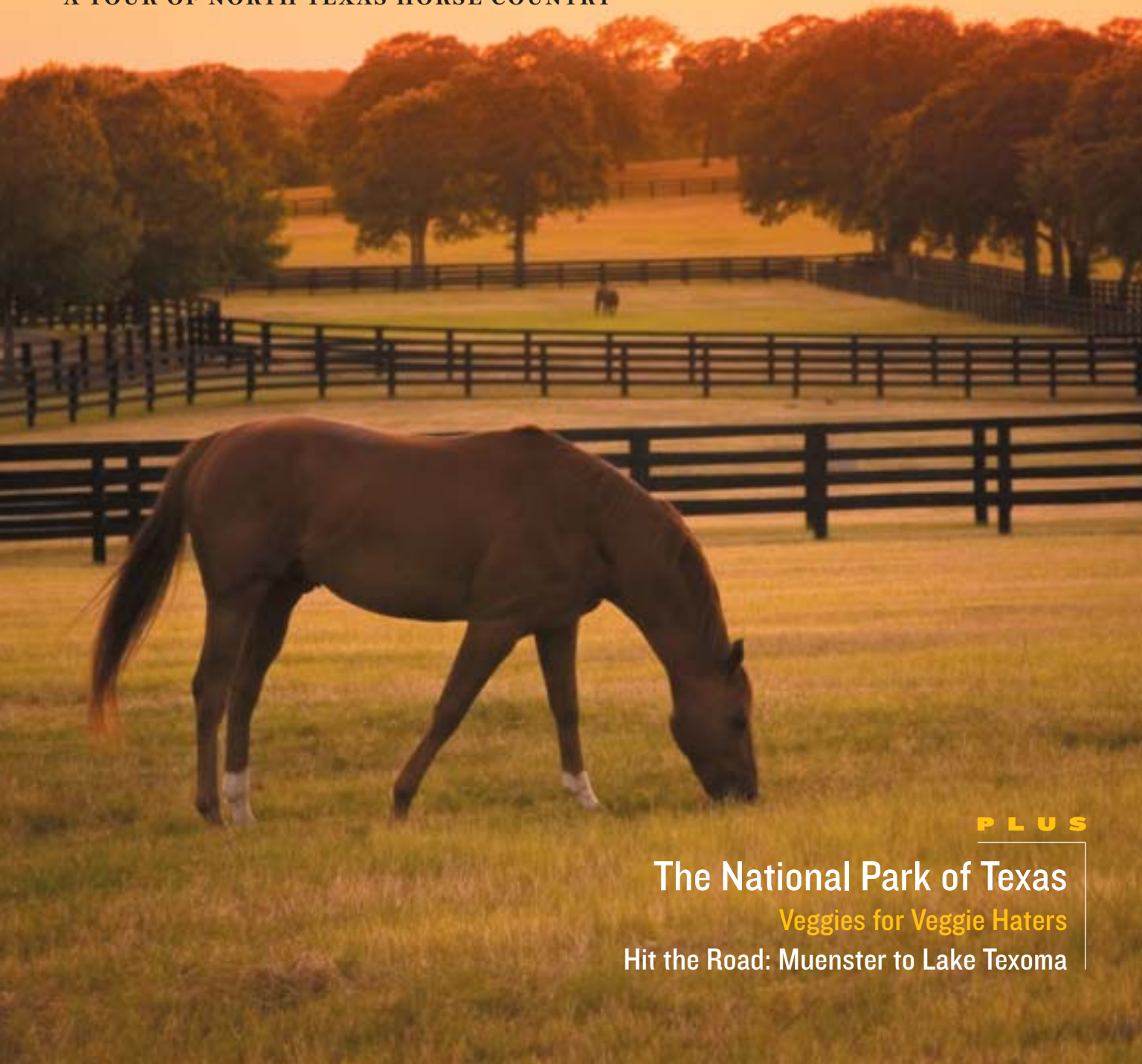


TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Horse Heaven

A TOUR OF NORTH TEXAS HORSE COUNTRY



PLUS

The National Park of Texas

Veggies for Veggie Haters

Hit the Road: Muenster to Lake Texoma

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.



Texas Electric Cooperatives

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October 2006

VOLUME 63 NUMBER 4



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TAKE A NORTH TEXAS
HORSE COUNTRY TOUR
By Kaye Northcott
Photos by Kent Barker

Move over Kentucky—Denton County is the new Horse Country, USA. Driving tours are perfect for fall excursions.

- 12** The National Park
of Texas

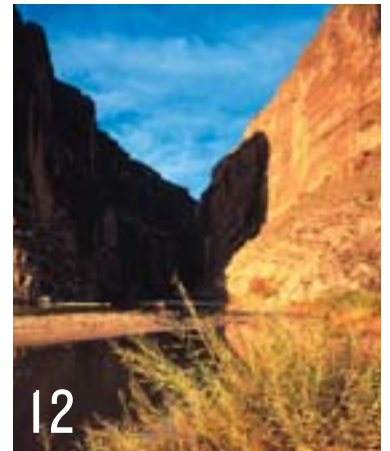
Photos by Laurence Parent
Story by Joe Nick Patoski

Experience Big Bend's splendor through the eyes of two nature connoisseurs.

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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

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

I really enjoyed reading the article in August's edition about bringing electricity to rural Texas. I remember the stories of my grandmother,



who slept in a hotel room with the lights on all night because she'd only seen ceiling lights with strings hanging down to turn them off and on!

JANA VICK

Navasota Valley Electric Cooperative

ELECTRICITY SAVVY HAD TO BE TAUGHT

I came to Blanco County as a young country girl to be a home demonstration agent with the Extension Service in 1941. The power had been turned on in April of 1941 but many families only used the power for lights.

Many were just beginning to buy electric appliances. Some left their wood stoves in the kitchen when they got an electric range. Some had an electric range ready for use when the power came. It was quite an experience teaching people to use these appliances, and how to freeze fruits, vegetables and meats.

Electricity really emancipated the housewife.

FRANCES EBELING

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

We receive many more letters than we can fit in the magazine. Visit 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. 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

PUBLISHER'S NOTES

When economists talk of collective purchasing power, supply and demand, and marginal costs, my eyes glaze over. Yet those economic principles let your electric co-op put this magazine in your hands for less than the price of a postage stamp!

Texas cooperative leaders figured out 66 years ago that by working together, their members would benefit. That's how Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC), the statewide association to which your cooperative belongs, can produce a high-quality magazine that delivers valuable news about your electric cooperative along with interesting stories from across the state at such a low cost.

This is the magic of aggregation—a basic co-op principle. Through cooperation we can provide you with a better product than could be created individually. When TEC was originally founded in 1940, it was because individual co-ops were paying extremely high prices for wholesale power. Co-ops thought they could make their voice louder and their business more efficient by aggregating their purchasing power. And so they formed the Texas Power Reserve Electric Cooperative, which later became TEC, and almost miraculously, their wholesale power costs were cut in half and co-op members saw their rates go down.



The cooperative business model is nothing new, but because October is Co-op Month, we want to salute it now. Thanks to 61 subscribing electric cooperatives, this magazine reaches the homes and businesses of more than 1 million cooperative members each month. You tell us, through surveys and letters, that you enjoy *Texas Co-op Power* and that you find it useful.

Thank you for your cooperation. Thanks for letting us work for you. And thanks for being part of our co-op family.

Peg Champion, *Publisher*

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SAFELIVING

Electric Safety

The National Safety Council urges you to follow these safety rules around your home and business:

- The urge to surge.** Use surge protectors wherever possible.
 - Give them a test.** Test ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) monthly. Turn on a nightlight plugged into the outlet. Depress the "test" button. If the light turns off, the outlet is working properly. If the "reset" button pops out but the light stays on, the GFCI isn't working. Press the "reset" button to return the outlet to normal. In addition, contact a qualified, licensed electrician to ensure your GFCI is working correctly.
 - High and dry.** Keep appliances away from water. Never reach into water for a plugged-in appliance. Shut off the main power, then unplug it. Have an item that has been immersed inspected before using it again.
 - Forget the pennies.** Pennies may be a quick fix for blown fuses, but they could cause the electrical panel to overheat and catch fire.
- Look for these and more tips at www.nsc.org.



H A P P E N I N G S

Gene Autry, America's favorite singing cowboy, would be 99 this year. And if he were still around, the Tioga native would no doubt be at the big doings in his honor October 6-8 at Southfork Ranch in Plano. For the past five years, the **GENE AUTRY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION** was held in Tioga, but now it's grown so big sponsors are moving it down the road to the Southfork Ranch, where the TV series "Dallas" was filmed.

There will be a bit of everything—the National Polo-Crosse Finals (blending polo and lacrosse); performances from four tribes of Native-American singers and dancers; military drills by the 1870s Horse Cavalry from Fort Hood; a Mexican rodeo; David Hartwick and his wonder dog, "Skidboot"; sheepdog herding; a chuck wagon cook-off; a rattlesnake wrangler; folkloric dancing; crafts and music (Ray Price and Gary P. Nunn) ... well, you get the picture. Contact the Tioga Museum and Heritage Association at (940) 437-1110 or www.geneautryfestival.info.

WHO KNEW?

THESE FOLKS ARE NATIVE TEXANS



Newscaster Sam Donaldson
(1934) El Paso

Newscaster Dan Rather
(1931) Wharton

Dancer Cyd Charisse
(1921) Amarillo

Actor/Dancer Ann Miller
(1923) Houston

Actor Ann Sheridan
(1915) Denton

**Fleet Admiral
Chester W. Nimitz**
(1885) Fredericksburg

JOHNNY EVE



TEXAS IS TOP U.S. PRODUCER OF WIND ENERGY

It's not just a bunch of hot air: Texas is now the top U.S. producer of wind energy.

According to the American Wind Energy Association's second-quarter market report, Texas' cumulative wind power capacity now stands at 2,370 megawatts. That's enough electricity to power 600,000 average American homes. California is the nation's second-largest wind power producer with 2,323 megawatts.

Until now, California has been tops in installed wind capacity for nearly 25 years, ever since the first wind farms were built there in late 1981. At one time, California was host to more than 80 percent of the world's total wind capacity.

Overall, the report shows that U.S. developers brought online a capacity total of 822 megawatts in the first half of the year. With this strong growth, the nation's cumulative wind power capacity surged to 9,971 megawatts.

FEED YOUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

NOAA, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, says that this year's exceptional drought poses a danger to birds. August, September and early October is the time when, for centuries, birds have foraged the fresh food they need from natural sources in fields and meadows. Due to the persistent drought, however, naturally growing grasses, grains and berries have withered away. Birds and other wildlife are also suffering from lack of surface water during this unusually dry period.

Owen Yost, landscape architect with the Wild Bird Center, points out that birds here have weathered these cycles for ages. In the past, they re-populated their numbers within a decade or so, feasting on the seeds and berries growing in subsequent years in their natural habitats. But since their natural habitat is shrinking, the birds may not be able to rebound. They're more dependent on man-made feeders for the time being. So make it a goal this fall to fill your feeders. Morning and evening birdsong will be your reward.




