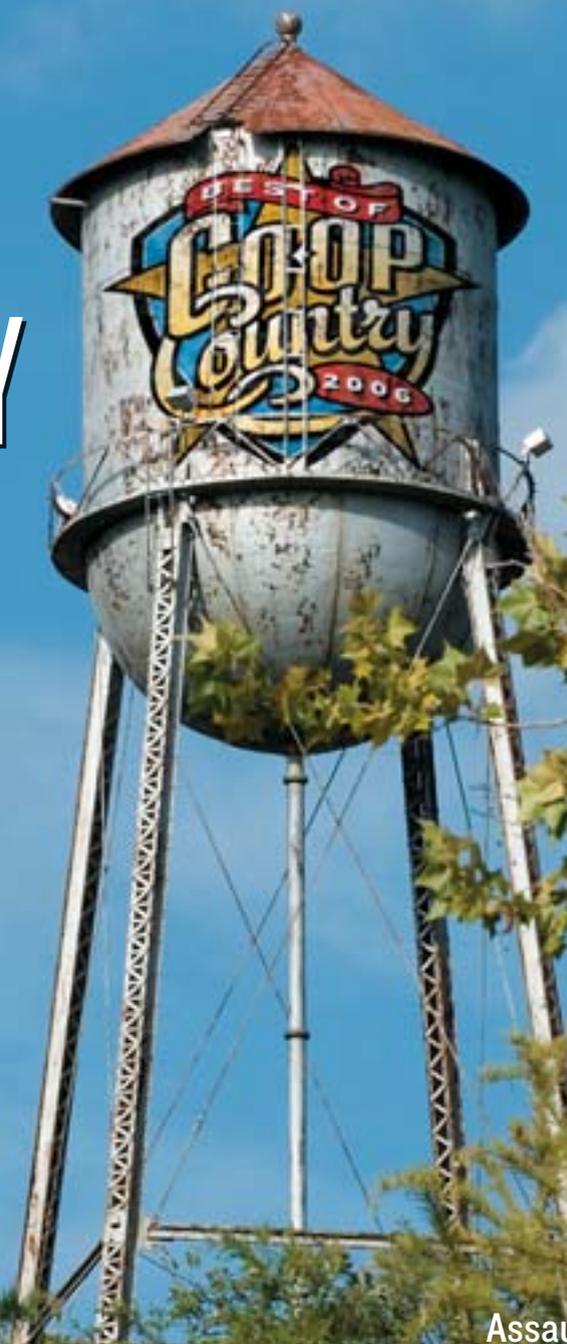


# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

BEST *of*  
CO-OP  
COUNTRY  
2006



PLUS

Assault, the Clubfooted Comet  
Italian Cooking

Hit the Road: Waxahachie to Corsicana

Getting to School

# SCHOOL SAFETY ABCs

The school buses are rolling and excited children are on their way to and from classes. It's time to start thinking about back-to-school safety!

## Safety Comes First:

- Look left, right, then left again before crossing the street.
- Take directions from crossing guards.
- Cross in front of the bus only after the driver signals it's OK to do so.

### Riding the school bus:

- Find a safe place for your child to wait for the bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Teach your child to stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals that it's safe to enter.
- When your child is dropped off, make sure he/she knows to exit the bus and walk 10 giant steps away from the bus and to be aware of the street traffic in the area.

### Riding a bike:

- Mind traffic signals and the crossing guard.
- Always wear a bike helmet.
- Walk the bike through intersections.
- Ride with a buddy.
- Wear light-colored or reflective material.



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# September

# 2006

VOLUME 63 NUMBER 3



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By Texas Co-op Power Staff

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The Frisco water tower finished third in the Best of Co-op Country voting for Best Water Tower. See page 6 for more contest winners.



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# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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# letters

## GENEALOGY RESEARCH AIDS ID THIEVES

Online genealogy records add to the problems described in the July article, "Ripped Off." Any computer-savvy person could learn my mother's maiden name from the Internet. My Social Security number is available to anyone who sees my health insurance card or banking records. My credit card number is easily copied when I pay for services. Those three pieces of information would give a con artist easy access to my credit card account.

I contacted my credit card company and was allowed to give my mother a "new" maiden name that only I know when I need access to my account.

**SARA LAAS**

*Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

## A DESCENDANT OF CHOCTAW BILL

I was delighted when I opened the July issue of *Texas Co-op Power* and read the article about Choctaw Bill Robinson. He was my great, great, great grandfather on my mother's side.

We grew up hearing stories about his "planting" of new churches and his preaching, always with his rifle at his side!

Some of the best information about him and other early circuit-riding preachers can be found in the Howard Payne University Library in Brownwood.

**BILL HOWSLEY**

*Wood County Electric Cooperative*

We receive many more letters than we can fit in the magazine. Visit [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com) to read a sampling of those.

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](mailto: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.

# POWER TALK



This pedal-driven "bullet" car was popular with kids and adults at last year's Renewable Energy Roundup.

## GET GREENER IN SEPTEMBER!

Electricity consumption in the United States will increase by 51 percent over the next 20 years, says the U.S. Energy Information Administration. "With a statistic like this, the need for renewable energy is becoming increasingly important," says Kathryn Houser, executive director of the Texas Solar Energy Society. Houser is co-founder of the Renewable Energy Roundup and Green Living Fair, held each September in downtown Fredericksburg.

The Roundup, scheduled for September 22-24, offers plenty of family-friendly activities, educational and commercial exhibits, eco-friendly goods for sale, demonstrations, natural foods, live music, speakers and workshops. The event is a great opportunity to get energy conservation tips from the experts.

For more information, go to [www.theroundup.org](http://www.theroundup.org).

## SAFELIVING

### H.E.A.T. Helps Deter Auto Theft

Did you know that a car is stolen in Texas every 5.5 minutes? Or that more vehicles are stolen between 1 and 5 a.m. than at any other time of day?

The Texas Department of Public Safety's statewide vehicle registration program helps law enforcement officials identify stolen vehicles. Vehicle owners who take part in H.E.A.T. (Help End Auto Theft) by registering their vehicles in a statewide database receive decals to put on their vehicles. The stickers authorize law enforcement officers to stop the vehicles anywhere in the state to verify ownership between 1 and 5 a.m. The decals are also used to alert officials to check ownership of any vehicle being driven across the border into Mexico.

You don't have to be a permanent Texas resident to participate in the H.E.A.T. program, as long as you can provide a Texas address and phone number.

For more information or to enroll in the free program, call Texas H.E.A.T., 1-888-447-5933, or visit the website, <http://records.txdps.state.tx.us/heat>.

## YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD HORSE DOWN...

American Quarter Horse Association Foundation sire Gonzales Joe Bailey is being exhumed and moved to a new gravesite in Gonzales. The famous horse, which died in 1947, will find its final rest beneath a granite monument topped with its life-sized bronze statue at J.B. Wells Park. A documentary is being made about the horse, and he even has his own website: [www.gonzalesjoebailey.com](http://www.gonzalesjoebailey.com).

—Janis Turk





# H A P P E N I N G S

Experience life before television, computers, refrigerators and even running water ... life before electricity. **POWER TO THE PEOPLE: THE ELECTRIFICATION OF RURAL TEXAS**, a new exhibit, opens at the LBJ Library and Museum on September 2 and will run through May 28, 2007. The exhibit will tell the story of the electrification of rural Texas in the late 1930s and '40s, one of the most dramatic statewide events of the century. Visitors will learn about Lyndon B. Johnson's efforts to bring "lights" to the countryside and view vintage artifacts such as a large, lighted art deco sign from Pedernales Electric Cooperative and vintage REA demonstration appliances. Lady Bird Johnson narrates home movies from the era. For more information, go to [www.lbjlib.utexas.edu](http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu) or call (512) 721-0216.

## WHAT IS A FARMER?

Orlin Stark, president of the First National Bank of Quitaque, pretty much summed up the definition of a farmer in the bank's February 1990 newsletter, *Comings, Goings & Doings*, which is the nation's longest continuously published banking newsletter.

A farmer is a paradox: He is an executive in overalls with his home as his office; a scientist using fertilizer attachments; a purchasing agent in an old straw hat; a personnel director with grease under his fingernails; a dietician with a passion for alfalfa, aminos and antibiotics; a production expert with a surplus; and a manager battling a price-cost squeeze. He manages more capital than most businessmen in town.



He likes sunshine, good food, state fairs, dinner at noon, auctions, his shirt collar unbuttoned, and above all, a good soaking rain in August.

A farmer has both faith and fatalism—he must have faith to continually meet the challenges of his capacities amid an ever-present possibility that an act of God (a late spring, an early frost, tornadoes, floods, drought)

can bring his business to a standstill. You can reduce his acreage but you can't restrain his ambition.

Might as well put up with him—he is your friend; your competitor, your customer, and your source of food, fiber and self-reliant young citizens to help replenish your cities. He is your countryman: a denim-dressed, business-wise, fast-growing statesman of stature. When he comes in at noon, having spent all the energy of his hopes and dreams, he can be recharged anew with the magic words: "The market is up."

# WHO KNEW?

## THESE FOLKS ARE NATIVE TEXANS



**President Dwight D. Eisenhower**  
(1890) Denison

**Dancer/choreographer Alvin Ailey**  
(1931) Rogers

**Painter Robert Rauschenberg**  
(1925) Port Arthur

**Jockey Willie Shoemaker**  
(1931) Fabens

**Cowboy William "Bill" Pickett**  
(1870) Travis County

**Dancer Tommy Tune**  
(1939) Wichita Falls

**Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry** (1921) El Paso

**Novelist Katherine Anne Porter**  
(1890) Indian Creek

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# CO-OP PEOPLE

## TAKE MY KIDNEY, PLEASE

When 28-year-old Will Sanders of Lubbock discovered he needed a new kidney, his father and three uncles, an aunt and two brothers promptly volunteered to be tested for a match. Uncle Brent Sanders, a lineman for Lighthouse Electric Cooperative, turned out to be the closest match. He said Will had no trouble with the new kidney. "His color got better right after the surgery," Brent told the *Plainview Daily Herald*.

Brent is doing fine, minus one kidney. As soon as he regained his



**Co-op lineman Brent Sanders, left, donated a kidney to his nephew, Will Sanders.**

appetite, the co-op hosted a steak dinner in his honor. Lighthouse Electric Cooperative is based in the Panhandle town of Floydada.

WE LEARNED MANY WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT OUR STATE, THANKS TO THE GREAT READER RESPONSE FOR OUR 2006 BEST OF CO-OP COUNTRY BALLOTING.

