

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

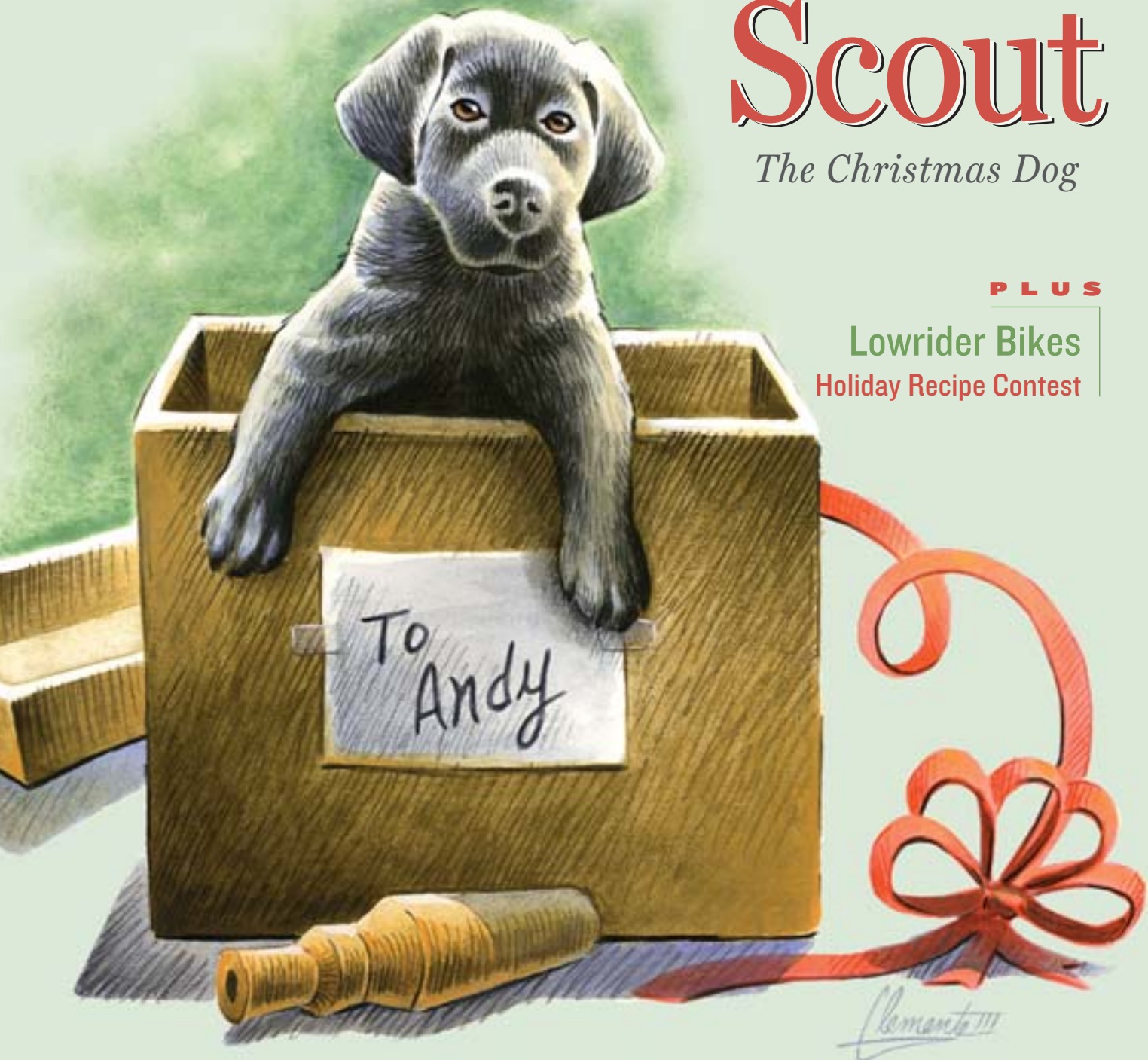
## Scout

*The Christmas Dog*

PLUS

Lowrider Bikes

Holiday Recipe Contest



# LINES DOWN— BUT NOT OUT

## Downed Lines


Weather and car accidents are the main causes of downed power lines. Always stay away and warn others to stay clear of power lines. Even if they don't hum, spark or "dance," downed lines can be dangerous—they can carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or even death.

### Follow these rules:

- If you see a downed power line, move away from the line and anything touching it.
- The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times to minimize the chance for a human path of electric current.
- If someone is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. Call 911 instead.
- Don't try to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object such as a broom or stick.
- Don't drive over downed power lines.
- If you are in your car and it is in contact with a downed line, stay in your car. Honk your horn for help but tell others to stay away from your vehicle. Call 911 if you have a cell phone or ask passersby to do it.



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# December 2006

VOLUME 63 NUMBER 6



# 6

## FEATURES

### 6 Scout, the Christmas Dog

By Andrew Sansom

Illustrations by Clemente Guzman III

*Born of a Christmas litter, Scout was almost lost forever during the heaviest snowstorm along the Texas Coast in 100 years.*

### 12 Lowrider Bikes

CRUISING LOW AND SLOW

By Mary Lance

Photos by Neal Hinkle

*Some view these decorated Schwinn's as high art.*

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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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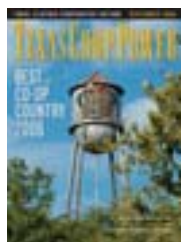
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# letters

## BIOFUEL HAS LONG HISTORY

In the September issue of *Texas Co-op Power*, you mentioned biodiesel. The British have been using vegetable oil for over 30 years to power



their diesel vehicles, and folks in Texas as well as other parts of this country

have also been using it. I personally have been using 100 percent reclaimed vegetable oil in my 2002 Ford Excursion with a 7.3-liter PowerStroke diesel engine.

On Saturday mornings I go to about eight restaurants I have agreements with and pick up their used vegetable oil for processing into biodiesel. Texas law allows a person to make blended fuel for one's own use without paying road tax. Even if I had to pay road tax, the cost of producing the fuel and the reduction of pollution in the atmosphere would be worth the effort.

All types of vegetable oil are usable—peanut oil, cottonseed oil, canola oil, and the list goes on and on. When Henry Ford started, his cars were powered by 100 percent ethanol. It wasn't until 1932 that Standard Oil convinced engine manufacturers to use fossil fuel.

**GEFF W. WILLSTROP**

*Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

We receive many more letters than we can fit in the magazine. Visit [www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.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



## IS MESQUITE THE NEXT BIOFUEL?

Texas ranchers and farmers have been cussing mesquite since ranching and farming began here. Now there may be a “green” solution to this pesky problem: using mesquite wood to produce ethanol.

Dr. Jim Ansley, a rangeland ecologist for the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, says there are difficulties to overcome. Right now he's studying the cutting, collecting and transporting of mesquite. Ansley worked with private industry to build a mesquite-harvesting machine that breaks and picks up felled wood and sucks it into a hydraulically hinged bin. In October, his prototype machine was demonstrated at the 2006 Range and Wildlife Field Day in Vernon. The harvester is pulled behind a conventional brush-cutting machine and powered by the cutter's hydraulic system, although a standard tractor could also be used.

Mesquite might be the perfect biofuel. It is drought-hardy; fixes its own nitrogen; requires no seeding, fertilization or irrigation; re-sprouts vigorously after topkill; and grows on dry, nutrient-poor soils. Approximately 10 years of regrowth is required before re-harvesting. There are an estimated 51 million acres of mesquite in Texas. “The next step will be to minimize transport costs by locating small-scale ethanol refineries near the wood sources,” said Ansley.

Funding for the project has been provided by a grant from the Department of Energy-State Energy Conservation Office, Pearson BioEnergy and the Experiment Station.

Onward to cedar-fuel!

# SAFELIVING

## Electricity 101

**How much voltage is needed to hurt someone?**

Any amount of voltage can hurt or kill a person.

**Why can a bird sit on a power line and not be electrocuted?**

Because it is not touching the ground or any other grounded object.

**Where is the safest place to be during an electrical storm?**

By far the safest place to be is in a building or house. The metal plumbing and wiring in the walls form a protective barrier. However, stay away from electrical appliances, plumbing fixtures and wiring.

**How fast does electricity travel?**

At the speed of light: 186,300 miles per second.



## CHANGE A LIGHT

Change a light, change the world: That's what federal officials want consumers to remember when choosing electric bulbs and fixtures.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs promoted by a new campaign consume only about a third of the energy of standard bulbs and last up to 10 times longer, officials said.

Of the 125 campaign partners as of Oct. 4, 38 were electric co-ops, said Sarah Banas, campaign liaison for ENERGY STAR, which certifies efficient bulbs and fixtures.





EDD PATTON

## H A P P E N I N G S

No, we're not suggesting you go to France for **CHRISTMAS IN PARIS**. But downtown Paris, Texas, is a great spot to get the holiday spirit on December 1-3, or December 8-10. These six days are chock full of events. To name a few, you've got your art walk, holiday parade, carriage rides, Santa's Hut on the Plaza, "Winter Wonderettes" at the Paris Community Theatre, Christmas lighting, seasonal goodies and libations, turn-of-the-century music and costumes, and a tour of homes. For more information, go to [www.paristexas.gov](http://www.paristexas.gov) or call 1-800-PARIS-TX.

## WHAT DO THESE ANIMALS HAVE TO DO WITH ELECTRICITY?

Back when rural electric cooperatives were being formed in the 1930s and '40s, new electric customers had much to learn about safe use of electricity and appliances. The Rural Electrification Administration (REA) toured the country putting on "Electric Circuses." We didn't realize how much some of the circuses resembled the real "big top" until we ran across these undated REA photographs in our files.



