

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Cabins

for GET-TOGETHERS
and GETAWAYS



PLUS

Abilene, My Abilene

Dutch Oven Cooking

Hit the Road:
Gladewater to Henderson

SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Flooding

Don't mess with floods. Flooding is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in Texas. The simple decisions you make can mean the difference between life and death.


Flood Safety Rules:

- Never drive through water on a road. It can be deeper than it appears. Floodwaters can damage roadways, creating invisible sinkholes or washed out bridges.
- Quickly leave your car if it stalls in water. Water displaces 1,500 pounds of weight for every foot it rises. It takes only 2 feet of water to push a 3,000-pound car downstream.
- Don't attempt to walk through rapidly running water. As little as 6 inches can knock adults off their feet.
- Keep an emergency kit in your car, including a flashlight with extra batteries, drinking water and a battery-operated radio.
- If you have a cell phone, program the number for police or fire department rescue.

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



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FEATURES

6 Cabins for Get-Togethers and Getaways

By Melissa Gaskill

Photos by Will van Overbeek

No matter your needs, there's a park with cabins just right for you. But get your reservation early because affordable cabins are very popular.

14 Abilene, My Abilene

By Staci Semrad

Photos by Jennifer Nichols

Whether you want a blast from the past or a peek at the present, Abilene is a tourist's delight.

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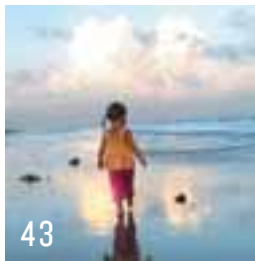
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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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.

TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES BOARD OF DIRECTORS: John Herrera, Chair, Mercedes; Greg Jones, Vice Chair, Jacksonville; Ray Beavers, Secretary-Treasurer, Cleburne; James Calhoun, Franklin; Charles Castleberry, Tulia; Gary Nietzsche, La Grange; William "Buff" Whitten, Eldorado

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letters

BURSTING OUR BULB

Regarding your January "Power Talk" item about the light bulb that has burned for 98 years. As a WBAP news reporter and later cameraman for WBAP-TV, I filmed stories on the "eternal light bulb" twice. In 1977, when the Palace Theater in Fort Worth was torn down, the light was turned off. I had a little talk with a former employee, who told me: "The eternal light bulb was a hoax. We had bought a box of old-style bulbs, and when one burned out, we replaced it with another."

Good publicity, but like other myths, it wasn't true.

WAYNE BROWN
Hamilton County
Electric Cooperative

LABS ARE THE GREATEST

I read with interest the story of "Scout, The Christmas Dog" in the December 2006 issue. We have owned several dogs—or they have owned us—but the most faithful, most loyal and most eager to please were Labrador retrievers. Our three didn't shy away from guns, but all were absolutely terrified of lightning and thunder, so I wonder if that is a trait of Labs. We enjoyed them immensely, but we don't want any more. It is just too hard to give them up when they have made their final retrieve.

MILTON SELLARS
Karnes Electric Cooperative

Editor's note: *Andrew Sansom's Lab, Scout, the subject of his Christmas remembrance, died in January of cancer.*

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. Read additional letters at www.texascoopower.com.

POWER TALK



TREES ARE COOL

With Arbor Day upon us, it's a good time to thank our friends the trees for providing shade in the summer, trunks to lean on, branches to climb in, a home for birds and squirrels, and carbon dioxide storage.

Carbon dioxide storage? Maybe not as poetic as Joyce Kilmer's famous tree "that looks at God all day, And lifts her leafy arms to pray." But trees are natural "carbon sinks," effectively capturing and storing greenhouse gases that have been linked to climate change.

Scientists with the U.S. Forest Service who study the use of trees for carbon cleanup say that any species will do, but the ones that grow quickly and live long are ideal. Among those with the best "carbon sequestration" potential are loblolly pine, black walnut, red oak, Virginia live oak and bald cypress.

Ultimately, trees of any shape, size or species will help absorb carbon dioxide. So, this Arbor Day, plant a tree—any tree—as long as it's compatible with the soil and climate in your area. If you're really ambitious, plant 10. With a \$10 National Arbor Day Foundation membership, you will receive 10 free trees. You may choose from among flowering trees, oaks, redbuds, bald cypresses or crape myrtles. Go to www.arborday.org for more information.

Arbor Day is the last Friday in April.

SAFELIVING

Tornado Watch or Warning: What's the Difference?

Texas weather is active this time of year, so we frequently hear about tornado watches or warnings. Do you know what they mean and what the difference is?

TORNADO WATCH

Conditions are favorable to produce a tornado.

TORNADO WARNING

A tornado has been spotted visually or on radar. Seek cover.

As you listen to your radio or watch TV for updates, be alert to what is happening outside as well. If you see a tornado and it is not moving to the right or to the left relative to trees or power poles in the distance, it may be moving toward you! Remember that although tornadoes often move from southwest to northeast, they also can and do travel in any direction. Tornadoes can strike at any time of the year but are most prevalent in Texas from March through June.





H A P P E N I N G S

If you want to see the ones that didn't get away, head out to Lake Fork for the **TOYOTA TEXAS BASS CLASSIC** competition April 13-15 at Lake Fork in East Texas near Lindale. The purse is \$1 million, and funds raised will go to the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. The event is sponsored in part by Wood County and Farmers electric cooperatives, both Touchstone Energy® members. One hundred sixty members of the Professional Anglers Association will form teams for competition. When the fish aren't biting, enjoy live music and entertainment, featuring country music star Clay Walker. Take the kids to the Family Fun Zone for games, activities and food. Learn fishing tips from an industry pro and see the latest in fishing gear and accessories. For more information, go to www.toyotatexasbassclassic.com.

WHO KNEW?



MILES AND MILES OF TEXAS

Texas' size (268,580 square miles), as we well know, is the stuff of legend and song. But it also makes good fodder for some pretty strange facts. If you live in Beaumont and can't decide between a road trip to El Paso or Orlando, Fla., don't let the distance be a factor. El Paso is 830 miles down Interstate 10, but Orlando is only 50 miles farther away. And if you do wind up in El Paso and get itchy to move on, you're closer to California than you are to Dallas.

HIGH-FLYING FRUIT

Look what's in the air ... It's a bird. It's a plane. It's a giant banana! Quebec conceptualist Cesar Saez, drawn by our state's iconic status, plans to float a gigantic banana balloon high above the Lone Star State, making the "Geostationary Banana Over Texas" visible day and night for a month starting in August 2008. The helium dirigible is designed to circle above the state for days, steadied by internal wind-powered gyroscopes. The \$1 million project, in the final stages of engineering, would "bring some humor to the Texas sky," Saez says on the project website. Our sides are splitting already.



CO-OP PEOPLE

THE VIEW FROM THE TOP (OF THE POLE)

The lanky, veteran lineman, weighed down with a gear belt of dangling tools, says to his young partner, "Until you can stand on top of a 50-foot pole in the middle of the night during a blizzard, and roll your own with your rubber gloves on, you're just a rookie!"

The cartoon, titled "The Litmus Test," is just one of hundreds drawn over the decades by Dale Hammond, who started as a groundman at Taylor Electric Cooperative in Merkel in 1969, and retired as a staking engineer in 2003. When he wasn't in the field, Hammond was at his drawing board, creating co-op characters.

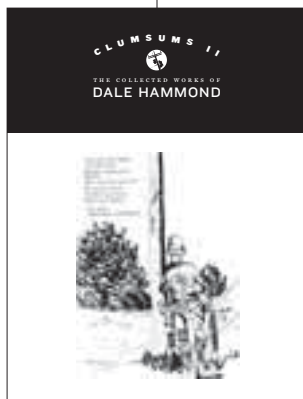
Hammond was generous with his talent, donating original cartoons that fetched handsome sums at

Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC) safety scholarship fund-raisers. So when Hammond fell on hard times—mounting medical expenses associated with his wife's illness and the death of their only daughter—his fellow linemen wanted to help.

The result was the publication of a large-format, hardbound volume of 130 of Hammond's cartoons, printed entirely with donations from TEC, co-ops, individuals and the publishing expertise of the TEC Communications Department. The book, *Clumsums II*, sells for \$50,

with all proceeds going directly to Hammond. Even if you haven't "clumsum" (climbed some poles), you will enjoy the humor and message of Hammond's drawings.

For ordering information, contact Tami Knipstein at tknipstein@texas-ec.org or (512) 486-6271.




Texas Co-op Power (USPS 540-560) is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical Postage Paid at Austin, TX and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 74 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is www.texascooppower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or e-mail knorthcott@texas-ec.org.

Subscription price is \$3.84 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues are available for \$3 each.

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The architectural style typical of Civilian Conservation Corps projects is evident in cabins at Bastrop State Park.

CABINS *For Getaways*

GET AWAY TO NATURE WITHOUT UNFOLDING THE TENT

BY MELISSA GASKILL • PHOTOS BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK

A quiet, relaxing weekend for Stuart Umlauf started with a roux. As light from the setting sun filtered through thick pine needles to cast a glow on the dark stone cabin, gentle bubbling from a pot on the stove combined with the crackle of logs in the fireplace and the sounds of conversation and laughter. Stuart tossed in chopped vegetables, chicken, sausage and a stock he made himself.

“That stock is the key to true, inner-Louisiana gumbo,” he says of the recipe. The gumbo kicked off an evening of cards, dominoes and a roaring campfire. “Just fun stuff. This is a way to get away from the rat race and relax.”

Quiet, restful weekends are sought by many visitors to Bastrop State Park, located in the Lost Pines, a 70-square-mile stand of loblolly pine and hardwoods some 100 miles from the East Texas Piney Woods. Stuart and girlfriend Jean McNutt, from Livingston, joined friends for a weekend in the Lost Pines Lodge, the largest of 13 cabins here, with four bedrooms, a large fireplace and a screened porch overlooking a pond.

“This one is hard to get,” Stuart says of the weekend availability of the cabin. “We had to book it 11 months in advance. But anything this fun is worth it.”

PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK

Kent and Marion Smith of Austin enjoy spending time outdoors with their three boys, ages 13, 9 and 7, but corralling the active bunch into a flimsy tent hasn't worked well. Instead, they often head to cabins at Bastrop, Brownwood State Park, the Lower Colorado River Authority's Oak Thicket Park on Lake Fayette, and most recently, Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

"You leave all the TV and video games behind, the kids play naturally together and everyone is content," says Kent. "It takes you back to when life was simple. Then, all kids had to play with were sticks and rocks and they were perfectly happy. Our kids are, too, when they're here." The Smiths researched state parks with cabins, and decided on the Palo Duro trip because the boys had never seen the Panhandle—and because there are only a handful of cabins.

"Once the lights go out at night, there aren't a lot of people around," Kent says. For millions of years, the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River has been carving Palo Duro Canyon, 120 miles long and up to 800 feet deep, making it the second largest canyon in the United States, behind only that Grand one out in Arizona. As the Smith boys clamber over the rocks and stage mock battles, they could be children of the Kiowa, Comanche or Cheyenne tribes that lived here several centuries before, or cowboys working the more than 100,000 cattle on Charles Goodnight and J.A. Adair's JA Ranch in the late 1800s.