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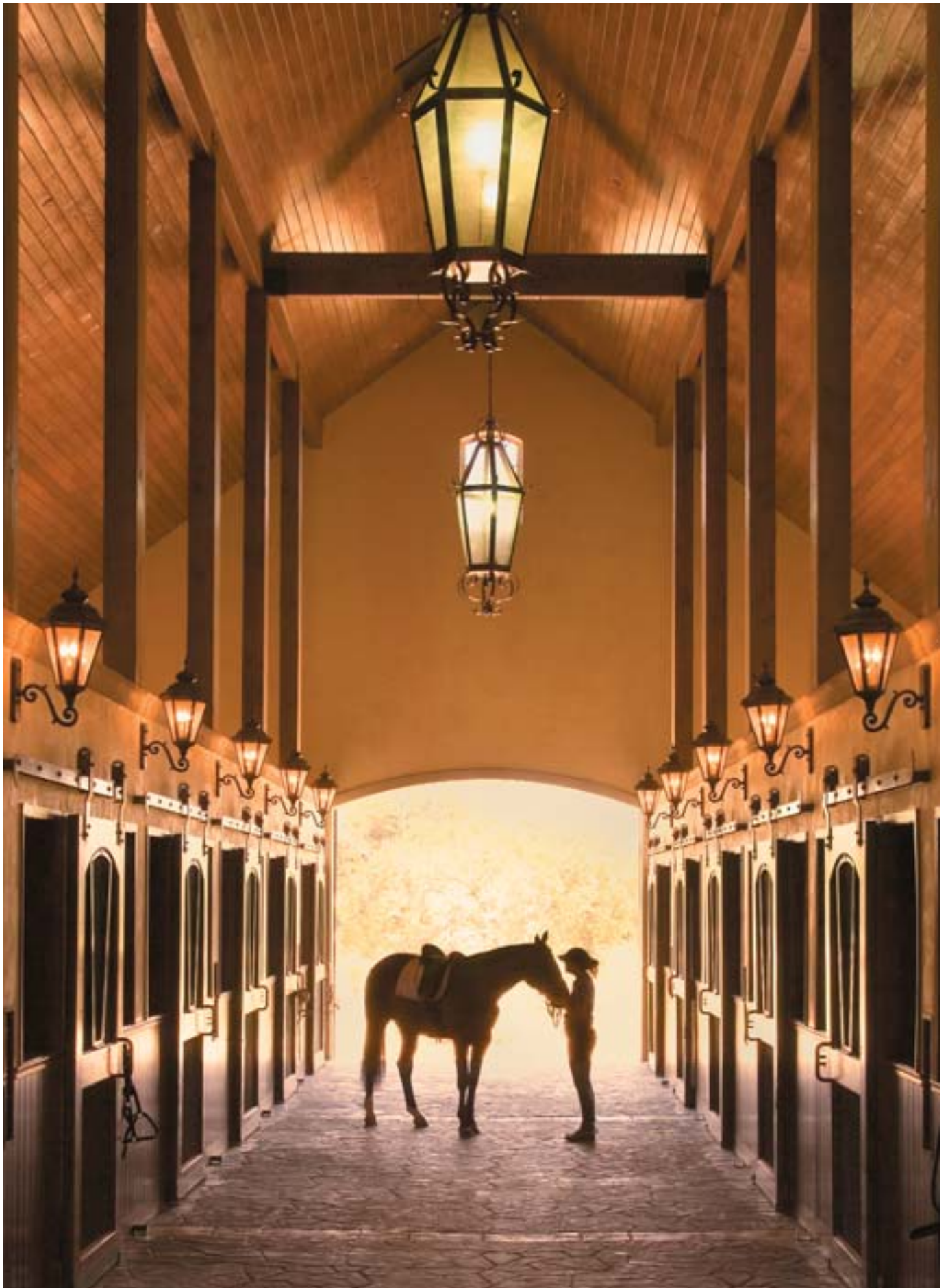
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STARGATE SPORT HORSES LIVE IN THE LAP OF LUXURY.

Horse Heaven

TAKE A NORTH TEXAS HORSE COUNTRY TOUR

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT • PHOTOS BY KENT BARKER

Gretel and Larry L’Heureux were simply looking for a nice place to live near Denton in 1995 when they discovered a lovely rural area along U.S. 377 between Aubrey and Pilot Point. The road, perfect for an old-fashioned Sunday drive, runs parallel about 10 miles east of I-35, where truckers and commuters barrel north from Fort Worth to Denton and on toward the Oklahoma border.

A handful of housing developments was nestled among horse farms on gently undulating pasturage encased by expensive white pipe and cable fences and punctuated by post oak, blackjack oak, cedar elm—all common to the Cross Timbers area. In those fields, one could catch glimpses of some of the finest horseflesh this side of Kentucky.

The L’Heureuxes were not horse people, but they loved the pastoral setting and promptly bought property. They learned they were living in an area suitable for year-round riding due to moderate climate and well-drained loamy soil that doesn’t turn to mud. (A similar patch of superior soil lures horse breeders to Parker County, west of Fort Worth.)

By chance, Larry happened to buy a field trial dog, which led him to purchase a Tennessee walking horse in order to watch the dog’s field trials. He learned very quickly that he enjoyed the horseback riding more than the field trials, and he also discovered 28 miles of greenbelt equestrian trails just a stone’s throw from his house. Next, he bought an Arabian for high-energy endurance riding. This horse thing turned out to be contagious.

Meanwhile, Gretel resolved to find out as much as she could about the area horse industry with a mind to organizing tours of equine facilities like those in Kentucky. “I didn’t know anything about horses,” said the slim woman, who looks like a Scandinavian cowgirl in her brown leather jacket. “Now I can see the horses are all different.”

She learned that there were 300 farms and ranches in the area, many of which were breeding and training facili-

ties. The horse industry, it turns out, produces Denton County’s primary agricultural impact. “There’s an enormous diversity of horses,” Gretel said. “The focus is primarily on quarter horses, but trainers specialize in several disciplines. Trainers move here from Oregon, Illinois, Minnesota and other locations because of the proximity to the airport and the equine support system.”

One hundred and fifty years ago, horses were pulling carriages down these farm roads, but now SUVs and pickups pull horses in luxurious, air-conditioned trailers. Some of the pampered horses are on the first leg of exotic trips to Olympic trials in Europe or a new life in Saudi Arabia. FedEx delivery trucks speed packages of horse semen through nearby Alliance or Dallas/Fort Worth airports to awaiting mares throughout the world.

Gretel’s dream of organizing guided horse ranch tours turned out to be impractical. Still, she knew that many people would like to be in the know about this mecca for all things equine. This year, based on her research, the North Texas Horse Country Driving Tour was launched under the sponsorship of the Denton and Fort Worth Convention and Visitors Bureaus and the Pilot Point Main Street Program.

For horse aficionados, buyers and riders, or people like me who simply like to look at frisking colts in the springtime, the driving tour is a treasure map. I would recommend this soothing tour even to people who don’t give a whit about horses, for pure pleasure, especially in the spring or fall. (See map information on page 10.)

The map lists 24 farms and ranches, plus the great Western destinations in Fort Worth such as the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame and the Stockyards National Historic District. The Paul Taylor Saddle Company and massive tack emporium



LARRY AND GRETEL L’HEUREUX

outside Pilot Point is also a must-see.

North Texas' horse country has not yet developed into a tourist attraction. There are no bus tours or souvenir shops like those offered around Lexington, Kentucky, but the Denton Convention and Visitors Bureau can organize group tours. Or you can take your chances and simply drive up to a gate, activate the speakerphone, and ask for a tour. Several managers assured me they are delighted to give tours if it's not foaling time, or some other critical juncture of the year when they don't have a minute to spare.

Most of the big farms specialize in registered breeds and provide stud services or semen for artificial insemination. The owners and trainers are happy to explain why their breed is the best—be it thoroughbred, Arabian, cutting horse, warmblood or other (see box on page 9 for more on the subject).

Many of the farms and equestrian centers sell and board horses for modest rates, but some of the fun of the Horse Country Tour is seeing the most

lavish facilities in North Texas.

Below are some of the extraordinary places I visited.

STARGATE SPORT HORSES

The billionaire Wyly brothers (Sam and Charles) of Dallas financed this \$12.5 million facility. A human could easily luxuriate in the cross-ventilated stalls and tiled showers. Do the horses really appreciate the vaulted wood ceilings, wall sconces and chandeliers in the barn? Probably not. But the people who write the checks seem to. They also, no doubt, enjoy watching exquis-

itely trained horses prance across the covered arena from inside an air-conditioned, glass-walled viewing lounge.

Stargate breeds Hanoverian and Dutch warmbloods and trains them for dressage and jumping. It is the home of Calimero, a Grand Prix dressage stallion. European judges periodically visit to determine if the stock bred on the farm are worthy of the exacting requirements of the breed, which is frequently seen at the Olympic Games. When I toured, a trainer and a champion horse were literally dancing through a dressage routine.

VALOR FARM

Clarence Scharbauer Jr. of Midland, former president of the American Quarter Horse Association, owns Valor Farm. He and his late wife, Dorothy, were involved with two Kentucky Derby winners. Dorothy's father, Fred Turner Jr., won the 1959 Kentucky Derby with Tomy Lee. In 1987, Dorothy and daughter Pam captured the roses with the great Alysheba, whose portrait



MANAGER-TRAINER DAVID RHEA INSPECTS AN ARABIAN FILLY AT MANDOLYNN HILL FARM.

Horse Lexicon

During the last century, the interest in registering and subdividing the categories of horses and horse sports has mushroomed. It would take an encyclopedia to get a handle on the subject. A few basics: A registered thoroughbred or Arabian must have two registered parents of the same breed. Other breeds tolerate limited infusions of different blood.

Here's a rundown on some of the breeds on display along the North Texas Horse Country Driving Tour:

Warmblood refers to temperament and breeding. Once cavalry horses, "warmblood" today usually refers to a group of sport horse breeds that have dominated the Olympic Games and World Equestrian Games in dressage and show jumping since the 1950s. These breeds include the Hanoverian, Oldenburg, Trakehner, Holsteiner, Swedish Warmblood and Dutch Warmblood. Warmbloods tend to be heavy bodied, but not as large as "coldbloods," a term reserved for docile draft animals.