READERS WHO RETURNED THEIR PICKS IN AT LEAST FOUR OF THE EIGHT CATEGORIES WERE ENTERED IN A DRAWING FOR A LUXURY WEEKEND AT MESSINA HOF WINERY AND RESORT IN BRYAN. THE WINNERS OF THE WEEKEND TREAT WERE ROBERT AND JANE ANDREWS, MEMBERS OF BLUEBONNET ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE. ★ FOR NEXT YEAR'S BEST OF CO-OP COUNTRY FEATURE, WE'RE GOING TO



TAP THE RESOURCES OF AREA EXPERTS: OFFICIALS FROM TEXAS' CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAUS. THEIR ASSIGNMENT WILL BE TO ALERT US TO SOME OF THEIR BEST LOCAL ATTRACTIONS. THE TEXAS CO-OP POWER STAFF WILL WIN NOW THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS TO COME UP WITH A NEW GROUP OF "BESTS" THAT REPRESENTS SOME OF THE MANY TREASURES OF CO-OP COUNTRY. ★ NOW ENJOY THE REPORTS ON OUR FIRST-, SECOND- AND THIRD-PLACE WINNERS IN THIS YEAR'S CATEGORIES!

LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT IS ONE OF THE PREMIER RETREATS IN THE UNITED STATES.



LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT

★★★

BEST

**LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT**

*Austin*

After I win the lottery, I will book myself into one of the 40 lakeside guest rooms at the Lake Austin Spa Resort for at least a week every year. This is just for my health, mind you. But I suspect our readers, who overwhelmingly chose this green oasis just west of Austin as the best spa, were thinking about more than the exquisitely prepared diet meals and exercising with water aerobics, sculling, kayaking, hiking, yoga, dance, spinning, kickboxing and much more. You can rejuvenate your soul with meditation and music or pick up a new hobby such as astronomy, hip hop dancing, painting, cooking or Texas Hold 'Em.

The most affordable way to sample the great spa life is to book yourself as a day guest for a single procedure such as a massage, body wrap or facial. Sunday through Thursday—as long as you have one body treatment—you can spend the whole day on the grounds at no extra charge. You can lounge by one of the pools or swim laps. Stay in your robe and stroll through the terraced water garden, view more than 1,000 species of plants, and gaze down the

sloping property to the misty, green cool of Lake Austin. Don't forget the Jacuzzis, steam rooms and saunas. On weekends, these extras come with a \$25 facilities charge.

Lake Austin Spa Resort ranks high—within the top five—on many national travel and resort listings, so we knew our readers were probably on the right track. Still, to uphold the standards of good investigative journalism, I wanted to see for myself. I spent a blissful 110 minutes getting the pomegranate rejuvenation (scrub, wrap and massage). After the scrub and shower, the masseuse wrapped me from neck to toes in sheets for 20 minutes while she massaged my scalp. I have never felt more pampered!

*1705 S. Quinlan Park Rd., Austin; 1-800-847-5637; www.lakeaustin.com*

★★★

SECOND PLACE

**The Spa at Canyon Oaks**

*Crawford*

This little spa outside Crawford may not be nationally recognized, but it has been a pleasant surprise for some of the national press and Secret Service agents who cool their heels in Central Texas when President Bush is in resi-

dence at his nearby ranch.

After a busy weekend following the President around his spread, some hard-working members of the press are more than ready to take an excursion to this 32-acre hideaway spa and bed & breakfast. I recommend the hot stone therapy. Lava stones are used to massage a gentle healing heat over whatever ails you. It's especially good for treating joint pain, arthritis and inflammation. I just about melted into the massage table. McLennan County Electric Cooperative serves the spa as well as the Bush ranch.

*316 Canyon Oaks Rd., Crawford; (254) 848-9989; www.thespaatcanyon Oaks.com*

★★★

THIRD PLACE

**One Fine Day**

*Waxahachie*

This day spa in Waxahachie is a special favorite of our readers in the HILCO Electric Cooperative service area. You can enjoy spa packages, massages, skin care, manicures and pedicures, body therapy and hair services.

*3390 N. Highway 77, Ste. B, Waxahachie; (972) 937-6401; www.onefinedayspa.com*

**KAYE NORTHCOTT, Editor**

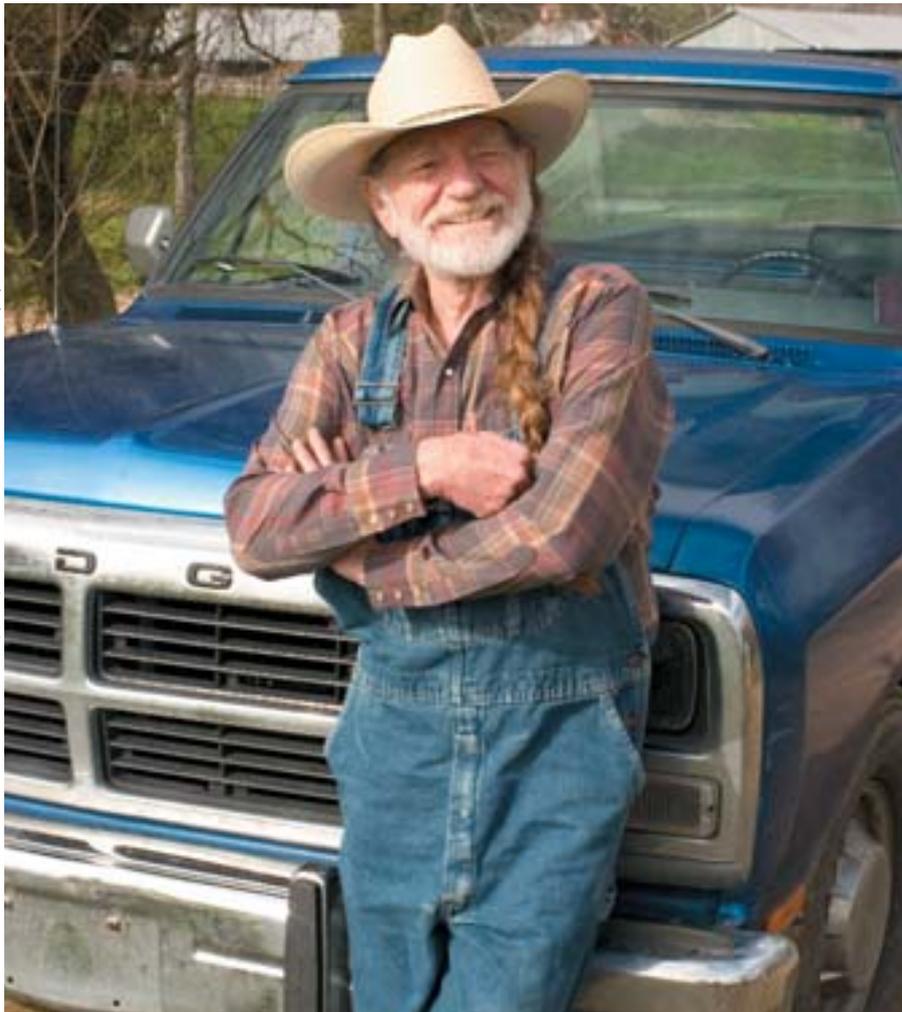
**A LAKE AUSTIN SPA CHEF (LEFT) HARVESTS FRESH HERBS AND VEGETABLES. MANY OF THE MASSAGE AREAS (RIGHT) HAVE VIEWS OF THE HILL COUNTRY.**



LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT

LAKE AUSTIN SPA RESORT

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**WILLIE NELSON**

★★★  
BEST  
**WILLIE NELSON**

Texas has long been a fertile breeding ground for music of all genres and musicians of all pedigrees. But when it comes to that first-name-only kind of fame, with a celebrity status among grannies and teens alike, there's only one real Texas superstar: Willie.

Our readers just can't get enough of the legendary singer-songwriter, once described as a cross between Bing Crosby, Jimmie Rodgers and Woody Guthrie. Raised by his grandparents in bare-bones cotton country, Willie, now 73 (and a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative), strikes a common chord in Co-op Country—a chord that blends seemingly disparate notes into his own peculiarly harmonic

sonata. Willie dares to experiment with reggae and rap, when he could easily rest on his songwriting laurels ("Crazy," "Hello Walls," "Night Life," "The Party's Over" and "Funny How Time Slips Away," to name only a few). His nonchalant style of performing, with a notably laconic phrasing of both vocals and guitar, provides a fascinating balance with a wide array of other performers in dozens of duets.

For Willie's legions of loyal fans, it's about more than his buttermilk voice and jazz-flecked riffs. Willie is a hero of Texas proportions. He's so beloved for his generosity that his friends bought his possessions at an IRS auction just to give them back to him. Perhaps no single chapter in Willie's story shows his lion heart more than the Farm Aid concerts, begun in 1985 and continuing today. Not content with trying to save

the family farm, Willie's now on the hunt to save the planet, selling his own biodiesel fuel, made from slightly altered vegetable oil. Only Willie could find a way to make car exhaust smell like chicken-fried steak!

Even Texas author Joe Nick Patoski, who is writing Willie's biography, has a hard time separating the red-headed stranger's multi-faceted persona from his music. "It should be enough to state the obvious and declare that no single musician from the 20th or 21st century defines Texas music like Willie Nelson does," Patoski says. "But when all is said and done, Willie defines Texas, not just Texas music."

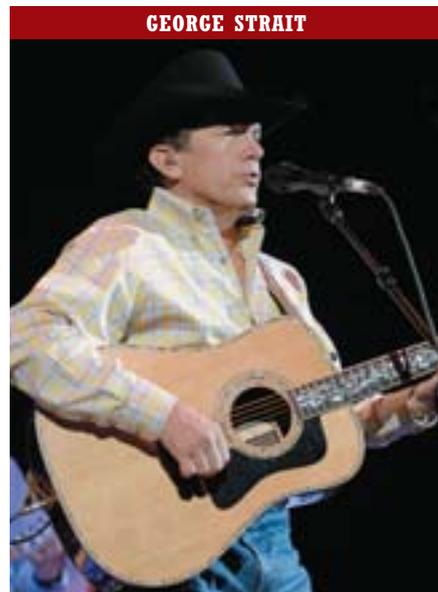
★★★  
SECOND PLACE  
**George Strait**

★★★  
THIRD PLACE  
**Pat Green**

Smooth crooner George Strait (a Medina Electric Cooperative member) and rowdy balladeer Pat Green round out our readers' choices for this category. With all three winners placing hits on the country-and-western charts, it looks like boot-scootin' still tops rock-and-roll in the musical heart of Co-op Country.

**LOUIE BOND**, *Copy Editor*

**GEORGE STRAIT**



© TIM MOSEVELLER/CORBIS

★ PUBLIC MURAL ★

★★★

BEST

**CHISHOLM TRAIL**

*Sundance Square, Fort Worth*

Since man first picked up a burnt rock and sketched out a primitive rendering of a bison on his cave wall, people have been telling the stories of their communities through murals. In more modern times, Diego Rivera covered walls throughout Mexico with his easily identifiable murals, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt put America's Depression-era artists back to work depicting our history on post office walls (including nearly 100 post office murals in Texas).

Co-op Country readers enjoy the murals that adorn town squares and public buildings in their hometowns, but picked as their favorite this year an unforgettable work of art in Fort Worth's Sundance Square. The Chisholm Trail mural spans the southern façade of the Jett Building. The *trompe l'oeil* ("fool the eye") mural, painted in the mid-1980s

by Richard Haas, depicts two cowboys on horseback watching over a cattle roundup. The longhorns appear to be charging right off the building.