Not only are there just seven cabins, counting four limited-service "Cow Camp" cabins, but their location below the edge of the canyon rim and the road affords additional privacy. Outside patios have a breathtaking view of the canyon, a view also visible through many of the cabin windows. The cabins have been modernized but retain a rustic feel reflecting their construction by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s. CCC workers created cabins and other structures all over Texas,



Stuart Umlauf and girlfriend Jean McNutt whip up a batch of gumbo in a Bastrop cabin.

including those still in use in Bastrop and 30 other Texas state parks. Thousands of Texans have enjoyed the fruits of the program, part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal for a Depression-racked nation.

"I enjoy the unique architecture of the CCC buildings," says Stuart Umlauf. "That program saved a lot of families from starving and left us with a wonderful legacy."

DAINGERFIELD STATE PARK

The dam creating 80-acre Lake Daingerfield in East Texas' Daingerfield State Park is part of the CCC legacy, as are its pair of two-bedroom cabins, a three-bedroom cabin and Bass Lodge, which has five bedrooms and two baths. These facilities, offering the option of togetherness or privacy, overlook the tree-lined lake, which offers fishing for crappie,

perch, catfish and bass.

Other diversions include swimming, boating, and 2½ miles of hiking trails through typical East Texas pines. Dogwoods, red buds and wisteria create a riot of spring color; sweetgum, oak and maple paint a fall palette.

SAN ANGELO STATE PARK

Fortunately, the state has added more cabins in the decades since the CCC

operated. Covered front porches of the six limited-use log cabins in San Angelo State Park overlook O.C. Fisher Lake and the sunrise. Located on the outskirts of San Angelo, the park is home to some members of the official state Longhorn herd, hiking and biking trails, and equestrian trails.

“Cabins are a great place to meet,” says Umlauf. “Even if it pours rain,

you just go inside and nap or play games. We’ll definitely be doing this again.” Roux and all.

DETAILS

For a full list of state park facilities with lodging, go to www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/parkinfo/facilities/. Park entrance fees may apply.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park, 11450 Park Road 5, Canyon, (806) 488-2227. Three cabins—Lighthouse, Goodnight and Sorenson—sleep four each. Heated and air conditioned, fireplace and indoor bathroom with shower. Microwave, coffee maker, mini-refrigerators. Outdoor grill and picnic tables. Linens, pillows and towels provided. Four Cow Camp Cabins offer two twin beds and a table and chairs but no towels or linens with restroom and showers across the road. Park museum and store. Old West Stables, Palo Duro Trading Post and “Texas” musical drama, all seasonal. Almost 40 miles of hiking trails and nearly 15 of equestrian trails. RV, tent, primitive and equestrian camping and limited-service cabins in the canyon.

Bastrop State Park, on Highway 21 east of Bastrop, (512) 321-2101. Cabin for two to eight people with furnished kitchens (no cooking or eating utensils), fireplaces and outdoor grills. Linens provided. Heating and air conditioning. The park has a swimming pool, golf course, canoe rentals, miles of trails, and a scenic drive also good for cycling.

Lake Daingerfield State Park, 455 Park Road 17, Daingerfield, (903) 645-2921. Cabins have stove, refrigerator, microwave, coffee pot but do not have ovens. There are two- and three-bedroom cabins, plus Bass Lodge. Any cabin reservation for a weekend must include both nights. Linens and towels furnished but not kitchen utensils. Year-round rental of pedal-boats, canoes, kayaks and flat-bottom boats.

San Angelo State Park, 3900-2 Mercedes Road, (325) 949-8935. Cabins are furnished with two bunk beds and one double in separate rooms. Linens not provided. Water and electricity, heating and air conditioning. No kitchens, but outdoor grills and picnic tables allow for cooking with a view. Restrooms and showers in the park.

Bastrop State Park is served by Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative. Daingerfield State Park is served by Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative.



Above: The Bastrop park’s cabins allow families to get away from the city without giving up all the conveniences. Sarah Kettleman reads while brother Ben and mother Sharon stand by a nice fire.

Below: At Palo Duro State Park, the cabins come with a spectacular view of the canyon.





A family reunion at Lake Brownwood allows, from left, Bryant Crumpton, Cameron Mestor and Zachary Crumpton to enjoy a dinner of hot dogs together.



TEXAS PARKS' BIG CABINS HOLD EVERYONE, AND THE KITCHEN SINK

Kids crowd around picnic tables on the outdoor patio, chowing down on burgers hot off the grill. Inside, grown-ups eat from heaping plates, occasionally getting up to chase a little one or to snag second helpings from the endless containers of food in the kitchen. The spacious room echoes with the clatter of utensils, murmur of conversation and occasional shrieks of delight. Several youngsters stand briefly mesmerized by a chocolate fountain on a counter.

Some 30 yards away at the waterline of Lake Brownwood, Ronnie Crumpton stands with his little boy, the former skipping rocks, the latter chunking them into the water. Charred bits of wood and a pile of ashes testify to last night's campfire.

Some 22 members of Crumpton's family have converged on the Beach Lodge in Lake Brownwood State Park, in from Plano, and Ruidoso and Hobbs, N.M., for one of their semi-annual gatherings.

"It's a central location for all of us, a great place to relax," says Ronnie, who with wife Stacy has four kids. "It's the only place I know of that holds so many people." The afternoon promises more fun and hanging out, followed by more food, another campfire and a friendly board game tournament.



Misty McDowra and Cody Petty had their wedding at Lake Brownwood. Todd Holubec's son Bo helps his dad with fishing bait at the lake.

Many families are scattered these days, and few have the luxury of the family ranch, beach house or mountain cabin at which to muster the troops. Cabins and lodges such as this one at Lake Brownwood fill the gap, serving as gathering places where youngsters can get to know their relatives; adult brothers and sisters can catch up; and everyone can relax and have the kind of experiences that bond families together like glue. Similar settings can be found at select parks and camps across the state.

The facilities at Lake Brownwood, constructed in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) of local timber and stone quarried nearby, range from cabins that sleep two to the Crumptions' choice, Beach Lodge, two dormitory wings with beds for 26 around a central kitchen and living area.

The same weekend, in the five-bedroom Fisherman's Lodge, Todd and Jennifer Holubec of Cedar Park and their two kids have met up with Jennifer's brother Scott and his wife, Carla, and their kids from College Station, along with parents and in-laws Mary and Richard Terry. Before noon, the gang is fishing and hiking; later there is a campfire and, of course, s'mores.

"We live all over and have to make an effort to get together," says Mary Terry, who lives in Houston. "The cabins are inexpensive and more central." Not to mention perhaps one of the most attractive features, that no one has to clean the house before and after hosting the relatives.

Brownwood also has a pavilion overlooking the lake, perfect for dances, family reunions and weddings. In fact, that same night, Misty McDowra married Cody Petty on the spacious patio in back, followed by a traditional reception inside. "We had our prom out here when I was a junior in high school," Misty says. "My husband was raised at the lake, and we lived on it in the summer growing up. It felt like home and a nice place to have a wedding.

"People have talked about the setting and how it was done, the building, and how pretty everything turned out. The building set the theme for our wedding." The 130 guests fit comfortably on the patio for the ceremony and inside for the reception. The Pettys held their rehearsal dinner there on Friday night, too.

"It was neat being out and away from everything, nobody around to bother you. It felt like we were out in the country. My grandparents stayed at

the park in their RV, and some friends of my parents stayed in cabins."

INDIAN LODGE

For some, the idea of gathering the relatives is appealing, but bunking with them might not be. Room for everyone but a bit more privacy, too, is possible at Indian Lodge in Davis Mountains State Park. Considered the crown jewel of CCC projects, the lodge resembles a Native American pueblo, multilevel white tiers in stark contrast to the rugged grassy slopes that surround it. Workers molded the adobe blocks on site. Renovations in 1967 and 2001 retained the original 18-inch adobe walls, ceilings of pine vigas, or beams, and almost 200 pieces of the original hand-carved cedar furniture.

Indian Lodge's 39 rooms can sleep some 128 of your closest aunts, uncles, cousins and other assorted friends and relatives, who can gather around a swimming pool that boasts the most beautiful view of any in the state, or in front of the lobby fireplace, under bird feeders on the stone terrace, or in the Black Bear Restaurant. The lodge does not have kitchen facilities, but Uncle Bob can toss burgers on the grill in the park's picnic areas. The gang can walk those burgers off on 9 miles of trails (plus 10 more in the Limpia Canyon

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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Primitive Area) through yucca-studded grasslands and up steep slopes to piñon and juniper around 6,000 feet. Two trails connect to Fort Davis National Historic Site.

LAKE HOUSTON PARK

Lodges at what is now Lake Houston Park, 30 miles north of Houston, were constructed for the Girl Scouts in the 1950s. A group of 40-something women who camped at Peach Creek Girl Scout Camp converge from all over the country to re-create those carefree days at Lazy Creek Lodge. They hold scavenger hunts, hike and tell ghost stories around the large fire pit, while the moon climbs the limbs of the tall pines that cover the park.

The scout camp, which played host to thousands of Houston-area girls in the 1960s and '70s, was sold to the State of Texas in 1990 and combined with additional land to form Lake Houston State Park, which opened in 1992. The park's pine woods, ponds, creek and San Jacinto River shoreline were transferred to the City of Houston in August 2006.

Thirteen bunks line the walls in the main room at Lake Houston's Lazy Creek Lodge, with two long tables in the middle and couches in front of a

large fireplace. Nearby Forest Cottage now hosts many a slumber party, with five bunk beds in the main room and a separate bedroom and half-bath where the grownups can hide out. The park has miles of hiking and equestrian trails, tent camping, and a nature center with exhibits and programs such as "Owl Prowls" and birding walks.

DEVILS RIVER STATE NATURAL AREA

A bit farther off the beaten path—22 miles of unpaved road, to be exact, off U.S. Highway 277 between Del Rio and Sonora—Devils River State Natural Area offers deeply quiet nights and severely clear skies. This is the place for quality time together with no distractions or interruptions.

The comfortable but no-frills Group Barracks, a former hunting camp, sleeps 10 in five separate bedrooms, with two bathrooms and a central room, outdoor covered deck and picnic table. Down the road 100 yards, the Group Kitchen's commercial-size stove and refrigerators make it easy to feed the whole family. The park is nearly 20,000 acres and 70 road miles from any kind of civilization, with 12 miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking, and a mile of

shoreline on the pristine Devils River, where catch-and-release fishing for smallmouth bass and swimming are allowed. Several of the springs that provide most of the river's flow gush from park river frontage.

Whether gathering the extended family or rounding up old friends, seeking a place to relax and do nothing, or for fun activities like hiking and fishing, park cabins and lodges are just the ticket. It's less expensive and more interesting than the typical hotel experience, and a darned sight easier than hosting the gang at home.