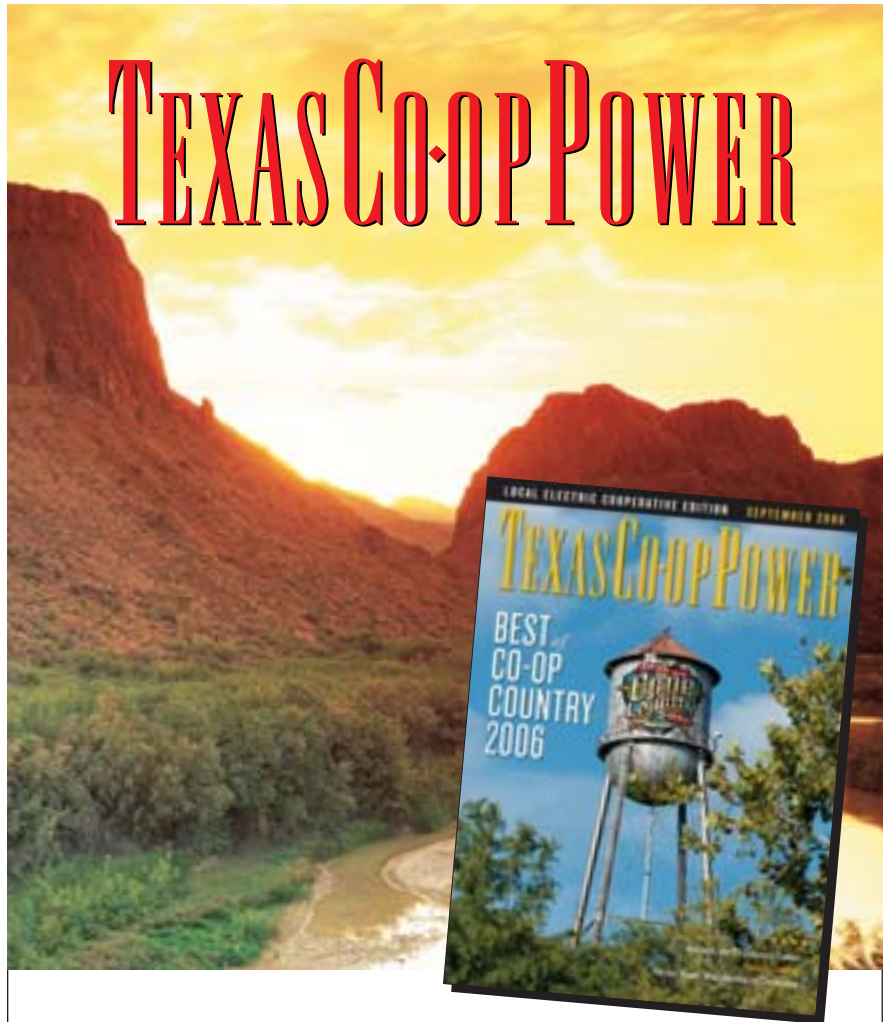
For thousands of years, Bedouins bred **Arabians** as war mounts for long treks across the desert, evolving steeds with large lung capacity and incredible endurance. The horses shared tents with their masters and developed a reputation for being amiable as well as athletic. Among the historic figures who preferred Arabians were Genghis Kahn, Alexander the Great, Napoleon and George Washington. The horses are known for their extraordinary beauty.

Thoroughbreds trace their ancestry to one of three Arabian sires brought to England from the Middle East and bred to native horses around the turn of the 17th century. The *General Stud Book for Thoroughbreds*, started in 1791, traces all thoroughbreds back to the three foundation sires for that breed. In contrast to other registered breeds, a thoroughbred cannot be reproduced through artificial insemination to be eligible for Jockey Club races.

The **American Quarter Horse** is one of the first horse breeds native to the United States. It is valued for its ability to run a short distance over a straightaway faster than any other horse. The breed's muscularity and sprinter's speed make it the ideal cowpony. A quarter horse can have only limited white markings on the face and below the knees. One born with white spots or patches might be eligible to be registered as an American Paint Horse, but that's a story of a different color.

—Kaye Northcott

TEXAS CO-OP POWER



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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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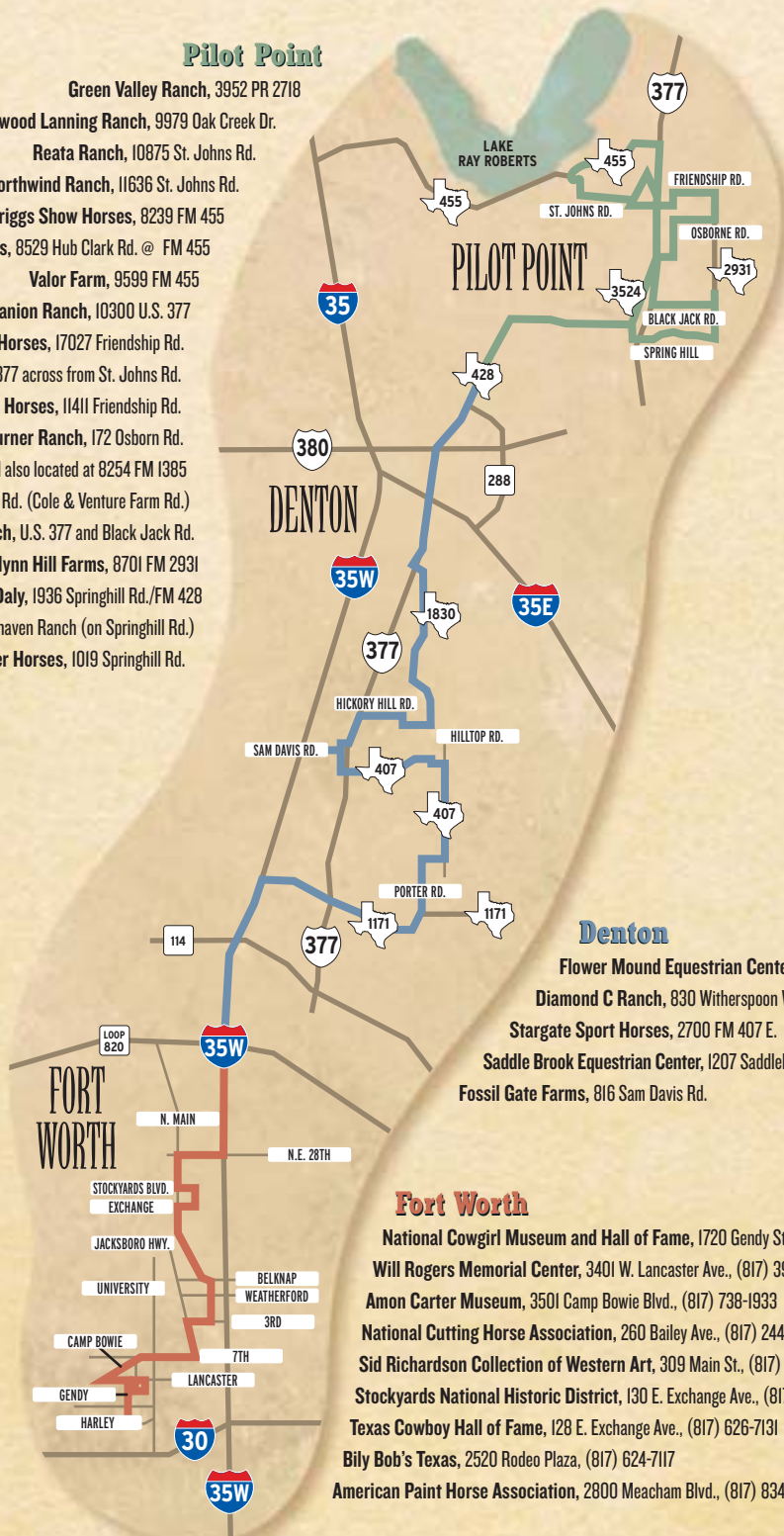
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Horse Country Tours

To arrange a tour or order a map, contact the Denton Convention and Visitors Bureau at 1-888-381-1818.
For maps online, go to www.horsecountrytours.com.

Pilot Point

- Green Valley Ranch**, 3952 PR 2718
- Edgewood Lanning Ranch**, 9979 Oak Creek Dr.
- Reata Ranch**, 10875 St. Johns Rd.
- Northwind Ranch**, 11636 St. Johns Rd.
- Horizon Ranch and Briggs Show Horses**, 8239 FM 455
- Hidden Valley Thoroughbreds**, 8529 Hub Clark Rd. @ FM 455
- Valor Farm**, 9599 FM 455
- Tommy Manion Ranch**, 10300 U.S. 377
- Simons Show Horses**, 17027 Friendship Rd.
- Chip Knost**, U.S. 377 across from St. Johns Rd.
- Steve Heckaman Quarter Horses**, 11411 Friendship Rd.
- Turner Ranch**, 172 Osborn Rd.
- JEH Stallion Station**, Osborn Rd. and also located at 8254 FM 1385
- Venture Farms**, 1720 Venture Farm Rd. (Cole & Venture Farm Rd.)
- Circle Y Ranch**, U.S. 377 and Black Jack Rd.
- Mandolynn Hill Farms**, 8701 FM 2931
- Roger Daly**, 1936 Springhill Rd./FM 428
- Winterhaven**, 10390 Winterhaven Ranch (on Springhill Rd.)
- Clark Rassi Quarter Horses**, 1019 Springhill Rd.



Denton

- Flower Mound Equestrian Center**, 7950 FM 1171/Cross Timbers
- Diamond C Ranch**, 830 Witherspoon Way (@ corner of Porter Rd.)
- Stargate Sport Horses**, 2700 FM 407 E.
- Saddle Brook Equestrian Center**, 1207 Saddlebrook Way (@ corner of FM 407 E)
- Fossil Gate Farms**, 816 Sam Davis Rd.

Fort Worth

- National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame**, 1720 Gendy St., (817) 336-4475
- Will Rogers Memorial Center**, 3401 W. Lancaster Ave., (817) 392-7469
- Amon Carter Museum**, 3501 Camp Bowie Blvd., (817) 738-1933
- National Cutting Horse Association**, 260 Bailey Ave., (817) 244-6188
- Sid Richardson Collection of Western Art**, 309 Main St., (817) 332-6554
- Stockyards National Historic District**, 130 E. Exchange Ave., (817) 624-4741
- Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame**, 128 E. Exchange Ave., (817) 626-7131
- Billy Bob's Texas**, 2520 Rodeo Plaza, (817) 624-7117
- American Paint Horse Association**, 2800 Meacham Blvd., (817) 834-2742



THOROUGHBRED



ARABIAN



QUARTER HORSE

hangs prominently in the farm's lush business offices.

In 1991, the Scharbauers purchased 393 acres near Pilot Point and built this impressive facility for thoroughbreds. Unlike other breeds, which are allowed to reproduce by artificial insemination, thoroughbreds must be coupled the old-fashioned way. This explains why Valor Farm has first-class accommodations for visiting horses in their "mare motel."

MANDOLYNN HILL FARM

Established in 1987, this farm focuses on Arabians and thoroughbreds. This

is the only place I got to see the beautiful, fleet-footed Arabians. Mandolynn Hill Farm has had a successful breeding program for years. The goal at Mandolynn Hill Farm, manager and trainer David Rhea explained, is to produce correct, pretty, athletic horses that can perform in a variety of venues.

REATA RANCH

This well-outfitted but unpretentious ranch is home to some of the finest quarter horses in the area. It's owned by Texas Motor Speedway, the nearby auto racing behemoth. Reata Ranch

specializes in breeding quarter horses for halter. Their most famous claim to fame is Coolest, an American Quarter Horse Association leading sire. The Reata Ranch manager is Wayne Jordan, a nationally known roping and halter horse trainer.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power. Kent Barker is a Dallas-based photographer whose work has been featured in many national magazines.

