my unfortunate adventure.

CHARLES H. MOERBE
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bat bites are few and far between, but you took the right steps to protect yourself.

Protect Your Skylights

Your article in the May issue of Texas Co-op Power about tubular skylights was right on the mark. Tubular skylights provide a substantial amount of light for their size. They are reasonably priced and relatively easy to install.

Since we are subject to large hail here in Texas, it is important to ensure that the skylight domes are covered with an expanded steel cover or other protection. If the domes are not protected, you could easily find your house full of hail and rain.

BRIAN SIGNORELLI
Concho Valley Electric Cooperative

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Tubular Skylight a Bright Idea" did not appear in all editions of Texas Co-op Power. If you missed the article, you may look it up on our website, texascoopower.com. Click on the cover of the May 2006 issue to download a PDF.

SAFE LIVING

Have a Happy and Safe Fourth!

Even though your electric cooperative office will be closed on the Fourth of July so the employees can celebrate Independence Day, rest assured that standby crews will be on call to handle any emergencies or weather-related outages.

We want you to enjoy the holiday, but use caution and common sense to keep your own festivities safe. For example:

- Make sure any fireworks are

handled by a responsible adult.

- Designate adults or older teens to supervise sports activities.
- Make sure there is always a responsible person in charge of grills, barbecues and campfires.
- Keep all perishable food thoroughly chilled and stored in a cooler.

A little pre-planning can make your celebration fun and safe for everyone!



RIPPED OFF!

Tips To Protect Yourself

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TERRY TIDWELL

By Kaye Northcott

My blood ran cold when I opened my bank account statement last September. All my transactions are usually on one page, but this listing of checks covered the reverse side as well. Funny, I didn't remember spending \$109.14 at Wal-Mart or \$227.46 at the grocery store. In fact, according to my bank, I'd been spending hundreds of dollars at multiple grocery stores through much of early August.

The check numbers started 50 beyond the book I was using at the time. I got to thinking, "Didn't I order new checks?" A search of the house did not turn up a new box of checks. Pretty quickly, I concluded that the checks had been stolen from my mailbox, next to the street 180 feet down a hill from my house. Sometimes I don't pick up the mail for days.

My carelessness had apparently cost me thousands of dollars in forged checks. And none of them was going to bounce, because I tended to keep several thousand dollars in my checking account, which is backed by overdraft protection from my money market account.

My first calls were to the Austin Police Department and my credit union. I immediately closed my old account and

started a new one. A credit union representative went through all my August and early September checks with me. The volume of forgeries made me a little queasy. Some of them infuriated me, like a \$179.94 check to HEB, designated “for Birthday Boy.” Fortunately, the credit union—a cooperative, by the way—was insured for fraud, and I received full reimbursement within a week. I’m not going to say how much of my and the bank’s assets the thief got because it is so embarrassing. I was socking away money for a new driveway in my checking account—bad place for savings.

The news was not so good at the police station. The thief had timed the crime perfectly. She spent my money early in August. My statement didn’t arrive in the mail until mid-September. It was too late for the authorities to look at videotaped transactions for early August. Stores had already recycled the tapes of the fake “me.” The driver’s license number and phone number written on the checks were bogus. The police said there was nothing they could do. That was that. If the thief ever got caught, it was as part of another case, not mine.

What have I learned?

- I check my bank account via computer regularly to make sure nothing funny is going on.
- I pick up my checks at the credit union. You don’t need to

do that if your bank requires you to call and validate receipt of new checks before they can be activated.

- I’m wary of having valuable items deposited in my mailbox. It’s best to have a post office box.
- I pick up my mail every day. If I’m going out of town, I ask a trusted neighbor to do it for me.
- I mail my bill payments at the office, the post office or a postbox. Some say offices in general are unsafe for personal mail, but I know who handles the mail bin here. Electronic banking would be even better, and I will do it someday soon.
- I intend to buy a shredder so no one can garner valuable information—such as bank account numbers—from my trash.
- You can also purchase identity theft insurance from many sources. Be sure you are dealing with a reputable company, such as your current credit card provider, to buy insurance. You should initiate the contact. More and more scam artists are “phishing” for your vital information online. They pose as banks, insurance companies and even the IRS, asking for your Social Security number, date of birth, checking account number, and other information so they can set up phony accounts in your name.

For more tips on how to avoid being a victim of this modern world, see pages 8–10.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.



By Carol Moczygemba

He squeezed in through the kitchen dog door, helped himself to a computer printer, jewelry, loose change, a \$300 coin collection and a set of keys. Then he walked out the back door and drove away in my car—in broad daylight—last November in Austin.

For the second time in two weeks, a hired-helper-turned-burglar had ripped us off. The first time, he nonchalantly strolled through the house while a houseguest was having coffee at the kitchen table. She saw that he had a cell phone to his ear and was talking as if he were responding to directions from my husband, going from room to room. Our guest believed this guy was just trying to be helpful in finding something my husband misplaced.

Once he was out of sight and in another room, he began loading up on whatever he could carry out the front door to his pickup. He carried out a laptop computer and a handful of blank checks.

We reported the stolen computer to the police. We didn't find out about the checks until \$2,000 worth had been forged and cashed.

We immediately changed the locks, alerted the neighbors, gave the police every shred of information we had about the suspect, identified forged checks at the credit union, filled out affidavits, and notified our homeowner's insurance company.

After the second violation, I started a dossier to keep track of all the paperwork, the suspect's vital statistics, all communications with the police, the credit union and two insurance companies, and details about every stolen item. I was running on outrage.

It was a giant hassle. It was a disruption of daily life. It was frustrating. At one point, we knew exactly where the thief was. We called the police. They knocked on his door and talked with him, but the warrant for his arrest had not been processed, so they could do nothing more than "knock and talk," as they described it. He subsequently disappeared.

The sorry saga finally came to an end right before Christmas. The police found my car. The thief had sold it to two teenage boys for \$100, a bargain at \$9,900 less than the "blue book" price. It was damaged, but not irreparably.

All in all, I consider myself lucky. The person who victimized me was caught. He cooperated with police, and made a full confession that helped detectives recover some of the stolen goods. The credit union made restitution on the forged checks. No one was hurt. And there's one other thing: We knew the perpetrator; he was the suspect from the beginning. We were able to supply the police with a lot of specific information, which hastened the thief's arrest.

The fact that we knew this person was helpful, but it was also a blow to my belief that if I trusted someone and treated that person with respect, I would in turn be respected. I couldn't believe someone who knew us would do such a thing.

My sense of safety and my trusting nature feel permanently damaged.

Within a week of his incarceration, the inmate wrote me a letter. He was sorry, he said, and he blamed his crimes on drug addiction.

What have I learned?

- I do not assume that a hired worker is trustworthy. I am courteous but cautious, never allowing someone I don't know well free access to my house.
- I do not leave blank checks in baskets or on desktops. I keep them in a small safe with a lock, and have a record of the check numbers in another location.
- I do not leave my car keys in the open, where someone can easily pick them up.
- I am more conscientious about keeping a photo inventory of items such as my laptop computer, along with serial numbers.
- Speaking of photos, I did not have my digital photos saved on CDs. More than anything I believed to be lost, those photos were the most precious.

What did I do right?

- I did not sit and wait. I immediately called the police. I vigorously proceeded by gathering and reporting information.
- I alerted people in my neighborhood to be aware of anyone lurking around our house, and gave a detailed description of the suspect.
- I did not rely solely on the police to solve the case. I contributed everything I could, researching the suspect's residence, associates, pattern of activities, and criminal record.
- I stayed on top of police reports and maintained regular communication with the investigating detective, the insurance company and the credit union. I bit my tongue as I had to fill out yet one more form, then another, then another. Then make one more phone call, hold 20 minutes, and make two more.

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

The tips on the following pages were provided by Mr. Modem, also known as Richard A. Sherman of Phoenix, Arizona. We chose him to be our expert because he's a geek with a sense of humor. His website is mrmodem.com.

Identity Theft

Information (such as name, address, date of birth, Social Security number, birth certificate, or mother's maiden name) enables the identity thief to commit numerous forms of fraud.

Identify-theft crimes include taking over a victim's financial accounts, opening new bank accounts, purchasing automobiles, applying and securing loans, credit cards and Social Security benefits, renting vehicles or

apartments, and establishing services with electric, gas, cable and telephone companies.