DETAILS

For reservations, call Texas Parks and Wildlife Department main reservation number (512) 389-8900. Linens and kitchen utensils not always provided. Park entrance fees may apply.

Lake Brownwood State Park, (325) 784-5223. Beach Lodge sleeps 26, two full baths, dining area, kitchen. Fisherman's Lodge sleeps 10, two baths and kitchen. Group Recreation Center or Clubhouse, day use only, kitchen, restrooms without showers. Cabins for two to four people also available.

Lake Houston Park, 22031 Baptist Encampment Road, New Caney, (281) 354-6881. Forest Cottage sleeps 12. Lazy Creek Cottage sleeps 26. Cleaning/security deposit required. Heat/air conditioning, kitchens and bathrooms with showers. Handicapped accessible.

Indian Lodge, Davis Mountains State Park, State Highway 118N and Park Road 3, Fort Davis, (432) 426-3254. Singles (one double) and standards (two doubles) available. One king bed, a two-room Executive Suite (two doubles and hide-a-bed), or two-room Junior Suites also available. Telephone, television, maid service. No smoking or pets. Restaurant open year-round, hours seasonal.

Devils River State Natural Area, Dolan Creek Road off U.S. Highway 277, 47 miles south of Sonora, (830) 395-2133. Carry out all trash. No ground fires. Group Barracks and Group Kitchen available. Catch-and-release fishing only. No pets.

Lake Brownwood State Park is served by Comanche Electric Cooperative. Devils River State Natural Area is served by Rio Grande Electric Cooperative.

Melissa Gaskill, who lives in Austin, frequently writes about travel.

The Davis Mountains State Park's Indian Lodge has 39 rooms and maid service but no kitchens.



SEVERE WEATHER! ARE YOU READY?

Lightning

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


Lightning Safety Rules:

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

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



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The truth is, I never wanted to move to Abilene. I just landed there by default after the 9/11 terrorist attacks pretty much obliterated my chances of getting in with a big metro newspaper in the fall of 2001.

I had just returned from more than a year in the Czech Republic when the New York towers got hit. And with the economy the way it was, any American with a job was a fortunate American. So when I got the offer to work at the Abilene newspaper, I put on a smile and headed to this town in the middle of nowhere that the young folks like to call “Drabilene.”

From the start, Abilene surprised me. Though I first visited after a snowstorm, and the roads were treacherous, my drive through town was pleasant. On the way downtown, I cruised up Sayles Boulevard, lined by grand older homes, and crossed the railroad tracks. There, I found a beautifully restored downtown with well-kept sidewalks, red brick buildings, parks and, despite the snow, a few pedestrians. The city center looked newer, shinier and more alive compared to some Texas cities of similar size.

I ended up living in Abilene for three years. I now view my time there as some of the best of my life.

Why?

Maybe I got a bang out of time travel. There were moments

the ashes, more than once. Two years after the fire, Abilene wrested the county seat from Buffalo Gap, a town to its south, paving the way for Abilene to become the commercial and cultural hub of a 17-county region.

Abilene took another blow with the 1980s oil bust, but a commitment to downtown revitalization brought Abilene back to life.

Preserved partly by remoteness—the city is 150 miles west of Dallas-Fort Worth—Abilene remains an authentic stronghold of rustic cowboy culture accented by a surprising splash of modern sophistication and appreciation for the arts. What was uncharted territory for settlers in the 19th century is now a new frontier, this time explored by travelers seeking both contemporary Texas culture and the last true remnants of a vanishing Old West.

Genuine and Beautiful

Dr. Donald Frazier, professor of history at McMurry University in Abilene, says Fort Worth is where the West begins, but Abilene is where the West keeps going.

“You get great big skies at night and real, live cowboys going to the restaurant with you, and their spurs are jingling,” Frazier says. “There’s a sincerity about what Abilene is. There’s no pretense of being something else.”

BY STACI SEMRAD • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER NICHOLS

ABILENE

in Abilene when it seemed I had beamed back to another dimension—1950s rural Texas. A farmer wearing overalls and a baseball cap would walk into some downtown café. A vintage Thunderbird would roar up to me at a stoplight. The “Chicken Dance” became one of my dancehall favorites.

I also appreciated the slower pace of life. Today, I most value the kind people and friendships I formed there. Abilene has no monopoly on friendliness but is indeed a friendlier place than most.

I also admire the tenacious spirit of Abilene. It knows all about resurrection, and not just because it has three private, religiously affiliated universities and numerous churches educating its population.

In August 1881, months after a town lot sale helped establish Abilene along a Texas & Pacific Railway route through West Texas, a fire destroyed much of the town’s new business district. The local newspaper editor, whose own facility was burned by the blaze, predicted that, “Phoenix-like,” the city would return.

Abilene and affected downtown businesses did rise from

That’s not to say the townspeople don’t work to impress their guests.

Crape myrtles greeting visitors around town are as colorful as the story behind them. In 1997, Abilene Clean and Proud committed to selling 5,000 of them to help beautify the city. Janet Ardoyno, who was involved with the project, got the idea to promote it by using a series of billboards that gave a new twist to an old saying: “Myrtle’s coming. Get your beds ready.”

Billboards went up, each with a silhouette of a fancy lady wearing a big hat. They were supposed to bear the project slogan, but the “s” was mistakenly left off of “beds” on each billboard, changing the slogan’s meaning just enough to stir an enormous controversy.

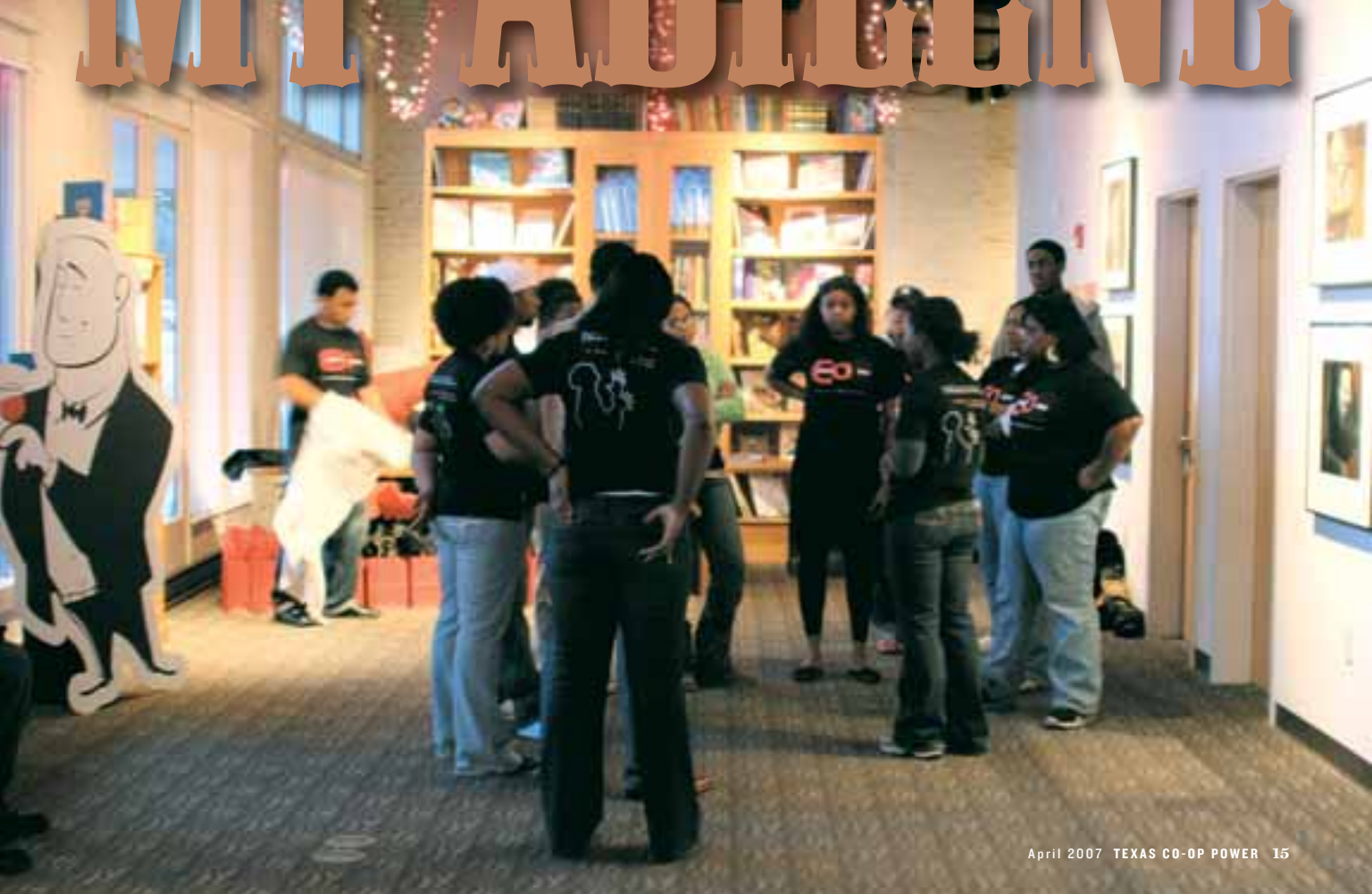
“That’s when this lady, so indignant, called the city manager and complained about the sexual connotations of this ad,” Ardoyno recalls.

Still, the beautification project caught on. That year, Abilene Clean and Proud sold more than 8,000 crape myrtles, far surpassing its goal and making a lasting mark on Abilene’s landscape.

OPPOSITE, TOP: In Abilene, where the Old West is still alive, seeing a four-legged conveyance downtown is not unusual.
BOTTOM: Youths gather at the National Center for Children’s Illustrated Literature in downtown Abilene.



MY ABILENE





Downtown Pizzazz

If you're passing through town on the highway, you might not think Abilene has any pizzazz. All of the major thoroughfares bypass the city center, which should not be missed. You'll realize you're downtown when you see a cluster of buildings, museums, shops and parking garages, one with a green dinosaur and orange car perched on the roof.

For a population of only some 114,000, Abilene boasts an impressive lineup of downtown museums. And the artists and their art aren't the high-falutin', inaccessible sort.

For the full artistic flavor of this town, plan your visit to coincide with ArtWalk, the second Thursday evening of each month, when most of the museums stay open late and offer free admission. People stroll through downtown, visiting shops, cafés and art studios or perhaps taking in a film at the historic and majestic Paramount Theatre. An assort-

ment of street performers and other characters liven the scene and may vary from artisans and dream interpreters to a one-man banjo band playing for tips.

Nearby Excursions

Artists and artisans also dwell in Buffalo Gap. I like to escape to this shady oasis to peruse its unique shops and art galleries. As in Abilene, the creators are often in plain sight—painting on canvasses, drawing with their pencils, shaping their clay, talking about what inspired each work and, of course, ringing up sales.

The Buffalo Gap Historic Village offers another chance for time travel and includes the first Taylor County courthouse and jail.