## BARN RAISING BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The Arnosky family (featured in "Flower Farms Bloom in Texas" in our July 2005 issue), invited neighbors to an old-fashioned barn-raising in September. Their farm in southern Blanco County, served by Pedernales Electric Cooperative, is largely surrounded by small ranches where artisans have escaped city life to practice their crafts. The project appealed to local folks as an opportunity to meet neighbors, as well as to their sense of craftsmanship. No nail guns were used, and the wood-framed walls were raised by 20 or so people lifting from underneath. Other neighbors contributed to the party atmosphere by cooking and playing music for those hard at work on that warm day.

Frank and Pamela Arnosky were inspired to build the barn by visits to German dancehalls in the area,

particularly Fischer Hall near Wimberley, which has arched wooden trusses supporting its roof. Furniture maker Phillip Sell constructed similar trusses for the Arnoskys, donating more than 100 hours of work to their project. The 30-by-60-foot structure will be used as the farm's market on Saturdays and for community events, potlucks and meetings, but especially as a new venue for music and dancing. "We love to dance," says Frank.



The Arnosky barn raising.

## WHO KNEW?

### THESE FOLKS ARE NATIVE TEXANS



**Actor Luke Wilson**  
(1971) Dallas

**Actor Owen Wilson**  
(1968) Dallas

**Actor Joan Crawford**  
(1906) San Antonio

**Comedian Carol Burnett**  
(1933) San Antonio

**Conan the Barbarian creator Robert E. Howard**  
(1906) Peaster

**Flying Tigers founder Claire Lee Chennault**  
(1893) Commerce

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# Scout

## *The Christmas Dog*



BY ANDREW SANSON • ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLEMENTE GUZMAN III

I GREW UP ON THE TEXAS COAST, JUST INSIDE A LINE OF TREES SEPARATING US FROM THE VAST SWATH OF COASTAL PRAIRIES AND MARSHES THAT BRING MILLIONS OF MIGRATING WATERFOWL EACH YEAR. I MARKED MY BIRTHDAY EVERY AUTUMN BY THE SOUND OF GEESE FLYING IN AT NIGHT, AND I SCHEDULED MY LIFE AROUND HUNTING THEM WITH MY FRIEND AND COMPANION, CORKY PALMER, AND HIS LEGENDARY LABRADOR RETRIEVER, BOOMER. DURING THOSE MEMORABLE TIMES IN THE MARSH, WE FORMED A BOND OF HUNTERS AND DOGS THAT HAS LASTED ALL OUR LIVES SINCE.

**T**hus, it was a devastating blow when, many years after those early experiences, while hunting with Corky one late December, I lost my own dog, Scout—my other best friend.

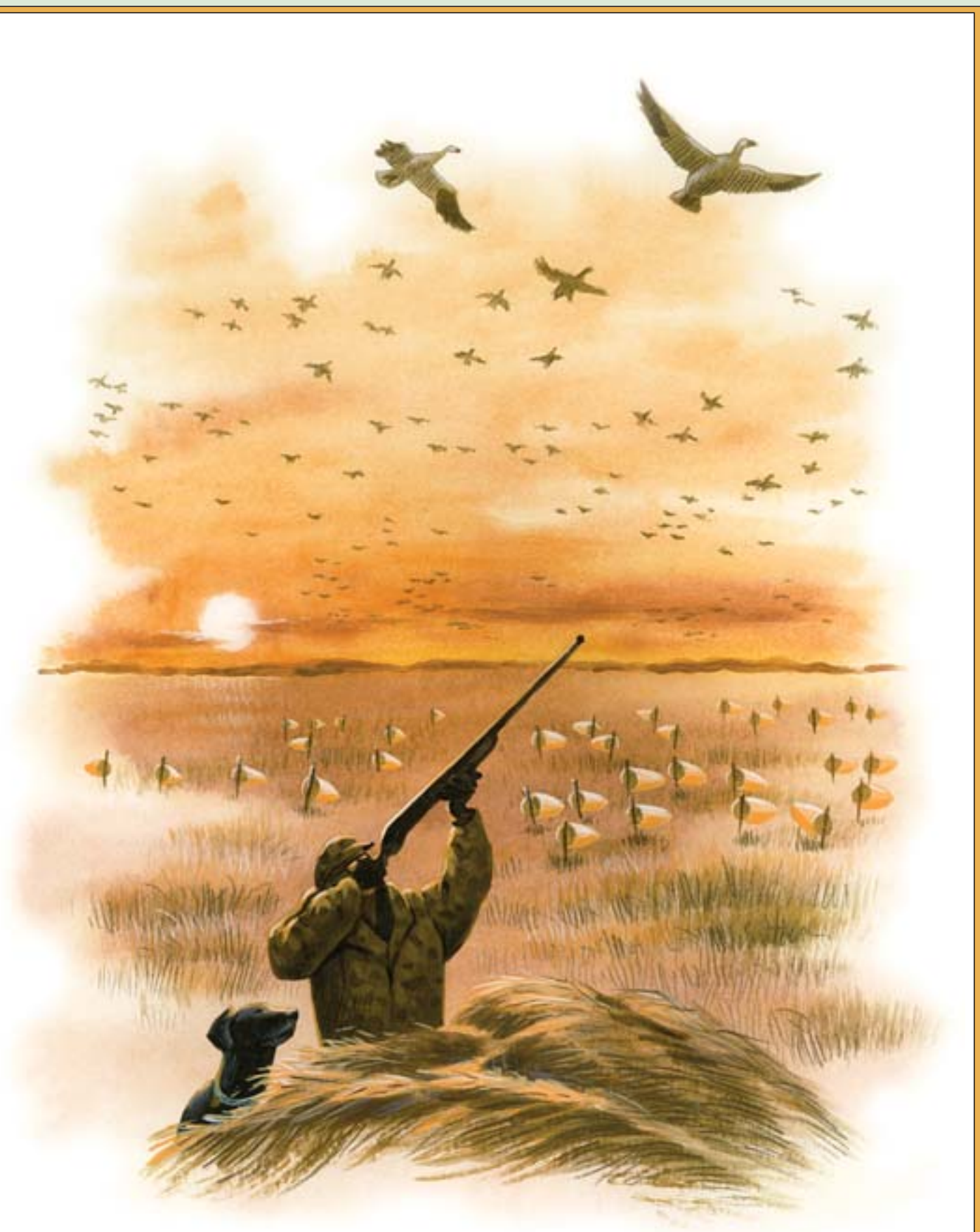
Scout came to me at Christmas more than 12 years ago. My wife, Nona, presented me with a female Lab puppy and the anticipation of having, for the first time in my life, a dog that could hunt with me made her as thoughtful and exciting a Christmas gift as anyone has ever given to me.

Training Scout, whom I named after the little girl in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was one of the most satisfying things I have ever done. She seemed literally born to bring things back to me. Scout loved to swim and retrieve. She would leap into the water like a rocket in pursuit of her prize, flying a good part of the way in the air. Because of her, I came to deeply appreciate the intensity of a fine hunting dog and the sheer elation she displayed in doing what she was bred to do. I also learned how our relationship with dogs can enhance their performance and enrich our lives at the same time.

To my dismay, however, I also discovered that my big-hearted Scout had somehow developed a fear of thunder so intense that a spring storm in Central Texas would bring her up in the bed with us. Though we worked hard for years on helping her overcome her phobia, we never fully got her comfortable with loud noises. Nevertheless, we never stopped training and I learned from her how lucky we humans are to share a dog's joy in the field and be the recipients of such unqualified love.

Through the years, Scout and I grew older together. I taught her to get the newspaper in the morning. She enjoyed that so much that, for a long time, she would come back with papers from all over the neighborhood and I had to develop a regular route on my way to work to get them back to their rightful owners.

Meanwhile, Corky and I opened a new chapter in our long relationship when we started hunting together at the Bucksnap Hunting Club down in the rice prairies along the Texas Coast. Thanks to the cornucopia of water and food in this region, millions of migratory waterfowl spend the winter in the rice fields each year, and the



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*The sky was mottled with thousands of birds coming at us in wave after wave.*





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*I was overcome with feelings of terror, of loss, and of guilt. My Scout had disappeared.*

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spectacle of their arrival is one of the great outdoor experiences on the earth.

We would take Scout down to the Bucksnap with us. It is a lovely old hotel in the farming community of Garwood next to the Colorado River. Although she did not go to the field with us in the mornings, I would wrap her in camouflage and sneak her upstairs to our bedroom where she slept on the floor between Corky and me. I would get up in the morning, sneak her back downstairs, and let her out so she could hang out with some of the local dogs that always seemed to be around.

That is where she was a week before Christmas in her 12th year. Nona had flown up to New Jersey, where we planned to spend Christmas with our new grandson, Alexander. This would be his first Christmas, and the only reason I was still in Texas was that I had promised to take some kids from Houston goose hunting for the first time, and introducing youngsters to the out-of-doors is a passion of mine. Still, as I sat on the porch at the Bucksnap with Scout and Corky, I realized that this was the first time in my memory that I was in a hurry to finish the hunt.

Noticing how attached I was to Scout, one of the guides said: "Why don't you bring her along?" Corky chimed in and reminded me of all those hours of training and that I had always wanted to see what she could do in a real hunting situation. So the next morning, Scout, Corky and I headed out to the rice fields together. She was quivering with anticipation and quickly acquainted herself with the other dogs who were old hands at this hunting business.