The mural commemorates the Fort Worth segment of the Chisholm Trail cattle drives of 1867-75. Following the trail blazed by the half-Scottish, half-Cherokee trader, Jesse Chisholm, cowboys spent their time in Fort Worth going a little crazy in the crime-infested area known as "Hell's Half-Acre."

★★★

SECOND PLACE

**Dallas Fair Park**

*Dallas*

Carlo Ciampaglia painted these art deco murals in 1936 when Fair Park was built to celebrate the Texas Centennial. Some murals had been painted over while others were badly flaking as Fair Park fell into disrepair, eventually named as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Places in 1994. More than

\$100 million has been spent restoring the buildings and their artwork.

★★★

THIRD PLACE

**Belton Dam**

*Belton*

The Belton Dam mural exemplifies cooperative spirit as the town pulled together to transform an eyesore into the "biggest coloring book" in Texas. When the Army Corps of Engineers constructed the concrete dam, they unwittingly provided a 1,300-foot canvas for amateur graffiti artists, to the displeasure of town residents.

Thirty years later, the Belton project manager proposed a solution—create a folk art history mural. Art students from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor sketched black outlines, creating a giant paint-by-number canvas for artists and ordinary citizens, who also submitted sketches of their ideas.

LOUIE BOND, *Copy Editor*

THE CHISHOLM TRAIL MURAL IN FORT WORTH'S SUNDANCE SQUARE CELEBRATES THE CITY'S WESTERN HERITAGE.



FORT WORTH CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

★ ENCHILADA ★



THE ORIGINAL EL FENIX OPENED IN DALLAS IN 1918.

★ ★ ★

BEST

**EL FENIX**

*Dallas/Fort Worth*

Our readers' top three winners for Best Enchilada have a few things in common. They're all homegrown, family-owned Texas businesses, built on hard work and traditional family recipes, some handed down for generations. Although each restaurant features many different menu items and several varieties of enchiladas, for this story I'm sticking to another big vote-getter. We received a number of votes for Best Enchilada that read, simply, "Cheese." Can't argue with that!

The downtown Dallas location of El Fenix is across the street from the spot where Mike Sr. and Faustina Martinez opened their original restaurant in 1918. Almost 90 years and three generations later, the Martinez family empire has expanded to 15 locations—all in the D/FW area, with no plans to expand outside the region. They also have a booming mail-order food business.

The Martinez family credits the quality and consistency of their food to using the freshest possible ingredients, with every menu item prepared from scratch daily. Their enchiladas start with aged Wisconsin Cheddar and tortillas that are seasoned before frying, but it's the top-notch chili gravy here that's a personal favorite. A rich, deep reddish-

brown sauce with plenty of beef, it's similar to a hearty Texas chili, though with a much finer texture. This outstanding version of a Tex-Mex staple is also an excellent companion to the tamales, and with a follow-up bite of a soft cheese taco, it's just about as good as it gets.

*1601 McKinney, Dallas; 1-877-591-1918; www.elfenix.com*

★ ★ ★

SECOND PLACE

**Joe T. Garcia's**

*Fort Worth*

Established on July 4, 1935, by Joe and Jessie Garcia, the original restaurant held only 16 people. It's become so popular over the years that they've added multiple rooms and patio areas, and Joe T.'s now boasts a seating capacity of over 1,000. Despite the ever-increasing size and clientele, and their expansion into other areas (such as the nearby Esperanza's Bakery and Café, and businesses supplying wholesale breads and bottled hot sauce), the location in Fort Worth's Stockyards is still the one-and-only Joe T.'s, and it's run by the grandchildren of the founders.

The dishes remain unchanged from the original, home-style Michoacan cooking practiced by Jessie back in the '30s. Joe T.'s enchiladas are one-of-a-kind. If it's a flavor you grew up with—or have become addicted to—you're

drawn back repeatedly, because there's no other place you can get it. The enchiladas are topped with shredded lettuce and a bright red sauce. Light and tangy, the sauce enhances, but doesn't hide, the real cheese flavor. And did I mention the fajitas?

*2201 N. Commerce St., Fort Worth; (817) 626-4356; www.joets.com*

★ ★ ★

THIRD PLACE

**Manuel's**

*Brenham, Humble, Bellville, Houston*

This is the sort of place we like to find: A small, family-owned restaurant that's built its reputation on good food and word-of-mouth, with a down-home feel that many larger operations just can't muster. During his 15 years in the restaurant business, Manuel Reyes moved up from dishwasher to head chef. In 1987, along with his wife, Hilda, Manuel opened his own place, a small, 10-table eatery in Houston. His reputation, based on fresh, hot, home-style Mexican food—and, just maybe, the free margarita on your 21st birthday—grew, and there are now three other locations in Humble, Bellville and Houston run by the Reyes brothers. All share the recipes that Manuel learned in Mexico.

I recently ate at Manuel's in Brenham. I don't want to get into the "American vs. Cheddar" argument; suffice it to say that I like both styles, and Manuel's American cheese version of Tex-Mex hits the spot. The chili gravy is a medium-red, flavorful but not too heavy, and it goes great with the cheesy goodness of the enchiladas. Another touch I enjoyed with my "too much food" plate (aka the "Manuel's Dinner") was the beef-stuffed bell pepper, with a nice ranchero sauce and melted cheese. Good stuff. Manuel's Brenham location is served by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

*409 W. Main St., Brenham, (979) 277-9620. Call for information on other locations.*

**ANDY DOUGHTY, Production Designer**

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

## **Farm Safety Rules:**

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

# **CULTIVATE FARM SAFETY**



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

★ **FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION** ★

★★★  
BEST  
**ROUND TOP**

You wouldn't expect a Central Texas town with a population of 77 to put on a big-time parade and barbecue that attracts droves of big-city folks—perhaps thousands—from hundreds of miles away. Well, maybe you would, if you're one of those thousands who've attended the July Fourth parade and barbecue at Round Top.

The parade begins around 10 a.m. with the traditional firing of a cannon; spectators sit in their lawn chairs along the shady parade route waiting to hear the big BOOM that signals the start of the festivities. Not only is the parade one of the longest around with well over 100 entries (and that's without counting the "caboose" of more than 80 horseback riders), it's probably one of the most unique. Where else can you find floats with an alpine skiing theme, complete with a "chair lift" hoisting Barbie dolls sky-high? Or a sign pro-

claiming "Caution: Overweight Load" for a bevy of "bodacious babes" riding on a trailer? Or pink inflatable flamingos all dolled up in their red, white and blue finery?

July Fourth in Round Top nets kids more treats than your average Halloween, as "youngsters," some of them AARP-aged, scurry to pick up candy, beads and treasures tossed by happy paraders. Some clever spectators get to see the parade twice if they position themselves strategically along the route that snakes through the shady streets of this picturesque community. Immediately after the parade, hundreds of hungry folks flock to the nearby Rifle Hall for a traditional barbecue feast. Fayette Electric Cooperative serves the Round Top area.

★★★  
SECOND PLACE  
**Belton**

It's clear that folks from Belton like their part of the state. The Belton Fourth of

July celebration, along with the Lake Belton Dam mural, won "best" honors this year. The Independence Day festivities take place at the Bell County Expo Center and Confederate Park, where the weeklong celebration includes a carnival, parade, fiddler's festival, barbecue, patriotic programs and Belton's famous Fourth of July PRCA Rodeo. Belton is in Bell County, which is served by Bartlett and Bellfalls electric cooperatives.

★★★  
THIRD PLACE  
**Granbury**

This outstanding July Fourth celebration attracts visitors with its arts-and-crafts show, parade, car show, ranch rodeo and garden tractor pull. The day's festivities end with a spectacular fireworks display over Lake Granbury. Granbury is in Hood County, which is served by Tri-County Electric Cooperative and United Cooperative Services.

CHERYL TUCKER, *Field Editor*

GRANBURY'S FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION (LEFT); ROUND TOP'S MORNING PARADE (RIGHT).



GRANBURY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CHERYL TUCKER

★ **WATER TOWER** ★

STEVE BECKETT



**IT'S SHAPED LIKE A MELON AND FILLED WITH WATER. IT MUST BE A WATERMELON!**

★★★  
BEST  
**LULING**

In a state where water can be as valuable as gold, it's no wonder that some towns place more importance on their water towers than just their utilitarian value. Readers picked Luling's giant watermelon tower as their hands-down favorite. As home of the Watermelon Thump each June, you'll find more watermelons, real and replicas, in Luling than just about anywhere! Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative serves the Luling area.

★★★  
SECOND PLACE  
**Gruene**

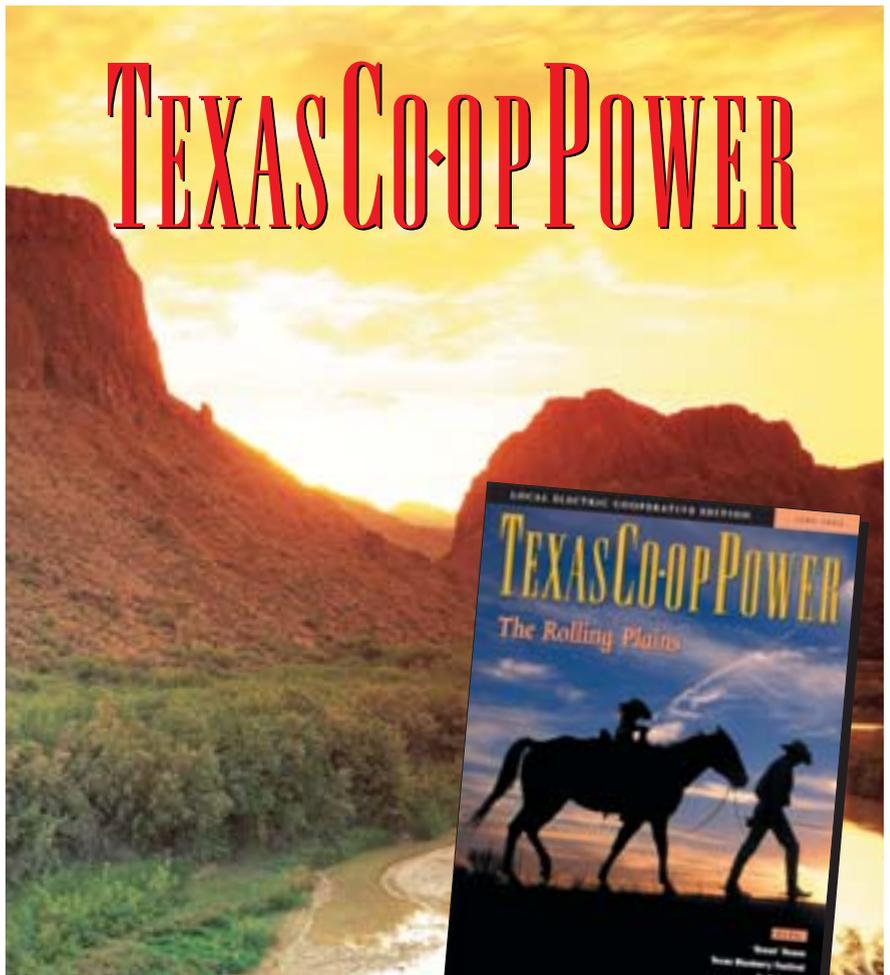
Gruene's old-fashioned water tower, much like the town, recalls those bygone days when life was simpler and folks moved at a slower, more thoughtful pace. It's no wonder that this landmark is one of the most photographed water towers in the state.