Also in Buffalo Gap is one of two Abilene-area restaurants standing out from the rest for regional fare. Aside from the obvious, the famous Perini Ranch Steakhouse dishes up delicious whiskey bread pudding.

FROM TOP: Strolling downtown, one might happen upon Candies by Vletas, or the dinosaur and VW 'Bug' perched atop the Grace Museum, or the historic Paramount Theatre, which offers live theater and films in a restored 1930 movie house.



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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Not far from Abilene, locals visit The Homeplace Restaurant in Tuscola for its pastoral setting and homestyle food. Here, you pass bowls of bread, salad and vegetables around the table to accompany the main course.

It's a fun place to go for dinner on the way to The Grand Ole Oplin, a Friday night dance at an old Oplin schoolhouse gym converted into a community center. A 25-minute drive if coming straight from Abilene, it's worth the trip for a wide range of folks who go there for country dancing and live music sans smoke or alcohol.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: In nearby Buffalo Gap, history comes alive at the Buffalo Gap Historic Village. Shopping in Abilene could include a visit to a gift store such as Civilization. The Warehouse Depot martini bar is inside a historic railroad structure downtown and is open only on Thursdays. Deep 'n The Heart restaurant serves up a rotating hot lunch menu every day in Buffalo Gap.

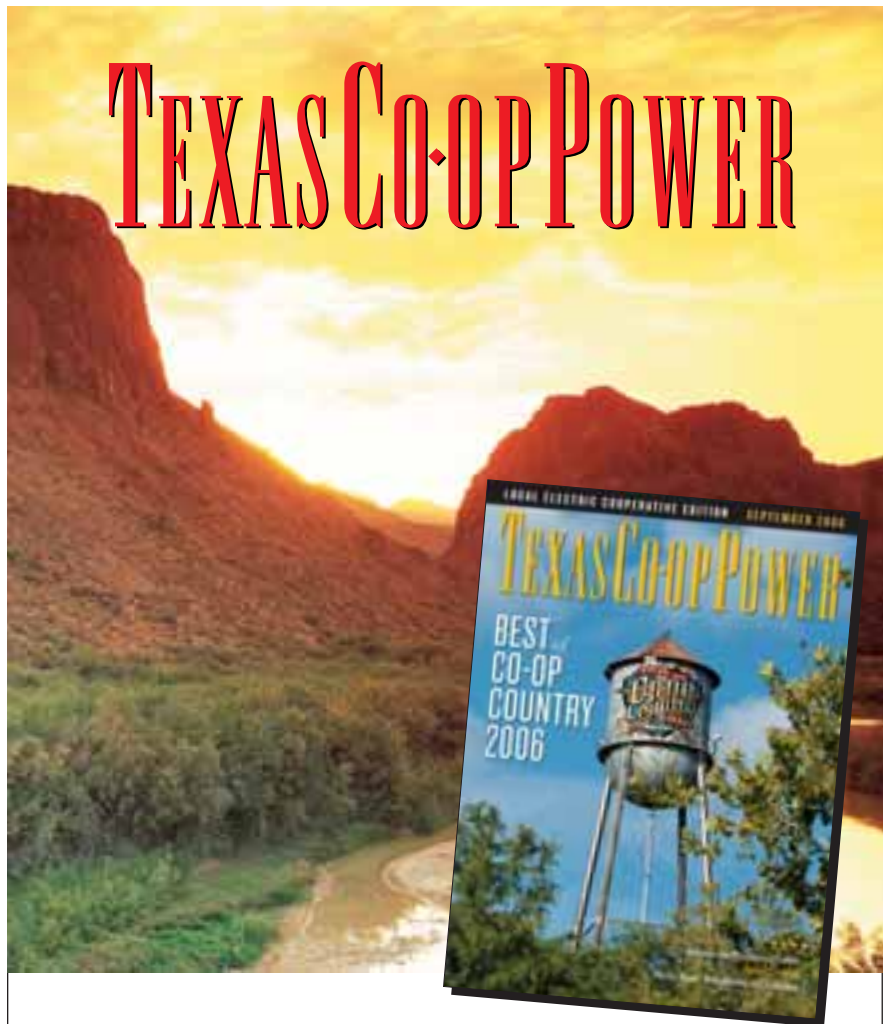


If you square dance, you can also kick up your heels at the Wagon Wheel dancehall back in Abilene, where the regulars gather every Saturday night. Otherwise, check out what's going on at the Expo Center of Taylor County, which holds fairs, rodeos, concerts and other events. Or see what's showing at the Town & Country Drive-In Theatre in Abilene.

Indeed, I found plenty to do in Abilene. Professional opportunities ultimately spurred me to Austin, but I now light up with excitement when preparing for visits back to Abilene and often find myself accidentally calling it "home."

For more information, contact the Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau in the restored T&P Depot, 1101 N. First St., at (325) 676-2556 or 1-800-727-7704.

Once a reporter for Abilene's daily newspaper, Staci Semrad is now an Austin-based freelance writer and member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



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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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Energy Tax Credits: The Debate Continues

DEAR JAMES: I heard about the new energy tax credits for improvements. How long are they effective, and what home items are covered? Also, will these credits save enough to make it worthwhile to make improvements?

—Paul N.

DEAR PAUL: You bring up a good point about the savings from energy tax credits. In my opinion, the credits are not large enough to provide a real incentive for someone to make energy-saving improvements, unless they were already planned.

One problem is people may not realize these are tax credits and not tax deductions. A tax credit actually reduces your tax bill by the total

amount of the credit. A tax deduction reduces just the taxable base, so the actual savings depend upon your specific tax bracket. In the 25 percent tax bracket, a \$500 tax credit is equivalent to \$2,000 in income. The tax credit amount is listed on line 52 of federal tax form 1040, and you must also complete tax form 5695 to calculate the tax credit.



Window upgrades will save more energy but will earn a smaller tax credit than some other improvements.

amount of the credit. A tax deduction reduces just the taxable base, so the actual savings depend upon your specific tax bracket. In the 25 percent tax bracket, a \$500 tax credit is equivalent to \$2,000 in income. The tax credit amount is listed on line 52 of federal tax form 1040, and you must also complete tax form 5695 to calculate the tax credit.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 covers most typical energy conservation improvements to your home. These include insulation, replacement win-

dows and improvements, doors, metal roofing, heating and cooling systems, water heaters and solar systems. In most cases, the improvements must meet the 2000 IECC (International Energy Conservation Code) specifications. Most contractors can advise you as to which products and improvements meet these specifications.

The Energy Act was enacted for only two years, so any energy-efficiency improvements must be installed before the end of 2007. With the recent changes in Congress, it is likely that the energy tax credits will be expanded and extended past 2007. These may provide greater incentives to make additional improvements. Using alternative fuels and heating provides the largest tax credit of 30 percent, up to a maximum of \$2,000. These include solar water heating and photovoltaics (solar cells) as well as fuel cells for producing your own electricity at home. For many homes, even with a \$2,000 tax credit, the economic payback for these alternative fuel improvements is a relatively long period. Solar water heating is the one exception where it is economically feasible for most homes.

Door improvements provide a higher maximum tax credit than replacement windows. In general, replacing windows will save more energy but is a more expensive improvement project. Installing efficient exterior doors and/or storm doors receives a credit of 10 percent of the costs, up to a \$500 maximum credit. Installing efficient windows, skylights and storm windows merits a \$200 maximum credit.

Installing a new heat pump (air-to-air or geothermal) provides up to a \$300 credit. Make sure the efficiencies (HSPF and SEER) of the heat pump you install are high enough to qualify for the tax credit.

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KEEPING 'HOME SWEET HOME' SAFE

For most people, the home is a place where friends and family can come together, rest and relax. However, if electrical appliances are not maintained or used properly, this safe haven can become dangerous in a matter of seconds.

Electrical appliances within the home are part of our everyday life—the toaster, heater, blow dryer, microwave,



television and computer. If these appliances are not maintained, stored or used properly, they can pose a serious safety hazard. Here are some safety precautions for electrical appliances in the home:

- Electrical appliances should not be used around water.
- When carrying appliances, they should be held by the handle, not the cord.
- Appliances that get hot such as heaters, toasters and light bulbs should be kept away from materials that can ignite and burn.
- Small appliances should be turned off or unplugged when not in use.
- If an appliance repeatedly blows a fuse, trips a circuit breaker or has given you a shock, unplug it and have the appliance repaired or replaced.

Reduce Hot Water Use for Energy Savings

You can lower your water heating costs by using and wasting less hot water in your home. Two of the best ways to conserve hot water are to fix leaks and install low-flow fixtures.

Fix Leaks

You can reduce hot water use by simply repairing leaks in faucets and showerheads or pipes. A hot water leak of one drip per second can cost \$1 per month in electricity to heat the water.

If your water heater's tank leaks, you need a new water heater.

Install Low-Flow Fixtures

Federal regulations mandate that new showerhead flow rates can't exceed more than 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm) at a water pressure of 80 pounds per square inch (psi). You can purchase quality, low-flow fixtures for about \$10 to \$20 apiece and achieve water savings of 25 to 60 percent.

SHOWERHEADS: For maximum water



efficiency, select a showerhead with a flow rate of less than 2.5 gpm. There are two basic types of low-flow showerheads: aerating and laminar-flow. Aerating showerheads mix air with water, forming a misty spray. Laminar-flow showerheads form individual streams of water. If you live in a humid climate, you might want to use a laminar-flow showerhead because it won't create as much steam and mois-

ture as an aerating one.

Here's a quick test to determine whether you should replace an older showerhead with a more efficient one:

- Place a bucket—marked in gallon increments—under your showerhead.
- Turn on the shower at the normal water pressure you use.
- Time how many seconds it takes to fill the bucket to the 1-gallon mark.

If it takes less than 20 seconds to reach the 1-gallon mark, you could benefit from a low-flow showerhead.

FAUCETS: The aerator—the screw-on tip of the faucet—ultimately determines the maximum flow rate of a faucet. Aerators are inexpensive to replace, and they can be one of the most cost-effective water conservation measures. For maximum water efficiency, purchase aerators that have flow rates of no more than 1.0 gpm. When replacing an aerator, bring the one you're replacing to the store with you to ensure a proper fit.

TURN IT OFF TO LOWER ELECTRIC BILL

In the average home, 40 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off.

Home electronic products use energy when they're off to power features such as clock displays and remote controls. Those that have earned the EnergyStar use as much as 50 percent less energy to perform these functions while providing the same performance at the same price as less-efficient models.



AT YOUR CO-OP ANNUAL MEETING, YOUR SAY COUNTS!

Wondering what that invitation to your electric cooperative's annual meeting is all about? This is a good year to find out.

When you signed up as a consumer of the electric cooperative, you automatically became a member and a part-owner of that utility. That's how cooperatives operate: Each consumer-member has a say in how the utility operates.

To make your voice heard, attend your cooperative's annual meeting this year. You'll hear the reports from co-op officials on how the business is doing.

You'll also get to elect the co-op's



board of directors. Only consumer-members are eligible to hold seats on the board of directors. So local people—not far-away stockholders—are running things at your community's utility.