CoServ Electric provides power for portions of Denton, Collin, Cooke, Grayson, Tarrant and Wise counties.



REATA RANCH SPECIALIZES IN TRAINING QUARTER HORSES FOR HALTER.

T The National Park of exas

PHOTOS BY LAURENCE PARENT • STORY BY JOE NICK PATOSKI

This article is excerpted from the introduction to Big Bend National Park, published by University of Texas Press, 2006.

THE BIG BEND IS LIKE NO OTHER place on earth—vast, sprawling, very dry, and very far from everywhere else. So it's no brag saying Big Bend National Park is unique among national parks.

Big Bend is the state icon of wilderness, Texas's own Empty Quarter and the north-of-the-border version of Chihuahua's La Zona del Silencio rolled into one.

While Texas has 13 national park

service units, none compares to this one. Big Bend is bigger—genuinely Texas-sized, 801,000 acres in all—and older, with roots going back to the establishment of Texas Canyons State Park in May of 1933.

Big Bend bears the name of the most significant feature of the land-mass known as Texas: a giant bend in the course of a giant river in a distant part of the state, an area so mythically rough, rugged and desolate that if it didn't exist, someone would have imagined it—a dreamscape of towering mountains, soaring canyons, a ribbon of life coursing through the desert, a desiccated Eden of flora and fauna.

Big Bend is a land of extremes. Here, no such thing as average exists, only a median to establish how wild the extremes can be. The temperature can exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit on the low desert in January and February. Snow has fallen in the mountains as early as October and as late as April. The mountains are cooler and actually habitable in the summer while the desert is a 24-hour oven. The coldest winter temperatures in the park are recorded on the river, not in the mountains. The hottest months are May and June. The summer monsoons—summer rain in the desert—occur mostly from July through



RIO GRANDE, MOUTH OF SANTA ELENA CANYON.

September. Average annual precipitation in the Chisos is 20 inches; in the low desert it's less than 10 inches. When it does rain, flash floods in creeks and washes are common, triggering a spectacle that some locals compare to watching glaciers calve.

BIG BEND IS OTHERWORLDLY. It's one of the last places left that's a long way from everywhere, so far away that people get the feeling they've fallen off the edge of the earth. No one thinks twice when Big Bend is described as a place where water runs uphill, where rainbows wait for rain, where the river lives

in a big stone box, where mountains go away at night to play with other mountains, and where the lies told about Texas are true. The sense of space is intimidating. The landscape is overpowering, swallowing up and diminishing humanity to its proper scale.

And just what kind of landscape is this, anyway? Big Bend is melted globs of volcanic tuff, lava extrusions, lava intrusions, dikes bulging out of the surrounding rock, scarps, faults, folds and fractures in the landmass—all weird and foreign, as if from another planet.

Paul Horgan described it thusly in his classic book *Great River*: "The whole rind of the earth in the Big Bend country

was dropped in a great tilted slab at a depth of 2,000 or 3,000 feet on the north, and 6,000 feet on the south, as though a cut were made in a watermelon, and the segment pushed in below the surrounding surface. Mesas, volcanic mountains, plains, interior basins, deserts, badlands, lava flows, beds of dried rivers and dead and vanished seas, all profuse in number and fantastic in shape and often violent in color, made that country in its vast freaks of light seem like figment instead of fact."

Sixty miles long, 60 miles across, 1,250 square miles big, Big Bend is about the size of the state of Rhode Island, embracing canyons higher than



SUMMIT VIEW OF EMORY PEAK, BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK'S HIGHEST POINT.



AGAVE IN CHISOS MOUNTAINS.



GIANT DAGGER YUCCAS IN FOG.



OCOTILLO AND WILDFLOWERS IN BURRO MESA.

any man-made skyscraper and a hundred times more majestic. For more than 1,000 miles, the Rio Grande, as it is called north of the river, or El Río Bravo del Norte, as it is referred to south of the river, is the international boundary between the United States and Mexico. One-fourth of that boundary on the U.S. side is administered by the national park.

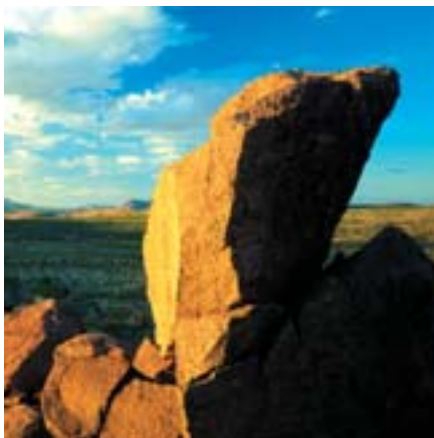
BIG BEND IS EXOTIC. The rest of the hemisphere is literally within a stone's throw. On the opposite bank of the muddy ribbon, no more than a hundred yards away, Mexico, Latin America and the Third World beckon.

Once upon a time, Big Bend was the only national park with its own Mexican border towns. Visitors were encouraged to cross the Rio Grande to the tiny villages of Boquillas and Santa Elena to eat tacos, drink sodas, beers and tequila, buy quartz or trinkets, and have a Mexican experience. Both towns were accessible by paying a \$2 round-trip fare to a boatman who rowed you across the muddy river in a small aluminum johnboat and rowed you back when you were ready to return. There were no customs or immigration posts because the two towns were extremely isolated from the rest of Mexico. Park turistas provided the primary source of income for

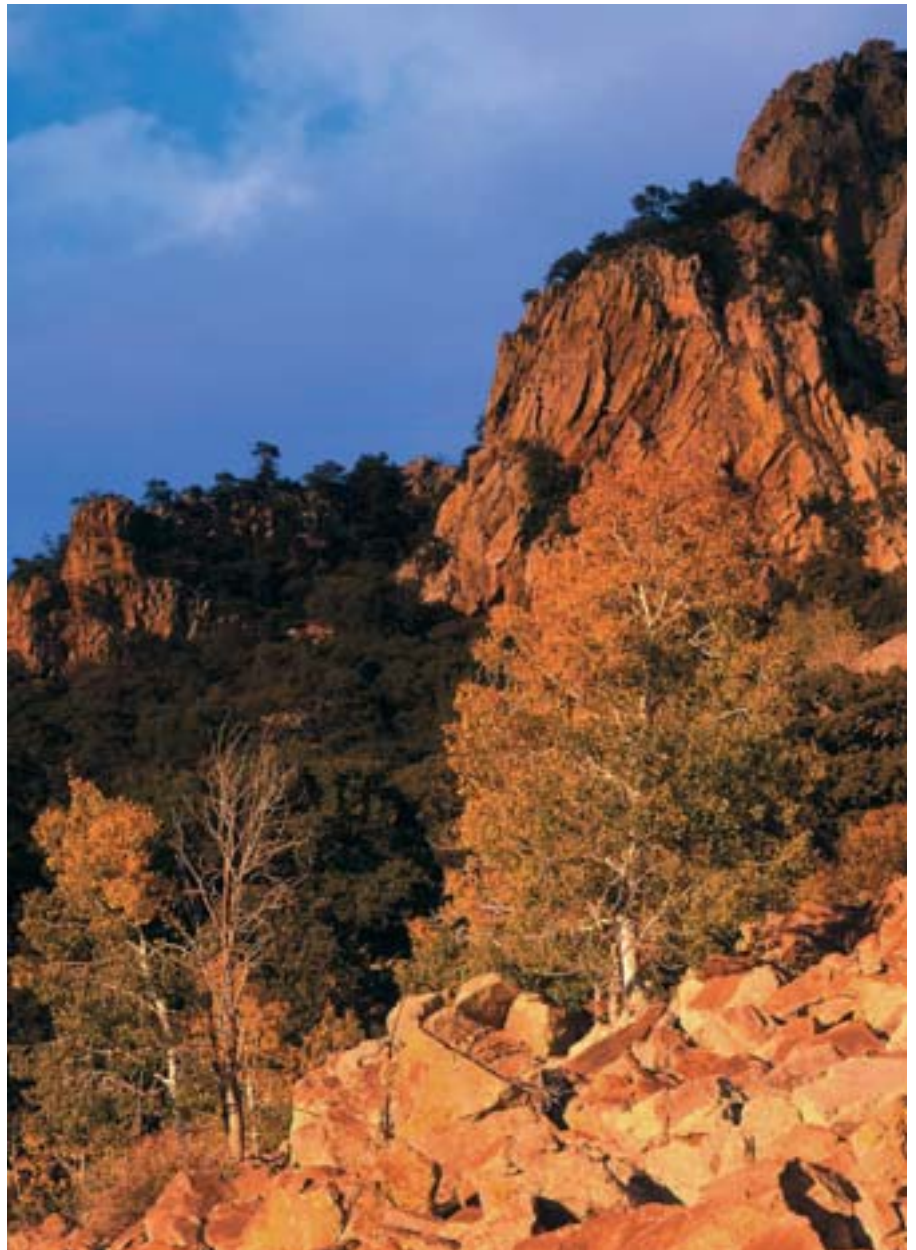
villagers. Boquillas became famous for its cluster of adobe bars, three-for-a-dollar tacos and burritos, and a bed-and-breakfast where singer/songwriter Robert Earl Keen wrote "Gringo Honeymoon." Santa Elena offered five restaurants, with varied Mexican fare.

But after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, the U.S. government closed these Class II informal crossings. The result was that the villages dried up, much of their population moved away, and a way of life that had existed since before there was a United States or a Mexico came to an end.

Big Bend is inviting. With 200 miles



VOLCANIC DIKE NEAR ROSS MAXWELL SCENIC DRIVE.



QUAKING ASPENS BELOW EMORY PEAK.

of hiking trails, 300 miles of paved and backcountry roads, and 118 miles of river within the park—235 miles if you include the Lower Canyons Wild and Scenic River section of the Rio Grande downstream from the park—there is plenty to explore. It is easily the biggest playground for outdoor enthusiasts in Texas, attracting hikers, backpackers, campers, paddlers, cyclists and fishermen.

BIG BEND IS AWESOME, TOO. Located entirely within the Chihuahuan Desert, the largest of four deserts in North America, Big Bend is one of the most remote of the 58 national parks scattered across the United States.

Hosting 400,000 visitors a year, it is also one of the least-visited national parks. Even on the most crowded days of the year—typically Thanksgiving weekend in November and spring break in March—each person can claim about 200 acres to roam.

Fewer humans translates to more solitude, wilder country and wilder wilderness. Not everybody gets Big Bend—which is fine for those of us who do. The great American folksinger Woody Guthrie wandered here. The great Southwestern writer Ed Abbey extolled its virtues.

Being a Big Bend true believer amounts to having an innate willingness to drive 500 miles at the drop of a hat to

see a sunset where sunsets really mean something and then cracking a smile when you realize that for all that distance and all those extraterrestrial sensations imparted, you're still in Texas.

The more I go, the more I realize I've just scratched the surface. Big Bend National Park is too huge and too complex to ever fully understand. Which are two good reasons to love the place all the more.