To reduce the likelihood of becoming an identity theft victim, follow these tips:

- Remove “snail mail” from your mailbox as soon after delivery as possible and do not leave outgoing mail in unsecured mail receptacles.
- Sign new credit cards as soon as you receive them. Save credit card receipts and match (reconcile) them against your monthly statement.
- Do not provide personal information by telephone, unless you initiate the call to your financial institution or other reputable entity.
- Be guarded, surly, cynical and leery (which happens to be the name of my attorney’s firm) when it comes to providing information online. Your personal information is rarely anybody’s business. Guard it jealously.
- Cover the keypad when entering your PIN (personal identification number) at an ATM. This will prevent shoulder surfers from copying your number. Don’t carry PINs in your wallet.
- Keep track of all your paperwork. When you no longer need it, shred it.
- Call Opt-Out at 1-888-567-8688 to reduce the number of unwanted credit card offers you receive in the mail.
- Order your personal credit report each year to check for fraudulent activity or other discrepancies. To order, visit annualcreditreport.com, a website sponsored by Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. You can also subscribe to a low-cost monitoring service to protect against fraud throughout the year.
- Online banking with any major financial institution is generally very safe, but make sure the bank is credible and trustworthy.
- Report any lost or stolen credit cards to the issuing authority immediately. To report a stolen or misused Social Security number, call 1-800-269-0271 or visit the Social Security Administration’s website at ssa.gov.

Internet Hoaxes

If you have an e-mail address, chances are you’ve been the recipient of messages that invited you to share Bill Gates’ fortune, or warned you about marauding hordes of spiders, telephone company scams, exploding cell phones, Internet taxation rumors, giant human skeletons, and the always popular DCSMN (Dying-Child-Send-Money-Now) scam.

E-mail hoaxes and scams are easy



to spot because they usually contain language with one or more of the following red flags:

- A sense of urgency. It doesn’t matter if it’s an alert about a “newly discovered” virus or a desperate plea for help because Little Scotty’s disabled mother’s crutch tore a hole in his oxygen tent, but there’s always a need to respond immediately.
- A prediction of dire consequences. The consequences of failing to heed the e-mail warning are usually so horrific, they would give Stephen King nightmares.
- Authentication. Virus hoaxes are usually authenticated by some highly fictitious official at Microsoft, AOL, IBM or other well-known institution. Other

hoaxes are authenticated by phony police department officials, insurance companies, or the government. Name-dropping is always popular.

- A request to forward the message to as many people as you can. This one element along should raise a huge red flag. This “town crier” approach takes advantage of our good nature and the fact that most of us want to help others. Plus, let’s face it, we all love to share bad news.

The best way to thwart the spread of these random acts of error is through awareness. Keeping informed about hoaxes is as easy as visiting one of the many hoax-debunking sites on the Internet. One of my favorites is Snopes (snopes.com).



Online Shopping

Online shopping is booming because it is convenient and cost-effective. It can also be safe—if you follow these recommendations:

- If you want to try shopping online but feel a bit leery, start by purchasing an inexpensive item from a retailer you know and trust in the off-line world, just to get a feel for the process.
- Prices vary widely on the Internet, so be a savvy shopper and use a free, online comparison shopper website such as mysimon.com or priceline.com to refine your choices.
- On the payment page of a website, look for the prefix “https” at the beginning of the webpage address, or a little closed-padlock icon in the lower right corner of your browser window. The “s” indicates a secure site. Click the padlock icon for additional security information.
- Pay by credit card. Nothing is more misunderstood in the world of e-commerce than using a credit card. Purchasing by credit card is the safest method of shopping online. But the consumer must practice due diligence in deciding which online merchants to use. The merchants should have a high degree of security protection. Because they generate a paper and electronic trail, credit cards also are handy if you want to dispute a transaction.
- Be sure you know and understand what you’re purchasing, the total price, the delivery date, shipping

charges (if any), the return and cancellation policies, and the terms of any warranty.

- Shop only with e-tailers that have posted privacy policies explaining what personal information is collected and how it will be used.
- Shop with merchants that display their street address and telephone number on the website. Call the telephone number to be sure it’s a legitimate business.
- Print out and save a record of your online transactions, including any order confirmations received by e-mail.
- The same laws that protect you when you shop by phone or mail apply when you shop in cyberspace. Under the law, a company must ship your order within the time frame stated in its advertisements and no more than 30 days after the order date.

Online Auctions

To paraphrase an old adage applicable to today’s online auctions, “You make your bid, and then you lie in it.” So have fun, but stay safe.

- Understand how the auction works and what you’re bidding on. Some sites list items for sale without verifying that the merchandise exists or is described accurately. If there is anything in an item description that gives you the heebie-jeebies, ask questions until you’re satisfied with the answers you receive. If you’re not comfortable, don’t bid on it.

- Check out the seller. Look for a “feedback” section on the site featuring comments about the seller from other purchasers. Keep in mind, however, that comments might be planted by the seller. The Better Business Bureau Online (bbbonline.org) may have additional information. Trust your feelings. If you’re the least bit suspicious, don’t participate.
- Get the name and contact information of the other party to your transaction. The name, street address (not a post office box) and/or telephone number can be helpful in checking somebody out or following up, if you experience a problem. If a seller refuses to provide that information, walk away from the transaction. Better yet, run.
- Don’t assume all claims about merchandise or value are true or that photographs are accurate. Print and save descriptions and any photos to document claims made.
- Understand delivery, returns, warranties and service before paying. Get a commitment for a definite delivery date and insist that the shipment be insured. Print a copy of the return policy and any warranties that may apply.
- Look for insurance information. Some auction sites provide insurance for buyers up to \$250. Other sites provide links to third-party insurance programs. Read the terms of any insurance policy carefully.
- Pay by credit card, if at all possible, or cashier’s check or money order. Never send cash. Ever. Paying by credit card allows you to dispute a charge if the merchandise fails to meet representations.
- Use an escrow service. For a small fee, an escrow service, available through most auction sites, will hold the buyer’s payment and only send it to the seller upon the buyer’s receipt and approval of the item purchased.
- Report any problems immediately. If difficulties occur, notify the auction site. Sites want to know about deadbeat, cheeseball sellers who don’t deliver or misrepresent merchandise.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Unfortunately, thieves seem to create new scams and develop variations on old ones faster than people can devise safeguards. Keep abreast of the latest intelligence and don’t presume e-mail messages from strangers are on the up-and-up. Good luck!





Tree Climbing

DON'T GO OUT ON A LIMB!

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


Safety Rules for Trees:

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

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



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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.



WELCOME TO

DISASTER CITY

BY STACI SEMRAD • PHOTOS BY BUD FORCE

James Bond hangs from a cliff on-screen as moviegoers in a crowded cinema feel the floor begin to tremble.

The screen goes black, sections of the theater cave in, and panicked patrons scream in the darkness, shielding themselves from falling debris. They trample one another in search of an exit, but there is none to be found.

The earthquake, while only an imagined training scenario at a full-scale, mock theater in College Station, is among a variety of real events (including hurricanes, tornadoes and terrorist acts) for which emergency responders prepare.

The Texas A&M University System boasts one of the world's most impressive training facilities—Disaster City. It is run by a member agency of the A&M system, the Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX), to provide emergency response training and technical assistance for disaster response.

Emergency responders from around the world come to Disaster City for specialized training in urban search and rescue. They perform exercises in structural collapse, canine searches, and disaster medical services.

Disasters can be virtually special-ordered at Disaster City, a 52-acre “community” featuring full-scale residential and commercial structures, streets lined with rubble piles, and the wreckage of a passenger train.

The buildings can be configured into “collapsed” positions by raising and lowering rooftops and other exterior sections. Volunteer “victims” are

recruited to stage the aftermath of disasters, producing a realistic atmosphere.

“We’re masters of disaster,” says Billy Parker, program manager for TEEX.

Indeed, visitors of Disaster City often feel they have entered a ghost town somewhere in the realm of chaos. An automobile is parked upside down in an intersection. A sedan is mashed under a toppled concrete beam. Street signs slanted 45 degrees look like they’ve suffered the ferocity of a hurricane. Threads of steel rebar jut from concrete rubble piles where buildings appear to have collapsed. A string of derailed train cars lie in disarray, some turned on their sides. In the cabins, mattresses and seats are strewn about, an eerie reminder of the passengers who once boarded the ill-fated train.

Amidst the ruins, sounds of hope emerge with the tapping of hammers and the chatter of men and women at work.

One recent morning, the voices were those of 17 emergency responders and Occupational Safety and Health Administration representatives working to support the exterior walls of Disaster City’s theater, weakened by an imagined disaster. The exercise was part of a five-day advanced course on exterior shoring.

Wearing protective clothing, hard hats and steel-toed boots, the students used heavy wooden boards and hundreds of nails to construct wall supports, a process crucial to safely rescuing trapped victims.

Other courses give students hands-

on experience breaking through wood, steel and concrete, and using simple tools (such as pipes and levers) to move and lift several tons of concrete. Students must often practice such skills in tight spaces such as the “House of Pancakes,” a three-story building collapsed to the height of one story.