So don't throw away that invitation. Save the date and become an important part of the utility that you and your neighbors own.

KATY

Such Hidden Gardens

*China's first emperor
slaughtered 1 in 5 of
his fellow citizens
and then built a clay
army to protect him
in the afterlife.*

by Spike Gillespie



You have to love a tour guide who, though you're sure he's given the same spiel fifty thousand times, is unwavering in his enthusiasm when it's your turn to check out what he's talking about. And so it was, on a blustery day on the prairies of Katy, a young guide name Josh did not come anywhere close to disappointing his small group of curious charges—a half-dozen Scots and a couple of Americans wanting to find out just what Forbidden Gardens is all about.

Protected from the chill wind by a hand-knit muffler and a red hoodie beneath his official shirt, Josh began to unravel the double mystery of this curious tourist attraction that covers nearly 70 acres just off Interstate Highway 10 on the outskirts of Houston. Walking gracefully backward along the stone wall of a pit filled with clay figures of ancient Chinese warriors, our young leader explained that in the third century BCE China was not a unified country until a great fighter named Qin Shi Huang came along, drove out the ruling Mongols, and formed a country over which he appointed himself the first emperor.

The emperor killed a lot of people in his day—1 in 5 of his fellow citizens—for a grand total of over a million and a half served up dead. Fearing the souls of these folks would unite and take him down in heaven, he devised a strategy to protect himself in the afterlife. He decided to bury thousands of soldiers alive so that they could travel with him to the great beyond and cover his back once they got there.

But then, rethinking this plan, Qin realized that killing his best warriors would leave no one on earth to defend his dynasty. Thus, Plan B came to pass: He would create an army of life-sized clay soldiers, no two alike, and bury these warriors at his tomb along with some clay horses and plenty of real weapons. The clay soldiers were left hollow, the theory being that souls could then inhabit the figures and bring them to life at the necessary moment.

In 1974, some Chinese farmers were digging a well near Xi'an when they accidentally discovered some of these faux fighters. To this day, the soldiers are still being excavated, in pieces and, unlike Humpty Dumpty, all these king's horses and all of his men are being put back together again.

Enter Ira Poon, a wealthy Hong Kong businessman who now lives in Seattle. He wanted to share this slice of Chinese history with the West. After ruling out popular tourist areas in New York, Florida and California as possible locations—even the deep-pocketed have limits on what they'll pay for real estate—Poon decided Katy would be the perfect place to re-create a miniature version of the emperor's palace, known as the Forbidden City in Beijing, as well as a copy of Qin's tomb and the pits of protectors. To the reported tune of \$20 million, Forbidden Gardens was built in 1997.

The pit Josh walks along is one of three packed with line after line of soldiers, some a full 6 feet tall, most done in one-third scale. At the back is a knoll repre-

senting the emperor's tomb, and in front of this knoll sits a statue of the man himself. The pits cover an area the equivalent of three football fields, with soldiers facing forward and back, just as they would have in real life to fend off both frontline attacks as well as ambushes from behind. Interestingly, Qin did not put his very best fighters in front. Instead he used the less dedicated conscripts, behind which stood the fiercest fighters. The strategy was that the opposing armies' best fighters would grow weary killing Qin's weakest lines and then themselves be killed by Qin's best, waiting patiently for this pleasure.

In addition to the main pit, which is most breathtaking for the sheer quantity of fighters it contains, two smaller pits hold plenty of interest as well. The smallest of the three contains only 68 figures—commanders at their post, surrounded by bodyguards. The other pit is filled with black- and gray-colored soldiers to represent a fire that was set in the actual pit in China during a raid in which the real weapons buried with the figures were stolen. The thieves set the place ablaze but, lacking forethought, shut the doors behind them when they left, extinguishing the fire and merely charring the figures.

Josh is a nonstop font of information, effortlessly spilling forth countless facts about the empire, which lasted for 500 years. Leading the group to another area, he reveals a pavilion where, under a massive sloping roof, a miniature replica of the Forbidden City stretches across 40,000 square feet (the real deal covered 7.8 million square feet).

From the entrance wall featuring five doorways (the center one was only ever used by the emperor except on his wedding day, when the empress, too, was allowed to use it) to the far-off Imperial Garden in the back, there are buildings great and small displaying how life was for the man, his family and their 10,000 servants. Peopled with tiny figurines, the little city appears vibrant, and you can almost imagine that if a prairie wind blew in hard enough, it would breathe life into the figures and they would scurry about.

*Call (281) 347-8000 or visit www.forbidden-gardens.com for more information.
Essayist Spike Gillespie lives in Austin.*



West Texas Wonder Years

*I didn't realize how
uneventful my life
had been until the
summer day that we
moved to Abilene.*

BY JACK GREAVES

I hope, dear reader, that you can recall a sparkling moment of life when everything and everyone seemed to shine in an especially wonderful light.

My wonder years were during fifth and sixth grades when I lived in a tiny, nondescript rent house in Abilene, circa 1957. That house was our 20th or 21st home since I started keeping track of the places we lived. Dad traveled with the oil companies, and Mom and I followed.

I kept to myself during those years, being the new kid at school and an only child at home. My experiences were pretty much limited to what I could do by myself. I got involved in baseball cards, comic books and toy soldiers.

I did all right with the moves, but I didn't realize how uneventful my life had been until the summer day that we moved to Abilene.

Before I had even gotten out of the car at 926 Albany Street, neighborhood children surrounded me. They ogled my stuff being unloaded onto the sidewalk, especially my three 4-foot stacks of comic books. Kids began asking my name, asking if I wanted to trade comics, asking if I had this or that and so on. I was an instant celebrity. When I brought out the big shoeboxes of baseball cards, my status was cemented as the most famous new kid of all time.

Incredibly, there were kids my age in nearly every house in that neighborhood. It was great. Soon, kids were coming over to see me every minute of the day. Ronnie wanted to play model cars. Eugene wanted to start up Monopoly. George wanted me to spend the night. The triplets wanted to trade comics. Charley wanted to take bikes to the creek and so on.

You may want to jump in here and ask, "OK, but what's so sparkingly special? Lots of us had nice neighbors." That's a fair question.

But hang on. There's more.

Because we had no air conditioning, we slept with windows wide open. Every morning just before dawn, a great, cavernous, roaring rumble enveloped our neighborhood. Real African lions were roaring and roaring.

It just so happened that the Abilene Zoo was in Fair Park, about a half-mile away. The lions would prowl their outdoor den waiting for the first meal of the day. By some trick of hill, valley and winding avenues, the deep growls carried to our house. Being slowly awakened by the faraway sound of the king of beasts, I tried to fathom the dark and distant roars signaling danger, flight and wildness. It's no

wonder the roar of the lions has stayed with me all these 50 years. To me, the lions were saying, "I'm here. I'm fearless. Bring on your demons. I will endure."

"OK," you may say, "that was special, even wonderful. But does that make a little hayseed West Texas town some sort of Camelot for kids?"

Well, there was a pretty good football team that played three blocks away in Fair Park. The stadium was close enough to hear the marching band play. Abilene High School didn't just have a good football team. AHS had the best team in Texas. AHS had the best team anywhere. In 1999 the *Dallas Morning News* decided that the AHS War Eagles of the late 1950s were the high school football "Team of the Century." The best team anywhere played right down the street from 926 Albany, between us and the lions.

My dad and I and some of my new friends would walk over to watch them clobber somebody. It got boring. During their four-year winning streak, they beat people by a total of 1,850 to 338, for a game average score of AHS 36, opponents 7. They used Coach Chuck Moser's "mud defense" that the pros picked up and turned into the "safety blitz."

Not impressed yet? Not wondrous enough? Well, how about this: Besides the pre-dawn roar of the lions and the best high school football team the world has ever known, there happened to be some rather fleet-footed individuals a mere 15 minutes away at Abilene Christian College, which was just past the high school, which was just past the lions.

These guys, coached by Oliver Jackson, were the talk of the whole world. They were Olympic champions. The ACC Wildcats sported track stars Bobby Morrow (often called the greatest sprinter of all time and winner of three gold medals and the first since Jesse Owens to do so), Bill Woodhouse (two-time national sprint champion) and Earl Young (Olympic gold medal winner). The *Dallas Morning News* designated the team "Sports Dynasty of the Century."

I would go down to the track and stand right next to them. Their golden silk uniforms would ripple in the summer breeze when they took off. They could run like the wind. I had heard that expression before, but suddenly, I knew what it meant.

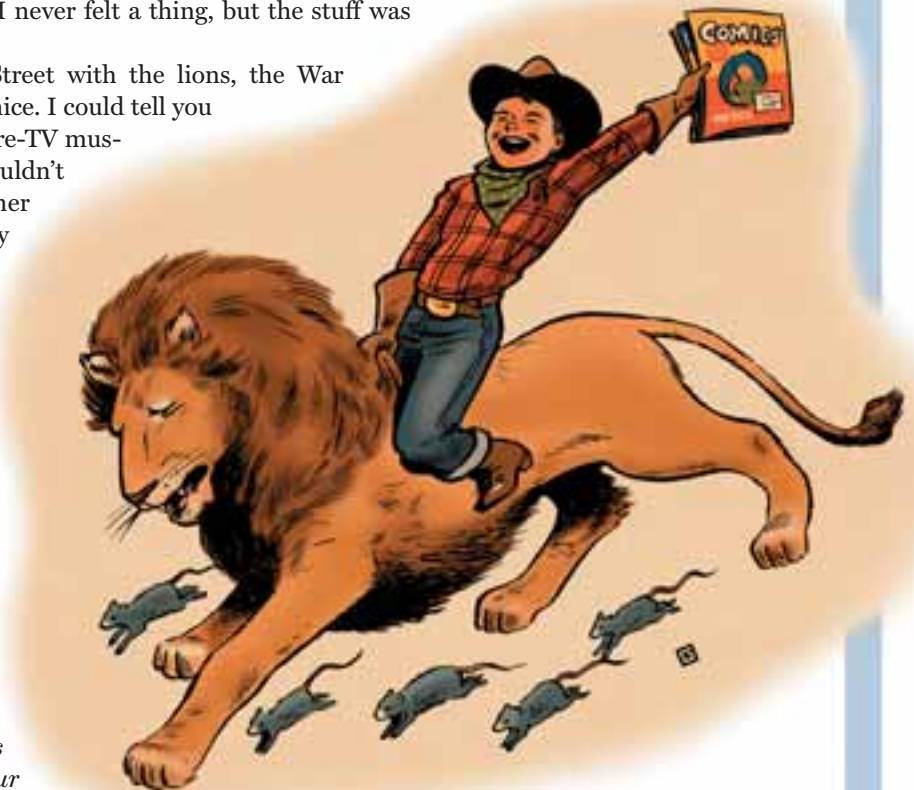
Next came the great mice infestation of the late '50s, which we kids thought was as cool as a science fiction movie. The mice were everywhere. You got to where you would hold your pop bottle up to the light to make sure there was not a mouse in it. We kids would bike along behind the little DDT trucks that sprayed down the alleys playing blizzard in the white smoke. I never felt a thing, but the stuff was murder on mice.