Daylight arrived in a spectacular sunrise and we all took our spots. Scout heeled perfectly and took her place at

my side. In minutes, the sky was mottled with thousands of birds coming at us in wave after wave until it was darkened with skeins of magnificent snow geese, Canadas, speckled bellies and more. They did not stop coming and as more and more birds pulsed toward us in the morning sky, gunfire filled the air with the sound of thunder.

And Scout was gone.

Amidst all the excitement, I was overcome with feelings of terror, of loss, and of guilt. My Scout had disappeared. I ran to find Corky and the two of us began a search at that moment that would continue for the next 20 hours. There was no sign of her anywhere. We searched up and down the back roads and canals of the rice country. I called ahead to New Jersey to inform my family of what had happened and the pall of this catastrophe reached all the way across the country.

**A**t the end of the second day of searching, Corky matter-of-factly advised me that she was either going to turn up or she wasn't and that nothing I could do in the rice fields would make any difference. Scout was wearing a collar with her name and my home phone number in Austin, so it was always possible that someone might find her and give me a call. With that glimmer of hope and a whole lot of dread, I boarded the plane to fly up to join my family for the holiday. When I arrived, they greeted me as if I had lost my best friend, which I had.

For a week, we tried to celebrate while I sat by the phone calling my voicemail every half hour. On Christmas Eve, we were feeding the baby and preparing





*"We've got your little dog down here."*

food for the next day when I made another call to check for new messages. "Well," said a faint female voice, "We've got your little dog down here. It's snowing and we thought you might want to come get her." Pandemonium broke loose in the kitchen. As I called for quiet, there was a "click" and the line went dead.

Frantically, I called Corky and, miracle of miracles, he had gone back down to the rice fields to look for the dog. "See if you can figure out where she is," he said. "And by the way, it is snowing in Texas."

My son, Andrew, as comfortable with technology as he is with his own skin, somehow retrieved the number of the lady who had Scout and I called her back while the rest of the family held their breath. She told me she was in the little town of Rock Island, nearly 20 miles north of where I had last seen my dog. Scout, headed home to find me, was stopped by what turned out to be the heaviest snowfall in 100 years. Thankfully, she was taken in by a lady named Maria, who was so strapped for funds that she did not have enough money to finish the call to my voicemail.

I called Corky back, told him where Scout was, and asked him to loan me the money to give the kind woman a reward. He found about \$250 in his pockets and wallet, put it in a just-opened Christmas card, marked out the names, put the money in it, and addressed it to Maria from me. He quickly found the trailer where she lived. The shattered windows were covered with cardboard. Scout was glad to see him, and he told me that as he drove away, Maria stood on the porch until the truck was out of sight shouting "Merry Christmas" over and over again.

I went to bed that night profoundly moved by the multiple gifts this special Christmas had granted, thanks to a lady who cared enough to bring Scout in from the cold and a lifelong friend who cared enough to bring her home. She is about the best Christmas present I ever received, and I am doubly blessed because she was given to me twice.

*This story is an adaptation from Scout, The Christmas Dog by Andrew Samson, published by the Texas A&M University Press. The book is available at bookstores or may be ordered directly from the press for \$12.95 by calling 1-800-826-8911, or online at their website: [www.tamu.edu/upress](http://www.tamu.edu/upress).*

*Sansom is former executive director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.*

*Clemente Guzman III is an Austin-based artist who is well known for illustrating bird books.*



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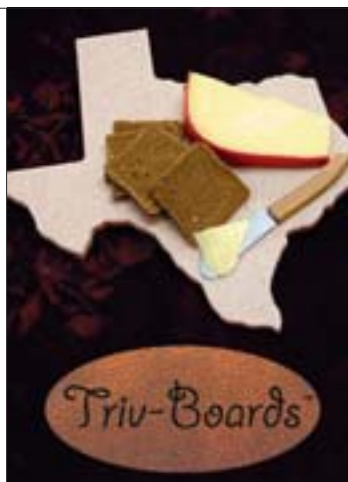
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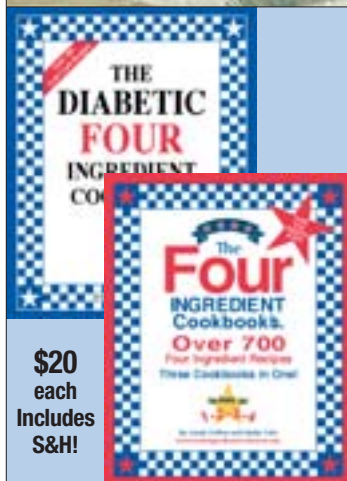
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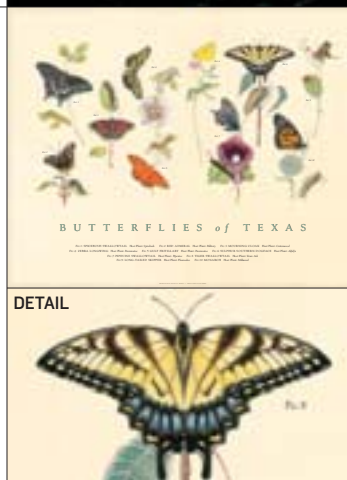
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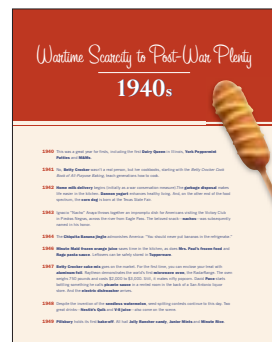
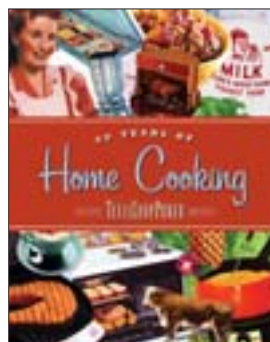
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# Harley-Davidson Bikes

*CRUISING LOW AND SLOW*







It was the mid 1990s—six young boys, ages 11 and 12, sailed on their bicycles across the Texas Tech University campus in Lubbock—the 1,800-acre campus a perfect spot for pumping hard, sashaying in and out and around the curving streets. “No siree,” said the university police and shooed the youths off campus. The kids didn’t know the reason for the eviction—but for sure they didn’t like losing their biking acreage.

One of those boys, Santana Morin, now 24 and a union plumber in Lubbock, is grinning in triumph today. He returned to the campus in 2005—as an artist—and his modified 20-inch, gold-and-silver-plated Schwinn bike, painted in Technicolor yellow, green, blue and red, was the centerpiece of the Second Annual Art Bike Parade and Lowrider Bicycle Exhibition sponsored by the Texas Tech University School of Art.



People don’t usually think of lowriders as bicycles. And they don’t think of lowrider bicycles as art, either. Lowrider traditionally means cars—a late 1940s tradition of altering autos initiated by Hispanics in Los Angeles.

Now the same folks who fashion lowrider cars also reweld, paint and use fiber-glass auto-body filler to sculpt lowrider bicycles for prize money, bragging rights, trophies and a chance to enter the *Lowrider Magazine* Super Show in Las Vegas. The vehicle of choice is the 20-inch Schwinn, partly due to its all-steel construction that facilitates welding body modifications, and partly due to tradition.

“Yes, it’s high art,” says owner and artist Morin. “It takes a lot of work.” Morin, a member of the Rollerz Only Car Club, has invested \$4,500 in his bike and has won dozens of awards in local and regional shows.

“It’s an art,” echoes Abraham Zapata, who is a lowrider car and bike designer and president of Tru Riderz Car Club in Lubbock. Zapata and his wife, Amy, who has her own lowrider Chevy Malibu, have helped daughter C.J. and son Chris build their glittery lowrider bikes. “You tear a bike apart, put on different frames, paint it and shape it the way you want. And that takes a lot of time and a lot of money,” explains Abraham. Costs average \$500 per bike.

The link between lowrider bicycles and the Texas Tech art school is Kyle McQuilkin, a cherub-faced, 44-year-old fine arts doctoral student. “Today’s lowrider bikes challenge the conventional definition of art,” explains McQuilkin, who became fascinated with the inventiveness of lowrider bikes when he was teaching art at Somerset Middle School, south of San Antonio. Later, enrolled in a Chicano art class at Tech, McQuilkin’s interest was rekindled. For a class presentation he hauled in a lowrider bike sculpted, fashioned and refigured by the Zapata family for son Chris. His art professors recognized the potential of bikes as an art form and encouraged McQuilkin to pursue the lowrider bikes for his dissertation. The doctoral student’s avid interest has evolved into the annual bike exhibit at Tech.

McQuilkin learned from his new lowrider friends that lowriding—whether car or bicycle—is a family affair in Lubbock, as it is in the surrounding counties and in clubs across America. While the grown-ups gather to shape, weld, paint and decorate their cars, the children get help fancying up their bikes. “Lowrider clubs help keep our kids out of trouble and off the street,” says Abraham Zapata.



You won't see lowrider bikes without lowrider cars. The bikes are a natural extension of the car clubs, a way to involve the children in a family activity.

"Always, when there's a car show, there's a bike show," explains Nelda Lopez, whose husband is president of the Lubbock chapter of Los Bajitos Car Club—other chapters are in Dallas and Lamesa. "It gives the family time to spend together. We'll go to the car show and while we're in line to preregister, the kids wash and polish cars, and help with set up," says Lopez.