Pedernales, Guadalupe Valley and Bluebonnet electric cooperatives serve the nearby areas.

★★★  
THIRD PLACE  
**Frisco**

Frisco's water tower stands on the highest point in the area and is visible from all over town, making it a well-loved landmark. CoServ Electric provides electricity for the Frisco area.

CHERYL TUCKER, *Field Editor*



**SHARE THE POWER!**

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

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

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TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT



THE HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA OFFERS RIDING TRAILS FOR EVERY SKILL LEVEL.

★★★  
BEST  
**HILL COUNTRY  
STATE NATURAL AREA**  
*Bandera*

Appropriately, the Hill Country State Natural Area (SNA) is outside Bandera, the “Cowboy Capital of the World.” Here you can ride as cowboys, conquistadores and Indians did before you. Founded with land from the Merrick Bar-O Ranch to “be kept far removed and untouched by modern civilization,” the Hill Country SNA has more than 5,000 acres and 40 miles of trails for horseback riding and other recreation. These marked trails progress like ski trails from kiddie to advanced. You can splash along a shady creek suitable for the greenhorn or tackle hold-onto-your-hat vertical ascents daunting enough for any rider. Not for the faint-of-heart, the steep, rocky climbs reward riders with drop-dead-gorgeous views

of the Hill Country. The area boasts spring-fed swimming holes and abundant wildlife. There are camping facilities for you and your horses. Pitch a tent, put your horse in one of the available pens, and build a campfire. Or “camp” in the four-bedroom lodge with central AC/heat and kitchen, plus a barn for the horses. If you are horseless but want to go on a trailride, check with local dude ranches for horse rentals and tours. Bandera Electric Cooperative serves the area.

10600 Bandera Creek Rd., Bandera; (830) 796-4413; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

★★★  
SECOND PLACE TIE  
**Palo Duro Canyon State Park**  
*Canyon*

You feel like a part of history riding in the Palo Duro Canyon, often called the Grand Canyon of Texas. Apache, Kiowa

and Comanche tribes sought shelter here until they were supplanted by Charles Goodnight’s JA Ranch and its 100,000 head of cattle. The 120-mile-long canyon is 800 feet deep and averages 6 miles wide. Now a 16,000-acre state park, the canyon is a favored picnicking and camping spot for more than a half-million visitors a year. Enjoy this scenic grandeur on your own horse or on a guided tour with the hospitable folks at Old West Stables. A one-hour ride costs \$35. Or negotiate an all-day excursion to Lighthouse Rock, the dramatic park beacon, with one of the wranglers. Deaf Smith and Swisher electric cooperatives serve the surrounding area.

11450 Park Rd. 5, Canyon; stables: (806) 488-2180; park: (806) 488-2227; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

★★★  
SECOND PLACE TIE  
**Big Bend Ranch State Park**  
*Presidio*

Big Bend Ranch State Park encompasses some of the most remote and rugged terrain in the Southwest. At first sight, this remote ranch may seem desolate and monochromatic. Brown, brown and more brown. With time, you discern the different shades of color in the canyons and the volcanic calderas, and their timeless beauty enchants you.

It takes no adjustment whatsoever to see that the nightly star show is beyond spectacular.

Sign up for a guided three-hour horseback ride through picture-postcard scenery to view ancient pictographs (\$55 for horse and a guide). Each September, dudes can help round up the park’s longhorns and drive them to ranch headquarters. A wrangler guide, horse and tack, meals, and lodging at the bunkhouse costs \$895 (September 28–30). Rio Grande Electric Cooperative serves the area.

Four miles southeast of Presidio on FM 170; (432) 229-3416; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)

SUZI SANDS, *Art Director*

# SEVERE WEATHER? TUNE IN!

NOAA Weather Radio

Do you have a battery-operated NOAA weather radio at your home or workplace?

If the NOAA broadcasts reach your area, the radios can be invaluable. Here's why:

- NOAA provides continuous broadcasts of the latest weather information directly from the National Weather Service offices. When severe weather threatens your area, the broadcast activates an alarm and turns on the radio so you can hear critical, potentially life-saving messages.
- NOAA weather radios can take advantage of an even greater tool: the "all hazards" radio network. These broadcasts provide warning and post-event information for a host of other threats including natural and technological hazards.
- NOAA weather radios can also receive broadcasted AMBER alerts for missing children.
- The NOAA weather radio network is expanding in coverage and capability, making it an invaluable tool. For as little as \$20, anyone can have access to potentially life-saving emergency messages.

We think your family's safety is worth the investment. Call your local electric cooperative or visit [www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html](http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/index.html) for more weather radio information.



**Texas Electric  
Cooperatives**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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



★ ★ ★  
BEST  
**LAKE TRAVIS**

They say Texas is a “whole other country.” If that’s true, Lake Travis is a “whole other state.” This outdoor recreation mecca winds its way through Central Texas for 60 miles, covers almost 19,000 acres, contains 382 billion gallons of water and has 270 miles of shoreline. The lake’s deep, clear waters are irresistible to scuba divers, windsurfers and all manner of sailors, as well as fishermen, picnickers, campers and swimmers. The lake often hosts sailboat regattas and ski boat competitions.

The Lower Colorado River Authority, Travis County and private businesses offer plentiful lake access, including Hippie Hollow—the only clothing-optional public park in Texas. Pedernales Electric Cooperative serves much of the area around Lake Travis.

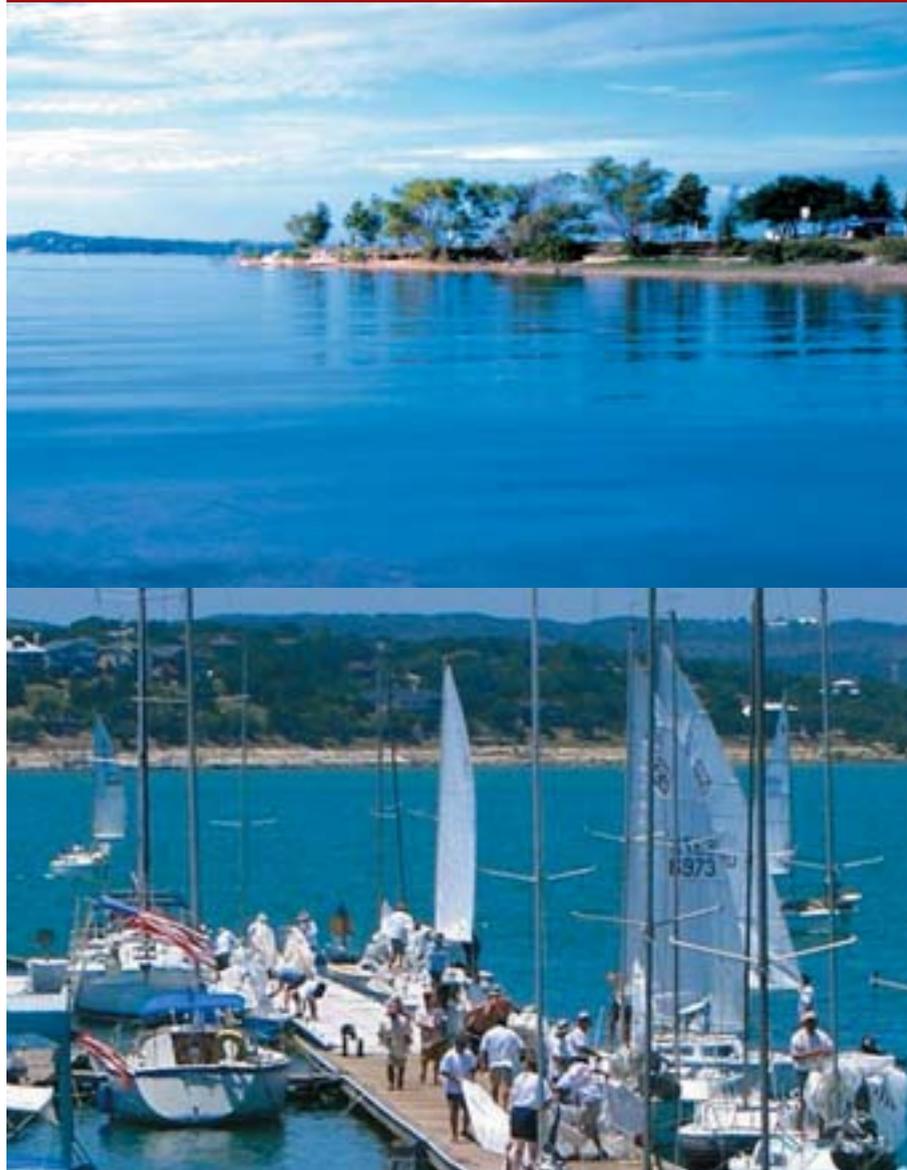
*Travis County: (512) 854-PARK (7275), [www.co.travis.tx.us/tnr/parks](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/tnr/parks)*

*Lower Colorado River Authority: 1-800-776-5272; [www.lcra.org](http://www.lcra.org); [www.laketravis.com](http://www.laketravis.com)*

★ ★ ★  
SECOND PLACE  
**Canyon Lake**

When my sons and I go camping, we often stay at a lake and then travel to nearby rivers or creeks for fishing. Canyon Lake and its neighbor, the Guadalupe River, offer the perfect setting. Eighty miles of shoreline provide ample room for boating, hiking, camping, bird watching, scuba diving, fishing and wildlife viewing. Marinas, yacht clubs and a ski club can be found on this Hill Country lake. Swimmers can enjoy man-made white sand beaches, while fishermen will find success with crappie, bass and catfish at the seven public parks managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that ring Canyon Lake. At the Guadalupe River, you can relax with a leisurely tube float or, for the more daring, a white-water canoe adventure. Much of the area around Canyon Lake is served by

LAKE TRAVIS (TOP) AND CANYON LAKE (BOTTOM) RANKED AS THE TOP TWO LAKES IN TEXAS.



LOWER COLORADO RIVER AUTHORITY  
CANYON LAKE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Pedernales Electric Cooperative. The lake is north of San Antonio and west of San Marcos.

*Canyon Lake Chamber of Commerce: 1-800-528-2104; [www.canyonlakechamber.com](http://www.canyonlakechamber.com)*

★ ★ ★  
THIRD PLACE  
**Lake Whitney**

Since the 1950s, Lake Whitney has been a relaxation destination. The usual lake activities of fishing, swimming, camping and boating are enhanced by several equestrian areas,

trails for mountain biking, and gorgeous scenic bluffs. The clear waters invite exploration by scuba divers and wildlife enthusiasts. Birdwatchers will enjoy the 194 different bird species in the area. Several varieties of bass and catfish as well as crappie are usually biting to keep anglers happy. The lake covers 23,500 acres. The lake straddles Bosque and Hill counties, served by HILCO Electric Cooperative and United Cooperative Services. It’s west of I-35 between Fort Worth and Waco.