Program participants can also hone their search-and-rescue skills. Live human “victims” are placed in tunnels under piles of concrete or wood rubble and left for responders and dogs to locate through vents on top of the tunnels.

Disaster City is home to Texas Task Force 1, an elite 265-member group of the state’s most experienced emergency responders. Its urban search-and-rescue team can deploy as either a state or federal asset. It is one of 28 such teams in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and also operates through the Governor’s Division of Emergency Management as the only statewide team of its kind in Texas.

Texas Task Force 1 has responded to several disasters including the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York, the Columbia space shuttle explosion, and hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Texas Task Force 1 and Disaster City are, in fact, the products of one such significant event as well as the vision of Dr. G. Kemble Bennett, vice chancellor and dean of engineering at Texas A&M University. He recalls seeing news coverage shortly after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, when he was director of TEEX.

“It was a wake-up call for me,” he

Opposite, above: Aggie engineers transported the wreckage of a passenger train to Disaster City for rescue exercises. **Below:** A dog and handler practice urban search and rescue in a huge rubble pile.

says, noting that TEEX had systems in place to ensure emergency responders in Texas were prepared for tornadoes, hurricanes and floods, but not for mass casualties from terrorism.

"We needed a facility that would put our responders into any possible scenario they could encounter," he says.

Parker oversaw the logistics that turned Bennett's concept into a reality and ensured that every major type of potential disaster was included in constructing Disaster City. Within a few years, the mock town became the

first heavy-rescue training facility in the state.

Today the \$12 million facility is regarded as the most comprehensive of its kind. As part of a larger TEEX emergency response training complex, Disaster City sits adjacent to the 120-acre Brayton Fire Training Field, the largest live-fueled fire training facility in the world.

Other states view Disaster City as a model to replicate.

Michael Bilheimer, a fire captain in San Bernardino, California, has been

undergoing structural collapse training for eight years and is among six professionals his state is sending to Disaster City for training. Their mission is to learn about the facility so California can design one of its own, he says.

"I've been to half a dozen urban search-and-rescue training facilities in the United States, and this one is, hands-down, the best," he says. "It is not twice as good, but 10 times as good."

Not only are Disaster City's facilities top-notch, but its leaders and visiting instructors are considered to be among the finest practicing emergency responders in the field.

Stephen Wright, who led the recent advanced course on exterior shoring, is a Nacogdoches County paramedic, a FEMA structural collapse instructor, and a member of Texas Task Force 1. He has responded to a list of high-profile disasters including September 11, the 2000 Fort Worth tornado and Hurricane Rita.

Parker, too, has often found himself heading for such disasters. He was even called when the unthinkable happened nearby in 1999, as the heralded Aggie bonfire collapsed, killing 12 students.

"That's probably the hardest disaster I've ever been to because of the connection to the university," he says.

Those who come for training at Disaster City are also among the most experienced in the nation, and must satisfy several prerequisites to be admitted to the program. They come from around the world and apply the knowledge they gain in College Station to a variety of major disasters.

Members of the London Fire Brigade called on skills they acquired at Disaster City when bombings shook London's public transportation system last July, killing 56 people.

In an interview with CNN, London Fire Brigade Commissioner Ken Knight credited Disaster City's urban search-and-rescue training for his agency's preparedness that day.

"I've been to half a dozen urban search-and-rescue training facilities in the United States, and this one is, hands down, the best. It is not twice as good, but 10 times as good."



Above: In this exercise, rescuers clear concrete columns from a passenger car and a schoolbus. **Below:** Disaster City's 52 acres in College Station are devoted to preparing first responders for the aftermath of everything from hurricanes to terrorist attacks.

"We'd taken the view that it was 'when,' rather than 'if,' and had a high level of training in place, including a number of London firefighters trained at Texas A&M for anti-terrorist activities [and] building collapse," Knight told CNN. "We had taken new equipment and prepared ourselves, sadly, for this day. This day was the reality of that training, and firefighters throughout London came through it well."

Although impressive, Disaster City remains a work in progress.

One of Disaster City's rubble piles spans 10,000 square feet. In time it will represent the fallout from the Oklahoma City bombing. Towering beside the pile is the steel frame of a multilevel structure that will become a smaller replica of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

Staci Semrad is an Austin-based freelance writer and member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

Hurricane Preparedness: Call 2-1-1

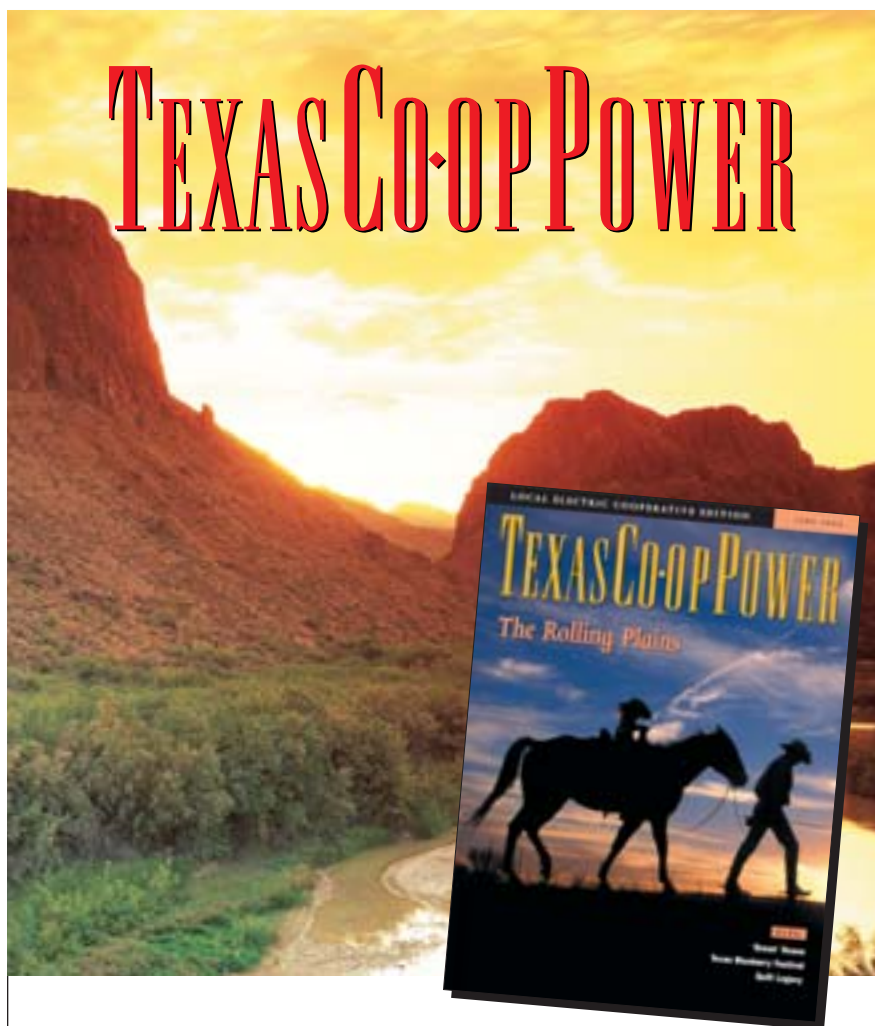
This hurricane season, June 1 through November 30, is predicted to be another severe one. Texas transportation and emergency officials are working to ensure that any necessary evacuations go more smoothly than last year's.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas and the Governor's Division of Emergency Management are asking all Texas residents to determine if they live in potential evacuation zones by calling 2-1-1. Now is the time to make an evacuation plan, prepare an emergency kit, and learn evacuation routes well in advance.

Give emergency responders a break. If you have special health care needs and cannot make transportation arrangements, register in advance by dialing 2-1-1.

If you do not have a car or other vehicle, and you cannot get a ride with friends, neighbors or family, register in advance for a ride by dialing 2-1-1.

It will be too late to register for help if you wait until a storm is in the Gulf.



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

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HOME IMPROVEMENTS THAT CAN SAVE YOU PLENTY



Energy-related home improvements may not be as inexpensive as buying a fan or as simple as scheduling a system checkup, but they can be well worth the expense or time they require.

Save With a Heat Pump

Like standard systems, heat pumps can meet your heating and cooling needs in one unit. The difference is that a heat pump will heat for significantly less cost than a typical electric resistance-heating unit. There are two types of heat pumps available today.

- Air-source heat pumps draw heat from the air outside to heat your home in winter, and expel heat outside to cool your home in summer. An air-source heat pump may reduce your heating costs by up to 50 percent if you convert from an electric furnace to an all-electric air-source heat pump. Generally, the colder it gets where you are, the less the savings, since the colder the air outside, the more difficult it is to extract heat from it.

- Ground-source heat pumps (also known as geothermal or earth-energy systems) make use of the earth's ability to store natural heat. They pump heat from deep in the earth into your home rather than taking it from the air. A ground-source heat pump may cost more than a conventional system, but the energy savings could pay for the unit in three to five years.