Sundays at 8 p.m. the Lopez family goes to Tommy's Burgers—a red-roofed, Dairy Queen-type eatery at University and First at the edge of Latino Lubbock—for the show. Before that, friends lounge in the Lopez's living room (surrounded on three sides by floor-to-ceiling displays of trophies) and watch a tennis match or football game on TV. Teen daughters Cortney and Amanda (each has a modified, decorated bike) and 3-year-old grandson Jordan (his is a fancy converted tricycle) scoot and race inside and out. Nelda is in the kitchen. Tony and his male friends are around the barrel barbecue pit smoking fajitas and chili-laced chicken thighs. A boxer and three Chihuahuas wander in and out.

Then at Tommy's, soon after 8 p.m., dozens of lowrider cars and bikes fill the parking lot to show off and experience some bragging time—a safe place for the whole family. Usually, yardstick high, glittery gold, green and red trophies are displayed next to the cars and bikes.

It was Amy Zapata who offered McQuilkin an entrée into the lowrider bike community in Lubbock. Today she laughs about how scared she was when she first met the doctoral student. She was in her Malibu—loaded up with her children and their cousins—driving to a flea market near Tommy's Burgers. Suddenly she saw McQuilkin do a U-turn and follow her into the flea market parking lot.

"Did I cut him off? Is this road rage?" Amy remembered thinking. As it turned out, McQuilkin had been told to watch for a purple lowrider Malibu because this family was also into bikes. After he explained his mission to locate lowrider bikes, Amy promised to help. McQuilkin



is now the club's newest member, sporting an aluminum Tru Riderz sign in his truck's rear window.

Most of McQuilkin's research participants live in Lubbock and the surrounding 100 miles of the city. But he learned through *Lowrider Bicycle Magazine* about car/bike clubs that exist across the United States and in Germany, Australia and Great Britain. (The magazine ceased publication in 2005.)

The parent publication, *Lowrider Magazine*, has sponsored hundreds of local and regional car and bike shows since 1979—about a dozen or so per year. The high spot of the year is its Las Vegas Super Show each fall. To be eligible for the national show in Las Vegas, a biker must have won or placed in one of the magazine's local shows. Sponsors for these shows have included Quaker State and the U.S. Army. This year, look for Harley Davidson, Boost Mobile, Fuze and CCE Hydraulics. First prize lands you \$750, with \$500 for second.

answers Tina Fuentes, acting director of Tech's School of Art. "They are another language, another communication—no different from an abstract painting, which not everyone can grasp."

**L**owrider car and bike clubs will continue to produce their souped-up, colorful, glitzy rides—whether they're considered art or not. And families like the Lopezes will continue com-

binning bike sculpting with barbecue, family gatherings and bringing home more coveted trophies.

"Our motto is *carnalismo y familia* [brotherhood and family]," says Nelda Lopez. She says she'll leave the art question to the academics. She and the lowriders are in it for fun.

*Mary Lance was a feature writer for the San Antonio Light, which closed in 1993. She now freelances from her home on the San Antonio River.*

**L**owrider bike judging goes strictly by points laid out in a rule book published by *Lowrider Magazine*. Rules include such esoteric dictates as "points will be awarded for a twisted fork bar and additional points for a double twist" (the fork bar is the hub connecting the wheel center to the handlebars). And equally esoteric for the uninitiated, even though chrome looks quite like silver plate, extra points are awarded for every silver piece added.

McQuilkin, too, has caught the lowrider bike-building fever. In his living room, about 10 minutes from Texas Tech University where he teaches art history while completing his doctorate, McQuilkin is building his version of a lowrider bike. "It's autobiographical," he explains. Combining his knowledge of art and paleontology—he has a master's in museum science—McQuilkin has embedded a bike frame within a plastic human skeleton, with the bones of the wings of a pterosaur forming the handle bars.

Now back to the original question, "But is it art?"

"Yes, I look at lowrider bikes as another art form—there's a phenomenal visual activity going on with them,"



## Electric Heaters

Space heaters are meant to provide supplemental heat, not to replace your home's heating system. In fact, if used incorrectly, space heaters can pose fire and burn risks.

### Safety rules when using your portable electric heater:

- Read and follow the manufacturer's warnings and the use and care guidelines before using a space heater.
- Space heaters need space. Keep them at least 3 feet away from any combustible material such as bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture and rugs.
- Never use space heaters around unsupervised children and pets.
- Always turn the heater off and unplug it when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Plug space heaters directly into an outlet; do not use an extension cord.
- Electric space heaters use a lot of electricity. Plug your heater into a circuit with as little else on it as possible.
- Space heaters should be used only for supplemental heat.



**Texas Electric Cooperatives**

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

## Cooking Tips for an Energy-Wise Holiday Season

**T**raditionally, the winter holidays are a time for delicious food shared with cherished company. This year, as you count your blessings, you might give a thought to the reliable energy sources that enable you to prepare those culinary delights so enjoyed by family and friends.

Today's new kitchen appliances use nearly 50 percent less energy than those built just a decade ago. Still, when holiday time rolls around, your energy bills can rise considerably, what with your stove, oven and dishwasher running overtime, and the door to your refrigerator standing open frequently as family members search for hidden treats.

Thankfully, it's not difficult to keep added holiday energy costs to a minimum. Your electric co-op has these suggestions:

**OVEN TIPS** The turkey is traditionally stuffed early in the morning and roasted for hours. Since it's a long, slow cook, there's no need to preheat your oven, even when the recipe suggests it. This also holds true for a holiday ham. In fact, unless you're baking breads or pastries, you may not need to preheat the oven at all.

Don't open the oven door to take a peek at what's cooking inside. Instead, turn on the oven light and check the cooking status through the oven window.

**A toaster oven can be a great energy saver for holiday cooking.**



dow. Opening the oven door lowers the temperature inside—by as much as 25 degrees—which increases cooking time and wastes energy.

As long as your oven is on, cook several items at the same time. Just make sure you leave enough room for the heat to circulate around each casserole and pie plate.

In an electric oven, you can turn the heat off several minutes before your food is fully cooked. As long as the oven door remains closed, enough heat will be stored inside to finish cooking your meal. The same principle applies to your electric range-top.

Self-cleaning ovens use less energy for normal cooking because of the higher insulation levels built into them. Consider using the self-cleaning feature immediately after using your oven, to take advantage of the residual heat.

**STOVETOP TIPS** When cooking on top of your range, match the size of the pan to the heating element. A 6-inch pan on an 8-inch burner will waste more than 40 percent of the energy!

Clean burners and reflectors provide better heating, while saving energy.

**OTHER WAYS TO COOK** Don't overlook the other cooking appliances. Fast and efficient microwave ovens use around 50 percent less energy than conventional ovens, and they don't heat up your kitchen. Consider using them to cook yams, steam your favorite fresh vegetables, or heat up leftover turkey and gravy for a midnight snack.

Remember, your small appliances are great energy savers that can save you money all year long. Slow cookers (crock-pots) are perfect for busy families. On average, they will cook a whole meal for about 17 cents worth of electricity. Electric skillets can steam, fry, sauté, stew, bake or roast a variety of food items—and some can double as serving dishes. If you're baking or broiling small food items, a toaster oven is ideal.

## WATCH OUT FOR FA-LA-LA-LA FAKES

**W**hether you're buying lights to trim the tree or power tools to wrap as gifts, beware of bogus bounty this holiday season.

Many home products can be illegally counterfeited, placing the purchaser—or the recipient of the perilous present—in danger of using faulty electrical equipment that does not meet product safety standards.



As you do your holiday shopping, inspect your purchases for a mark from a reputable product safety testing organization, like CSA International or Underwriters Laboratory. Here are some tips to help you spot illegal counterfeiting:

**IF THE PRODUCT HAS AN UNBELIEVABLY LOW PRICE**, it's probably a fake. Compare the prices and warranties of similar products.

**TOUCH AND EXAMINE THE PRODUCT.** Counterfeits are often light and feel cheaply made.

**CHECK FOR MISSPELLINGS OR UNCLEAR PRINTING** on labels, packaging and instructions.

**POORLY DESIGNED OR UNCLEAR PACKAGING** with only partial illustrations could be the sign of a fake.

**LOOK FOR MISSING ITEMS IN THE PRODUCT BOX** and for items that appear different from those described on the packaging.

**DON'T COUNT ON THE RETAILER** to weed out the offending merchandise. Even reputable vendors can be duped.



# How's Your Home's 'Physical Fitness'?

**W**ith high energy prices, the “physical fitness” of your home can make the difference between soaring energy bills or comfortable savings this winter.

An energy-efficient home is a strong defense against winter winds, rain, sleet, snow and chill, while also protecting the environment and increasing national security by cutting wasteful energy use. A home “energy diet” benefits your pocketbook and the planet. Here are some tips to improve your home's physical fitness—and cut energy bills and increase comfort.

## Is Your Home Leaking Energy Dollars? Plug Energy Leaks

Is your home drafty? Check your home's first lines of defense against the elements—walls, floors, roof, windows and doors. Seal leaks between moving parts (between door and frame) with weatherstripping. Fill leaks between nonmoving parts (between window frame and wall) with caulking.

Appropriate insulation can increase your comfort and reduce your heating costs up to 30 percent. Start with attic insulation, followed by exterior walls, floors and crawl spaces.

Upgrade inefficient windows and



Caulking can help save energy—and money.

glass doors. Replace them with energy-efficient Energy Star windows with double panes to increase comfort this winter.

## Improve How You Heat Your Home

Clean or replace air filters once a month to help your unit run more efficiently.

Forget to lower the heat when you leave home for the day? Or tired of awakening to a chilly bedroom? A programmable thermostat will remember for you. It will help you coordinate your home's temperature with your daily and weekend patterns to increase

comfort and monetary savings.