Things were never boring on Albany Street with the lions, the War Eagles, the Wildcats and those pesky little mice. I could tell you about the time that I met Jerry Lewis at a pre-TV muscular dystrophy tribute, but you probably wouldn't believe me. It was one sweltering summer night in the Hardin-Simmons University gym, and he literally broke down and cried so hard that he couldn't finish the show.

Then there was newcomer Bobby Darin at the brand new West Texas State Fair joking with us kids surrounding his little wood stage that "Mack the Knife" was supposed to be the "flip side" of his new record, and he had no idea that it would be a hit.

Just one more wonderful moment ... almost: Elvis came to Fair Park auditorium, right next to the lions, just a half mile from me, but I missed it. Oh, well, a kid can't have everything.

Jack Greaves is a high school writing and reading teacher in Fort Worth. He and his wife have a small hobby farm near Decatur and are members of Wise Electric Cooperative.



Dutch Oven Expertise

BY SHANNON OELRICH *Cowboy cooking, chuck wagon cooking, campfire cooking ... whatever you call it, it wouldn't be the same without that work-horse, the Dutch oven. Robb Walsh, restaurant critic for the Houston Press, explores the history and current state of this cuisine in his new book, The Texas Cowboy Cookbook: A History in Recipes and Photos (2007, Broadway Books). Like his previous books, Legends of Texas Barbecue and The Tex-Mex Cookbook, this one takes the reader into the heart of cowboy cooking with research, interviews, recipes, old photos and plenty of humor.*

In the following excerpt from the book, Walsh meets Brad Whitfield, award-winning chuck wagon cook for the Long X Ranch in West Texas. For those of you who want to try your hand at sourdough biscuit making, we've included two recipes for Sourdough Starter and one for Sourdough Biscuits, also from the book.

"When I started entering chuck

wagon competitions, I was just in it for the beer drinking," Brad Whitfield told me while he cut sourdough biscuits with a well-floured topless and bottomless tin can. He crowded the biscuits in the bottom of a Dutch oven.

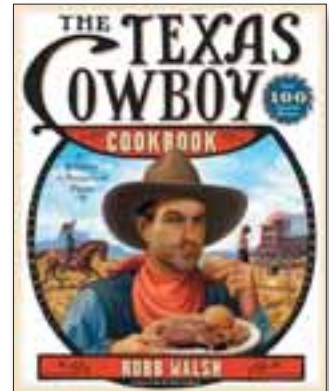
About his recipe, Whitfield said, "I mix sourdough starter, flour, salt, and sugar, and then I add a little baking soda for insurance. I never measure anything. It comes out different every time. I've been competing for six or seven years. But I won the bread-baking category in Fort Worth, Midland, and Lubbock—so now I'm stuck with cooking all the time," he moaned. "I'd rather be out punching cows."

J. Frank Dobie observed that South Texas cowboys hardly ever saw sourdough bread. "Yaller bread" was the catch-all phrase English-speaking cowboys used to describe the corn bread, corn dodgers, and hoecakes they ate in East and South Texas.

Sourdough baking is a West Texas phenomenon, according to historians.

It developed on the High Plains during the era of chuck wagons and trail drives after the Civil War, which is why it is such an important part of the chuck wagon cooking contests and demonstrations that have become popular there. The Western heritage movement sparked a revival in old-fashioned sourdough baking.

That's why sourdough is also on the menu at historic West Texas ranches like the Long X during deer hunting season, when the hunting camp is full. Hunters pay top dollar to come and hunt on the Long X, and the food is part of the appeal. Whitfield cooks for the gang from a chuck wagon that is set up in the center



of the hunting lodge area.

When his biscuits had risen enough to bake, he got a shovelful of hot coals from the fire and put them in a pile on the dirt. I asked him about his Dutch oven as he lowered it onto the coals. "I keep mine slick as glass," he told me. "When I start one out, I put Crisco on it in between uses. When you're done baking in it, you just wipe it out and grease it up heavy."

Whitfield got a second shovel load and poured it on top. The dish-shaped lid of a Dutch oven is designed to hold hot coals—with heat coming from both above and below, you can achieve the even heat required for baking. But the lid is on a swivel handle, so it has a tendency to tip to one side and dump the coals into the food. The trick to baking in a Dutch oven is in handling the pot hook. A pot hook is a metal rod with a hook designed to lift the lid of the Dutch oven.

I asked Whitfield if he ever dumps the coals onto the biscuits. "Yeah, I do," he admitted. "And any sumbitch who tells you he never has is a damn liar. I made my own pot hook in a forge. It's short and it has a thumb depression that fits me. But that lid still gets away sometimes."

The problem with baking in a Dutch oven, Whitfield confided, is that the bottom of the pot, which is sitting directly on the coals, bakes a lot hotter than the top. When he detected a strong bread yeast smell, he moved the pot off the bottom coals. "You got to let the top of the biscuits catch up to the bottom," he said, adding more hot coals to the lid.

We stood waiting for the biscuits to be done—the temptation is to lift the



lid and take a peek. But Whitfield was waiting for a telltale toasty smell. I suspect he was also looking at his watch. Finally he took off his cowboy hat and used it to fan the coals on the Dutch oven lid. "We need to turn this oven up a little," he said.

Then he expertly removed the lid. His crusty, yeasty sourdough biscuits were the best I had ever tasted.

SOURDOUGH STARTER NO. 1 "YOGI"

- 2 cups lukewarm water (100° F)
- 1/3 cup plain yogurt
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, plus 1 cup to feed starter
- 1/4 cup dry milk powder

Whisk together the water and yogurt, then add the 2 cups flour and the dry milk powder, blending until smooth. Transfer the mixture to a 1-quart glass jar, ceramic crock or plastic container. Cover with a double thickness of cheesecloth and let stand in a draft-free spot indoors for 48 hours. When it bubbles and a gray or yellow liquid forms on the top, stir it back in. (If the liquid is red or green, throw the starter away and start over.)

After stirring back the liquid for 2 days, add 1 cup flour to feed the starter.

FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

Author Robb Walsh made many batches of starter for this cookbook. He found that the easiest thing to do was mix flour and water together and set it outside in his backyard in Houston on a warm day (above 80° F). He quotes John O. West, from *Collection of Texas Folklore*: "The air is full of yeast, we refrigerate to keep yeast from spoiling our foods. To get a starter, mix equal amounts flour and water to a soft paste and set in the sun in hot weather, and it will soon begin to ferment and rise." Walsh had to scrap a batch one day when he heard the mosquito truck rumbling down his street, but mostly he's had good luck with this method.

SOURDOUGH STARTER NO. 2 "CHEATER"

If you are impatient, or you have no fermentation after 2 days, be a "Cheater" and add a pinch of active dry yeast on the second day.

Sourdough is notoriously stubborn when it comes to rising. Every cook-off contestant we've met adds yeast or baking powder or both to speed things up. If you want to be a purist and see what it's like to use nothing but sourdough for leavening, you will need to allow as much as an entire day of rising time. If the temperature outside is higher than 70° F, put the sourdough outside to rise with a clean kitchen towel over the top of the bowl or loaf pan to keep the flies away.

SOURDOUGH BISCUITS

- 3 cups sourdough starter
- 1 tablespoon active dry yeast (optional)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 5 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted

Lightly grease a Dutch oven or cookie sheet.

In a large mixing bowl, stir together the starter and dry yeast (if using) and let them sit for 5 minutes. Add the sugar, baking powder, salt and oil and mix well. Add the flour, 1 cup at a time, and mix until the dough becomes too stiff to stir. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and sprinkle some flour on top. Roll it out until it is about 1/2-inch thick. Using a circular cookie cutter, tin can with both ends removed, or a water glass, cut circles from the dough and place them on the bottom of the Dutch oven or cookie sheet. Brush the tops with the melted butter and cover with a cotton cloth.

Set the biscuits aside and allow them to rise until they double in size.

Preheat the oven to 325° F.

Bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Allow to cool for a few minutes; serve when they don't burn your fingers. Makes 12 to 15.

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1st

CAROLYN CHANDLER *Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Cashew Chicken**

We got a number of great recipes from members of Dutch oven groups. (Carolyn Chandler is member of the Toledo Bend Dutch Oven Society.) These groups focus on “fun, food and fellowship” with gatherings around the state. If you’d like to find out more, you can visit the Lone Star Dutch Oven Society online at www.lsdos.com to find a chapter near you.

CASHEW CHICKEN

- 2 tablespoons oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 2-3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 3 carrots, sliced
- 4 stalks celery, sliced
- 1½ cups cashews
- ¾ cup water (divided)
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup vinegar
- 1 can (20 ounces) chunk pineapple
- 3 tablespoons ketchup
- 4 tablespoons cornstarch

Pour oil in Dutch oven and place over medium-high heat on your stovetop. Add

onion and bell pepper, stir and cook about 2 minutes. Add chicken, carrots, celery and cashews. Reduce heat to medium and cook for 15-20 minutes, stirring often. Add ¼ cup water, if needed.

In medium bowl, mix ½ cup water, sugar, vinegar, pineapple (including juice), ketchup and cornstarch. Add to chicken and bring to a boil, stirring well. Cook another 20-30 minutes. Serve over rice. Serves 4-6.

Cook’s Tip: Cashew Chicken can be made on the stovetop or in the oven, but to make it on a campout, set your Dutch oven on top of six coals and put 18-22

coals on top. Remove the lid carefully when stirring so no ash falls into the dish.

Serving size: 1 breast with sauce. Per serving: 685 calories, 59 g protein, 21 g fat, 73 g carbohydrates, 288 mg sodium, 132 mg cholesterol

TEXAS CAVIAR CASSEROLE

- 2 pounds lean ground beef
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 can (15 ounces) jalapeño black-eyed peas, drained
- 1 can (10 ounces) Ro-Tel tomatoes and green chilies
- 1 can cream of chicken soup (undiluted)
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup (undiluted)
- 1 can (10 ounces) enchilada sauce
- 1 teaspoon liquid hot pepper sauce
- 1 bag (13.5 ounces) Nacho Cheese Doritos, crumbled
- 4 cups “Mexican Four-Cheese” shredded cheese

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HOME COOKING

In skillet over medium-high heat, sauté ground beef, onion and garlic until lightly browned, stirring to crumble.

Drain beef, if desired. Stir in remaining ingredients, except Doritos and cheese.

In 12-inch Dutch oven, place alternating layers of meat, cheese and Doritos until all is used. Bake in 350-degree oven for 35 minutes or until bubbly. Serves 8-10.

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 741 calories, 33 g protein, 52 g fat, 36 g carbohydrates, 1,269 mg sodium, 124 mg cholesterol

DAVE AND SHELAH COLE

Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative

DUTCH OVEN PINEAPPLE UPSIDE-DOWN SPICE CAKE

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons orange marmalade
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 can (20 ounces) pineapple slices
- 16 maraschino cherry halves
- 1 box Duncan Hines spice cake mix, plus ingredients required on box

Preheat Dutch oven in your oven at 350 degrees. Drain juice from can pineapple and reserve 1/4 cup juice. Take hot Dutch oven out and melt butter in it. Stir in sugar, marmalade and reserved juice.