*Lake Whitney State Park: 1-800-792-1112; [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)*

**KAREN NEJTEK, Production Coordinator**

# 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.



**Texas Electric  
Cooperatives**

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

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

## Energy-Efficient Doors Make Good ‘Cents’

BY JAMES DULLEY

**DEAR JAMES:** My house has an old wood front door and a steel back door. I don't want the expense of replacing them, but I want to make them more airtight and efficient. What things can I do myself to improve them? —*Johnny W.*

**DEAR JOHNNY:** Doors can be significant areas of energy loss. Many homes have a front door, a back door and a door from an attached garage. When you total up the perimeter length of the doors, you can see how poor-fitting weatherstripping can be a major factor. Doors also often have windows with low insulation value.

Before attempting any improvements to the doors, carefully inspect each one, especially the wooden front door. If the wood is deteriorated or warped, there really is not much you can do except replace it. Steel or fiberglass doors seldom warp, so they generally can be repaired and upgraded.

To determine if you have air leakage around the door, hold a stick of lighted incense near the weatherstripping on a windy day and move it around the door perimeter. The trail of smoke will indicate any leaky areas.

Push on the door to force it to close tighter and then check with the incense again. The striker plate in the door frame can get worn over time, causing the door to not close tightly enough to create a good seal. The easiest solution to this problem is to replace the old striker plate with an adjustable one.

If the doors are old, it would be wise to replace the threshold seal, and perhaps the entire threshold, under the door. Most newer doors have the weatherstripping seal attached to the door bottom, but with some older ones the seal is in the threshold on the floor. This can get damaged and crushed after years of foot traffic.

Most thresholds are adjustable.

There are usually three or four screws which allow you to move the section immediately under the door up or down. The screw heads may be covered or packed with dirt from years of use, so you might have to pick around to find them.

If you choose to install a more efficient threshold seal, the new seal will likely be thicker, so you will have to saw a thin strip off the door's bottom for clearance. For a steel door, consider installing an automatic door-



**This door bottom automatically moves downward and forces the weatherstripping against the door threshold.**

bottom seal that moves down to touch the threshold just as the door closes.

Worn hinges can allow the door to hang crookedly so the weatherstripping will not seal well.

The glass in doors is the lowest insulation component. Make a storm pane, using clear acrylic plastic, to cover the glass. This will almost double the insulation value and protect decorative glass from the weather.

If you can easily remove the door molding, check for insulation in the gap around the door frame. If you find none, spray expanding foam insulation in the gap. Let it fully expand and harden, then replace the molding.

© 2006 James Dulley



## LIGHTNING DANGER

**T**he National Weather Service reports that lightning strikes are fatal in approximately 10 percent of strike victims. Another 70 percent of survivors suffer serious, long-term effects.

Because lightning can travel sideways for up to 10 miles, blue skies are not a sign of safety. If you hear thunder, take cover. The Electrical Safety Foundation International recommends following these guidelines to stay safe during electrical storms:

**IF POSSIBLE, GO INDOORS.** Once indoors, stay away from windows and doors. Do not use corded telephones except for emergencies.

**UNPLUG ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT** before the storm arrives and avoid contact with electrical equipment or cords during storms.

**AVOID CONTACT WITH PLUMBING,** including sinks, baths and faucets.

**IF OUTDOORS, GO TO A LOW POINT.**

Lightning hits the tallest object. Get down if you are in an exposed area. Stay away from trees.

**AVOID METAL.** Don't hold metal items, including bats, golf clubs, fishing rods, tennis rackets or tools. Avoid metal sheds, clotheslines and fences.

**STAY AWAY FROM WATER.** This includes pools, lakes, puddles and anything damp, such as wet grass.

If you feel a tingling sensation or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Crouch down and cover your ears.

Victims of lightning strikes should be given CPR (if necessary) and get immediate medical attention.

# Look Up Before You Stand Them Up



**E**lectric power lines are high in the air, generally out of reach. But long spans of irrigation pipe can bring those power lines deadly close.

The mishandling of irrigation pipe is a major cause of accidental contact with overhead electric lines in farming areas. Several factors can set the stage for tragedy:

- When not in use, pipe is often stored at the edge of the field—the most likely location for overhead lines.
- An irrigation pump motor may be electrically powered, requiring an overhead service line from the distribution line.
- Most power lines are easily within contact range of the typical 30-foot sections of pipe.
- Irrigation pipe is made of aluminum, which is one of the best

conductors of electricity. Most new electric distribution lines are made of aluminum.

- The pipe is often used by small animals as a refuge or nesting place. Hunters or children may turn the section on end to dislodge game.
- Workers may also upend sections of pipe to relocate them or clear them of debris.

Should an accident occur, never attempt to remove any pipe sections that are still in contact with the power lines. Call your electric cooperative so professionals can be sent immediately to take care of the problem.

Look up before you lift up any section of irrigation pipe. And don't take any chances—if you only “think” you have clearance, don't risk it.

Look up before you stand them up.

## PLUG IT IN—BUT TURN IT OFF

**C**omputers, printers, air conditioners, TVs, VCRs, DVD and CD players, fax machines, blow dryers, cordless phones, microwaves ... We're more “plugged in” than ever before. Average households will spend more than \$5,000 on energy in 2006 to power their homes and vehicles, projects the Alliance to Save Energy.

Forgetful? A programmable thermostat coordinates indoor climates with your daily and weekend patterns. You don't have to remember to turn the air conditioning or heating off when you won't be home.

Here's more:

When refinancing your home, consider including **ENERGY-EFFICIENCY HOME IMPROVEMENTS**. Your interest may be tax deductible.

Switch to **COLD-WATER WASHING** of



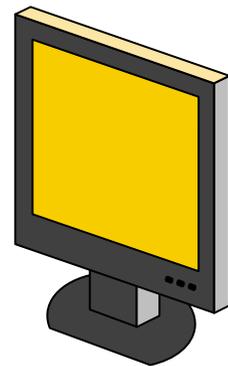
**Close window blinds to reduce energy costs.**

laundry and save up to \$63 a year.

**CLOSE BLINDS OR SHADES** on the south- and west-facing windows during the day or install shading devices such as trellises or awnings.

**TURN OFF EVERYTHING NOT IN USE—**lights, TVs, computers.

Additional tips and resources for energy use can be found on the Alliance to Save Energy website at [www.ase.org/consumers](http://www.ase.org/consumers).



## Save Energy Save Money

Flat-panel monitors use about a third of the energy of traditional monitors.

**You Have the Power!**

# On Learning To Putter

*Yes, puttering  
is a fine art,  
and for some  
of us, mastering  
it is hard.*

BY JUDY ALTER

I want to learn to putter. I have a friend who can contentedly watch paint dry. Not me. I barreled through life at full throttle. I had children to raise, books to write, a university press to run. Some days I got into the car at 7:30 in the morning and didn't get out until 10 that night. I've always said that when I die my children are going to say: "I remember her. She was always at her computer, saying, 'Go on now, I'm busy' or 'Hurry on, now.'" I am grateful that, now grown, all four of them seem to have forgiven me my compulsions. They even remember good meals and good times, praise be!

When my oldest grandchild was 3 and still the only grandchild, she and her parents were spending the weekend. I let her parents sleep in one morning while I got up with Maddie. But when she said, "Play with me, Juju!" my first thought was, "Play with you? I never played with my own children." Of course I didn't. When you have four close together, they keep each other occupied and you can go on with all that foolish business you have to do.

But now, in my late 60s and semi-retired, I want to learn to enjoy doing nothing. And I want to quit being compulsive. All my children, their spouses and my grandchildren were here recently, and I spent the weekend doing unnecessary straightening—they messed it up again as soon as I straightened. The only real result was that my feet hurt and I was cranky. Daughter-in-law Melanie put it into perspective for me: "Of course we're messy," she said. "We're home. It's a compliment." Next time they all come, I want to relax and enjoy them instead of worrying about the messy house. I can clean when they go home.

I spent Mother's Day with my youngest (and very pregnant) daughter, her husband and his family. I arrived at their house at 12:30; we ate at 2:30 (not only do I not putter well, I'm fairly compulsive about eating at regular hours, and it had been a long time since my early and light breakfast). At 3:30, everyone was still sitting around the table and showed no sign of moving, so I said softly to my daughter, "I need to leave." She smiled and said, "I know. We've already kept you longer than we expected." And that night on the phone, she said, "It's okay, Mom. We know you don't hang out well."

But I want to learn to hang out—gracefully.



I want to go to the Fort Worth Zoo with all of them and not worry about what we'll have for dinner. I want to hold Jake—due next month—for hours and tell him softly how pretty he is. I want to giggle with 9-month-old Morgan as she navigates the mechanics of crawling, sometimes getting so excited that she kicks her feet and waves her arms simultaneously. I want to rub noses with 2-year-old Sawyer and talk to him about “twos”—he wants to have two of everything—and gaze at the moon, which fascinates him.

I want to help 3-year-old Edie stay within the lines when she tries to color and love her when she goes from bed to bed because she can't decide where she wants to sleep (she always ends up with Mommy). And Maddie, darling Maddie—I want to cook with her, and watch for birds at the birdfeeder I gave her for her birthday, and go again to talk to her class about Texas history and sense that she is proud of her Juju.

One recent morning, I got up when I woke up—no alarm clock. (Okay, it wasn't much past 7.) But I did my best to putter, putting away dishes, feeding the cat and dog, brushing my teeth, washing my hair, reading the paper, riding my stationary bike, checking my e-mail. Then slowly—oh, so slowly—I showered, dressed and went to the office. I got there after 10 a.m. And you know what? The office didn't fall apart, and I felt really good.

But learning to putter is not easy. Some nights I tell myself that the next day there is nothing that absolutely has to be done. But then I find myself planning—a trip to the grocery, maybe check the new stock of herbs at the nursery, stop by the office and see what's going on. And so it goes. Then I'll wake and tell myself if I want to have a leisurely, puttering morning and still get those errands done, I better get out of bed and hurry about it. See? I can even be compulsive about puttering.

Yes, puttering is a fine art, and for some of us, mastering it is hard. But I'm trying. Today is a lovely day, and the school across from my house is disgorging children. I think I'll take a book, go sit on the porch, watch all those children and their parents, and remember the days that I missed because I was too busy.

---

Novelist Judy Alter wrote “The Van Zandt County War” in the May 2006 edition of *Texas Co-op Power*.

## FORT BEND COUNTY

# Take a Step Back in Time

*Return to them  
ol' cotton fields,  
the single-furrow  
plow and the  
spinning wheel.*

by Denise Adams



Late in the afternoon, Deborah Long leans back in her rocking chair and takes a lingering look at the cotton field out her back door. This pioneer woman's chores are completed. Kindling is stacked near the fireplace and brown eggs have been gathered from the henhouse.