Let the sunshine in to help heat your home. Keep blinds or drapes of sun-exposed windows open in the daytime and closed at night to conserve heat. Close the damper on fireplaces when not in use.

## Light Up Your Life—Efficiently

Don't like coming home to a dark house on short winter days? Instead of leaving lights on, put timers on a few of the lights in your home, or install motion detectors and daylight sensors. Motion detectors on exterior floodlights improve your home security.

Replacing four 75-watt incandescent bulbs with 23-watt compact fluorescent bulbs—which use about two-thirds less energy and last up to 10 times longer—saves \$190 over the life of the bulbs.

## Think Spring and Tap Free Resources

Think “warm” thoughts—steaming apple cider and hot chocolate—and how you'll be sweltering again next summer.

Layer clothing and wear sweaters so you can drop the thermostat a few extra degrees and still feel cozy.

Visit your co-op's website and [www.ase.org](http://www.ase.org) for more energy-saving ideas.



**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE**

# Apollo Christmas

*Like those long-ago astronauts of Apollo 8, sometimes we must go outside of ourselves to see the big picture*

BY CLAUDIA SULLIVAN

It was a time of anticipation: Christmas Eve 1968. My stepfather and I, and millions of other people around the world, sat up late waiting for something that had never happened before in the history of the world. We weren't waiting to hear that Santa was on his way, for surely he was, and we weren't waiting for the Christmas celebrations to begin, though certainly we had much to celebrate.

No. We were waiting until the wee hours of the morning for the first humans to emerge from behind the dark side of the moon. No one in history had ever seen the dark side of the moon, and from the time the three Apollo 8 astronauts (Bill Anders, Frank Borman and Jim Lovell) entered the dark side orbit, they were completely out of contact with Earth.

That night Mother went to bed early with a firm charge, "Call me if anything important happens." My stepfather and I sat in the den, which was dark except for the reflective glow of multicolored twinkling lights from our Christmas tree in the living room. I sat in the well-worn rocker with Nikki, our black cocker spaniel, at the foot of the chair. I rested my feet on his outstretched body and rocked back and forth in time with our breathing.

I was a high school student then, living in my generation's "dark ages"—no CNN and no satellite coverage. In Fort Worth, the television stations ceased broadcasting at midnight after a rousing version of "The Star Spangled Banner." So we listened intently to our black, palm-sized transistor radio broadcasting the weather ("cold, sunny on Christmas Day") and disturbing reports from a far away land called Vietnam ("more fighting today but a ceasefire is probable for Christmas Day"). Suddenly, we heard whistling and static. At first, it was difficult to tell whether the voices we heard were those of reporters or of others so far away that we could hardly imagine.

In that interminable moment, I thought of Christopher Columbus. What must his countrymen have thought as he sailed off into the horizon? Most of them probably believed that he would never be seen again. We shared a similar fear as we waited and looked at one another for reassurance on that night of wonder.

Suddenly, we could discern words from the small, distant craft. My stepfather sat on the couch and held the radio close to his ear but turned out so that I could hear as well. We leaned in toward one another as though we were about to share a secret. The kaleidoscope of faint colors from the Christmas tree reflected off our



faces, the glass porch door and the shiny surface of the coffee table. I marveled at what was happening so far away. In a clear voice, Bill Anders began to recite,

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

In that instant we each recognized the passage. Man had a new perspective, a perspective, perhaps that was close to the one God had at the moment of creation.

*And the earth was without form; and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light*

*And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ...*

*And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters. ...*

*And God called the dry land Earth.*

As the other astronauts followed Anders in reading from Genesis, I was reminded of Columbus again. I imagined that a cheer went up as his boat returned to the home shore. He had not fallen off the edge of the world. Nor had our astronauts found a celestial monster lurking on the dark side of the moon.

In our excitement, we forgot to awaken my mother and so she missed the historic event. We listened for nearly another two hours until my stepfather dozed off and dropped the radio, breaking the battery cover. It was bedtime, and dawn was not far away.

In the years since those three astronauts returned safely, we have seen man walk on the surface of the moon, travel back and forth to an international space station, and float weightlessly in free space tethered to the mothership. And yet, we continue to be astonished each time they venture beyond that gentle blanket that is the earth's atmosphere.

There is much to learn from the pioneers of any age. Some of us must go into the unknown, open the way for others, and make ready the path. My great, great-grandparents set out from Tennessee in the early 1820s for the Piney Woods of East Texas to run cattle, farm and raise a family. They were not alone. Each generation has been touched with that same adventurous spirit and the idea that life is full of great possibilities.

At this time of year, a familial gravitational field seems to pull us together. We draw near, at the dinner table, in front of the fire, or around the festive Christmas tree, and we remember who we are and why we matter to one another. We are families who have conquered time, on foot, on horseback, in sailing ships, or driving wagons, and now present generations reap the benefits of those who did all they could to make a home for us.

Each Christmas my grandfather chopped his own tree, a prickly cedar from his farmland, and we decorated it with strung popcorn, paper cutouts and colored lights in the shape of candles that bubbled inside. He lived in an amazing time. His life marked the end of the Conestoga wagon, the development of the Model T Ford, and the landing of men on the moon.

In the waning days of December, we have hope for the New Year. Hope is the true gift of the Christmas season, and like those long-ago astronauts of Apollo 8, sometimes we must go outside of ourselves to see the big picture.

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*Claudia Sullivan, professor of theatre and communications at Schreiner University in Kerrville, is a member of Central Texas Electric Cooperative. She has published six books.*



# Bang! It's the Cap Gun Museum!

*Childhood memories  
shoot by faster than a  
speeding bullet at  
Charles Trois'  
Cap Gun Museum.*

by Janis Turk



When he was a boy, Charles Trois had just one thing on his wish list for Santa Claus: a double-holster cap gun set. More than 50 years later, his wish list remains the same. Not that Trois needs another cap gun—he already has more than 3,000 double-holster cap gun sets and more individual cap guns than he can count. In fact, his is arguably the largest cap gun set collection in the world.

And he's happy to show his treasures to anyone who drops by the Cap Gun Museum at The Trois Estate, located on a bluff overlooking Enchanted Rock State Natural Area near Fredericksburg. The 5,000-square-foot museum boasts more than 50 huge display cases full of holster sets, cap guns and memorabilia from Hollywood Western serials and TV stars of yesteryear.

Older visitors wax nostalgic, and kids are wide-eyed over clever oddity items such as cameras and belt buckles that hide secret cap guns. There's a Roy Rogers cowboy hat with a trap door that opens when you tip the hat and push a little button on the brim. Out pops a cap gun, exploding with a sharp, surprising bang of gunpowder and mercury.

"When I was a kid, my dad had a small beauty shop on top of our apartment in Philadelphia, and he'd give me 50 cents or maybe a dollar for doing my chores. I'd run downstairs and over to a store to buy a cap gun," Trois remembers. "I especially love the smell of the caps. It's that smell that really takes memories all over the place, and I suppose that's what's at the heart of my love for cap guns—the way they take me back to childhood."

Although Trois picked up cap guns here and there over the years, it wasn't until about four years ago that he says he "went a little crazy" with his collection, and built the Cap Gun Museum.

"People who grew up with cap guns, especially in the '50s, want to reminisce, and that's why they start collecting them," says Trois. "But it's also a good investment. In the last three years, the price of cap guns has tripled, and I don't see it going down."

One of the most valuable guns in the museum may be a Fargo Express, worth at least \$6,000, according to Trois. There's nothing particularly fancy about it, he says, but there are only a few of them still around. As a single gun, it is one of the higher-end cap guns out there other than oddity collectible sets that sometimes emerge—types no one seems to have heard of. "For example, I have a 'Pioneer Negro' cap gun in mint condition from the 1950s, and no one in the world, that I know of, has ever heard of or seen a set like this—and of course it is so politically incorrect," Trois says. "It's so rare that, if I wanted to sell it, I could ask what I want and probably get it. But if you offered me \$50,000, I still wouldn't sell it."

The oldest cap gun in Trois' collection dates to 1792, the date embossed in the metal. It's a manufactured gun like none Trois has ever seen before, so he's still





investigating its origins. It's generally believed that cap guns first appeared in the mid-1800s, when they went from flintlock to cap-and-ball firing mechanisms.

In the 1940s, '50s and early '60s, cap guns hit the bull's-eye of fame, thanks to Hollywood. "Tom Mix and other characters helped make cap guns popular with youngsters wanting to be like the heroes they saw on the silver screen—Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy and the Lone Ranger," says Trois.

Some of the museum's guns and holsters (including some in their original boxes) bear names such as Wild Bill Hickok, Rin Tin Tin, Gunsmoke, Davy Crockett and Maverick. There are rodeo-themed guns, pistol handles with fancy carved longhorns, horses, cowgirls, Indians and star-shaped sheriff badges.

Cap guns today are often made of plastic or lightweight alloys—unlike the heavy, realistic cast iron models of yesteryear.

"Cap guns aren't as loud now, either, and they don't smoke like some of the old ones," Trois reminisces. "Caps used to spark really big, too, and you'd get a big bang for your buck."

"I believe we're just caretakers of all this stuff, of everything on Earth—we don't really own anything," says Trois, reflecting on his collection. "What we have—what's really ours to keep—are the memories."