Be Good to the Planet and Your Pocketbook: Go Solar

Using passive solar energy to heat and cool your home can cut your heating costs by more than 50 percent and help reduce your cooling

costs, too. If you're building a new home or doing a major renovation of your existing home, consider passive solar techniques such as:

- Placing larger, insulated windows on south-facing walls for more efficient heating.
- Improving heat transfer by locating thermal mass, such as a concrete slab floor or heat-absorbing wall, close to windows.
- Using reflective coatings on windows, exterior walls and roof to keep out heat in summer.
- Installing strategically designed overhangs to shade the house from summer sun.

Keep the Air Inside Where It Belongs

If your heating and cooling dollars are going out the window due to air leaks in your house, you need to caulk, weatherstrip and insulate.

Caulking, or filling cracks and gaps in your home, will eliminate air leakage around doors and windows as well as in areas where plumbing, ducting or electrical wiring penetrate the house. Weatherstripping is also useful around doors and windows that leak air.

Insulation creates a barrier of resistance to keep heat from escaping in winter or coming in during summer. The "R-factor" assigned to different types of insulation refers to the level of resistance. Different R-factor ratings are appropriate for different parts of the state, so check with your co-op or a local insulation dealer to see what's right for you.

Source: You Have the Power: A Guide to Cost-Cutting Conservation Measures



YOUR LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WILL BE CLOSED TUESDAY, JULY 4, FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY. WE WISH YOU A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY.

A/C SAFETY CAN PREVENT SHOCKS

Hot weather brings increased use of air conditioners. Contact with electric current from air conditioners accounts for a significant number of electrocutions and electrical injuries annually. Electrical hazards are the sixth leading cause of workplace fatalities. Contact with large appliances, such as air conditioners, contributes to nearly 20 percent of consumer product electrocutions.

Remember these safety tips to avoid deaths, injuries and economic losses due to electrical hazards in the home or workplace:

- Use a circuit tester. Make sure it is working by testing it before and after you use it.
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to help prevent electrocutions.
- Understand your electrical system—know which fuse or circuit breaker controls each switch, light and outlet.
- Make sure circuits are turned off before starting work, and take measures to make sure they are not turned back on while working.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation



DOWNED LINES THREATEN LIVES

Downed power lines can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or death. The following tips can help you stay safe around downed lines:

- If you see a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it. The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times.
- If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with a downed line, do not touch the person. You could become the next victim. Call 9-1-1 instead.
- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object, such as a broom or stick. Even nonconductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet, can conduct electricity and then electrocute you.
- Be careful not to put your feet near water where a downed power line is located.

- Do not drive over downed lines.
- If you are in your car and it is in contact with the downed line, stay in your car. Honk your horn for help and tell others to stay away from your vehicle.
- If you must leave your car because it's on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with the car and the ground at the same time. This way you avoid being the path of electricity from the car to the earth. Shuffle away from the car.

WATER + ELECTRICITY = DANGER

Water and electricity don't mix. To reduce electrical hazards, here's some safety advice:

- Sailboats often have masts of 30 feet or more, which are dangerous when they come into contact with overhead power lines. Stay at least 20 feet away from overhead power lines.
- Use outlet covers on outdoor receptacles near swimming pools. Keep cords and electrical devices away from pools. Never handle electrical items when you are wet.
- Use a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to help prevent electro-

cutions and electrical shock injuries. Portable GFCIs require no tools to install and are available at prices ranging from \$12 to \$30.

- Electrical devices such as circuit breakers, fuses, GFCIs, receptacles, plugs and switches can malfunction when water and silt get inside. Replace those that have been submerged.

- Do not allow power cord connections to become wet.

- When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electric shock.



EFFICIENT COOLING IN A NUTSHELL

- Set the thermostat at 78 degrees.
- Consider alternatives such as fans to take the load off your central system.
- Have your system serviced regularly for efficient operation.
- Clean or replace filters regularly.
- Keep ducts in good repair to avoid air leaks.
- Caulk, weather-strip and insulate.
- Install storm windows and double-pane windows.
- Landscape with plants that will block the sun in summer and let it in during winter.
- Choose window coverings, carpet and wall coverings with energy efficiency in mind.
- Take steps to minimize air loss through the fireplace.

Choctaw Bill Robinson

BY BARBARA BARTON

Circuit-riding preacher Bill Robinson shared the gospel with both settlers and Indians in the mid-19th century, sometimes with mixed results. Robinson was born in North Carolina in 1809 and had made his way to Texas by 1848. He was licensed as a Baptist minister in Rusk County and preached the first gospel sermons in Erath, Comanche and Brown counties during the 1850s. Before the end of his long and fruitful life, he had organized or served as pastor of at least 20 Baptist churches.

Texas was a wild and woolly frontier during the period Robinson was doing the Lord's work. Once, in 1859, he was officiating at a wedding ceremony when Indians raided the cabin and stole the bride. Robinson joined other members of the wedding party and went hell-bent for leather after the raiders. Several hours later, the bride was retrieved and the couple finished their vows.

Robinson preached to Indians every chance he got. He converted a group of Tonkawa Indians who were living at a military camp on Hord's Creek in Coleman County. The newly saved Indians decided they wanted to remain indefinitely near the protection of the troops. The soldiers weren't pleased with this arrangement, so they told the Indians that washing their sins away in the river by baptism would make their children sick. The Tonkawas quickly left camp.

In 1861 Robinson moved his family to a place near Camp Colorado in Coleman County. Robinson, like most preachers of that era, was also a rancher. When possible, he sold beef to the soldiers. Since he spent most of

his time in the saddle going from one community to another preaching, his farm needed a man's guidance. Thankfully, his older son kept the livestock fed and the home fires burning. All told, Robinson fathered 14 children and survived two wives.

In 1869, Robinson built a gristmill and sawmill in the southeastern part of Comanche County at a community

While at Camp Colorado, Robinson preached to Baptists in the same building where Methodists worshipped. The two denominations were considered miles apart in theology, and Choctaw Bill dismissed the Methodists as "tender-toed coyotes." Differences of opinion festered so badly between the two denominations that they decided to have a week of discussion about theology to clear the air. The

winner of the debate would receive 500 head of cattle. Robinson defended his views, and Elder J.M. Johnson spoke for the Methodists. If there was anything Robinson knew how to do, it was to talk as long as anybody would listen.

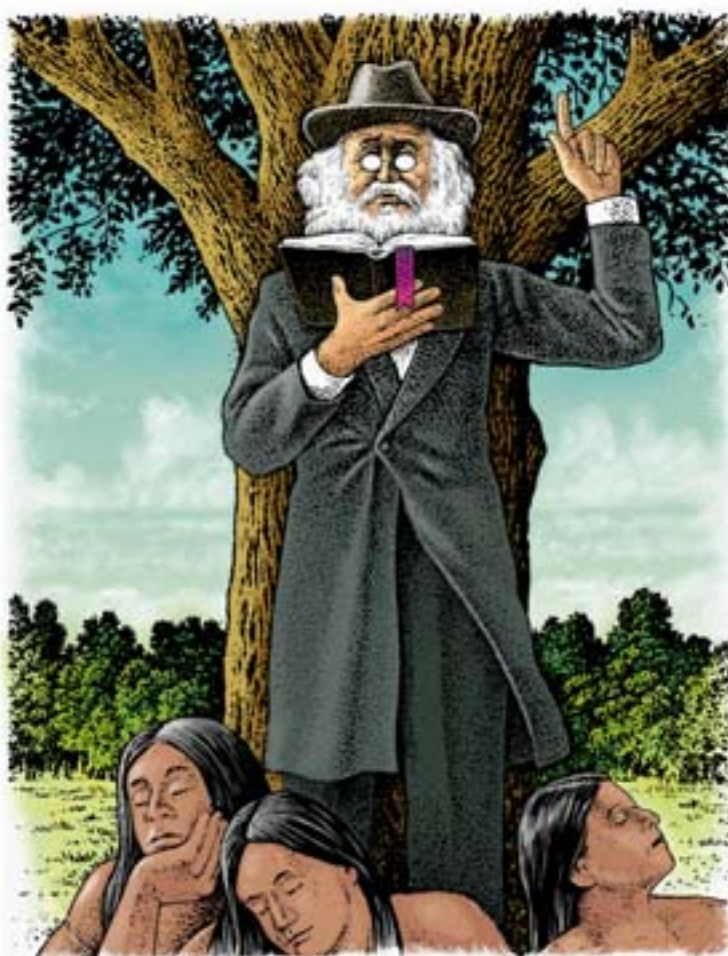
If the cattle were actually awarded to one of the speakers, the winner's name has been lost in the mists of time. But peace and harmony were restored after this lengthy discussion.