At the George Ranch Historical Park, minutes outside of Houston, historical interpreters like Long step back into the 1820s each day, using a replica of the actual homestead built by Henry Jones in 1824 to recreate the past at the park's Jones Stock Farm. Long and the other workers believe they have the best job in the world. They can escape the pandemonium of Houston freeways, traveling back in time each workday to a strenuous but simpler life, leading visitors through a hands-on tour for a unique frontier experience. It's just part of the rich educational experience at the 23,000-acre park, where kids can find out what it's like to split wood and haul water and watch blacksmiths and cowboys perform their daily duties.

As visitors approach the Jones House, Long takes on the persona of Nancy Jones. She greets them at the front porch and explains how the Jones family came to Texas to farm 4,500 acres of land sold to them by Stephen F. Austin. Inside, interpreter Kathy Rose demonstrates how the Jones women wove blankets on a loom and describes daily chores on the farm. The interpreters all wear aprons, caps and bonnets made from the cotton they spin and weave.

When Rose tells student groups that children didn't go to school back then, they usually let out a big cheer, until they find out what a typical day was like for a youngster. In addition to helping care for their younger brothers and sisters, the children helped plant corn and brown cotton. Henry Jones planted 40 acres of corn every year, using a single furrow plow.

After harvesting the cotton, each child was expected to collect enough tiny brown cottonseeds to fill a shoe. The seeds would be used in next year's plantings. To demonstrate, interpreters hand children a wooden comb and a tuft of cotton and show them how to rake the comb through the fibers and pick out the tiny seeds. Outdoors they are invited to try their hand at picking the pesky cotton bolls that are ready to harvest.

Guests walk with the interpreters to the barn, view the outdoor cooking area, and then stop at the smokehouse, where beef and pork may be curing. The visitors are asked to imagine what life was like without grocery stores. Wheat didn't grow in Texas, so bread was made with corn. In the covered barn, visitors take turns using the metal grinder to turn corn kernels into yellow flour. The Jones family grew its own sugar cane, pressed and boiled the cane, and then processed the cane into sugar. For salt, the family went to the beach, boiled sea water in big flat pans and then scraped up the dried salt. For cooking, cleaning and drinking water, the children hoisted a small yoke over their shoulders so they could carry two buckets of water from the creek to the house every day, a walk often covering half a mile.

Stopping at a pen, interpreters introduce visitors to Tom and Jerry, the ranch's



COURTESY GEORGE RANCH HISTORICAL PARK

two Piney Woods cattle. Interpreters explain that the Spanish conquistadors left three types of animals for the settlers: pigs that became feral hogs, horses that became wild mustangs, and Piney Woods cattle, which the farmers used as oxen to pull wagons and help plant the fields. Inside the wooden tool barn, guests examine the two-person saws and hand-forged shovels. At the end of the walking tour, interpreters invite guests to explore the homestead at their leisure or sit on the front porch and hear more stories about the history of the George Ranch and early Texas.

When there aren't any visitors or after the school tours have concluded, the interpreters busy themselves spinning cotton, weaving blankets, chopping wood, cleaning the henhouse, and tending to the outdoor cooking area before returning to their lives in the city.

While quietly weaving a blanket or picking chili peppers, rosemary and oregano for the next day's meals, Rose and Long say they feel at peace in the quiet of the park. They count themselves fortunate to have a job that brings them so much satisfaction.

A reminder of the modern world breaks the silence of the prairie when another group of visitors comes walking up the gravel path toward the house. Long stops sweeping the wooden porch, smiles and greets her guests.

"Hi. I'm Nancy Jones. Welcome to my home and welcome to Texas," she says.

*Denise Richards lives in Richmond and is a member of San Bernard Electric Cooperative. She works at the Fort Bend Herald, where she is paid to be nosy, and attends the University of Houston-Downtown as a nontraditional student. She plans to teach English after graduation.*

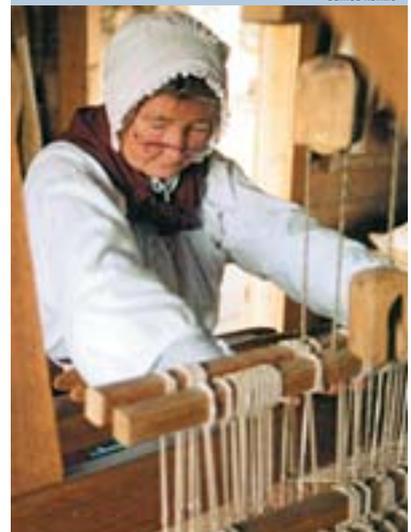
## WHAT YOU'LL SEE



COURTESY GEORGE RANCH HISTORICAL PARK

The George Ranch Historical Park, 10215 FM 762 in Richmond, follows family lines. Four generations of the descendants of Henry and Nancy Jones have managed and loved this land. Buildings open for tours include the 1890s Davis House complex, a barn, the blacksmith's shop, the Dry Creek General Store, a huge tree house, a visitor's center and the Jones Stock Farm. The ranch also offers Texas roadhouse lunches at the Dinner Belle Café, as well as chuck wagon weekend lunches and tours. Located just an hour's drive southwest of Houston, the park is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Admission is \$9 for adults and \$8 for seniors (ages 62 and up). For information about the park, call (281) 343-0218 or visit [www.georgeranch.org](http://www.georgeranch.org).

DENISE ADAMS



# PACK YOUR EMERGENCY KIT NOW!

## Emergency Kit

Have you taken steps to prepare for severe storms before they strike? If you put together an emergency supply kit now, you and your family will be ready for almost anything.

### Here's what you should include in your kit:

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

*(Information from the Division of Emergency Management, Texas Department of Public Safety)*



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# Assault, the Clubfooted Comet

BY MARGARET BURANEN

Assault had just about all the wrong ingredients to be a Triple Crown champion.

Nearly crippled and suffering from a myriad of health problems, he finished nearly last in his first race, and only managed to win two races his first year. Even at his best, the small liver chestnut wasn't the most dependable of winners, occasionally finishing far behind the pack. Worst of all, he was born and raised on Texas' King Ranch, and horses from Texas just didn't stand a chance against the Kentucky elite.

Like his legendary predecessor, the undersized, knobby-kneed and "lazy" Seabiscuit, Assault ignored the odds. The rest is history.

Sixty years ago, this unlikely thoroughbred won all three jewels of racing's Triple Crown: the 1946 Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes and Belmont Stakes. Only 11 racehorses have achieved this feat in the event's history, with Assault the only Texas winner.

"Assault was all heart," said Warren Mehrtens, the 25-year-old Texas jockey who rode Assault to the Triple Crown victory. "He was just better than all the horses around."

That Assault could run at all was a near-miracle. As a foal, he stepped on a surveyor's stake, piercing his right forefoot. The foot healed, but Assault's hoof was so malformed that it was difficult for a blacksmith to shoe him. At a walk or trot, Assault had an unattractive limp, but at a gallop, he was a thing of beauty. The limp disappeared at full speed, so he was nicknamed "The Clubfooted Comet."

"He never showed any signs that it was hurting him," recalled Assault's trainer, Max Hirsch. "He got in the habit of protecting it with an awkward gait, and then he kept it up. But he galloped true. There wasn't a thing wrong with his action when he went fast."

The King Ranch was once the site of the Wild Horse Desert, where magnificent mustangs ran free, but in the '40s, the million-acre ranch was primarily known for its cattle operation and its size, which was unequalled. (At his top speed, it would have taken Assault nearly four hours to cross the ranch!) Owner Robert Kleberg began breeding quarter-horses in the '20s, then started with thoroughbreds in the '30s, buying Assault's sire, Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Bold Venture, in 1939.

Assault's dam, a small mare named Igual, was nearly put down before she ever foaled. Igual recovered from a nearly fatal abscess, thanks to the efforts of the ranch's dedicated veterinarian, Doc Northway, but she was never well enough to race. Assault inherited his mother's small frame, standing only a little more than 15 hands and weighing less than

1,000 pounds fully grown.

In the WWII era, horses were often given military names, hence Assault. The strong-sounding name proved to be suitable for this valiant colt. Doc Northway not only successfully treated Assault's injured hoof, he tended to Assault's other ailments: a bad kidney, splint bone, wrenched ankle, injured knee and bleeding problems.

In 1945, Assault began training with Hirsch. The trainer was not impressed with this small colt who walked "as though he would trip over his own feet," but Hirsch took a chance and began running Assault in small local races. After an unimpressive first race, Assault got the hang of the sport and began offering a glimpse of the speedster he could become.



Assault stands in the winner's circle of the Belmont Stakes with jockey Warren Mehrtens and owner Helen Kleberg, 1946.

Assault won the 1946 Kentucky Derby by eight lengths. At the Preakness (then held only one week later), Assault won, but only by a nose because Mehrtens had mistakenly asked him for maximum effort too soon.

Two weeks later, as the Belmont began, Assault stumbled. He lagged behind the other horses for most of the race, but his champion spirit prevailed, and Assault was able to recover and win by three lengths. To celebrate, Hirsch's cook baked a combination chocolate/vanilla cake (to represent the stable's colors of brown and white) for Assault, which he happily devoured.

*Margaret Buranen, who lives in Louisville, Kentucky, writes about horseracing.*

# La Dolce Vita— The Sweet Life

I'm a Romanophile; I love all things Italian—the food, the wine, the language. I've been studying the language for 20 years, the past 10 with Italian teacher Patrizia Gislon. *Il cibo degli italiani* (Italian food) speaks to us in a pure and simple way. Although it can be time-consuming (have you ever made homemade pasta?), the food is uncomplicated and never fussy. Most recipes consist of just a few of the freshest local ingredients, resulting in the savory regional dishes for which Italy is renowned.

As in most things, the culture influences the food. Italians have an intimate connection with the land that is expressed through their cuisine. As Eugenia Giobbi Bone says in her cookbook, *Italian Family Dining* (Rodale Books, 2005), "A meal should tell us where we are in the season."

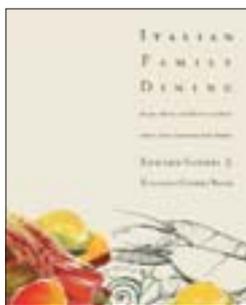
Using a seasonable approach to cooking is healthier, Bone explains, as produce travels a shorter distance to market, arriving practically fresh off the vine. In addition to being tastier, local seasonal ingredients are less expensive, especially as fuel transportation costs continue to rise.

Another fundamental and healthy characteristic of Italian-style dining is that of many *piatti*, or plates of food, eaten in small amounts. Meals are always leisurely affairs to be shared with family and friends. How civilized of the Italians to make leisure a primary part of life!

As for sweets, a traditional Italian dessert is fresh fruit, sometimes marinated in wine. Cherries in Wine, from *Italian Family Dining*, is a classic summer dessert, served alone or garnished with whipped cream.

As cooler fall weather will soon be upon us, I've also included one of my own creations: a simple reduction of red cabbage and onion that becomes a fragrant, silky brown sauce for dark-meat chicken. This slow cooking method takes all afternoon, perfect for that first cold snap, whenever it comes.