Trois, a successful artist, was a member of the 1960s rock band Soul Survivors. The Trois Estate is a Mexican pueblo-themed village encircling a central plaza with future plans for a Mayan temple-shaped museum of illusions. The village includes Trois's Restaurant plus a full-service spa, bed and breakfast retreat, chapel, wine cellars, cave and underground grotto/pool, house, shops, offices, a saloon, and the Cap Gun Museum, which also displays chaps, vests, hats, cowgirl outfits, American Indian headdresses, 007 pistols, Colt .45-type rifle-style cap guns and movie star photos.

*Janis Turk is a travel writer and photographer who divides her time between Texas and New Orleans.*

*Central Texas Electric Cooperative serves the Cap Gun Museum of the Trois Estate.*

## GETTING THERE

**G**oing northwest on U.S. Hwy. 290 into Fredericksburg, U.S. 290 becomes Main St. Pass through downtown, and turn right onto Milam St./RR 965. Take RR 965 north 16 miles toward Enchanted Rock and Willow City. Turn right onto Trois Ln. You'll see a gate covered in dried antlers and flanked by lion statuary. There is no sign for the Cap Gun Museum or the Trois Estate other than the Trois Ln. street sign. Follow the road up the hill into the village of the Trois Estate. Parking is next to the Cap Gun Museum, which is open daily. Admission is free.

Contact: The Cap Gun Museum of The Trois Estate at Enchanted Rock, (830) 685-3415, 300 Trois Ln., Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

Website: [www.troisestate.net](http://www.troisestate.net)

# 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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# The Reindeer of Texas

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

Not a lot of people remember this, but there was a time when reindeer roamed wild in Texas and spread cheer and wonder all over the state.

Okay, so the reindeer weren't wild. But they were here, all right, thanks almost entirely to a man named Grady Carothers, a Mills County rancher who one day decided he wanted to see reindeer in Texas.

Carothers' inspiration was his son, Jack, who thought it mighty peculiar that Texas didn't have reindeer like some of those places "up north." Grady Carothers got to thinking about it and decided that other Texas children might like to see reindeer, too.

Bringing reindeer to Texas is one of those things, like saving money or starting an exercise program, that is easier said than done. Carothers set about getting Texas its own reindeer, despite the guffaws of neighbors and otherwise good friends. He wrote a slew of letters to postmasters and various chambers of commerce in Alaska without so much as a reply from the Great White North.

Encouragement came from an unlikely source. The manager of a local department store told him that the Alaska Native Service managed the reindeer for the Eskimo, and that his best bet would be to get in touch with the service. Three times he was told "No," but Carothers was nothing if not persistent; he might even be called ornery and stubborn. Finally, Carothers was allowed to buy six reindeer steers, despite the fact that the animals had never been south of Anchorage.

Carothers and his older son, John, traveled to Nome, Alaska, in 1946, and then proceeded another 100 miles east to Galvin where Carothers bought six reindeer for \$50 each from an Eskimo.

The original Alaska reindeer were imports from Norway. Carothers left the reindeer with a Norwegian in Seattle until fall. The Norwegian helped Grady break the reindeer, a process during which he learned just how ornery and stubborn a reindeer can be. Texas was woefully short on reindeer moss—there being none at all—but Alaska didn't have much either. So Carothers taught the reindeer, or they learned on their own, to eat cultivated food. When Carothers could get some of the moss, he'd bring it back to Texas as a treat for the reindeer, which appropriately, if unoriginally, were named Dancer, Prancer, Donner, Vixen and the like.

These naturalized Texas reindeer wore red harnesses with their names stitched on them and pulled Santa in his sleigh from Thanksgiving through Christmas for more than 40 years. Carothers contracted with local chambers of commerce, shopping centers and schools, putting on three shows a day and transporting the equipment in vans from town to town and state to state. It took three men, including Santa, to handle the reindeer.



Early on, the reindeer performed close to Carothers' ranch, but their popularity extended into 39 southwestern and central states. Sometimes as many as six teams of reindeer were on the road at one time. One of the highlights came when Carothers and his reindeer pulled Santa in a rose-covered sleigh in the 1955 Tournament of Roses Parade.

In time, Rudolph, a fawn whom some locals insist had a real red nose, joined the team and learned to travel in front of the harnessed deer. Rudolph had his own harness with his name and little bells. He was quite the star of the show.

Carothers ended up making 15 more trips to Alaska for reindeer, including some females so that he could have his own replacements, ones that would be native Texans, to boot. He and his reindeer were profiled in several newspapers and magazines, including the January 1954 edition of *The Wide World*.

Carothers and Son Enterprises eventually moved to California, where the animals were exhibited at Santa Claus Land and shown in fall parades. He sold the reindeer and equipment in 1984 and drove the stagecoach at Knott's Berry Farm.

"It wasn't easy, but nothing ever is," Carothers said of his reindeer operation.

Carothers died in April 25, 2004, at 98. And the reindeer, like the buffalo and others before them, no longer roam Texas.

*Clay Coppedge has written about pasture golf and school mascots for Texas Co-op Power.*

# Holiday Recipe Contest

**S P O N S O R E D   B Y   P I O N E E R   B R A N D**

**BY SHANNON OELRICH** Oh boy, are you in for a holiday treat! You can't go wrong with any of our winning recipes this year. We've got an appetizer, a main dish and three sweets from which to choose. The very best, though, is our grand-prizewinning recipe, Upside-Down Cranberry Puffs. Your guests will delight in them hot out of the oven with a sweet buttery sauce, the perfect end to a holiday meal. And you can't beat the smells coming out of the kitchen for holiday ambiance as you zest an orange and chop cranberries. I hope you enjoy sharing our selections with your family.

Our grand prize winner, Jo Ann Kugle, won \$3,000, and runners-up won \$500 each. I want to thank the folks at Pioneer for sponsoring the contest and being so involved in the process. All the photos on these pages were taken at The Guenther House, an elegant home built in 1859 by Carl H. Guenther, founder of Pioneer Flour Mills, for his family when they relocated from Fredericksburg to San Antonio. (If you'd like to learn more about this Texas-grown company, go to [www.chguenther.com](http://www.chguenther.com).) I also want to thank Chef Rob McDonald and his students at Travis High School's Institute for Hospitality and Culinary Arts in Austin, who once again helped us test the recipes. Finally, thanks to everyone who cooked and ate their way through our readers' many recipes.

**Grand prizewinner Jo Ann Kugle shows off her Upside-Down Cranberry Puffs at The Guenther House.**



WILL VAN OVERBEEK

## GRAND PRIZEWINNER: JO ANN KUGLE

Jo Ann likes to play with recipes and ingredients. Her **UPSIDE-DOWN CRANBERRY PUFFS** are a tart and tasty result. She says she entered the contest last year, but feels like she didn't test her recipes enough. This year, she baked the puffs many times, tweaking the recipe a little each time until they were perfect. Jo Ann loves to cook, especially with kids. She is retired from the Texas Agricultural Extension Service (now Texas Cooperative Extension), where she worked to bring the 4-H program into the inner city. Jo Ann and her husband enjoy traveling in their RV and riding his motorcycle together. They live in Austin, have two grown children, and are Pedernales Electric Cooperative members.

## UPSIDE-DOWN CRANBERRY PUFFS

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup roughly chopped cranberries
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar
- 1 cup Pioneer Biscuit & Baking Mix
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup milk
- Zest from 1 small orange  
(about 1 tablespoon)

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly toss cranberries with sugar. Divide into 8 buttered muffin cups using about 1 tablespoon in each cup.

Mix remaining ingredients except Butter Sauce; beat for 30 seconds. Fill muffin cups  $\frac{2}{3}$  full using about 2 tablespoons in each cup.

Bake about 15 minutes or until golden brown. Invert muffins onto cooling rack.

Serve warm with hot Butter Sauce drizzled over. Makes 8 servings.

## BUTTER SAUCE

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon vanilla
- Juice from  $\frac{1}{2}$  small orange  
(about 2 tablespoons)

In medium sauce pan, heat sugar and cream, stirring constantly until just boiling.

Remove from heat; beat in butter, orange juice and vanilla.



## RUNNER-UP: EMILY HUFFMAN

Emily's **GINGER CHOCOLATE CHIP CRINKLES** came from a recipe that she liked and then lost, so she re-created them and then kept experimenting until she had these chocolaty spice cookies. When creating a new recipe—whether for a contest or a potluck—

**Emily Huffman** Emily's motto is "nothing ordinary will do." She lives with her husband and three children in Austin. They are members of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



## GINGER CHOCOLATE CHIP CRINKLES

- 4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1½ tablespoons vanilla extract
- 1¼ cups packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup molasses
- 1 egg
- 3 cups Pioneer Original Biscuit & Baking Mix
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1¼ cups chocolate chips
- Granulated sugar to coat

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In large mixing bowl, combine butter, vanilla, brown sugar, molasses and egg. Add baking mix, cocoa powder, ginger and nutmeg. Mix well. Stir in chocolate chips. Form into 1-inch balls and roll in granulated sugar. Place on ungreased cookie sheet 2 inches apart. Bake 11-12 minutes. Do not over-bake. Makes approximately 3½ dozen.

## RUNNER-UP: TITUS ROBISON

Titus grew up in Italy and remembers eating biscotti for breakfast. His **SANTA'S BISCOTTI** would make Old St. Nick himself say, "Delizioso!" His mother learned to cook Italian food from local women. He remembers watching and learning in the kitchen with his mother. Friends and family often request his Italian specialties. He and his wife live in Stephenville, where he's the assistant vice president of development for Foster's Home for Children. They are United Cooperative Services members.