When he wasn't differing with Methodists, the outspoken preacher did much good. He helped to establish the short-lived Brazos Institute, a private school in what is now Palo Pinto County, in 1860. A marker commemorating Choctaw Bill Robinson's life is situated on FM

1702, three miles north of its intersection with State Highway 36, halfway between Comanche and Hamilton. The marker sits under a spreading oak tree similar to the one under which he preached his lengthy sermons in Hazel Dell.

Barbara Barton, who lives in Knickerbocker, wrote *Pistol Packin' Preachers: Circuit Riders of Texas*, Taylor Trade Publishing, 2005.

Coleman County Electric Cooperative serves the area where Choctaw Bill Robinson preached.



JOHN WILSON

called Hazel Dell. He loved to stand under an oak tree there and preach to anyone who would listen. It wasn't unusual for him to put his gun in the fork of the tree and preach for several hours. One day a group of Choctaw Indians stopped under its shady boughs to listen to Robinson's message. After he preached for four hours, the Indians were heard to say as they left: "White man lie. Him talk too long." From then on, Robinson was known as "Choctaw Bill" Robinson.

Peace, Love and a Big Yellow Table

BY ROBIN M. ALLEN

When I was little, my family had a ridiculous breakfast table. It was as round, bright and yellow as the sun. And big. One of us could spill a glass of milk at breakfast and the splash wouldn't reach the others until dinner.

My parents bought the big yellow table in Mexico during a trip across the border to shop for silver bracelets, tooled leather purses and marble chessboards. Later, during our musical phase, these trips would yield castanets, maracas and bongo drums. The bright colors and sultry heat of Mexico has a way of enchanting you into believing you can't live without something, so I can only assume that my dad was under a spell when he decided that: a) we needed a new breakfast table, and b) it needed to be a big yellow one.

We had made dozens of these border runs, enough to know that by the time we returned home and hauled our Mexican curios into our Texas rooms, the spell would be broken. My brother would realize that the life-sized statue of knight's armor didn't look as cool next to his twin bed as it did against a backdrop of hundreds of piñatas. On the next trip, my sister would see that the flamingo-pink sombrero, which looked festive and adorable on her in the mirrors in Mexico, looked silly in the mirrors at home. The knight ended up serving as sentry in the garage, no doubt embarrassed by his sequined sombrero and whipstitched gun holster.

When we finally got the big yellow table into the house and alongside the rest of our French Provincial furniture, it was as out of place as a sumo wrestler at the Westminster Dog Show. I thought my dad would own up to his big yellow mistake and the knight would finally have a place to sit down and play the bongos. Instead, my dad gave an approving nod, then started dragging in the big yellow chairs.

That evening, my mom assigned us our seats around the big yellow table—my baby sister, Rebecca, next to her; my younger brother, Paul, who had rheumatoid arthritis and was in a

wheelchair, next to my dad; and my sister Lisa and I in the crook of the breakfast nook.

The big yellow chairs were impossible to move quietly over our tiled floor, and mealtimes were a cacophony of scrapes and screeches. Those chairs were also, I understand now, the beginning of cooperation.

As children, our rivalries were fierce and relentless. But now we needed each other's help. You couldn't sit down to dinner unless someone helped you pull out your big yellow chair. The circum-

Paul raced remote-control cars over the kitchen floor, but he couldn't get out of his wheelchair to retrieve them when they wedged under the big yellow pedestal base, so Rebecca fished them out for him.

Then one day, the big yellow table was gone. I don't know why my parents decided to end its tenure. Maybe my mom got tired of our guests' raised eyebrows when they saw it. Or maybe it was simply too big for our new house. A sensible oak table took its place.

We still fought over who got the



GIL ADAMS

ference of the big yellow table was so vast that all six of us dined without ever touching elbows or knocking knees. Unfortunately, we couldn't reach a thing on our own. If I wanted another pork chop, I'd have to hand my plate to Lisa, who'd hand it to Rebecca, who'd hover it in front of my mom while she placed one on my plate.

This mealtime teamwork was simply a matter of necessity, but we soon started cooperating in other ways. Rebecca worried she'd be stuck at the big yellow table, so Lisa and I pulled out her big yellow chair before we sat down to watch *Scooby Doo*, thus easing her mind that all of us might take a sudden family vacation without her.

front seat in the station wagon and we still "accidentally" locked each other out of the house, but our time around the big yellow table had taught us to resolve our differences faster. I sometimes helped Lisa clear the table if she helped me load the dishwasher. And Paul stopped telling on "the girls" when we started hiding his Hot Wheels in his room where he could find them instead of in the backyard.

I think my dad was right that day in Mexico. We did need a new breakfast table, and it needed to be a big yellow one.

Robin M. Allen lives and writes in a little red cabin in the Texas Hill Country.



Thank You, Elmer Kelton

BY MAXINE MAYES • ILLUSTRATION BY FRANK CURRY

Shortly before our marriage over 36 years ago, I gave my future husband a book, *A Place in the Woods*, by Helen Hoover. Since Carl was an outdoorsy kind of guy who liked hunting, fishing and camping, I thought he'd enjoy Hoover's true tale of how she and her husband left lucrative careers in cosmopolitan Chicago for a pioneer-type life in the North Woods of Minnesota.

The book went unread for many years while I learned a lot about my husband. You see, given a choice on a hot Texas day between relaxing with a good book in air-conditioned comfort or grubbing out mesquite seedlings on our acreage, he'd grab the grubbing hoe every time. Not that he didn't appreciate air conditioning, he simply hated to read, an aversion that started in first grade and continued through high school and beyond. "If it weren't for my mother," he's confessed many times, "I'd have never learned to read."

For the dreaded book reports in high school, he read the first and last chapters of a book and charmed the librarian into filling in the gaps. I, on the other hand, read voraciously and traced my enthusiasm to my childhood. My father was a teacher in numerous rural Texas communities, and we often lived adjacent to the schoolhouse. In the summertime, the school library became my private playground where I spent countless hours in the company of the Bobbsey Twins, Nancy Drew and *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew*.

Though Carl and I had other shared interests, I longed for a time when the two of us would sit before the fireplace on long winter evenings, with only the crackle of the fire and the rustle of book pages breaking the silence.

Eight years ago my wish came true, thanks to a twist of fate involving Elmer Kelton, the prolific Western writer from San Angelo. I'd scheduled a fall workshop for beginning writers in Camp Wood. Three weeks before that date, I was asked to postpone my workshop one week so it wouldn't

conflict with a book signing for Elmer Kelton scheduled for the same Saturday. With my compliance came an invitation to promote my workshop at the signing.

At the time, Western novels were not part of my reading diet but, realizing we would meet Kelton, I hurried to a bookstore to purchase *The Time It Never Rained*, his classic chronicle of a fiercely independent rancher, Charlie Flagg, and his struggle to survive the drought of the '50s. Like other readers who discover Kelton, I was hooked. But beyond that, a glimmer of hope for those winter evenings of reading surfaced in my mind. You see, Carl Mayes and Charlie Flagg could have been brothers, so alike are they in philosophy and character and work ethic. And Carl had always had an affinity for ranch life, even though he'd never owned a ranch. I just knew that if I could get him to read that book it would open his eyes to the wonders of reading ... and it did.

After reading *The Time It Never Rained*, Carl, like someone long deprived of food, devoured Kelton's entire works, then started in on Louis L'Amour's vast repertoire. Along the way he discovered the compelling characters in William W. Johnstone's Western fiction. Occasionally, he takes a brief break from cowboys and reads a biography, a historical narrative or, upon my recommendation, an obscure but captivating memoir like *The Orchard* by Adele Crockett Robertson.

All of this happened less than two years after Carl's retirement from the Caterpillar dealership where he'd worked for 48 years. Perfect timing, for now we can read at leisure on summer afternoons when it's too hot to be outdoors or on winter evenings before a fire. As I write this, the only sounds I hear are the tapping of my fingers on the keyboard, the occasional hiss and pop from the fireplace, and the soft rustling of pages being turned as Carl sits in his recliner, engrossed in Kelton's latest. Kudos to

Charlie Flagg's Philosophy

Charlie Flagg, the main character in *The Time It Never Rained*, is a man of old-school principles. Here's how he explains why he alone resisted the government's drought relief program:

"I'll give you an illustration. If you was to go out to my ranch and look around my barn, you'd find a bunch of cats. Feed barns and haystacks are bad about breedin' mice if you don't have cats to keep them thinned out. Now, if you'd go in my wife's kitchen you'd see an old pet cat curled up close to the stove. She's fat and lazy. If a mouse was to run across the kitchen floor that old cat wouldn't hardly stir a whisker. She's been fed everything she wanted. She depends on us. If we went off someday and left her she'd starve.