*Buon appetito!* —PEG CHAMPION, GUEST EDITOR



## POLLO AL CAVOLO E CIPOLLE (CHICKEN WITH CABBAGE AND ONION)

- 1/2-1 cup cold-pressed olive oil (divided)
- 1 head elephant (or regular) garlic, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1-2 sweet onions, sliced very thin
- 1 large head red cabbage, finely shredded
- 3 pounds chicken legs and thighs, bone in
- 1/2-1 cup Italian red wine
- Coarsely ground black pepper
- Sea salt

In large pot with lid, sauté garlic and onion in olive oil (about 1/4 cup) on medium heat until vegetables become golden brown and oil becomes fragrant. Remove garlic pieces and discard.

Add cabbage and stir until coated with oil. Lightly salt top layer, stir and cover. Reduce heat. Cook cabbage until softened (about 40 minutes to 1 hour).

Wash chicken pieces and dry thoroughly. In frying pan, sauté chicken pieces in olive oil (about 1/4 cup). Add salt and pepper to taste. When browned, add chicken to cabbage and stir in wine.

Cook with lid of pot ajar at moderate temperature until chicken falls from the bone and cabbage becomes sauce-like in consistency (about 1 hour.) Remove bones and serve. Serves 4 to 6.

Serving size: 1 piece of chicken with sauce. Per serving: 539 calories, 33 g protein, 38 g fat, 11 g carbohydrates, 534 mg sodium, 138 mg cholesterol

## CHERRIES IN WINE

- 2 cups red wine
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 cup superfine sugar
- 8 whole cloves, or 1/4 teaspoon powdered cloves
- 2 cups Bing cherries, pitted
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- Whipped cream, for garnish (optional)

In small pot, combine wine, orange juice, sugar and cloves. Bring to boil over medium heat. Add cherries and boil for about 3 minutes. Remove cherries and reduce syrup by half, about 10 minutes. Add almond extract. Return cherries to syrup and allow to cool. Remove cloves. Serve in glasses, garnished with whipped cream, if you like. Serves 4.

Serving size: 1/2 cup. Per serving: 275 calories, 2 g protein, 3 g fat, 47 g carbohydrates, 110 mg sodium, 0 mg cholesterol



PATRIZIA GISLON  
PREPARES POLLO  
AL CAVOLO E CIPOLLE



**KAILA WYLLYS** *Pedernales Electric Cooperative*  
Prize-Winning Recipe: **Pasta Arrabiata (Angry Pasta)**

We ate a lot of pasta this month, but none better than this rich and spicy dish. Wyllys wrote: “When we moved out of Austin, I missed the Angry Pasta at Romeo’s restaurant, and this was my attempt to recreate it at home. With all the butter and cream, it’s not an eat-every-day dish, but it’s really delicious!” We concur.

**Cook’s Tip:** For this dish, boil the pasta just until it is *al dente* (firm or “to the tooth” in Italian), about 8 to 9 minutes for bowtie pasta. Don’t overcook—it will cook a little more when adding the sauce.

## PASTA ARRABIATA (ANGRY PASTA)

- 10 ounces bowtie pasta
- 5 tablespoons butter (divided)
- 3 tablespoons leeks, finely chopped
- ¼ pound baby portabella mushrooms, sliced
- Black pepper
- ¼-½ pound prosciutto, julienned (Buy as slab; if you get sliced, do not get paper-thin slices.)
- 12 tablespoons heavy cream (divided)
- Double handful of cherry tomatoes, quartered
- Salt
- 2 tablespoons crushed dried red pepper flakes (or less, to taste)
- Dry white wine (optional)
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese (plus extra for the table)

Clean and slice mushrooms, leeks and tomatoes before starting to cook.

Boil pasta until *al dente* (see Cook’s Tip, above).

While pasta is boiling, melt 3 tablespoons butter in large saucepan over medium heat. Add leeks and cook until softened (about 6 minutes). Add mushrooms. Stir to coat with butter, add dash of black pepper, then turn heat to low and sauté for about 5 minutes. Then turn heat to high and boil away most of the liquid, stirring frequently. Lower heat and add prosciutto; stir on medium-low heat for about a minute. Add 6 tablespoons cream and cook just long enough for it to reduce and thicken a little bit. Then add tomatoes, salt to taste, and red pepper flakes. (If at any time you need more liquid, add a splash of white wine.) Turn off heat and set mushroom mixture aside while pasta finishes cooking.

In another pot, big enough to hold both the pasta and mushroom mixture,

heat 2 tablespoons butter and 6 tablespoons cream over low heat. When butter is melted, stir to join with cream, then turn off heat.

Drain pasta. Add to pot with butter and cream, turn heat to low, and stir to coat pasta. Add half of mushroom mixture and toss with pasta. Add ½ cup Parmesan and toss again. Finally, add remainder of mushroom mixture on top of pasta and serve. Have more Parmesan available on the table. Serves 4.

Serving size: medium-sized bowl of pasta. Per serving: 691 calories, 26 g protein, 38 g fat, 58 g carbohydrates, 1,646 mg sodium, 134 mg cholesterol

## GOURMET WHITE LASAGNA

- 8 uncooked lasagna noodles
- 1 pound lean ground beef
- ½ pound lean pork sausage
- 1 cup chopped onions
- ½ cup chopped celery
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese
- ½ cup dry white wine

- 2 cups shredded white Cheddar cheese
- 2 cups shredded Gouda cheese
- 1 container (12 ounces) ricotta cheese
- 2 large eggs
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Cook noodles according to package directions. Set aside. Cook ground beef, pork sausage, onions, celery and garlic in a large skillet, stirring until meats crumble; drain. Stir in herbs, salt and cream. Stir in wine, cream cheese, Cheddar and Gouda; cook, stirring continually, until cheeses melt. Set aside.

Combine ricotta and eggs; set aside. Arrange half of noodles in a lightly greased 13x9-inch baking dish; top with half of meat mixture, then cheese/egg mixture, then mozzarella. Repeat layers with remaining ingredients, ending with mozzarella. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes, or until top is lightly browned and bubbling. Let sit for 10 minutes. Serve with fresh grated Parmesan cheese. Serves 12.

**JANET VOLZ**

*Rio Grande Electric Cooperative*

Serving size: 1 square. Per serving: 720 calories, 37 g protein, 41 g fat, 48 g carbohydrates, 736 mg sodium, 164 mg cholesterol



## HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST

The December issue will feature the winners of our **HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST**, sponsored by Pioneer Brand products. The deadline to enter the contest is September 8, so send in your original holiday recipes today! (See page 32 for more information.)



## CAPONATA (ITALIAN EGGPLANT)

- 4 medium eggplants, diced
- Salt
- Olive oil
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, grated
- 1/4 cup parsley, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, skinned, deseeded and chopped
- 2 ounces green olives, pitted and chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons capers
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- Vinegar

Sprinkle diced eggplant with salt. Leave in colander for 1 hour. Rinse thoroughly and pat dry with towel.

In large nonstick pan, add 2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons olive oil and eggplant. Toss to coat. Sauté over medium heat, stirring occasionally, for 3 to 5 minutes. Set aside in bowl. (You may need to do this in batches, depending on pan size.)

Using same pan, heat 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon olive oil over medium heat and sauté onion until transparent. Add carrot, parsley, tomatoes, olives and

capers. Cook for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add sugar, 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon vinegar, and prepared eggplant. Continue to cook until heated through. Serve warm or at room temperature. Serves 4 to 6.

**B.J. WILLIS**

*Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative*

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 227 calories, 4 g protein, 20 g fat, 26 g carbohydrates, 203 mg sodium, 0 mg cholesterol

## ITALIAN MEAT LOAF AND SPINACH ROLL

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 pound ground pork
- 1/2 cups (3 slices) soft bread crumbs
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoons Italian seasoning (or a pinch each basil, oregano, thyme, marjoram and rosemary)
- 3/4 teaspoon each salt and black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 package (10 ounces) chopped frozen

spinach, defrosted and drained

- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Combine beef, pork, bread crumbs, onion, tomato sauce, egg, garlic and seasonings in large bowl. Mix spinach and cheeses in medium bowl.

Press meat mixture into 8x14-inch rectangle about 1/2-inch thick on large sheet of waxed paper. Spread filling over meat mixture, leaving a 3/4-inch border around edges. Roll from short end in jellyroll fashion, press over filling at both ends and seal. Place seam side down on rack in open roasting pan. Sprinkle top with additional Parmesan cheese, if desired.

Bake 60 to 75 minutes until meat thermometer inserted in the center reads 160 degrees. Cut in 1-inch slices to serve. Serves 6 to 8.

**BEVERLY GALANTE**

*Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

Serving size: 1 large slice. Per serving: 367 calories, 22 g protein, 27 g fat, 9 g carbohydrates, 570 mg sodium, 108 mg cholesterol

## TEXAS CO-OP POWER Holiday Recipe Contest

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We're looking for the best recipes from your holiday celebrations. All recipes must be original and the ingredients must include Pioneer Brand Gravy Mix, Pioneer Brand Biscuit & Baking Mix, or Pioneer Brand Frozen Biscuit or Roll Dough. Winners will be announced in our December issue.

Up to three entries are allowed per person. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper. Entries MUST include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your electric cooperative, or they will be disqualified. 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.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com) or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.



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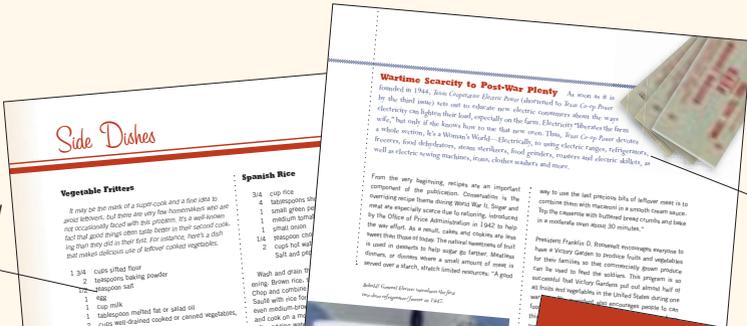
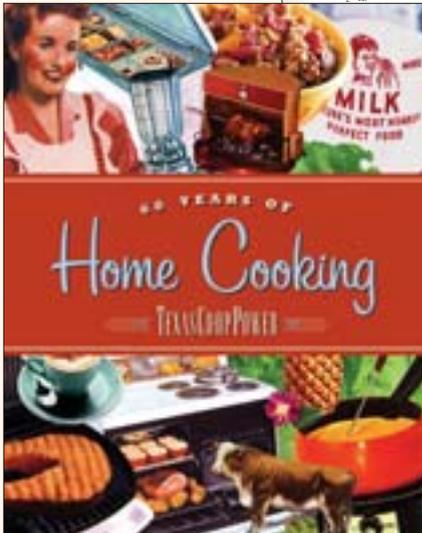
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- Be aware of circumstances that require added caution or safety awareness.