Photographer Laurence Parent, who lives in Austin, specializes in landscape, nature and travel subjects. Joe Nick Patoski, who lives in Wimberley, has authored several books. He's a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

High-Efficiency Heat Pumps

BY JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JAMES: I want to install the most efficient heat pump for lower electric bills. I am also concerned about getting one that provides the best year-round comfort. What features should I look for in a new heat pump? —*Bob M.*

DEAR BOB: With the new minimum energy-efficiency requirements for 2006, there have been improvements in heat pumps that make them an excellent choice for almost any home. Heat pump efficiency in the cooling mode is rated by a SEER (seasonal energy-efficiency rating) similar to

with a reversing valve. When switching from the cooling to the heating mode, the reversing valve reverses the direction of the refrigerant. The hot gases flow through the indoor blower coil to heat the air inside your home. The wall thermostat takes care of automatically switching the reversing valve depending upon whether you need heating or cooling.

A two-stage heat pump is your most efficient option, and it also provides the best comfort. The heat pump has two different output levels when heating and when cooling. This allows the heat pump to be sized to handle some of the coldest or hottest days, yet also be effective during milder weather. Depending upon the compressor design, the heat pump lower-output level will be from 50 percent to 67 percent of the maximum higher-output level.

This is a great advantage because the heat pump runs in longer, more efficient cycles when it is operating in the lower-output level. Even though it is running longer, the compressor is using less electricity in this lower-output level so the overall electricity usage is reduced.

Most two-stage heat pumps use a General Electric variable-speed blower motor in the indoor air handler. This efficient motor varies its speed depending upon the heat pump stage currently running and the air flow resistance in the ductwork. Heat pump efficiency and indoor comfort depend upon matching the outdoor unit, the indoor coil and the blower speed (air flow).

One of the key advantages of the variable-speed blower, when used with the proper thermostat, is in controlling the indoor humidity level. This affects comfort and common allergens such as mold spores and dust mites. By varying the indoor air flow, the ratio of cooling to dehumidification can be controlled. This is ideal for humid climates. © 2006 James Dulley



This is a two-stage outdoor heat pump unit installed at a home. It has a large condenser coil area for high efficiency.

that of a central air conditioner. In the heating mode, the efficiency is rated by the HSPF (heating seasonal performance factor). Generally, the ones that are most efficient at cooling your home are also the most efficient at heating. If you now have an old heat pump with a SEER in the 8 range, installing one of the most efficient new ones (SEER of 19) could cut your utility bills by more than 50 percent.

As a brief background, a heat pump is basically a central air conditioner

PREPARE NOW FOR WINTER STORMS

It's hard to predict the weather, but it's easy to prepare for it. Here's how to plan ahead for unavoidable power outages that can accompany winter storms.

LISTEN TO WEATHER FORECASTS often so you'll know when high winds, heavy rains or ice are on the way.

PREPARE AN OUTAGE KIT that contains: a battery-powered radio, fresh batteries, a flashlight, candles, matches, a wind-up clock, bottled water, and paper plates and plastic utensils.



TEACH CHILDREN TO STAY AWAY FROM FALLEN OR SAGGING POWER LINES. They could be energized and dangerous, even if the power is out.

KEEP A STOCK OF CANNED FOOD in your cupboard, along with a manual can opener. Consider buying a camp stove and fuel that you can use (outdoors only, please) if you can't cook on your electric stove.

TAPE OUTAGE REPORTING PHONE NUMBERS for your electric cooperative on your refrigerator so it will be handy if you must report an outage.

PILE A FEW EXTRA BLANKETS and sweaters together so you can find them easily if the heat goes off. Dress in layers to stay warm.

"Our hope is that the weather will spare us, and we won't have any outages this winter. If we do, however, we'll restore service as quickly as possible," says a spokesperson for your electric cooperative. "Just in case, though, it's best to be prepared."

Practice Safety on Halloween

While kids are busy dreaming of the superheroes they will become on Halloween night—and the candy they'll eat the next day—parents should have safety on their minds.

Parents can make sure their kids are safe—and that their homes are safe for the little trick-or-treaters who come calling on October 31—before night falls on Halloween.

Most parents know the basic safety rules: Dress your kids in bright costumes and keep them in your sight as they ring the neighbors' doorbells and ask for treats. Carry a flashlight. Check candy for tampering before letting your little ones eat any. Buy masks with large eye holes and keep everyone on the sidewalk and out of the street.

Still, parents don't always consider the dangers their own homes can hold

for the night's costumed visitors. Follow these tips for a safe holiday:

Replace your porch light a week before Halloween so it will glow brightly all night. The light lets trick-or-treaters know they are welcome and keeps your porch or steps illuminated to prevent falls.

If you don't have effective security lighting or outdoor lighting around the house, now you have an excuse to get some. Proper lighting will scare off pranksters and keep visitors safe.

Choose lighted decorations that are certified by a product safety organization like Underwriters Laboratories, which has standards for safety and performance.

Do not connect more than three strings of decorative lights together. Inspect them first for damaged cords



©ROBERT LERICH. BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM.

and always unplug them before replacing bulbs.

Use outdoor, heavy-duty extension cords for outdoor lighting jobs, and don't overload them. Check to see that cords are out of the way of the home's entrance and won't be a tripping hazard in the dark.



Lots of businesses talk about growing their communities. For cooperatives like your electric cooperative, it's not just talk. It's what we're all about.

We're owned by our members, and our mission is to serve and nurture you and the communities in which you live, work and shop.

We're in it for the long haul ... strengthening communities through jobs, service and community involvement.

Cooperatives.

Owned by Our Members,
Committed to Our Communities.





Lovebugs

True to their name, lovebugs live to make love; in other words, reproduce.



BY HARRY P. NOBLE JR.



Look out, everybody—the lovebugs are doing their thing. In many parts of the state, the highways are swarming with multitudes of tiny Romeos and Juliets. Car hoods and windshields are plastered with their smashed bodies. For the lovebug, love truly hurts.

Lovebugs belong to the fly family (Diptera). Their scientific name is *Plecia nearctica Hardy*, for E. Hardy, a Galveston-based entomologist who wrote the first scientific paper about the little fellows in 1940.

There are more than 200 variations of lovebugs, but the species we know ranges from North Carolina to Texas and south to Mexico and Costa Rica. They visit East Texas twice a year, April and May, and again in September and October. Males are smaller, only 6 to 10 milligrams, while females weigh in at 15 to 25 milligrams. The ovaries, which contain 70 percent of the body's protein, account for the added weight.

Lovebugs are relatively harmless. They don't bite; they don't damage crops; they don't fly at night; and they are not an environmental hazard. As a rule, they don't consume or destroy anything humans eat.

True to their name, lovebugs live to make love; in other words, reproduce. They spend a large portion of their short lives making sure they leave plenty of progeny behind. Both males and females are dedicated to this goal. Adult males begin hovering near the ground just after dawn. The female lingers around vegetation, displaying her charms. When she takes to the air, an interested male grabs her.

Once the male seizes the female, he must hold on for dear life, lest other males dislodge him. At this point, if he is man enough to hold on, the male and female fall to the ground, where initial egg fertilization takes place. While interlocked, the male turns 180 degrees and faces the opposite direction.

About this time, the male becomes a sack of dead weight as the female's thoughts turn to laying her eggs. Unfortunately, Mr. Deadweight is still locked in, having no choice but to tag along, swung from right to left as the lady flies. This is the scene East Texans most often find in their yards, and on their screens and window panes. It is at this very point that zillions of lovebugs lose their lives, smashed by speeding vehicles as the female plans a quickie divorce and launches the mother of all egg-laying sprees.

If the male is lucky, he will soon drop off naturally. The female's total life span is 68 to 90 hours, and she can lay over a 100 eggs a day, which is exactly what she does with her remaining hours. A fondness for moisture leads her to seek out ponds, drainage ditches, catch basins, swamps and low fields. Her food supply comes from sources such as mulch, compost and flower beds. Lovebugs are vegetarians, so they do not eat mosquitoes or other insects.

Lovebug eggs hatch quickly, especially if the chosen laying area contains a lot



of moisture and food. In a process that takes a week or two, the larvae spin cocoons in which they undergo a metamorphosis and emerge as fully grown flying adults. When they swarm, they can create an almost impenetrable cloud of bugs—searching for and crawling into every possible crevice they can find. If there is the slightest crack to an enclosure, they find it and crawl through. Such invasions are frenzied and relentless but last for only a few days.

Worst of all, they are a menace on the highway. Lovebugs are mysteriously attracted to asphalt, methane, irradiated automobile exhaust fumes (both gasoline and diesel), ultraviolet highway light, intersections, traffic signals, truck stops and service stations.

Cars driving through these aerial orgies quickly become splattered; one car can easily rack up hundreds of bugs a minute. As the bug-count climbs astronomically, radiator fins become clogged, windshields proceed from speckled, to syrupy-solid, to opaquely layered with carcasses. If that's not enough, the lovebugs must be cleaned off the car quickly, before their acidic digestive juices and enzymes burn through the paint layers and ruin your vehicle's finish.

There is one way to avoid lovebugs. To conserve energy, lovebugs do not fly at night. Therefore, some people may alter their driving schedules to avoid the swarming flies.

Nearly every person growing up in the South has a lovebug story. Here is mine:

Years ago, while working at the University of Houston, I had to drive to Austin for an early morning meeting. I pulled out of Houston around 5 p.m. Sunday, heading west on Highway 290. Before I left the city limits, lovebugs swarmed the highway. By the time I made it to Waller, my windshield was coated with splattered bugs. Leaning out the side window, I drove toward a service station, where a long line of cars had accumulated. I joined the line.

By the time I had worked my way up, I realized the station was closed but someone had kindly left the water running. The drivers of the only two cars ahead of me got into a heated argument over the one water faucet. As their verbal battle escalated, I stared at them through my smeared windshield. Suddenly, one of the men turned to me and demanded, "What are you looking at?"

"Bugs," I answered.

My response broke the tension and we formed a three-man windshield wash. Laughing, we shook hands as we prepared to leave. We drove off as the man behind me, who had observed the entire episode, honored us with a round of applause.

Harry P. Noble Jr. writes a weekly column for the San Augustine Tribune. He is an information systems expert.

Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative serves the San Augustine area.



WISE COUNTY

Uneasy Rider

“Bull riding is a crazy sport, but when you’re performing there’s no better feeling in the world.”

by Carol
Moczygemba



If I was their mama, I’d keep my eyes covered the whole time. But I’m not their mama and I’m hypnotized—glued to the bull’s rapid-fire bucking and twisting and the cowboy’s gripping and gyrating, losing and regaining his balance before flying unceremoniously into the red dirt of the Wise County Sheriff’s Posse Arena. I’ve never seen anything like it. And I sure don’t understand it.

But the cowboys who have come to Decatur to compete in the J.W. Hart PBR (Professional Bull Riders) Challenge—a benefit for area charities—can’t imagine doing anything else. You could say it’s in their bones, most of which have been broken at one time or another. Cracked ribs, concussions, a few missing teeth, fractured arms and legs, busted collarbones, a few stitches here and there—it all comes with the territory. And nothing short of traction can keep a patched-up bull rider from getting back in the chute. He might be taped up and glued together, but as long as he can straddle 1,600 pounds of bull and hold a rope in one hand, he’s in the game.