"But out at the barn there's cats that can spot a mouse across two corrals. I never feed them. They rustle for themselves, and they do a damn good job of it. If I was to leave they'd never miss me. All they need is a chance to operate. They may not be as fat as the old pet, but I'd say they're healthier. And they don't have to rub somebody's leg for what they get. Now, you can call me old-fashioned if you want to—lots of people do—but I'd rather be classed with them go-getters out in the barn than with that old gravy-licker in the kitchen."

you, Elmer Kelton, for making dreams come true.

Writer Maxine Mayes and her husband continue to spend long hours reading before the fireplace both at Sisterdale, where they live, and at a getaway cabin near Camp Wood. They are members of both Central Texas and Pedernales electric cooperatives.

My Life in Salsa

First, there was Pace Picante Sauce. Growing up in San Antonio, that hourglass-shaped bottle was a staple in our fridge. Then, a friend in high school with an entrepreneurial streak started bottling her own salsa. It was fresh and chunky, heaped by the spoonful atop slices of my dad's home-grown tomatoes for a summer snack.

Next, I fell in love with a salsa from our favorite Mexican food joint, El Milagrito. It was served heated with cheese melted in it. When the tattooed son of the owner brought it to your table, he'd growl, "Coming at you, hot and cheesy!"

My husband has made up a couple of mean batches, one with habaneros we grew in a metal washtub in full sun. They were vicious little orbs, and I couldn't eat it.

These days, I like a store-bought brand, Arriba. They make a medium-hot fire-roasted salsa that is the new staple in our fridge. But I aspire to salsa self-sufficiency. I want to make my own, to share it with neighbors, to have people ask for more. To this end, I went searching on the Internet for my perfect salsa recipe.

I like a simple, fresh salsa with all the requisite ingredients and the added zing of lemon juice or vinegar. I found the right mix in this Fresh Tomato Salsa, from a website called Texas Cooking Online (texascooking.com). The website is an outstanding resource for recipes and cooking tips, but you'll also find excellent articles about Texas food products, wines and cooking traditions.

Who knows what salsas await me down the road? Happily, as a confirmed Texan, this condiment is my constant companion.

Fresh Tomato Salsa

- 1 medium purple onion, chopped
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 large clove garlic, chopped
- 1-2 large fresh jalapeño peppers, seeded, chopped
- ½ cup fresh cilantro leaves, chopped
- 1½ pounds ripe tomatoes, seeded, chopped
- 1-3 small cans of green chilies, depending upon taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

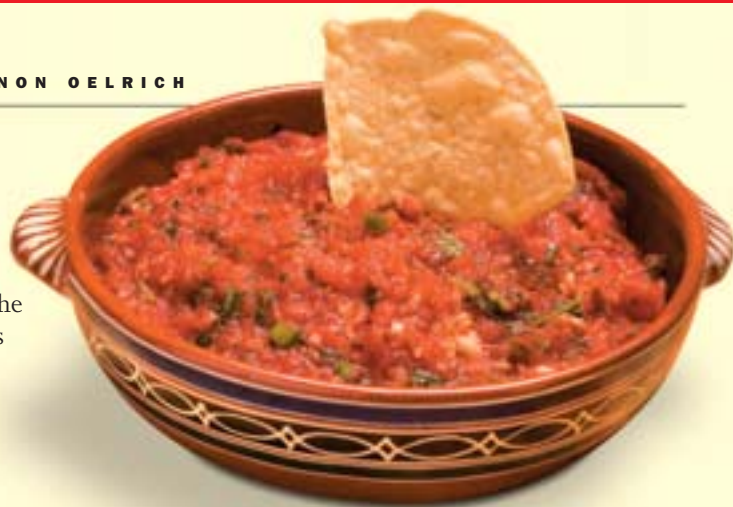
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons tomato juice

Combine onions, garlic, jalapeño and cilantro in blender or food processor. Pulse until finely chopped, but not puréed.

Add tomatoes, canned chilies, oil, lime juice, salt, cumin, vinegar and tomato juice. Pulse until just chopped—not too smooth.

Correct seasonings, if necessary. Cover and refrigerate for about an hour before serving. Makes about 4 cups.

Serving size: ½ cup. Per serving: 50 calories, 1 gram protein, 2 grams fat, 8 grams carbohydrates, 158 milligrams sodium, 0 cholesterol



Most months, when we test recipes for this contest, we have to loosen our belts afterwards. This month was a nice break—it's pretty hard to fill up on salsa. Even so, an entire table was covered with bowls of salsa and bags of chips. We dipped and tasted over and over (no double dipping!), narrowing the field until we found our three winners.

GEORGIA FULENWIDER writes that her top prizewinning Salsa by George "is a favorite with my church, friends and family in Whitewright. I've been told our athletic director puts this salsa on everything he eats." We can see why! Georgia is a member of Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative.

Salsa by George

- 2 large cans (28 ounces each) whole tomatoes, or 16 fresh tomatoes
- 1 can (14 ounces) Rotel tomatoes and green chilies
- 1 small can (4 ounces) salsa verde
- 1 small can (4 ounces) green chilies, or 4 fresh roasted green chilies*
- 3-4 chipotle peppers in adobo sauce (canned)
- 3-4 roasted jalapeño peppers
- 2-3 roasted habanero peppers (optional, for extra-hot salsa)
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro
- 6-8 whole garlic cloves
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 cans (14 ounces each) diced tomatoes with roasted garlic

In blender or food processor, blend whole tomatoes, Rotel, salsa verde, green chilies, all peppers, cilantro and garlic cloves. Pour into large bowl or gallon pitcher (great

for storage); add chopped onion and diced tomatoes. Mix well. Refrigerate at least 3 to 4 hours; serve with tortilla chips or your favorite Mexican dish. Yields 1 gallon.

*To roast peppers: Place on foil or cookie sheet under oven broiler until skin blisters and browns; turn and roast all sides. When roasted, they give salsa a great smoky flavor.

Serving size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Per serving: 32 calories, 1 gram protein, trace fat, 7 grams carbohydrates, 40 milligrams sodium, trace cholesterol

Slow Cooker Salsa

- 10-20 small or plum tomatoes, whole
- 4-8 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2-3 onions, quartered
- 2-3 jalapeño peppers
- $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup fresh cilantro or parsley
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons salt
- Juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lime (optional)

Wash tomatoes (cut away any bruised spots or large cores) and place in slow cooker (enough tomatoes to fill 5-quart $\frac{3}{4}$ full). Cut slit in 4 to 8 tomatoes; place garlic cloves inside tomatoes. Place onions on top of tomatoes. Cut stems off peppers and place on top of onions. Set on high and cook for $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 hours (or cook on low for 5 to 6 hours), until vegetables are tender. Let cool.

In food processor or blender, layer cooled mixture with cilantro (or parsley) and blend well. Pour into bowl and add salt and lime. Mix well and pour into jars or other covered container. Chill before serving. Keep stored in refrigerator. Makes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 quarts.

Serving size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Per serving: 20 calories,

1 gram protein, trace fat, 4 grams carbohydrates, 206 milligrams sodium, 0 milligrams cholesterol

CAROL WISHARD

Fannin County Electric Cooperative

Grilled Salsa Verde

- 1 pound tomatillos, husked and quartered
- $\frac{1}{2}$ medium onion, cut in half
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 4 serrano or 3 jalapeño peppers
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cilantro, chopped
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lard (or canola oil)
- 1 cup chicken broth (or water)

Preheat grill to high. Place vegetables on a vegetable grate or on skewers. It will take 4 to 6 minutes for all but onions. Remove to cutting board, and continue to cook onions about 6 minutes more. (For milder salsa, remove seeds from peppers.)

Place grilled vegetables, cilantro, sugar and salt in blender; process to coarse paste.

Heat lard in deep saucepan over medium heat. Add paste and cook until slightly darkened and thick, about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in broth and simmer for about 6 minutes. If too thick, add more stock or water. Adjust salt and sugar if needed. Serve at room temperature. Leftovers will keep for 1 week in refrigerator. Yields 3 cups.

Serving size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Per serving: 66 calories, 2 grams protein, 3 grams fat, 8 grams carbohydrates, 489 milligrams sodium, 2 milligrams cholesterol

NORA WHITTED

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

OCTOBER RECIPE CONTEST: VEGGIES FOR VEGGIE-HATERS



I'll admit, I like my veggies lightly steamed or sautéed, but I know plenty of people who won't let something green near their mouths unless it's been thoroughly camouflaged. We want recipes that make veggie-haters beg for more! Send your favorites 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 July 10. The top winner will receive a prize from Pioneer. Others whose recipes are published will also receive a prize.