Arrange pineapple slices and cherries on bottom of Dutch oven. In medium bowl, make cake mix according to package directions. Pour batter into Dutch oven. Bake 40 minutes, until toothpick inserted into center of cake comes out clean.

Run knife around the edge of cake to loosen from oven and invert onto serving platter or lid. Serves 8-10.

Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 304 calories, 3 g protein, 13 g fat, 46 g carbohydrates, 280 mg sodium, 44 mg cholesterol

LIZ LOCKHART

Upshur-Rural Electric Cooperative

RECIPE CONTEST

The August recipe topic is **HOMETOWN WINNERS**. Have you ever won a prize, ribbon or other recognition for an original recipe? Would you be willing to share it with us? (Please be sure the rules of the original contest allow you to publish your recipe.) Send your winning recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6254 or e-mail them to recipes@texas-ec.org. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The deadline is April 15. The top winner will receive a tin filled with Pioneer products. Runners-up will also receive a prize.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

3rd Annual Holiday Recipe Contest

\$5,000 in Total Prizes!

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GRAND-PRIZE WINNER TAKES HOME \$3,000. FOUR RUNNERS-UP WILL EACH WIN \$500.

Once again, we're looking for the best original recipes from your holiday celebrations. All recipes must include a Pioneer product such as Pioneer Brand Flour, Pioneer Brand Gravy Mixes or the new Pioneer Brand Microwaveable Country Gravies, Pioneer Brand Biscuit & Baking Mixes, or Pioneer Brand Pancake Mixes. Winners will be announced in our December issue.

Up to three entries are allowed per person. Each should be submitted on a separate piece of paper. Entries MUST include your name, address and phone number, plus the name of your electric cooperative, or they will be disqualified. All entries must be postmarked by September 10, 2007. Send entries to: Holiday Recipe Contest, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, or fax to (512) 486-6254. To enter by e-mail (recipes@texas-ec.org), you must include "Holiday Recipe Contest" in the subject line and submit one recipe per e-mail (no attachments). For official rules, visit www.texascoopower.com or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.

ONLY CRACKPOTS TAKE SHOTS

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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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- 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.

Enjoy your sport, but be a responsible hunter. Teach your children to respect power lines, electrical equipment and guns so that they, too, will be responsible hunters.



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Texas' Second President: History's Second Fiddle

BY JUDY ALTER

Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar probably deserves better from history than he gets.

Lamar was the first vice president and the second president of the Republic of Texas. A poet who was passionate about education, he is known as the "Father of Texas Education" and the "Poet President."

While president, he moved the government from Houston to Austin because he believed the Republic's capital should be more centrally located. During his term, Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Great Britain diplomatically recognized the Republic of Texas, and the Texas Congress passed a law benefiting schools and universities by setting aside land that could be sold only if the profits went to public education.

As president, Lamar also experienced failure. He never "solved the Indian problem," and the Comanche continued to raid settlements. Lamar was responsible for a battle in Van Zandt County in which many peaceful Cherokee died, including Sam Houston's good friend Chief Bowl. Desperate for money for his debt-ridden government, Lamar decided to annex the settlements around Santa Fe and Taos, in present New Mexico. He sent an expedition to Santa Fe in 1841, but Mexican troops captured all 275 soldiers and volunteers, marched them to Mexico City, and imprisoned them. History, as it often does, has taken note more of his failures than his successes.

History has also left Lamar overshadowed by Sam Houston, once his colleague and finally his archenemy. Houston was colorful and often loud; Lamar was quiet and soft-spoken. Houston dressed flamboyantly in moccasins and buckskins; Lamar was always carefully dressed, although he was known for baggy pants.

The two men became comrades when Lamar joined the Texas army as a private. A native of Georgia, he first visited Texas in 1835, when revolt against Mexico was brewing. His friend James W. Fannin urged him to travel around the territory, collecting letters, stories and official documents. Lamar meant to write an official history of Texas, but he never completed it. His notes, known as the "Lamar Papers," are in the Texas State Library, where they are valuable to scholars.

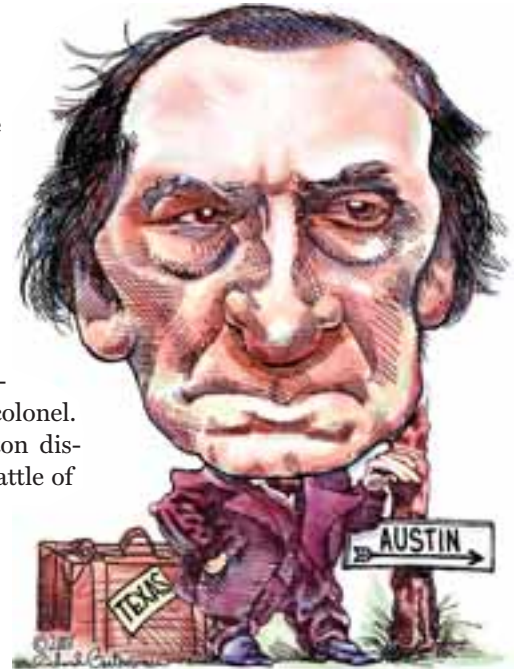
Lamar decided to move to Texas and returned to Georgia to put his affairs in order, but when he heard of the massacres at the Alamo and Goliad, where his good friend Fannin died, he returned to Texas so fast that he rode his horse to death and had to finish the trip on foot. Lamar found Houston's troops at Groce's Ferry (outside present-day Houston) where they were training for battle. He so impressed Houston with his bravery, rescuing a young sol-

dier about to be killed by Mexicans and rushing a crowd of Mexican soldiers surrounding Texas Secretary of War Thomas Rusk, that Houston promoted him to full colonel. Lamar and Houston disagreed after the Battle of San Jacinto and capture of Santa Anna. Houston believed Santa Anna was more valuable to Texas alive than dead; Lamar thought he should be executed on the spot. Houston prevailed.

In September 1836, Houston was elected president of the Republic and Lamar vice president. Houston favored statehood; Lamar did not. Houston, who had lived with the Cherokee, fought for recognition of the Indians' rights to land in East Texas granted them by Mexico; Lamar believed the Indians had no rights.

According to the Constitution, Houston could not succeed himself after his first term. When Lamar announced his candidacy, Houston endorsed other candidates, two of whom died before the balloting. Desperately, at the last minute, Houston endorsed a candidate unknown to the voting public. By then, although Houston was personally popular, his policies had lost favor, and Lamar won the election. At Lamar's inauguration, Houston spoke for over three hours, praising his own accomplishments. Lamar left in disgust, and an aide read his remarks. Lamar later delivered them personally to the Texas Congress.

When Houston was again elected president in 1848, Lamar retired. Long a widower, he traveled to Georgia with his daughter, Rebecca Ann, who died the following summer. He published his poetry in a book titled *Verse Memorials*, and the most poignant poems are elegies to his wife and daughter.



Judy Alter received the 2005 Owen Wister Award for Lifetime Achievement from Western Writers of America. She is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.

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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INSPIRATIONAL

This month's topic prompted readers to share with us the many ways they find inspiration, from quiet solitude to patriotic gestures, religious symbols and heroics of the spirit. It was tough selecting winners from the great number of entries we received. One thing is certain: Inspiration is in the heart of the beholder.

◀ **Michele Jones**, a member of Cherokee Electric Cooperative, named this photo of her 2-year-old daughter, **Zoe**, "A Walk in the Clouds." It was Zoe's first trip to the beach.

▼ **Carole Waina**, a member of Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative, took this photo of her 6-year-old grandson, **Ethan**. Carole was inspired by Ethan's quiet concentration as he sketched the water, rocks and plants he saw during an outing at the Dallas Arboretum.



▼ **Jared Vollstedt** and his Cub Scout pack went to Fort Sam Houston last Memorial Day to place flags on soldiers' graves. His mother, **Elizabeth Vollstedt**, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, wrote, "As he placed his last flag, Jared felt that it was fitting to salute the gravesite of that service person. I am very proud of his respect for those who serve our country."



▲ **Vicki Patterson** of San Patricio Electric Cooperative sent this photograph of her 3-year-old granddaughter, **Alannah**, with her dad, **Trent Widener**, on the day he returned home from a tour of duty in Kuwait. Alannah's mom, **Cindi Widener**, took the photo in the family dining room.

▼ Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Gretchen Willard** calls this photo of her preemie daughter, **Destinee**, "I Am Strong, I Will Survive." Destinee, now a healthy 5-year-old, was born at 26 weeks and weighed 1 pound, 10½ ounces.



INVENTIONS is the topic for our **JUNE 2007** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Inventions, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before **April 10**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. 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.)

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
June	Inventions	Apr 10
July	Brothers	May 10
August	Off to the Races	June 10
Sept	Birdhouses	July 10
Oct	Hats and Caps	Aug 10
Nov	Hunting with a Camera	Sep 10

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

APRIL

07 BULVERDE
Easter Egg Hunt,
(830) 980-2813,
www.redroofchurch.com

GRAND PRAIRIE
Easter Egg Hunt,
(972) 237-8100

HONDO Old Iron Trail
Ride & Benefit,
(830) 741-8922

LAMPASAS Bloomin'
Fest, (512) 556-5172

VICTORIA Easter Egg
Roll, (281) 343-0218,
www.georgeranch.org

13 ABILENE [13-14]
Founder's Day Festival,
(325) 676-3775

COLEMAN [13-15] Flea
Market & Pet Adoption,
(325) 625-4724, www
.humansocietycc.com

13 COMANCHE [13-14]
Farm Ranch Dairy Day,
(325) 356-2558

LOCKHART [13-14]
Spring Crafts & Outdoor
Show, (512) 398-2818,
www.lockhartchamber.com

