

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

ENERGY REALITY CHECK

What's on the Horizon for Texans and Their Co-ops?



PLUS

Van Cliburn

Macaroni and Cheese

Hit the Road:
*Huntsville to
the Big Thicket*

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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By Kaye Northcott and Roxane Richter

With Texas co-ops facing an energy crunch, we look at where we are now and what our options are for the future.



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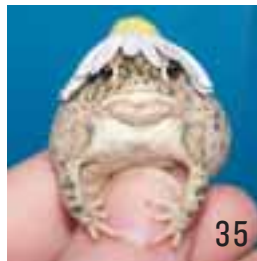
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The average single-family house has increased by 769 square feet since 1976, putting more pressure on electricity providers.

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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letters

A SAVORY HISTORY LESSON

I really appreciate the history of salt ("Texas' White Gold," August). A few years ago, during a family reunion of the Bedells, I visited with a distant cousin. She was almost 100 years old, and she told me about some of her aunts who were young women at the time of the Civil War.

They told her they used to ride sidesaddle with flowing skirts under which they concealed bags of salt, which they hung from their saddles to smuggle behind enemy lines to reach their sweethearts who needed salt for their meat.

VIRGINIA CASTRO EDWARDS

IN TOO DEEP

In the August issue, you have a good article on bathroom safety. However, the photo that accompanies the article is showing a very dangerous situation with no mention of its risks. A child should never have a bathtub deeper than his navel, as my mom used to say. A water level as deep as shown would cause the child's feet to float, upsetting him, yet he is unable to lift his face far enough out to breathe. Many "tub seats" are sold to help children sit upright, but in my experience, they are more easily upset than the child himself and then hinder his attempts to right himself. The tips in the article are valid, but photos model behavior, and this one's lethal for babies.

BRENDA ELVING, MOTHER OF SIX
Bluebonnet Electric

Editor's Note: *The article and photo did not appear in every edition.*

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.

POWER TALK

COURTESY USDA NRCS



THE MONTH TO SALUTE CO-OPS

October has been celebrated as National Co-op Month annually since 1930. Of course, in 1930, there were no electric cooperatives. The first electric co-op in the nation to string lines was Bartlett Electric in 1935, headquartered in Bartlett, Texas. Today, that Central Texas co-op has more than 6,000 members. There are 75 electric cooperatives serving the state, and nearly 3 million Texans benefit directly from our efficient and economical form of operation.

Foremost, electric cooperatives exist to bring a much-needed service to their members, not because they're trying to turn a profit. And along the way, co-ops do more than just keep the lights burning; they provide jobs, services and opportunities for Texans.

If you're reading this magazine, it's probably because your electric cooperative provides it to you as a member benefit. Cooperatives and their employees are passionately dedicated to their communities, providing a variety of contributions and services, such as scholarships, safety demonstrations and support for volunteer fire departments.

Co-ops are service-oriented, not money-oriented, and the way we do business has benefited Texans for decades. And it works because local people—who put the interests of their neighbors, friends and family first—are at its heart.

—Mike Williams, President/CEO
Texas Electric Cooperatives

THEY WANT OUR EYES ON THE SKIES

Weather watchers, unite. The scientists at the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow network (CoCoRaHS) want your help.

The network of weather observers, which was founded in 1997 in Colorado, is recruiting citizen-meteorologists to add to its pool of 3,500 volunteers in 18 states. The only requirements are having an appropriate spot to place a rain gauge, an enthusiasm for watching and reporting weather conditions, and a desire to learn more about how weather can affect everyone.

The duties of a volunteer are simple: Report daily the amount of precipitation that falls (or doesn't). The tools are also simple: a 4-inch rain gauge (available for purchase at a discount) and an Internet connection. Observers also track snow and hail amounts using a ruler for snow and an easily constructible foil-covered foam pad for hail. Training is offered on the network's website, www.cocorahs.org.

Various groups and agencies, such as the National Weather Service, water planners and ranchers and farmers, can access the collected data, giving them a comprehensive look at precipitation patterns. Texas, which is divided into 13 regions, currently has more than 400 active members. State coordinator Troy Kimmel, a lecturer at the University of Texas and meteorologist for three Austin radio stations, hopes that will grow into the thousands.

To learn more about the weather network or to apply to be a weather-watching volunteer, visit www.cocorahs.org. Kimmel said he'd be glad to answer questions about the project. He can be e-mailed at tkimmel@mail.utexas.edu.



Members of the Brazos Militia celebrate the statue's completion in 2005.

H A P P E N I N G S

Texas is known for its larger-than-life figures. And one of the largest was Stephen F. Austin, who is depicted with a 60-foot concrete-and-steel statue—10 times life-size—on a 12-foot base in Angleton in Southeast Texas. The statue, which was erected in 2005, stands tall over the coastal plain in Henry Munson Park just off Texas Highway 288. The park includes a museum devoted to the history of the “Father of Texas” and of surrounding Brazoria County.

To help pay for further development of the 10-acre site surrounding the statue, the third annual **STEPHEN F. AUSTIN BIRTHDAY PARTY AND CELEBRATION** will be held October 27 at the park (Austin was born November 3, 1793). The event will feature that most Texan of events, a barbecue cook-off, which starts at noon, and also include a visit by Austin himself, as portrayed by professional re-creationist Bob Heinonen. There also will be a raffle and children’s activities.