J.W. Hart, for whom the event is named, is known as the “Ironman” for competing in 198 consecutive bull riding events, and for being the only man to qualify for all 12 PBR world finals. You can bet something was broken or injured just about all 198 times he got his name on the roster. “If I don’t get up and get on, I can’t win,” he says. He could add that if he doesn’t stay on for eight seconds he can’t win, and if the bull performs poorly he can’t win. And even if he stays on for eight seconds and the bull performs superbly, he might not win.

Judges may award up to 50 points each for the rider and the bull, turning what looks like the ultimate conflict into grudging interdependence. A high-performance bull, or “animal athlete,” will display a combination of speed, power, low front-end drop and high back-end kick, with frequent direction changes and lots of bucking action. The cowboy tries to match the moves of the bull. He must maintain constant control and good body position. His free hand must not touch the bull or himself, and if his other hand comes out of the rope before eight seconds, the ride is over.

On this warm and humid May evening, the arena is packed. Fans study the lineup of cowboys and bulls. Some of the top riders in the world, stars such as Hart, Justin McBride, Mike Lee, Adriano Moraes and Paulo Crimber are competing for \$25,000 in prize money. They’ll be matched with notorious bulls including Klickety Klack and Voodoo Child. This is only the third year for Decatur’s J.W. Hart PBR Challenge, but it has already earned favor among cowboy athletes. In fact, Decatur is home to both Lee and Crimber. In 2005, PBR members voted Decatur the Venue of the Year, a distinction directly tied to the tireless efforts of the local promoters and the overwhelming enthusiasm of Wise County crowds.

There’s no shortage of youngsters among the thousands of fans. Little ones decked out in chaps and cowboy hats peer through the fence at cowboys rubbing resin into their leather gloves. Teenage bull-rider wannabes study their heroes, dreaming of the day when their names might be on the roster. Lance Holloway is a 15-year-old from



Alvord. He's come with a couple of his buddies. All of them want to be bull riders. "I'll go to bull-riding training this summer," Holloway says. He's been mutton bustin' (riding a sheep) and calf riding in the Youth Fair Rodeo since he was a tyke. He's been "run over" by cows, he adds, "but it's not that bad." If the young mutton buster makes it into the bull ring, he'll find the stakes considerably higher. As one cowboy put it, "You know you're gonna get hurt. You just don't know how bad."

"How bad" hangs like a specter over the arena, with ambulances parked outside the chutes and EMS crews standing by. The possibility for debilitating injury, even death, is ever present. Maybe that explains the absence of bravado in Ross Coleman's explanation for why he's been riding bulls for the past seven years. Coleman is among the top 10 riders in the country. "Bull riding is a crazy sport, but when you're performing there's no better feeling in the world," he says. "Nothing feels better than getting off that bull and hearing all those people cheering for you. We'd do it for nothing, even if there was no money—we'd do it for nothing."

If there's anyone who symbolizes the deep commitment these cowboys have to their sport, it must be Jerome Davis. He's a special guest at tonight's event, seated in the front row with a bird's-eye view of the action. In his cowboy hat and plaid, pearl-button shirt, Davis, 33, blends in with the rest of the crowd. Except for the wheelchair. In 1998, Davis was thrown from a bull, broke his neck and was paralyzed from the chest down. He's still in the business—as a stock contractor, supplying rodeos with "some of the toughest bulls in the PBR." The irony is unremarkable to Davis. "I love being around it," he says. "It's something I've always done."

Some fans say the rodeo clowns are the real heroes in the ring. Frankie Smith, a.k.a. Punkintown the Rodeo Clown, has a serious job. He distracts the bull, luring him away from the cowboy once he's on the ground. Although rodeo bulls are trained to turn back toward the gate once the ride is over, they're not always the most compliant of creatures. In the process of getting laughs from the crowd and protecting the cowboy, Smith has sustained his share of injuries. Two concussions, a blown-out knee and lots of scrapes and bruises. But he loves it. "I'm now getting paid for what my mama used to whip me for," he says, grinning.

At the end of the night, 49 riders have busted out of the chute on the backs of some mighty cantankerous bulls, some staying on for as little as one second and others for the full count of eight. There were no serious injuries, and the crowd got a good show.

I still don't understand it, but I now know that these cowboys are serious athletes. As for the "why," Hart himself doesn't have an answer: "I kinda wonder why guys jump out of airplanes or jump motorcycles."

From left: Even the littlest cowboys want to get close to the action. A rider rubs cooked resin into his leather glove. End of the ride.

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

The 2006 Hart PBR Challenge returned \$53,500 in proceeds to Wise County charities, including \$1,500 to Wise Electric Cooperative's Relay for Life team. The cooperative, located in Decatur, serves parts of Wise and surrounding counties.

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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John C.C. Hill: Teen of Two Countries

BY BILL CRAWFORD

On Christmas Day 1842, John Christopher Columbus Hill crouched on a flat rooftop in Mier, Mexico, picking off Mexican soldiers with the naïve calm of a 14-year-old boy. As he fought alongside the other members of the ill-fated Mier Expedition, Hill had no idea that he would eventually be adopted by his sworn enemy, Antonio López de Santa Anna, and become the loyal son of two nations, Mexico and the U.S.

Born on November 15, 1828, John was 8 when his father, Asa Hill, and his older brother, Jeffrey, fought with the Texian forces at the Battle of San Jacinto. Later, in September 1842, they answered the call for volunteers to avenge the capture of San Antonio by Mexican forces. John Hill was only 13.

“In those days that meant I was ready to do a man’s part; at least I thought so,” he later recalled. Hill rode to war, armed with a small rifle, a gift from his other brother, James. “Brother John,” James said, “this is not to be surrendered.”

By the time the Hills and the other Texas volunteers arrived near San Antonio, the Mexican forces had fled south of the border. In November, John, who was the youngest and smallest Texas soldier, set out with the rest of the force on a punitive expedition to Mexico. After plundering Laredo and Guerrero, Mexico, most of the Texas volunteers, including the Hill family, marched to Mier.

The Texas force attacked Mier on Christmas morning 1842 and faced a large Mexican force led by General Pedro de Ampudia. John and several others took up positions on a flat rooftop, from which the sharpshooting 14-year-old shot and killed more than a dozen Mexican soldiers. Despite heavy Mexican losses, the Texans—exhausted, out of ammunition, and outnumbered 10-to-1—surrendered to the Mexican forces the following day. Rather than surrender his rifle to the Mexican forces, Hill smashed it on the ground. Mexican guards immediately hauled him in front of General Ampudia to explain his conduct. Hill believed that he was walking to his execution.

“*Mi hijito*, do not fear,” General Ampudia told him. “I will do you no harm. You are very young to be a soldier. Have the Texans so few men that they must send their little ones into battle?”

“I am no little one,” the proud young soldier shot back. “I am 14 years old.”

Ampudia was so impressed by Hill’s bravery that he released him from prison, and arranged for the remarkable boy to meet Santa Anna in Mexico City.

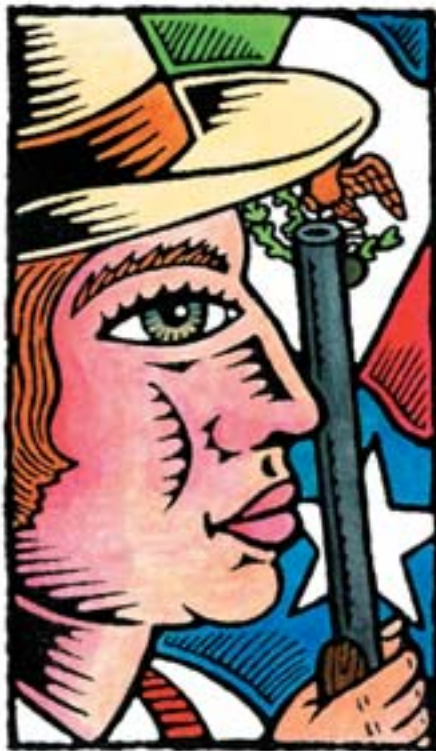
After waiting many months, Hill, whom the Mexicans called Juan Cristóbal Colón Gil, finally entered the National Palace in Mexico City to meet Santa Anna. “Now we will settle about young Gil,” Santa Anna declared. “I want to adopt this boy and make a soldier of him.”

“Your Excellency, I can’t be your son,” Hill responded. “I have a good father. And I can’t be a soldier in your company, because I am a Texan.” Santa Anna was annoyed and amused by John’s impudence and made an offer. Santa Anna agreed to release Hill’s father and brother from prison, if Hill would agree to let Santa Anna adopt, educate and provide for him.

Hill went to find his father, who was imprisoned in Mexico City along with the other members of the Mier Expedition who had survived the infamous “black bean incident.” (When 176 prisoners were captured after an attempted escape, 1 in 10 was sentenced to execution. The escapees drew beans from an earthen jar; those drawing black beans were killed.) After considering his own desperate situation and his son’s future, Asa Hill accepted Santa Anna’s offer.

True to his word, Santa Anna adopted John as his son, and Asa and Jeffrey Hill were released from prison long before their fellow captives. Many of the other Texas prisoners resented the deal.

John Hill never regretted the decision. As recorded by Mary Margaret McAllen Amberson in *A Brave Boy and a Good Soldier: John C.C. Hill and the Texas Expedition to Mier* (Texas State Historical Association, 2006), Hill retained his American citizenship, graduated from the College of Mining in Mexico City, and had a rewarding career as an engineer. He built mines, railroads, and business and cultural bridges, both physical and political, between Mexico and the United States before his death in Monterrey on February 16, 1904.



Bill Crawford has written about Adina Emilia De Zavala and Governor Pappy Lee O'Daniel for Texas Co-op Power.

Give Peas a Chance

BY SHANNON OELRICH My good friend Lee Bell was a veggie hater. She hated pretty much every vegetable if it was cooked. She'd eat a salad, or a crunchy raw carrot, but no cooked veggies, especially fried, because that's how her mother cooked vegetables. She says, "I think my mom went to the cafeteria school of cooking—fry them or boil them until they're mush."

Over the years, though, with a talented cook for a boyfriend and a lot of "foodie" friends, she's learned that she actually likes vegetables. She found out it's all in the cooking. "Now I like them just lightly steamed or barely cooked. Fresh is a must, and don't even call me if the green beans have come out of a can."

I find this is true for many people who profess to hate certain veggies—they've just never had produce that was in season, freshly prepared and cooked by an expert. Rather than cooking green beans to a mush, try blanching them quickly and serving them cold with a vinaigrette, as in this Green Bean and Cherry Tomato Salad.

Brussels sprouts are often at the top of the "most hated" list, but I've gotten people to try them and even love them with a family recipe, Sautéed Brussels Sprouts. Lee says, "I always hated Brussels sprouts, but my mom never cooked them in bacon. That bacon part is the key."