AROUND TEXAS



MARIE KELLEY

Contestants in period clothing will be judged for accuracy and speed as they shoot out balloons while on horseback at the Cowboy Mounted Shooting Texas State Championships in Conroe July 21-23.

July

June 29–July 2. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or oldmillmarketplace.com

June 30–July 1. Freedom Fiesta, **Seguin**, (830) 379-6382 or seguintx.org

1. Demolition Derby, **Mount Vernon**, (903) 588-2482

1. Market Day on the Square, **Bellville**, (979) 865-3407 or bellville.com

1. Market Day, **Elgin**, (512) 376-6115 or elginchurch.com

1. Old Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or pearlbluegrass.com

1. Citywide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307 or sintontexas.org

1. Independence Day Celebration, **Kyle**, (512) 268-4220 or cityofkyle.com

1. Jackson Street Market Days, **Harlingen**, (956) 423-4041

1. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201

1. Tomato Festival, **Avery**, (903) 684-3825 or cityofavery.com

1. July Jubilee, **Leakey**, (830) 232-5222 or friocanyonchamber.com

1. Fireworks on the Beach, **Port O'Connor**, (361) 983-2898

1. Patriotic Festival, **Bastrop**, (512) 303-0558

1-2. Art Festival, **Rockport**, (361) 729-5519

1-2. Star of the Hills, outdoor historical drama, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-6969 or emilyann.org

1-2. Highway 290 Trade Days, **Burton**, (979) 357-2552

1-3. VFW Rodeo and PBR Bull Riding, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-6441 or visitwimberley.com/rodeo

1-4. July Fourth Celebration, **Granbury**, (325) 648-3619 or granburychamber.com

1-4. July Fourth Celebration, **Canadian**, (806) 323-6234

2. Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church Picnic, **Dubina**, (979) 725-8203

3. Christmas in July Celebration, **Goldthwaite**, (325) 648-3619 or goldthwaite.biz

3. Johnny Dee and the Rocket 88s Sock Hop, **Canyon Lake**, (830) 964-2324

3. Celebration and Fireworks Display, **Caldwell**, (979) 567-4286

3. Pops Concert and Fireworks, **San Angelo**, (325) 658-5877

3-4. Grape Myrtle Festival and Driving Trail,

Waxahachie, (972) 937-2390

3-9. Spring Ho Festival, **Lampasas**, (512) 556-5301 or lampasaschamber.org

3, 18. Abendkonzerte, **Boerne**, (830) 537-4367

4. Old Fashioned 4th of July Celebration, **Huntsville**, (936) 295-8113 or huntsvillemainstreet.org

4. Fourth of July on the River Concert, **Kerrville**, (830) 792-8387

4. Summerfest, **San Marcos**, 1-888-200-5620 or sanmarcoscharms.com

4. Independence Day Celebration, **Beaumont**, (409) 880-3163 or beaumontcvb.com

4. Fourth of July Parade, **Harlingen**, (956) 245-5005

4. Annual Turtle Race, **Mount Pleasant**, (903) 572-1705

4. Salute to America, **Onalaska**, cityofonalaska.us

4. Fireworks Display on Lake, **Jacksonville**, 1-800-376-2217 or jacksonvilletexas.com

4. Jefferson Salutes America 4th of July Celebration, **Jefferson**, 1-888-GO-RELAX or jefferson-texas.com

4. Fireworks at the Fisheries, **Athens**, 1-888-294-2847

4. 4th of July Celebration, **Luckenbach**,

- luckenbachtexas.com
4. Explosion in the Park, **Big Sandy**, (903) 636-2238
 4. Fourth of July Picnic, **Schulenburg**, (361) 798-5888
 4. Fourth of July Celebration, **Marshall**, (903) 935-7868
 4. Fireworks and Floating Parade, **Uncertain**, (903) 789-3443
 4. Fourth of July at Heritage Park, **Bryan**, (979) 822-6769, brazosheritage.org
 4. People's Parade and Celebration, **Elgin**, (512) 281-2477
 4. Fourth of July Parade and Barbecue, **Wheelock**, (979) 828-4347
 4. Fireworks Display, **Victoria**, (361) 485-3200
 4. Parade and Festival on Nolan Creek, **Belton**, (254) 939-3551
 4. Fourth of July Fireworks Show over **Clear Lake**, (281) 338-0333 or clearlakearea.com
 6. Free Concert in the Park, **Conroe**, (936) 522-3025 or downtownconroe.org
 - 6-8. Blue Ridge Rodeo, **Blue Ridge**, (214) 733-3981
 - 6-8. Jubilee Days, **Rockdale**, (512) 446-2030
 7. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
 7. Aley Picnic, **Kemp**, (903) 498-6482
 - 7-8. Fireman's Rodeo, **Mineola**, (903) 569-2087 or mineolachamber.org
 - 7-9. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, 1-866-433-6683 or oldmilltradedays.com
 - 7-9. Flea Market Days, **Jewett**, (903) 536-7689
 8. Falls on the Colorado Museum Annual Founders' Day Celebration, **Marble Falls**, (830) 798-2157
 8. German Festival, **Nazareth**, (806) 945-2285 or greaternaz2020.org
 8. Watermelon Festival, **McDade**, (512) 273-0018
 8. Mason Roundup, **Mason**, (325) 265-4302
 - 8-9. National Depression Glass Show and Convention, **Waxahachie**, (972) 938-3434, ndga.net
 - 8-9, 22-23. Chicken House Flea Market, **Stephenville**, (254) 968-0888
 9. Living History Day, **McKinney**, (972) 562-8790, chestnutssquare.org
 10. Jamboree, **McDade**, (512) 273-2307
 - 10-15. Rodeo Week, **Jacksonville**, 1-800-376-2217 or jacksonvilletexas.com
 12. El Second Weensdee, **San Benito**, (956) 361-0110
 - 13-15. 127th Annual Leonard Picnic, **Leonard**, (903) 587-0174 or leonardonline.net
 - 14-15. Summer Bash, battle of bands, car/motorcycle show, raft race, **Lockhart**, (512) 398-9600 or lockhartthispanicchamber.org
 - 14-16. East Texas Quilt Shop Hop, **Trinity**, (936) 594-1237
 - 14-16. Third Monday Trade Days, **McKinney**, (972) 562-5466
 15. Joel McBroom Memorial Rod and Custom Car Show, **Leonard**, (903) 587-2592
 15. Cheeseburger Cook-Off and Festival, **Friona**, (806) 250-3491
 15. Citywide Garage Sale, **Fayetteville**,

- 1-888-575-4553
15. Watermelon Festival, **Hempstead**, (979) 826-8217 or hempsteadtxchamber.com
 - 15-18. American Legion Baseball Division 3 Tournament, **Castroville**, (210) 355-2963
 16. STCA Conjunto of the Year Awards, **Harlingen**, (956) 454-8482
 16. Catfish Festival, **Yantis**, (903) 383-2610 or woodcountytexas.com
 - 16-17. Big Catfish Splash Fishing Tournament, **Lake Fork**, (903) 878-2500 or

- lakeforkchamber.org
21. Country Opry, **Victoria**, (361) 552-9347
 - 21-23. Cowboy Mounted Shooting Texas State Championships, **Conroe**, (936) 344-2327
 - 21-23. National Cowboy Day Festival, **San Angelo**, (325) 655-4136
 22. American Music in the Texas Hill Country, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 997-2835 or pioneeremuseum.com
 22. Orleans Street Jazz Festival, **Beaumont**, (409) 880-3749 or beaumontcvb.com



Swimming

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

- Keep electric appliances at least 10 feet from a pool and wet surfaces. Use battery-powered appliances whenever possible.
- Outdoor electric appliances should be 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.
- 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!