GINGER CHOCOLATE CHIP CRINKLES



SANTA'S BISCOTTI

## SANTA'S BISCOTTI

- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups Pioneer Buttermilk Biscuit & Baking Mix
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Dash of salt
- 1 cup chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease

large cookie sheet. Mix sugar and butter till well combined. Add vanilla and eggs, beat until smooth. Add baking mix, spices and salt, and stir until well combined.

Make a 10-inch by 3-inch rectangle of dough on the cookie sheet. Bake for 25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool for 10 minutes.

Cut into ¾-inch slices and place cut side up on cookie sheet. Bake for 10 minutes. Turn each piece so the other side faces up. Bake for 10 minutes more.



HOLIDAY JAEGER SCHNITZEL  
WITH PORTOBELLO CREAM SAUCE

### HOLIDAY JAEGER SCHNITZEL WITH PORTOBELLO CREAM SAUCE

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons minced shallots
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- $\frac{3}{4}$  pound sliced fresh baby portobello mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine
- 1 packet Pioneer Brown Gravy Mix, prepared
- 4 tablespoons sour cream
- 6 boneless pork chops (4-6 ounces each)
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup Pioneer Buttermilk Biscuit & Baking Mix
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup milk
- 2 cups panko (Japanese) bread crumbs
- Vegetable oil for frying

Melt butter in large skillet on medium-high. Add next 4 ingredients and sauté 5-7 minutes or until mushrooms soften. Add wine and cook 1 minute. Add gravy and sour cream. Stir until combined. Keep warm.

Pound chops with mallet until  $\frac{1}{8}$ - to  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place baking mix in wide bowl. Combine eggs and milk in another wide bowl. Place crumbs in third wide bowl. Pour oil to a depth of 1 inch in large skillet. Heat oil on medium-high until 375 degrees. Dredge chops in biscuit mix, then egg mixture, then crumbs, and fry in batches, 2-4 minutes on each side or until brown and crispy. Drain and keep warm. Serve with sauce. Garnish with additional parsley, if desired. Makes 6 chops.



CHIPOTLE BEAN BURRITO  
CHEESE TARTS

Remove from sheet and cool on rack.

In small saucepan, carefully melt chocolate chips over low heat, stirring continually, until fully melted. Spread chocolate on one side of cooled biscotti. Makes approximately 20 biscotti.

### RUNNER-UP: SUSAN RILEY

Susan has the distinction of being a two-time runner-up in the *Texas Co-op Power* holiday contest. (You may remember her Decadent Chocolate Mint Truffle Torte from last year.) This year,

her **HOLIDAY JAEGER SCHNITZEL WITH PORTOBELLO CREAM SAUCE** has won our judges' accolades. Susan says she wanted to put a creamy gravy on that

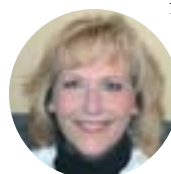


Susan Riley

German favorite, jaeger schnitzel, and she loves stroganoff, so she added sour cream to the gravy to give it that kick. Susan and her husband live in Allen with their three kids. They are Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative members.

### RUNNER-UP: DONNA DETEAU

Donna is a Renaissance woman—besides being a fantastic cook, she's the finance director of the Children's Advocacy Center in Bastrop and a handywoman-



Donna Deteau

for-hire. Cooking is her main hobby, though. This self-taught cook loves to experiment with recipes and shares her good experiments with her friends and co-workers. Part of experimentation, however, is failure. Donna says, "I've probably thrown



away as much food as I've eaten!" Her **CHIPOTLE BEAN BURRITO CHEESE TARTS** are a real success: a crowd-pleasing appetizer with zingy sour cream topping. Donna lives in a 100-year-old farmhouse in Paige and is a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.

## CHIPOTLE BEAN BURRITO CHEESE TARTS

- 1 1/4 cups Pioneer Buttermilk Biscuit & Baking Mix
- 12 ounces sour cream (divided)
- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese (divided)
- 1 package Pioneer Texas Taco Seasoning Mix (divided)
- Flour for rolling
- 1 cup canned refried beans
- 2 chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, chopped (divided)
- 4 tablespoons chopped cilantro (divided)
- 1 teaspoon bottled or fresh lime juice
- Shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes and salsa (for garnish)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray 12 regular size muffin tins with nonstick cooking spray. In small bowl, mix together the baking mix, 4 ounces sour cream, melted butter, 1/2 cup cheese and 1 tablespoon taco seasoning.

Turn out onto generously floured wax paper and knead 3-4 times. Pat down and flour top of dough. Top with another piece of wax paper and roll out dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut rounds with 4-inch cookie cutter. Using a spatula, place rounds on muffin tins and gently push

dough with fingers into tins to make little tarts until all dough is used.

Mix together refried beans, 1 chipotle pepper, 2 tablespoons cilantro and 1 tablespoon taco seasoning. Spoon bean mixture into tarts. Top with remaining Cheddar cheese. Cook for 15 minutes. Let cool in pan 2 minutes before removing. Serve with remaining sour cream mixed together with remaining taco seasoning, chipotle pepper, cilantro and lime juice. Top with shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes and salsa. Makes 6 servings.

## RECIPE CONTEST

April's recipe contest subject is **DUTCH OVEN COOKING**. Send your chuck-wagon favorites to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6254 or e-mail them to [recipes@texas-ec.org](mailto: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 December 15. The top winner will receive a tin filled with Pioneer products. Runners-up will also receive a prize.

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Make checks payable to Texas Electric Cooperatives.  
Send \$29.95 (\$24.95 plus \$5 tax, shipping and handling) for each cookbook to Cookbook, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. Also available in many co-op lobbies throughout the state or online at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).  
Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

# ONLY CRACKPOTS TAKE SHOTS

## Transformers

It doesn't take a crack shot to hit an electric insulator or transformer, just a crackpot. During hunting season, careless shooters taking pot shots at electric equipment can cause major problems for your electric company.

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- It could even be a matter of life and death to someone on a life-support system or to someone who is hit by a stray shot.
- Damage to electrical equipment is very expensive to repair. Lines may be cut or weakened from a shot, and they may sag or break, becoming a severe hazard for anyone who comes in contact with the line.
- Broken insulators can cause power outages that are hard—and expensive—to find. An insulator cracked by a bullet can remain on line for a long time before it finally fails.

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## CHRISTMAS MORNING MAGIC

December 25 is probably the most anticipated morning of all, whether you're young or old, or even if you're a pampered dog! And—judging by many of the photos we received for this contest—December 25, 2004, has got to be one of the most documented Christmas mornings ever, as it was truly a white Christmas over most of the state. Even without snow, it's a most memorable day of the year. Happy holidays!

—CHERYL TUCKER

◀ It seems **Lindsey Chiesl** had given up on getting the guitar she wanted for Christmas, so when the 7-year-old unwrapped this gift, she was truly surprised and excited. The look on her face tells it all. Her mother, **Chelsey Chiesl**, belongs to Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative.



▲ As the new “grandpuppy,” **Sarah** the dog was completely worn out after opening too many gifts from the grandmothers on her first Christmas. Sarah spent her first year as a guide dog in training with Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Rob Shook**.



▼ Santa was extra-special good to the **Wachel** family last Christmas, with every family member busy opening colorful gifts. Guess all the Wachels were good, too! San Bernard Electric Cooperative member **Rita Wachel** submitted this colorful Christmas morning photo.

◀ An 11-inch Christmas Eve snowfall may not be unusual, unless you live near the Texas Gulf Coast! Wharton County Electric Cooperative member and employee **Blake Lurker** wasn't about to let this once-in-a-lifetime happening go undocumented on Christmas morning 2004.



▲ “How'd he do that?” **Anna** and **Matthew Hall** had a tough time figuring out how Santa was able to fit down their chimney, especially with all the presents he brought! Their parents, **David** and **Ronda Hall**, are members of Cooke County Electric Cooperative.

### Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Feb	Gates	Dec 10
Mar	Snapshots	Jan 10
Apr	Inspirational	Feb 10
May	Barbecues	Mar 10
June	Inventions	Apr 10
July	Brothers	May 10

**GATES** is the topic for our **FEBRUARY 2007** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Gates, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before December 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](mailto: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