GREEN BEAN AND CHERRY TOMATO SALAD

- 1 pound green beans
- 10-12 cherry tomatoes
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Snap stems off green beans and wash. Blanch green beans by bringing salted water to a rapid boil, adding beans, and cooking for 8 to 9 minutes. Remove beans from boiling water and immerse in a bowl filled with ice and water to cool them quickly. Drain off cold water and store in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Make the vinaigrette by mixing together vinegar and mustard, then drizzling in olive oil while whisking. Add salt and pepper to taste.

In large bowl, place chilled green beans and halved cherry tomatoes. Drizzle with vinaigrette and toss. Serve cold.

Serving size: ¼ of recipe. Per serving: 101 calories, 2 g protein, 6 g fat, 9 g carbohydrates, 100 mg sodium, 0 mg cholesterol

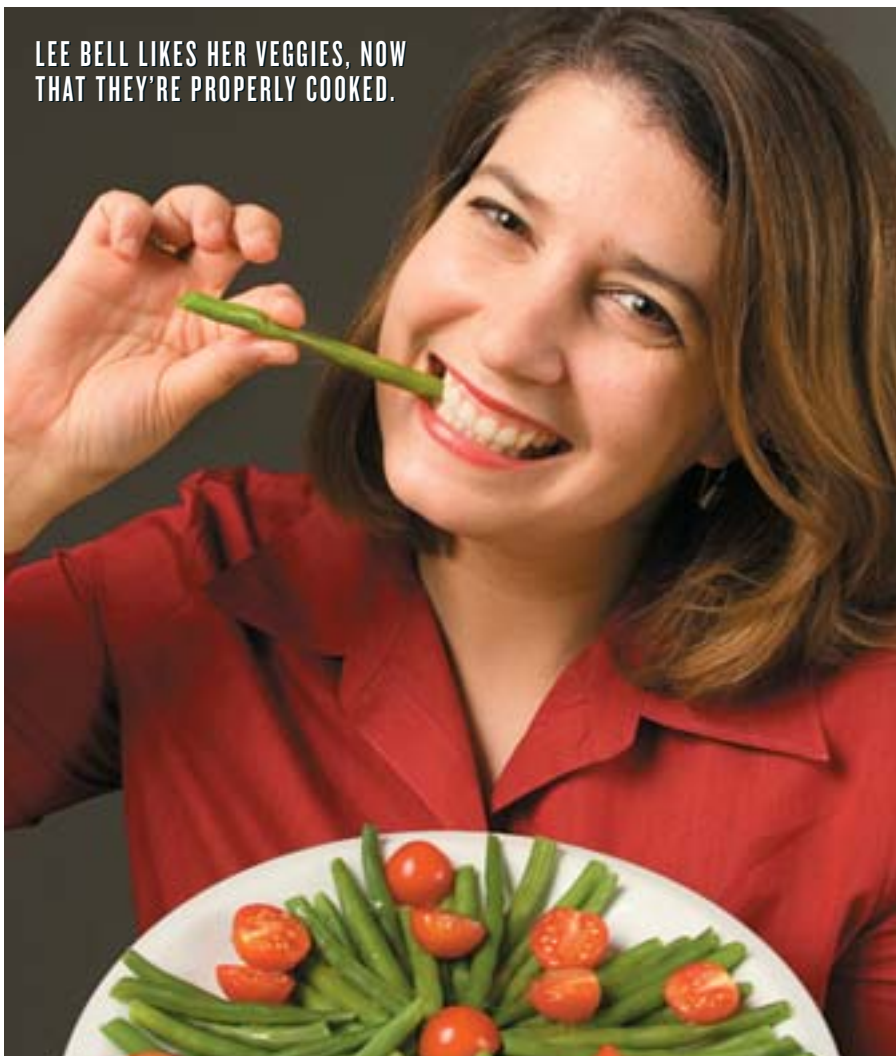
SAUTÉED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

- 1 pound fresh Brussels sprouts
- 2 strips thick-cut bacon
- 1½ teaspoon minced shallot
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cut stem ends off Brussels sprouts, remove outer leaves, and cut in half. Wash thoroughly. Blanch in salted water (see above for directions) for about 5 to 6 minutes. Drain well and set aside. Chop bacon; fry over medium-high heat in large pan or cast iron skillet until brown and crisp. Remove bacon; set aside. Lower heat to medium. Add shallot and Brussels sprouts to pan; toss and coat with bacon grease. Sauté, stirring frequently, until cut sides of Brussels sprouts are golden brown (about 15 to 20 minutes). Taste occasionally to be sure you're not overcooking—Brussels sprouts should still be a little firm in center.

Remove from heat and immediately drizzle on balsamic vinegar and toss. Salt and pepper to taste, and sprinkle with reserved bacon pieces. Serve hot.

Serving size: ¼ of recipe. Per serving: 90 calories, 4 g protein, 4 g fat, 10 g carbohydrates, 110 mg sodium, 4 mg cholesterol



LEE BELL LIKES HER VEGGIES, NOW THAT THEY'RE PROPERLY COOKED.

WILL VAN OVERBEEK

1st**SUE WHITTED** *Hamilton County Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: "Mom Hid the Vegetables" Italian Sausage Casserole

This month's winning recipe is a casserole brimming with Italian flavor, chunks of sausage, and gooey cheese. Whitted writes, "I created this recipe to get my family to eat squash." The big question is: Does she tell them they're eating squash?

"MOM HID THE VEGETABLES" ITALIAN SAUSAGE CASSEROLE

- 1 pound mild Italian bulk sausage
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 medium zucchini, grated
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1 large can (13.25 ounces) mushroom pieces and stems, drained
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese
- 3 tablespoons sour cream
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Cook sausage and drain. Sauté zucchini, onion and garlic in butter until soft, 5 to 7 minutes. Add mushrooms and heat through. Add salt, oregano and bread crumbs. Add sausage, Monterey Jack cheese and sour cream. Pour into 9x11-inch ovenproof dish. Top with Parmesan cheese and heat under broiler until cheese is brown and bubbly. Serves 6 to 8.

Serving size: 1 square. Per serving: 359 calories, 16 g protein, 28 g fat, 10 g carbohydrates, 811 mg sodium, 70 mg cholesterol

Cook's Tip: Tired of lifeless-looking veggies? Use a non-iodized salt, like kosher salt, instead of table salt when cooking vegetables in boiling water. It'll help your green beans stay green!

VEGETABLE TORTILLA LASAGNA

- 1 large zucchini, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch slices
- 3/4 cup corn (thawed if frozen or canned whole kernel, drained thoroughly)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup ricotta cheese (divided)
- 1 1/4 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese (divided)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 cup tomato salsa
- 6 corn tortillas
- 1 jar (7 ounces) roasted red peppers, drained and patted dry, chopped or sliced
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro, divided
- Lime wedges

Preheat oven to 500 degrees and grease two shallow 9x13-inch baking pans and an 8-inch loaf pan. Arrange zucchini in one layer in first baking pan and in half of second baking pan. Spread corn in remaining half of second pan. Season zucchini and corn with salt and pepper and roast in upper and lower thirds of oven, stirring corn and switching position of pans halfway through roasting, about 10 minutes or until lightly browned.

While vegetables are roasting, in a small bowl stir together half the ricotta, 1 cup Monterey Jack, cumin, and salt and pepper to taste. Drain salsa for 30 seconds into a fine sieve set over a bowl

(do not press on solids); transfer to another bowl.

Trim tortillas with scissors into six 5x3 3/4-inch rectangles. Arrange two rectangles in bottom of loaf pan, then add half of zucchini, half of peppers, half of corn, and 1 tablespoon cilantro. Repeat layering with tortilla rectangles, 1/4 cup salsa, remaining ricotta, remaining vegetables and 1 tablespoon cilantro in same manner. Top with remaining tortilla rectangles, salsa, Monterey Jack and cilantro. Cover lasagna with foil, bake in middle of oven 12 minutes or until heated through and cheese is melted. Let lasagna stand covered 5 minutes before serving.

Cut lasagna in half, serve with lime wedges. Serves 2 as a meal.

Note: You may use whole wheat tortillas or low-carb wheat tortillas instead.

Serving size: 1/2 of recipe. Per serving: 613 calories, 31 g protein, 29 g fat, 65 g carbohydrates, 1,103 mg sodium, 78 mg cholesterol

PRUE NICHOLAS*Central Texas Electric Cooperative***VEGGIE MEDLEY RED BEANS-N-RICE**

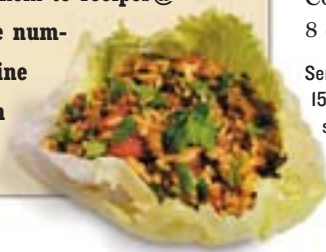
- 1 pound dried red beans
- 1 large purple onion
- 2 red or yellow bell peppers
- 2 zucchini
- 1 large yellow squash
- 1 carrot
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 2 stalks celery, sliced
- 7 cups water
- 4 tablespoons Creole seasoning
- Hot rice or thick bread slices
- Smoked sausage, optional

Wash and sort beans. Place beans in slow cooker. Put next five ingredients in food processor and purée until smooth. Pour puréed veggies with juices into slow cooker. (Don't put your face too close to the mix; it's quite pungent.) Add garlic, celery, water and seasoning. Add sausage if you want meat, though straight veggie is fantastic. Cook on low 8 to 10 hours. Serves 6 to 8 over rice or with bread as a meal.

Serving size: 1 1/2 cups. Per serving: 232 calories, 15 g protein, 1 g fat, 44 g carbohydrates, 357 mg sodium, 0 mg cholesterol

ALLISON ANNE CAVANAUGH*Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative***RECIPE CONTEST**

I'm always looking for a way to streamline the hectic weekday dinner. One way is to make simple recipes with few ingredients. For our January contest, send in your best **FIVE-INGREDIENT MEALS** 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. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The deadline is January 10. The top winner will receive a tin filled with Pioneer products. Runners-up will also receive a prize.



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 for more weather radio information.



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▲ In 2003, **Jean Culli**'s sister created these appropriate bride and groom scarecrows to welcome guests to an October engagement party for **Matt Culli** and his then-fiancé, **Christy**. The Cullis are members of San Patricio Electric Cooperative.



◀ Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member **Michael Ahrendt** shares this bug-eyed scarecrow that was placed in front of the Lexington Log Cabins and Heritage Center last October. We think he's about to "sweep" some lady scarecrow off her feet!



▲ **Robin Copeland** stayed up until 3 a.m. making daughter **Kelly**'s costume for her kindergarten class' "Scarecrow Day." Kelly put on her best scarecrow face for this photo. The Copelands are members of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.

SCARECROWS DOING GUARD DUTY

Remember how the silly, empty-headed Scarecrow pined for a brain in "The Wizard of Oz"? He wasn't interested in—or successful at—scaring crows at all. Not that it would do much good; most scarecrows I've seen make excellent perches for crows to rest upon while deciding which row of produce to eat next. Our readers' scarecrows might not be scary, but they're certainly entertaining! —**CHERYL TUCKER**



▲ **Sarah Boothe** likes the way her scarecrow has gotten "creepier" as it has weathered over the past 10 years. Her husband, **Scott**, is a self-taught artist who enjoys creating yard art. The Boothes belong to Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



▲ **Laddie Zimmet**, United Cooperative Services member, constructed this scarecrow, using some of his clothes and a foam football, hoping to keep the birds and squirrels away from his backyard peach trees. It worked for awhile, he reports, but not nearly long enough.