**Texas Electric
Cooperatives**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

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

22. Trades Day, **Coldspring**, (936) 653-2009 or coldspringheritage.org
 22. Ranch Road Show, **Brenham**, (979) 421-6883 or BackAtTheRanch.biz
 22. Christmas in July, **Cleveland**, (281) 592-1174
 22. Bluegrass Music Show, **Quitman**, (903) 763-4411 or quitman.com
 22. Western Swing Show and Dance, **Navasota**, (936) 825-7338
 22. VFD Fish Fry/Auction, **Winchester**, (979) 242-3173
 22-23. Beach Comber Art Show, **Harlingen**, (956) 425-4030
 28-29. Big-Hearted Houston 2006 Quilt Show, **Houston**, qggh.org
 28-30. Texas Hill Country Swap Meet, **Fredericksburg**, (830) 388-2223 or FredericksburgCarClub.com
 28-30. US Hang Gliding and Paragliding National Fly-In, **Leakey**, (830) 232-6186 or flexwing.org/txopen
 29. Somerfest, **Somerville**, (979) 272-1835

- 29-30. Running of the Bull, storytelling festival, **Eldorado**, (325) 853-2434
 31-August 12. Shakespeare Under the Stars, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-6969 or emilyann.org

August

1. Abendkonzerte, **Boerne**, (830) 537-4367
 3-6. Old Mill Marketplace, **Canton**, (903) 567-5445 or oldmillmarketplace.com
 4. Knights of Columbus Fish Fry, **Dripping Springs**, (512) 894-4470
 4. Jackson Street Market Days, **Harlingen**, (956) 423-5440 or harlingen.com
 4-6. Old Mill Trade Days, **Post**, 1-866-433-6683 or oldmilltradedays.com
 4-6. Schulenburg Festival, **Schulenburg**, schulenburgfestival.org
 5. Market Day, **Elgin**, (512) 376-6115 or elginchurch.com
 5. Old Time Music, **Pearl**, (254) 865-6013 or

- pearlbluegrass.com
 5. Citywide Market, **Sinton**, (361) 364-2307 or sintontexas.org
 5. Market Day, **Wimberley**, (512) 847-2201
 6. Blessing of the Fleet, **Kemah**, (281) 334-9880 or kemah.net
 6. Sts. Peter and Paul Festival, **Fredericksburg**, (979) 732-3430
 6-13. Hill Country Cowboy Camp Meeting, **Mountain Home**, (830) 866-3366

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

FESTIVAL OF THE MONTH

BY JIM GRAMON

Texas Steak Cook-Off, Beef Symposium and Tourist Trap: July 29, Hico

Summer heat won't be all that's sizzling in Hico this month, as Texas' top steak grillers will be competing for bragging rights and prizes at the Texas Steak Cook-Off. The town celebrates its 120th Old Settlers Reunion with contests, a parade and a carnival, then caps off the festivities with this unique,

mouth-watering event.

While it's only the third year for the Steak Cook-Off (billed as the only one of its kind in the state), the Old Settlers Reunion (which began as a Confederate reunion) has been around nearly as long as Hico itself. The reunion activities begin earlier in the week on July 25, culminating this year with the cook-off, which is usually held in May. The date change occurred when the town of around 1,300 put the fate of the event on the election ballot. Hico (pronounced "high-coh") citizens voiced their approval resoundingly by a four-to-one margin. Since the election was held only one week prior to what would have been the usual date, organizers opted to hold the event in conjunction with the reunion this year only.

Cook-off contestants, who compete in "backyard expert" and "professional" divisions, are given similar cuts of ribeye steaks to prepare for the celebrity judges. The results, competitors say, are basically determined by seasoning (dry rub or marinade) and preparation

(cooks bring their own grills and wood/charcoal). After the contest, visitors may request the chef of their choice to prepare their steak dinner, complete with salad, baked potato, roll and iced tea. Chef Mansour Gorji of Dallas' Canary Cafe will be vying for his third win in the professional division.

Hico calls itself the town "Where Everybody Is Somebody." Maybe that's because one of the town's citizens claimed shortly before his death to be "somebody" named Billy the Kid. No one knows for sure if "Brushy" Bill Roberts was the real outlaw that Pat Garrett claimed to have shot in New Mexico, but local officials say he had the stories and bullet-wound scars to back up his claim. Hico has its own Billy the Kid Museum, to help you make up your own mind.

United Cooperative Services serves the Hico area, which is located at the junction of highways 281, 6 and 220 in Hamilton County. For more information, call 1-800-361-HICO or visit the following websites: hico-tx.com or texassteakcookoff.com.



JERRY MCADAMS, HICO NEWS-REVIEW

Close Calls

We have to hand it to our shutter-snapping readers: Close Calls is a topic that's hard to stage—a close call just happens! Fortunately, nearly everyone has a fast and easy digital camera on hand. And it's a good thing for us that these readers did, or we wouldn't have these great photos of close calls to share this month!

Murals is the topic for our September issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Murals, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before July 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.)



While on a recent trip to the Texas Hill Country, CONNIE SLOCOMB called this friendly longhorn for a closer look. "He got closer and closer, until we were nose to nose," she said. "That was close enough for me!" Slocomb is affiliated with Sam Houston Electric Cooperative.



Talk about a squeaker! We don't know how this lucky mouse did it, but he even found time to say "cheese" for the camera. Lamb County Electric Cooperative member MELISSA TIPTON snapped this classic close call.



"Heeee's out!" All-star catcher FRANKIE "SCOOTER" HARRIS gets the runner out in a close call at home plate. PRENTICE and TINA WESTBROOK of Taylor Electric Cooperative are the proud grandparents of Scooter.



Another inch or two and it would have been all over for FRANK and SHIRLEY CONNIFF's Suburban! While renovating their old "car shop," the falling roof barely missed Frank's head and came to rest on their vehicle's tailpipe. The Conniffs belong to San Bernard Electric Cooperative.



CLIFFORD LEE, a 100-pound weimaraner, proudly posed with an armadillo he caught. After his photo session, Cliff released the young armadillo unharmed, but he had a great story to tell his friends! Cherokee County Electric Cooperative members WAYNE and DARLENE JOSEY submitted the photo.

UPCOMING in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
September	Murals	July 10
October	Scarecrows	August 10
November	Mailboxes	September 10
December	Christmas Morning	October 10
January	Extreme Weather	November 10
February	Gates	December 10



Bill and Red, Shade Tree Vendors



DIANE LYELL

When Bill Taylor retired from his steel mill job in California, he traded a grinding big-city commute for blue Texas sky, a hand-fed longhorn and a bird nest inches above his head. His workstation for the past 21 years has been a trailer of fresh fruits and veggies at the side of Highway 84, west of Santa Anna and 57 miles south of Abilene.

When Taylor arrives at work about 9:00 each morning, Red, the longhorn, shows up to say, “Howdy.” He presses eagerly against the barbed wire fence and wraps his tongue around the tomato held in Taylor’s hand. Taylor grins and begins setting up his market beneath the live oak tree.

Taylor’s family moved from Texas to Pittsburgh, California, in 1937, when he was 7 years old. As an adult, he became a commercial fisherman and a steel mill laborer, with a 20-minute commute to work. By the time he retired 15 years later, the commute had become four hours. “I went to work mad and came home mad,” he said. “That’s no way to live!” Recalling blue skies and country roads, he moved back to Texas.

Taylor, now 76, doesn’t know precisely how he came to choose his new career, but he remembers thinking that in small-town Texas, you have to create your own work. He settled his business under a live oak tree used previously by another fruit vendor.

Three times a week, Taylor leaves Santa Anna in the wee hours of the morning for farmers’ markets as far away as San Antonio, four hours distant. By 4:30 a.m., he’s loading his trailer. When he pulls away, the trailer is buried under 2 feet of fresh fruit and vegetables. Taylor races out of the city before the maddening rush hour begins. He’s worn out three trucks by logging 60,000 miles a year, but he still has the same old trailer.

The spring selling season starts with squash, cucumbers, onions, strawberries and cantaloupe. Customers tell him they are waylaid by the sweet aroma floating down the highway. By summer’s end, citrus from the Valley, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes are his main attractions. Taylor is particular about sweet potatoes—only those from Canton,

“the Sweet Potato Capital of Texas,” will do. “They don’t have strings at the ends,” he says. He sells 6,000 pounds of potatoes a week.

Taylor “jaws” with customers while they select fruits and vegetables. He says about 80 percent of the people who stop are travelers heading cross-country, and many return year after year. To a special few, he reveals the scissortail nest above his head. He answers a lot of questions about the white longhorn with red ears. Taylor calls him “Red,” although the steer’s owner calls him “Whitey.” Red has been Taylor’s buddy since he was a 3-month-old calf. “He’s my best sales person. People take pictures of him at least 20 times a day. They just love it when he eats a tomato!”

Red is a longhorn with distinctive credentials. The Circle 95 brand on his ribs authenticates his participation in the Great American Cattle Drive of 1995. This nine-month historical re-enactment of an Old West cattle drive started in Fort Worth and ended 1,700 miles later in Miles City, Montana. Most of the cattle in the drive ended up in the meat market, but not Red. He returned to Texas to help Taylor sell fruits and vegetables.

Around noon, Taylor’s wife, Louise, brings lunch from their Santa Anna home, less than a mile away. She says Bill loves his job. “He gets down sick if he’s not under that tree.”

Taylor’s market is open from mid-May until October or November, depending on the growing season. He doesn’t mind sizzling summer heat or cold autumn days, but drenching thunderstorms will send him packing. “This is the best job ever,” he says. Tall tales and jokes are as much his stock-in-trade as the produce. “If I can get people to smile, that makes my day.”

Red moseys off, leaving Taylor sitting, as he has for the past 21 years, under the shade of the live oak tree.

Jan R. Carrington is a writer based in Abilene. Coleman County Electric Cooperative serves the Santa Anna area.