## DECEMBER

**01 ATHENS**  
Christmas Park Drive  
Thru, (903) 677-0775,  
www.athenstx.org

**BOERNE** [1-2]  
Weihnachts Fest Parade,  
(830) 816-2176,  
www.ahillcountry  
christmas.com

**CLIFTON** [1-2]  
Cowboy Christmas,  
1-800-344-3720,  
www.cliffontexas.org

**COLUMBUS** [1-3]  
Christmas on the  
Colorado Festivities,  
(979) 732-8385,  
www.columbustexas.org

**COPPERAS COVE** [1-3]  
Krist Kindl Markt, (254)  
518-1612, www.down  
towncopperascove.org

**01 DESDEMONA** [1-2]  
Country Fair at the  
Old School House,  
(254) 758-2691

**FREDERICKSBURG** [1-3]  
Weihnachten,  
1-888-997-3600,  
www.tex-fest.com

**LAMPASAS** Carol of  
Lights, (512) 556-5172,  
www.lampasaschamber.org

**NACOGDOCHES** [1-9]  
Nine Flags Festival,  
(936) 564-7351,  
www.nineflagsfestival.com

**PARIS** [1-3, 8-10] Holiday in  
Paris, (903) 785-0969,  
www.paristexas.gov

**SALADO** [1-3, 8-10]  
Christmas Stroll &  
Historic Homes Tour,  
(254) 947-5040,  
www.salado.com

**SAN ANGELO** [1-3]  
Christmas at Old Fort  
Concho, (325) 481-2646

**01 TABLE ROCK** [1-2, 8-9]  
A Christmas Carol,  
(254) 947-9205

**WAXAHACHIE** [1-3, 8-10]  
Bethlehem Revisited,  
(972) 937-2390,  
www.waxahachie  
chamber.com

**WEST COLUMBIA**  
Varner-Hogg Plantation  
Holiday Open House,  
(979) 345-4656,  
www.tpwd.state.tx.us

**02 BOWIE**  
Fantasy of Lights  
Festival & Parade,  
(940) 872-6246

**BUDA** [2-3]  
Budafest, (512) 694-3413

**BULVERDE**  
Living Christmas Drive  
Thru, (830) 980-2813

**BURNET** [1-3, 8-10]  
Main Street Bethlehem,  
(512) 756-6033,  
www.fbcburnet.org

**02 CENTER** Nighttime  
Lighted Christmas  
Parade, (936) 598-3377

**CISCO** Lighted Christmas  
Parade, (254) 442-2537,  
www.ciscotx.com

**COLUMBUS**  
Holiday Extravaganza,  
(979) 733-9129

**CRANFILLS GAP**  
Authentic Norwegian  
Lutefisk Dinner,  
(254) 597-2531

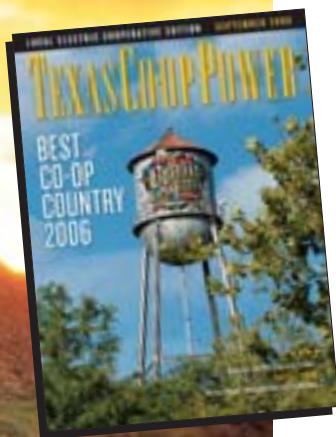
**DEVINE**  
Cowboy Christmas,  
(830) 665-6145

**FAYETTEVILLE**  
Country Christmas,  
(979) 378-2222

**GONZALES** [2-3]  
Christmas Tour of  
Historic Homes,  
(830) 672-6532,  
www.gonzalestexas.com

**HUNTSVILLE** Trail of  
Lights, (936) 291-5920

## TEXAS CO-OP POWER



## 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.

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2550 South IH-35, Austin, TX 78704



# AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

**02 PALESTINE** [2, 9, 16]  
Victorian Christmas Train Ride, 1-800-659-3484, [www.visitpalestine.com](http://www.visitpalestine.com)

**PILOT POINT**  
Christmas on the Square, (940) 686-8138

**RUNGE** [2-9]  
Christmas Tree Forest, (830) 239-4949

**VICTORIA**  
Lighted Christmas Parade, (361) 585-3200, [www.victoriatexasinfo.com](http://www.victoriatexasinfo.com)

**WAXAHACHIE**  
Christmas Parade, (972) 937-2390, [www.waxahachiechamber.com](http://www.waxahachiechamber.com)

**WILLS POINT**  
Christmas Bazaar & Lighted Parade, (903) 873-3111, [www.willspoint.org](http://www.willspoint.org)

**05 LONE STAR**  
Cowboy Christmas Parade, (903) 656-2611

**07 CANYON LAKE**  
Hope Hospice Angel Walk Tree Lighting, 1-800-528-2104

**JEFFERSON**  
Old-Fashioned Christmas Parade, (903) 665-2672, [www.jefferson-texas.com](http://www.jefferson-texas.com)

**09 BRAZORIA**  
Lighted Boat & Home Parade, (979) 964-4402

**HARLINGEN**  
Folklorico Extravaganza, (956) 423-0401

**MINEOLA**  
Amtrak Dinner/Murder Mystery, (903) 569-2087, [www.mineola.com](http://www.mineola.com)

**PORT ARANSAS**  
Carolers Afloat & Boat Lighting Contest, 1-800-452-6278, [www.portaransas.org](http://www.portaransas.org)

**09 SPRING BRANCH** [9-10]  
Living Nativity, (830) 885-5805

**VERNON**  
Lighted Christmas Parade, (940) 552-6803

**10 KERRVILLE** Christmas Concert, (830) 257-0809, [www.hillcountryyouthorchestras.com](http://www.hillcountryyouthorchestras.com)

**MASON** Luminary Drive Thru, (325) 347-5582

**15 BOERNE** [15-16]  
Cowboy Christmas, (830) 816-2176, [www.ahillcountrychristmas.com](http://www.ahillcountrychristmas.com)

**SEGUIN** [15-17]  
Country Christmas, (830) 379-1122

**16 ARROYO CITY**  
Christmas Boat Parade, (956) 748-9587

**16 BRENHAM**  
Children's Chorus Christmas Concert, (979) 277-6540, [www.brenhamchildrenschorus.org](http://www.brenhamchildrenschorus.org)

**LITTLE ELM** [16-17] Live Nativity, (972) 292-1465, [www.livenativity.org](http://www.livenativity.org)

**23 QUITMAN** Bluegrass Show, (903) 763-5100, [www.quitman.com](http://www.quitman.com)

**31 UNCERTAIN**  
New Year's Fireworks, (903) 789-3443

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 February by December 10. Events are listed according to space available; see the full listing at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.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!**

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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.

If you're in search of Texas icons, you'd be wise to conduct such a hunt in the South Plains of the Panhandle. Anyone who dismisses this patch of the state as devoid of interest hasn't studied it a lick. On this 110-mile stretch of U.S. Hwy. 84 (a highway that extends east clear to Georgia and west to Colorado), you'll encounter an eyeful of bigger-than-life symbols and remembrances of pure Lone Star cultural heritage.

Start in Muleshoe and point yourself southeast, stopping to see the cranes if they are in residence. Then it's onward to Lubbock for several attractions and a tasty ending in Post. But watch that lead foot—there's rumored to be a speed trap in these parts.

## MULESHOE

Roughly 20 miles from the New Mexico line, the Bailey County seat and headquarters for Bailey County Electric Cooperative lies in the midst of ranchlands that irrigation transformed into farm country. I enjoy stopping here to have my photo snapped with Old Pete, the giant mule statue that stands next to the **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE** and serves as the National Mule Memorial. This monument to the humble beast became a celebrity in 2001 when he was hauled to Washington, D.C., for George W. Bush's inaugural festivities.

To see live critters, I head about 20 miles south on Texas Hwy. 214, then west on Caliche Rd. for 2.5 miles to the **MULESHOE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**, the oldest such preserve in Texas. A home to migratory wildlife and indigenous creatures, the refuge provides a winter home for the country's largest concentration of sandhill cranes.

**Muleshoe Chamber of Commerce**, (806) 272-4248; [www.muleshoe.org](http://www.muleshoe.org)

**Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge**, (806) 946-3341; [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)

## LUBBOCK

Three great images of the American West are celebrated here in the Hub of

# MULESHOE to POST

*Tip your hat to a mule, sandhill cranes, Buddy Holly, windmills and ranching.*

BY JUNE NAYLOR

**American Windpower Center and Museum**, 1701 Canyon Lake Dr., Lubbock, (806) 747-8734; [www.windmill.com](http://www.windmill.com)

**Buddy Holly Center**, 1801 Avenue G, Lubbock, (806) 775-3560; [www.buddyhollycenter.org](http://www.buddyhollycenter.org)

**National Ranching Heritage Center**, 3121 Fourth St., Lubbock, (806) 742-0498. [www.ttu.edu/ranchingheritagecenter](http://www.ttu.edu/ranchingheritagecenter)

## CROSBYTON

I love driving east from Lubbock along U.S. Hwy. 82 just past this town in Crosby County. I spend an hour or two at the spectacular little Silver Falls Park. This scenic rest stop features little hiking paths alongside the water and provides breathtaking views of the dramatic canyon cut in the Caprock.

## POST

The man who ultimately made it possible for us to put Shredded Wheat and Grape Nuts on our breakfast table also put this town on the map. In 1907, C.W. Post established what he hoped would be an ideal agrarian community at the foot of the Caprock. A couple of the Garza County seat's earliest establishments are still worth seeking out today.

The **GARZA THEATRE**, opened in 1920 as one of the first film houses in West Texas, now hosts regional theater productions of "M\*A\*S\*H," "Oliver!" and "A Miracle on 34th Street." For a good BLT, chili cheeseburger and tater tots, I like to pull into Holly's Drive In, where the staff is mighty friendly, and the walls are plastered with generations of Post Antelopes football stars. At night, I can get one of the most comfortable beds in West Texas at the **HOTEL GARZA**, built in 1915 by Post. I like the mix of old and new, such as clawfoot tubs and Wi-Fi connections.

**Garza Theater**, 226 E. Main St., Post, (806) 495-4005, [www.posttexas.com](http://www.posttexas.com)

**Hotel Garza**, 302 E. Main St., Post, 1-866-495-2880; [www.hotelgarza.com](http://www.hotelgarza.com)

*June Naylor wrote Texas: Off the Beaten Path.*



the South Plains, which is also the headquarters for South Plains Electric Cooperative. At the **AMERICAN WIND-POWER CENTER AND MUSEUM**, I am mesmerized by the abundant number of designs in windmills. The museum offers more than 150 examples, inside and outside, telling the story of pulling water from the ground in a dry, dry land over the past century. At the **NATIONAL RANCHING HERITAGE CENTER**, I wander the grounds to understand the history of our country's ranching, as detailed in impressively restored ranch houses, a school, blacksmith's shop, depot, barn and bunkhouse, all from the past two and a half centuries. And at the **BUDDY HOLLY CENTER**, I'm reminded how the city's most famous son changed the world of popular music with his youthful genius. It's also a good place to explore the work of other West Texas musicians.