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

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

CHRISTMAS MORNING is the topic for our December issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Christmas Morning, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before October 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. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. 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.)

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

OCTOBER

- 05 CENTER** [5-7]
East Texas Poultry Festival, (936) 598-3682, www.shelbycountychamber.com
- ROUND TOP** [5-7]
Folk Art Fair, (281) 493-5501, www.roundtopfolkartfair.com
- SEAGOVILLE** [5-7]
SeagoFest, (972) 287-5184
- 06 CAMP WOOD** [6-7]
Cowboy Symposium, (830) 234-3322
- FREDERICKSBURG** [6-8] Oktoberfest, 1-866-839-3378, www.oktoberfestinfbg.com
- GRUENE** [6-8]
Music & Wine Fest, (830) 629-5077, www.gruenehall.com

- 06 PLANO** [6-8]
Gene Autry 99th Birthday Festival, (940) 437-1110
- POTEET** [6-8]
Sesquicentennial Celebration, (830) 742-8144, www.atascosal50.org
- ROCKPORT** [6-8]
Seafair, (361) 729-6445, www.rockport-fulton.org
- SNYDER** [6-8] White Buffalo Bikefest, (325) 573-3558, www.whitebuffalobikefest.com
- WINNSBORO** [6-8]
Chicken Run Motorcycle Rally, (903) 342-7788, www.officialchickenrun.info
- 07 AUBREY** Peanut Festival, (940) 365-9162
- BLANCO** Ladies State Chili Championship, (512) 396-4456, www.ladiesstatechili.org
- CLEVELAND** Tarkington Round Up, (281) 592-6135

- 07 COLEMAN** Fiesta de la Paloma, (325) 625-2163
- CRAWFORD** Oktoberfest, (254) 486-2366
- DEVINE** Oktoberfest, (830) 663-2244
- EASTLAND** RipFest, (254) 629-2332, www.eastlandtexas.com
- LAMPASAS** Herb & Art Festival, (512) 556-5172
- MCKINNEY** Run for Hope, (972) 381-6057
- ROSANKY** Fall Fling, (512) 332-6905
- SHINER** Pumpkin Patch, (361) 594-3999, www.shiner-oldtown.org
- 08 WESTPHALIA** 100th Annual Homecoming & Picnic, (254) 584-4701
- 10 WHARTON** Candlelight Vigil for Domestic Violence, (979) 531-1300

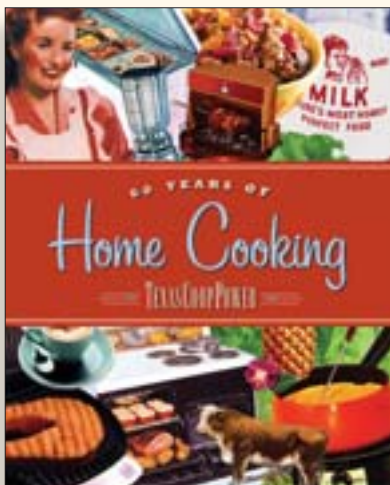
- 11 MARATHON** [11-14] Road Runner Open Road Race, (432) 336-8525, ext. 16, www.rrorr.net
- 12 DAINGERFIELD** [12-14] Fall Festival, (903) 645-2646, www.daingerfieldtx.net
- 13 BIG BEND** [13-15] Big Bend Ride for Trails, (432) 477-2395, www.bigbendfriends.org
- 14 ATHENS** Fall Festival, (903) 677-0775, www.athenstx.org
- CHAPPELL HILL** [14-15] Scarecrow Festival, 1-888-273-6426
- GREENWOOD** Fall Festival, (940) 466-7997
- HAWKINS** Oil Festival, (903) 769-4482
- LLANO** Grape Day Celebration, (806) 745-2258

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AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

14 MARSHALL Fire Ant Festival, (903) 935-7868

15 CAYOTE United Methodist Church 100-Year Celebration, (254) 932-6466

18 COMFORT Scarecrow Invasion, (830) 995-3131

20 JEFFERSON [20-22] Boo Run Benefit, (903) 665-2672, www.jefferson-texas.com

21 CAT SPRING EMR Benefit, (979) 865-3407

ENNIS Fall Festival, 1-888-366-4748, www.visitennis.org

PATTISON Fall Festival, (281) 375-8488

UVALDE Kelsi Robinson Rope for a Cure, (830) 591-8921, www.kelsiskindheart.com

WHARTON Fall Spook-tacular, (979) 282-8500

22 TEXARKANA [22-28] Boo Fest Bluegrass Music Pickin', (903) 255-0408

26 BAY CITY [26-29] Rice Festival, 1-800-806-8333

27 CONROE [27-29] Fright Fest, (936) 522-3900

JACKSBORO [27-28] Fall Fest, (940) 567-3660

28 CHRISMAN Perk Williams Festival, (979) 567-0573, www.chriesmanccc.org

HUGHES SPRINGS Pumpkin Glow, (903) 639-2351

KAUFMAN [28-29] Kaboodle Festival, (972) 932-2216

LOCKHART [6-7] Rockin' Jail House Festival, (512) 398-4322, www.lockhart.net/history

28 OMAHA Fall Festival, (903) 884-2556

31 TERLINGUA [10/31-11/4] Championship Chili Cook Off, 1-888-227-4468, www.chili.org

04 PALACIOS [4-5] Seafood Festival & Motorcycle Rally, 1-800-611-4567, www.texasfishermensfestival.com

PEARL Ole Time Music, (254) 865-6013, www.pearlbluegrass.com

SINTON City Wide Market, (361) 364-2307, www.sintontexas.org

WIMBERLEY Market Day, (512) 847-2201

NOVEMBER

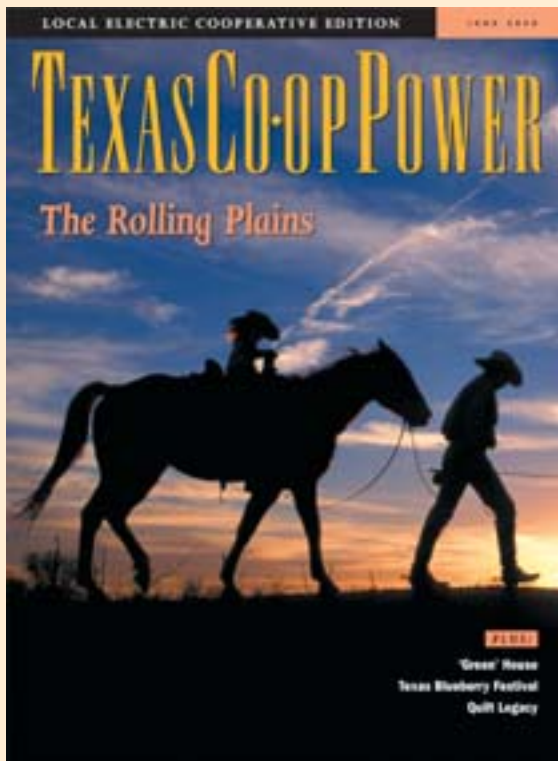
04 DEVINE Fall Festival, (830) 663-2739, www.devinecoc.org

ELDORADO Game Dinner & Drawing, (325) 650-9559

HARLINGEN Iwo Jima Parade, (956) 423-6006, ext. 235

MARBLE FALLS Show 'N' Shine Car Show, (830) 598-6998

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. Please submit events for December by October 10. Events are listed according to space available; an expanded list is available at www.texascoopower.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 \$7.50 a subscription, you can share *Texas Co-op Power* with friends and family members who live far away or in big cities! See page 9 for an order form.

Almost Oklahoma? Technically, yes. But you cannot deny the truly Texan nature of this quartet of towns just below the Red River. This jaunt is only 60 miles, reaching 15 miles from the Cooke County Electric Cooperative headquarters in Muenster east to the county seat of Gainesville, along Highway 82 to Sherman, the Grayson County seat, then another 11 miles north on Highway 75 to

MUENSTER to LAKE TEXOMA

For a great weekend of wandering, head toward the Red River

BY JUNE NAYLOR

James and other visiting outlaws earned Sherman the nickname of “Helldorado on the Cross Timbers.” Today, the old Butterfield Stage route is no more, but you can still get your kicks from a shopping spin through Kelly Square, a renovated 1870s building downtown, and don’t miss the Red River Historical Museum and the James Swann paintings inside the Carnegie Library.

DENISON Heading nearly to the banks of the Red River, I slow down long enough to take a turn through some of the 18 period buildings at Grayson County Frontier Village, such as the 1840s log schoolhouse with its teacher’s sleeping loft. In Denison proper, I can’t

1 For more about how to enjoy the best wurst in Muenster, check out www.germanfest.net.



2 The Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, 1-888-585-4468, can fill you in on all the particulars of these attractions.



3 Call the Sherman Chamber of Commerce, (903) 957-0310, or go to www.shermantx.org for highlights.



4 Call the Denison Area Chamber of Commerce at (903) 465-1551 or go to www.denisontexas.com for more about local attractions.



5 Get details about Lake Texoma at (903) 465-4990, www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/txoma.



Denison and the state line.

MUENSTER Founded in 1889 by German Catholic land agents, this charming burg celebrates its heritage with Germanfest each April. Where else can you witness Nägelshlagen, a competition to hammer a spike deep into a stump with the fewest blows? You can always find stick-to-your-ribs German food in town.

Right before you reach Gainesville, stop 3 miles west in Lindsay to gaze at the ornately adorned St. Peter’s Catholic Church, one of the area’s famed “painted” churches.

GAINESVILLE Wheeling into this old Butterfield Stage stop on California Street, so named for the gold-diggers who came through on their way west, I

park at the Cooke County Courthouse to begin roaming on foot. The exterior of this 1912 creation, which incorporates Beaux Arts with Prairie Style, was recently restored, and work on the interior, with its black-and-white marble detail and stained-glass skylight in the tower atrium, will begin soon. After poking around a few of the antiques shops on the square, I give in to my craving for the plump, filled pastries at the Fried Pie Co. Apricot is the star, but chocolate and coconut are mighty fine, too. Before heading east, I visit the red kangaroo, Grant’s zebra and giraffes at the Frank Buck Zoo, just off California Street in Leonard Park.

SHERMAN Things have calmed down considerably since the days when Jesse

resist yet another visit to the birthplace of Dwight D. Eisenhower, a humble, two-story, white-frame house where the future war hero and United States president was born in 1890.

LAKE TEXOMA Denison lies on the southern shore of Lake Texoma, created from the Red River in 1944. Anglers travel from everywhere to catch record black bass, striper bass, crappie and lunker catfish on this enormous reservoir, which covers 89,000 acres and has some 50 parks, more than 100 picnic areas and campgrounds, and dozens of marinas and lakeside resorts and motels.

June Naylor is author of Texas: Off the Beaten Path.