POTEET [13-15]
Strawberry Festival,
1-888-742-8144

STEPHENVILLE [13-14]
Texas State Gospel
Singing Convention,
(254) 965-3078

14 ANDERSON [14-15]
Circle Seven Trail Riders,
(936) 873-2257

CHAPPELL HILL [14-15]
Bluebonnet Festival,
1-888-273-6426,
www.brenhamtexas.com

CORSICANA
Concerts for Charities,
(903) 872-8226

HUNTSVILLE Herb
Festival, (936) 436-1017

14 NACOGDOCHES
Americana Music Fest,
(936) 564-7351,
www.visitnacogdoches.org

STEPHENVILLE
Museum Native Plant
Fair, (254) 968-5275

STONEWALL
Pedal Power Wildflower
Benefit Ride, (512) 756-
2607, www.hccac.org

UTOPIA Lions Club
Auction, (830) 966-2465

19 BRYAN [19-22] Brazos
Valley Senior Games,
(979) 822-4659,
www.bvsrgames.org

20 BURTON
Cotton Gin Festival,
(979) 289-3378,
www.cottonginmuseum.org

CARTHAGE [20-21]
Piney Woods Quilt
Festival, (903) 693-4403

20 CLEBURNE [20-22]
Antique Alley & Yard
Sale, (817) 641-8057,
www.alley.cleburne.com

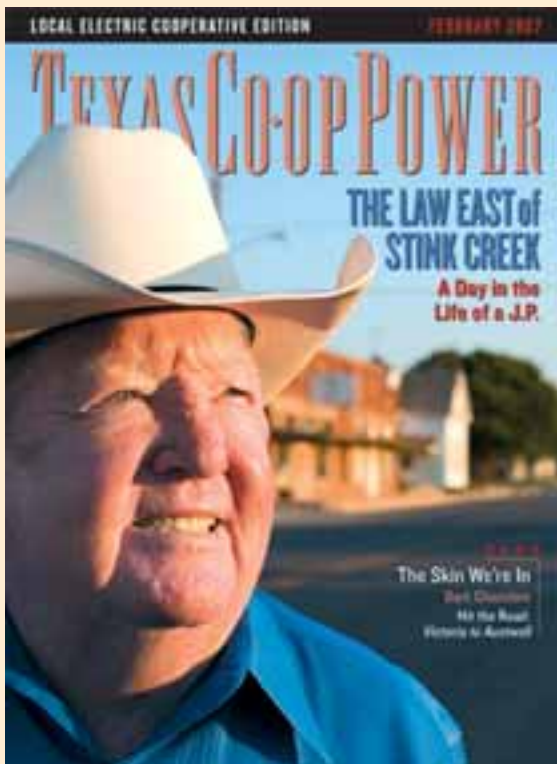
DECATUR [20-22]
Spring Heritage Trail
Ride, (940) 577-0272

DENTON North Texas
Book Festival, (940)
464-3368, www.ntbf.org

DRIPPING SPRINGS
[20-22] Founder's Day
Festival, (512) 858-7725,
www.foundersdayfestival
.com

HARLINGEN [20-22]
Riofest, 1-800-746-3378,
www.riofest.com

HUNTSVILLE [20-22]
General Sam Houston
Folk Festival, (936) 294-
1832, www.samhouston
.memorial.museum



TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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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.

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

20 LITTLEFIELD [20-22]
Bluegrass Festival,
(806) 385-3870,
www.littlefieldchamber.org

SAN ANGELO [20-22]
Texas Mesquite Arts
Festival, (325) 651-8831

TERRELL [20-22]
Heritage Jubilee,
(972) 563-5703,
www.terrelltexas.com

21 ALBANY WRM Arts
Roundup, (325) 762-
2525

ANDICE Crafters Fair,
(254) 793-9438

BROOKSHIRE
SpringFest Fundraiser,
(281) 375-5683

CANYON LAKE Blood
Drive, 1-800-528-2104

COLLEGE STATION
Starlight Music Series,
(979) 764-3486,
www.cstx.gov

21 LIVINGSTON
Piecemakers Quilt Guild
Show, (936) 563-4580

22 BRENHAM
Children's Chorus
Spring Concert,
(979) 277-6540,
www.brenhamchildrens
chorus.org

27 BROWNWOOD
Heart of Texas Wings
Rally, (325) 382-4469

GOLDTHWAITE [27-28]
Barbecue Goat Cook-Off,
(325) 648-3619,
www.goldthwaite.biz

LAGO VISTA [27-30]
Songbird Festival,
(512) 965-2473

LINDEN [27-29]
Wildflower Trails of Texas
Festival, (903) 796-3003,
www.lindenwildflower
trails.com

27 LUBBOCK [27-28]
Choral Scholarship
Concert, (806) 792-9220,
www.lubbockchorale.org

MERIDIAN [27-28]
County Wide Garage
Sale, (254) 435-2331

MUENSTER [27-29]
Germanfest,
1-800-942-8037,
www.germanfest.net

28 GEORGETOWN [28-29]
Red Poppy Festival,
1-800-436-8698,
www.redpoppyfestival.com

GONZALES
Springfest,
(830) 672-2815

PORT ARANSAS
Adopt a Beach Cleanup,
(361) 749-0425

29 BELLVILLE
Fruehling Saengerfest,
(979) 865-3407,
www.bellville.com

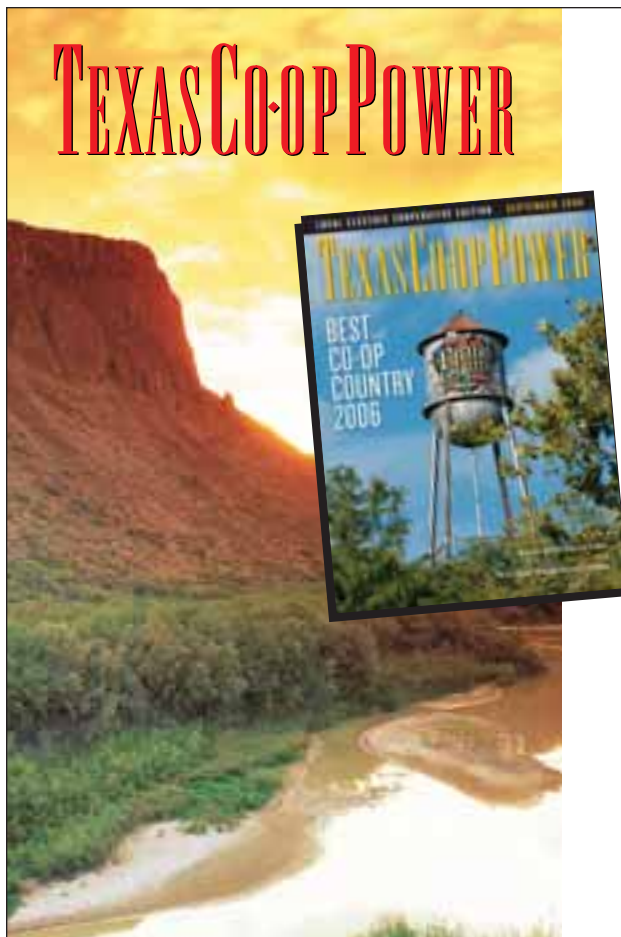
MAY

03 GAINESVILLE [3-5]
Spring Fling & Rodeo,
(940) 668-4533

05 HUNTSVILLE
Airing of the Quilts Show,
(936) 294-0212, www.tall
pinesquiltguild.com

BRENHAM Ice Cream
Festival, (979) 836-3339,
www.downtownbrenham
.com

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 June by Apr 10. Events are listed according to space available; see the full listing at www.texascoopower.com. We appreciate photos with credits but regret that they cannot be returned.



SHARE THE POWER!

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

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

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In the upper reaches of the Piney Woods that unfurl themselves across East Texas, there lies a pocket of landscape that helped shape Texas' fate for much of the 20th century. Thanks to the discovery of oil at the dawn of the 1930s, tiny hamlets in Gregg, Rusk and Upshur counties—places nobody had ever heard of—grew overnight from a couple hundred people to boomtowns with populations in the thousands. While the rest of the nation suffered during the Great Depression, empires were built on the riches drilled in places such as Gladewater, Kilgore and Henderson. In downtown Kilgore, where some 1,200 oil derricks represented a fortune forest, you'll find the World's Richest Acre, a city block that sprouted many of the rigs.

Wander through these woody environs, taking an easy drive from Gladewater along U.S. Highway 80 to Texas Highway 42, and following that highway south to Kilgore, then U.S. Highway 259 to Henderson. It's a little more than 30 miles, but if you love history like I do, you can easily stretch that journey over a weekend.

GLADEWATER

Even on a speedy spin through town, you'll quickly figure out how this place gained its designation as the Antiques Capital of East Texas. But take it easy, soak up the yesteryear pace and let the well-stocked shops—mostly placed along Main Street, as well as on Commerce and Pacific avenues—pull you back into another age. More than 200 vendors offer goodies from the olden days as well as a smattering of contemporary home décor. I like to give my sweet tooth a treat at the **GLORY BEE BAKING COMPANY**, home to famous brownies and the Gusherville Pie, a two-pound creation incorporating chocolate chips, pecans and sticky nougat. Be sure to snap a pic of **OLD SNAVELY NO. 1**, a replica derrick that honors the 1931 oil boom, smack in the middle of downtown.

Gladewater Chamber of Commerce, 215 N. Main

GLADEWATER to HENDERSON

*Former East Texas oil boomtowns
yield a gusher of tourist possibilities*

BY JUNE NAYLOR



St., Gladewater; (903) 845-5501; www.gladewaterchamber.com

Glory Bee Baking Company, 111 N. Main St., Gladewater, (903) 845-2448

KILGORE

To give youngsters some perspective on what life was like during the oil boom days, take them to the **EAST TEXAS OIL MUSEUM**. Inside, you'll find a re-created 1930s boomtown scene, complete with a rutted, muddy street and functioning drugstore soda fountain. A block away is my favorite site, the **RANGERETTE SHOWCASE**, a museum honoring the first-ever precision dance team and pride of Kilgore College. Since 1940, the Rangerettes have been the "sweethearts of the nation's gridiron," with their red lips and shirts, short blue

skirts and white hats and boots. Don't leave town without stopping for a platter of pork ribs at the **COUNTRY TAVERN**, an unpretentious honky-tonk with a loyal following.

Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, 813 North Kilgore St., Kilgore; (903) 984-5022 or 1-866-984-0400; www.kilgorechamber.com

East Texas Oil Museum, U.S. 259 at Ross St., Kilgore; (903) 983-8295; www.easttexasoilmuseum.com

Rangerette Showcase, Kilgore College, 1100 Broadway St., Kilgore; (903) 983-8265; www.rangerette.com

Country Tavern, Texas 31 at Farm Road 2767, Kilgore; (903) 984-9954

HENDERSON

One of the most inexcusably overlooked towns in East Texas, Henderson (headquarters of Rusk County Electric Cooperative), boasts a 13-block nationally recorded historic district. Grab a map from the chamber and take the downtown walking tour, stopping to admire the recently restored **HENDERSON OPERA HOUSE** that serves as home to the Henderson Civic Theatre. You should also take note of the Depot Museum, which stages the enormously popular **HERITAGE SYRUP FESTIVAL** on the first weekend in November. Year-round, I like visiting

JORDAN'S PLANT FARM to survey the 100 varieties of bedding plants, veggies and flowers, and browse the wares sold in the 19th-century-style hotel gift shop. As for barbecue, you'll find none better than **BOB'S**.

Henderson Chamber of Commerce, 201 North Main St., Henderson; (903) 657-5528; www.hendersontx.com

Heritage Syrup Festival at the Depot Museum, 514 N. High St., Henderson; (903) 657-2119; www.depotmuseum.com

Jordan's Plant Farm, 7523 Texas Highway 42 South, Henderson; 1-800-635-1147; www.jordansplantfarm.com

Bob's Barbecue, 120 Pope St., Henderson; (903) 657-8301

June Naylor wrote Texas: Off the Beaten Path.