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# STRAIGHT SHOOTING ON SAFETY



## LONE STAR MURALS

A wall is just a wall, unless it features a mural, and then it becomes a work of art or even a piece of history. We're pleased to present these murals from across the Lone Star State, as photographed by our faithful readers. —**CHERYL TUCKER**

◀ This mural depicts a vaquero on horseback driving longhorns in front of San Antonio's Mission Espada and is located in a Kerrville restaurant. It was painted by Central Texas Electric Cooperative members **Lee** and **Sandra Casbeer**, who have designed and painted many beautiful murals throughout the Hill Country.

▼ Pedernales Electric Cooperative member and clay artist **Melodie Greider** created this one-of-a-kind stoneware mural of carved tiles. "My favorite subject is the Hill Country that surrounds me," she says.



▲ This Bertram coffeehouse's serene front-porch setting was painted by **Faith Renee Fuqua**. Her aunt and coffeshop owner, **Sandy Carothers**, is a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



▲ Several years ago, the Sour Lake Economic Development Corporation commissioned the painting of a series of six murals in their historic downtown area. Sam Houston EC member **Ken Pelt** sent in this photo of a 10x90-foot mural. Sour Lake is known as the birthplace of Texaco (1903), which originated in local oil fields.

▼ Art gallery owner **Paula Perry** wanted to attract attention to her new business located across the street from the Real County Courthouse, so she began painting a *trompe l'oeil* window. By the time she was finished, she had painted an entire city block, complete with an "alley." Paula and **Darryel Perry** are members of Bandera Electric Cooperative.



### Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Nov	Mailboxes	Sep 10
Dec	Christmas Morning	Oct 10
Jan	Extreme Weather	Nov 10
Feb	Gates	Dec 10
Mar	Snapshots	Jan 10
Apr	Inspirational	Feb 10

**MAILBOXES** is the topic for our November issue. Send your photos—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Mailboxes, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before September 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope should 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.

# AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

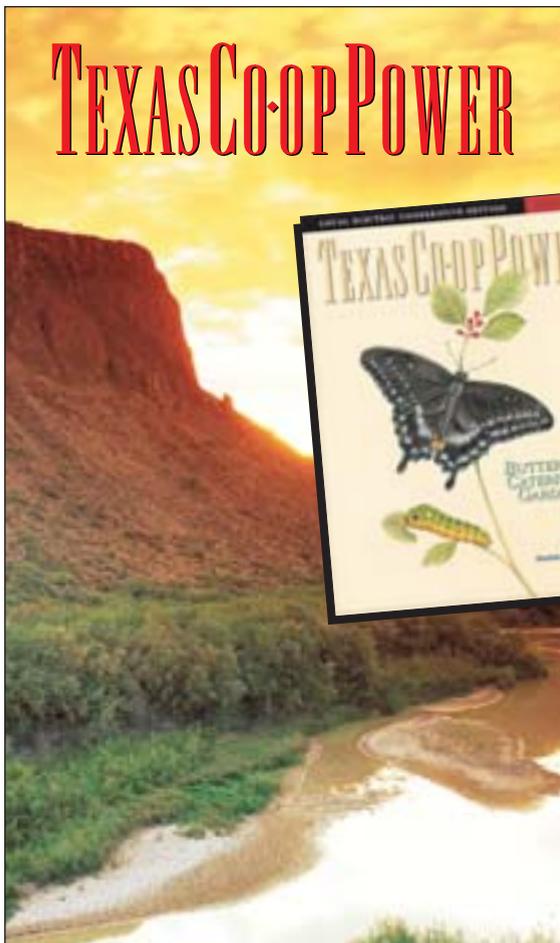
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- OATMEAL** [1-2] Oatmeal  
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- 02 JASPER** Lunch with the  
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- LAKE TEXANA**  
Labor Day Fun & Games,  
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- 02 SAN ANGELO**  
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- 03 NEW BERLIN** Sausage  
Festival, (830) 420-3185
- 07 LUBBOCK** [7-10]  
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sium, (806) 798-7825
- 08 OLNEY** [8-9]  
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- 14 HENRIETTA** [14-16]  
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- BROWNWOOD** [15-17]  
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- GRANDVIEW** [15-17]  
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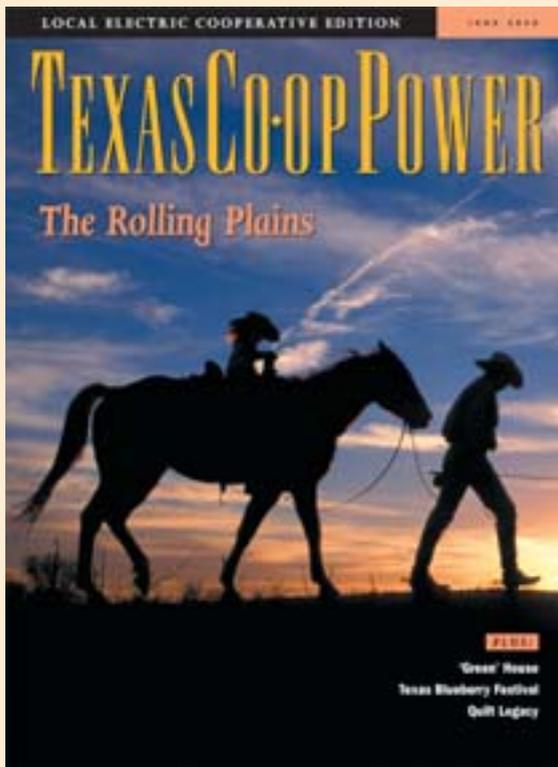
- 23 DRIPPING SPRINGS**  
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Festival, (254) 853-2314,  
www.moodytexas.com
- QUITMAN**  
Bluegrass Music Show,  
(903) 763-4411,  
www.quitman.com

- 29 WILLS POINT** [29-30]  
PigStye Pasture Party,  
(903) 873-6644
- 30 CLEBURNE** Dachshund  
Days & Craft Fair,  
(817) 645-8274,  
www.campfireusatesuya  
council.org
- DEL RIO** Oktoberfest,  
(830) 774-7568,  
www.whitehead-  
museum.com
- KAUFMAN**  
Living History Day  
& Archeology Fair,  
(972) 962-3890,  
www.kaufmancounty.net
- MARATHON** West Fest  
& Cabrito Cook-Off,  
(432) 386-4516,  
www.marathontexas.com
- PLANTERSVILLE** [9/30-  
11/19] Texas Renaissance  
Festival, 1-800-458-  
3435, www.texrenfest.com

## OCTOBER

- 01 NEW BRAUNFELS** [1-15]  
Art Stein Parade,  
(830) 629-8022
- 05 ROUND TOP** [5-7]  
Folk Art Fair,  
(281) 493-5501,  
www.roundtopfolktart  
fair.com
- 06 PLANO** [6-8] Gene Autry  
99th Birthday Festival,  
(210) 437-5405

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](mailto:aroundtx@texas-ec.org). Please submit events for November by September 10. Events are listed according to space available; an expanded list is available at [www.texascoop.power.com](http://www.texascoop.power.com). We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.



## TEXAS CO-OP POWER

**EACH MONTH, WE BRING YOU THE VERY BEST TEXAS HAS TO OFFER!**

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

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

For just \$15 a subscription, you can share Texas Co-op Power with friends and family members who live far away or in big cities! See page 4 for an order form.

One of the best things about Dallas, the anti-urbanite will assure you, is how quickly you can leave it behind. Upon driving no more than an hour southeast of Big D, I can lose myself in

**1** The Waxahachie Chamber has information on the courthouse and the historic Rogers Hotel. (972) 937-2390, [www.waxahachiechamber.com](http://www.waxahachiechamber.com).



two richly Victorian towns. I forget the traffic snarls and skyscraper clusters and gently slip into a pace left over from the days of horse-drawn carriages and afternoon garden parties.

The drive mapped out here is roughly a 40-mile jaunt, beginning in Ellis County and wandering southeast along U.S. Hwy. 287 to Ennis, making a slight detour there to Bardwell Lake, then back to 287 and proceeding to the Navarro County seat, Corsicana.

**WAXAHACHIE** Along streets bursting with vivid crape myrtle blooms in warmer months, nearly 200 of the original, ornate homes survive from the town's 19th-century heyday of cattle and cotton wealth. Heavily festooned in details that inspired the popular annual Gingerbread Trail, a tour held in early June, Waxahachie's extraordinary houses almost pale in comparison to the magnificent Ellis County Courthouse. I'm forever enthralled by the 1895 masterpiece, crafted in red sandstone and granite by German artisans who carved fascination in its clock tower, arches, gargoyles and frieze faces that range from beautiful to creepy. The courthouse recently underwent an \$11 million

**2** When you're too pooped to polka, find out about the Railroad Museum, at the Ennis CVB, (972) 878-4748, [www.visitennis.org](http://www.visitennis.org).



# WAXAHACHIE to CORSICANA

Two gingerbread cities and a fruitcake town are on this month's journey.

BY JUNE NAYLOR



restoration. I like staying in the wonderfully renovated Rogers Hotel, gracing the northeast corner of the courthouse square since 1913.

**ENNIS** If I'm not careful, I might dance my life away in this Czech town chock-full of Victorian charm. On Memorial Day weekend, Ennis hosts the National Polka Festival, attended by some 50,000 celebrants who make merry over parades (complete with Shriners, of course), food and plenty of polka music. Long gone are the days when cattle drovers from the Chisholm Trail and the outlaw gangs of Sam Bass and Cole Younger knocked around the many saloons and beer halls in town, but the Ennis of today offers me a glimpse of the past in its Railroad and Cultural Heritage Museum. Found in



Reserve your campsite at Bardwell Lake through the National Recreation Reservation Service, [www.reserveusa.com](http://www.reserveusa.com), 1-877-444-6777.

**3**

the 1915 Van Noy restaurant building that served as many as 10 passenger trains daily on the Southern Pacific Railroad, the museum is a gathering spot for model train buffs.

**BARDWELL LAKE** Immediately south of Ennis, this water-conservation and flood-control lake offers up six developed parks, including my favorite, Waxahachie Creek Park, on the western shore.

**CORSICANA** Sure, Navarro County's most famous business got that way by shipping fruitcakes to nearly 200 countries over the past century, but I would rather sample Collin Street Bakery goods in person rather than wait for the UPS truck to bring them to my house. Others who have stopped by over the years include Will Rogers and Enrico Caruso. I'm seduced on visits to the bakery by its apricot pecan cake, strawberry muffins and chocolate chip cookies, and you really can't

beat that 10-cent cup of coffee. Before leaving town, I walk off some of those calories exploring the Lefty Frizzell Country Music Museum at Pioneer Village, where I can place my hands in



Sample the wares at Corsicana's famous Collin Street Bakery, 401 W. Seventh Ave., 1-800-267-4657, [www.collinstreet.com](http://www.collinstreet.com).

**4**

the prints of no less than Merle Haggard, one of Frizzell's buddies, honored in the sidewalk near Frizzell's statue.

*June Naylor, a Fort Worth native, has won awards for her book, Texas: Off the Beaten Path. A seventh edition is due in stores soon from Globe-Pequot Press.*