JEFFERSON COUNTY COURTHOUSE RISES HIGH WITH UNIQUE STYLE

In 1932, most Texas towns were reeling from the Great Depression, but Beaumont’s oil reserves provided the city with enough money to build the 14-story Jefferson County Courthouse downtown. The stone and brick building designed by Fred C. Stone and A. Babin features Moderne-style architecture. Unique Art Deco details on the rare high-rise courthouse include carved limestone vignettes of lumbermen, oilmen and cowboys at work. —From *The Courthouses of Texas*, Texas A&M University Press, second edition, 2007



WHO KNEW?



HEAVENLY TEXAS

Many Texas towns are named for the divine, no doubt inspired by the beauty and grace of the landscape. Here are some of our favorite heavenly Texas town names and counties.

- ANGEL CITY** Goliad
- BLESSING** Matagorda
- EDEN** Concho
- GLORY** Lamar
- GODLEY** Johnson
- JOY** Clay
- PARADISE** Wise
- RAINBOW** Somervell

CO-OP PEOPLE

A SOLAR-HEATED GREENHOUSE

Many readers intrigued by Jess Russell’s passive solar-heated greenhouse (Letters, August 2007) wrote in seeking more details.

Russell, a Farmers Electric Cooperative member in Caddo Mills, grows tropical plants year-round in a 30-by-60-foot Quonset-style greenhouse.

During the cold winter months, he uses 55-gallon black plastic barrels filled with water as a heat source for the fragile plants, sometimes supplementing with an electric heater. The barrels line one long wall of the greenhouse facing southwest. During the day, they absorb solar heat, which radiates at night, keeping the climate in the greenhouse moderate. He reckons that metal barrels also can be used, as long as they are painted black.

Because of the constant warmth, Russell says his plants can simulta-



neously bear blossoms, green fruit and ripe fruit. He says if he had it to do over, he’d have put down a weed barrier and laid a stone or brick floor for even more absorbed heat.


Russell said he’d be happy to answer questions about his setup. He can be reached at jarmrl@argontech.net or at (903) 527-4140.

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ENERGY REALITY CHECK

By Kaye Northcott and Roxane Richter • Illustrations by A.J. Garcés



Energy consumers want the lights to come on when they flip a switch, but with rising prices, increasing demand and shrinking reserves, the future of electricity supply is not as clear as it used to be.

The escalating cost of electricity and predictions of shortages and blackouts, the future of renewable energy, climate change, pollution reduction ... these subjects are on consumers' minds more than ever before. We at Texas Co-op Power have been doing our homework on these issues by attending industry conferences and studying the latest reports to give you an overall view—a reality check, if you will—of Texas electric cooperatives' energy future.



Our story begins with the fundamental ingredient for producing electricity: fuel. That fuel can come from many sources, as we will explore later. There are many types of electricity generation, but basically a fuel source, such as natural gas or coal, is burned to create steam that turns turbines for electric generators. Texas cooperatives make individual arrangements to acquire electricity either from cooperative generation and transmission facilities, called G&Ts, or other power providers. G&Ts, such as Golden Spread Electric in West Texas and the Panhandle, Brazos Electric Power in Central Texas, and South Texas Electric, are owned by the cooperatives they serve. Cooperatives may also contract with other sources for energy, including the Lower Colorado River Authority and investor-owned utilities.

Co-ops typically supply base-load needs (that portion of the electrical demand that is present at all times) from units burning natural gas or coal. Intermediate and peaking loads, needed to satisfy high demand, are generally served using natural gas-fired power plants. Renewable energies such as water (hydropower), wind and biomass can supplement power supplies, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and reduce power plant emissions. Co-ops strive to use the most efficient, lowest-cost generating resources first. Other resources are blended during higher load periods, with the objective of minimizing both cost and emissions. Your co-op's future energy needs must be planned and contracted for years in advance.

Historically, natural gas was relatively inexpensive, so long-term gas contracts were thought to assure low electricity costs for a long time to come. But the market changed. Gas prices went up. Today's electricity bills reflect the higher fuel costs.

Along with costlier fuel comes a big growth spurt in Texas and an increased demand for electricity. The state has a goal of keeping a reserve power production capability of 12.5 percent. But industry experts say reserve capacity is rapidly diminishing. In fact, officials with the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) grid, which handles 85 percent of the state's electricity load, predict that the generation reserve margin (available electricity during peak demand times) will fall below 6 percent by 2012. The long lead times needed to obtain environmental permits and to construct new generating plants have caused some to predict future electricity shortages.

And this is happening in the midst of a serious national debate about climate change and a focus on renewable energy sources. Wind power is being hailed as a cheap, renewable source of electricity, especially in Texas, with wind farms cropping up all over the western part of the state. But wind doesn't blow on demand. And electricity cannot be stored. When you flip the light switch, you're getting "fresh" power.

Our reality check tells us that wind and other renewables are only part of the solution for the future. No one source can supply our growing electricity needs. Nor can conservation alone suffice. Instead of a silver bullet, there are a multitude of silver pellets. We must look to a variety of energy sources and make a major commitment to researching and developing improved technologies, efficiencies and conservation.

Next month we will concentrate on renewable energies and their great promise for the future. This month we will discuss Texas' dominant, conventional fuels. So here goes. ...



GONE TO CYBERSPACE

In 2004, according to the EPA's Energy Star program, home electronics accounted for about 15 percent of all residential electricity consumed. That's a 200 percent increase since 1980.



NATURAL GAS

This fuel once was cheap and abundant. But wells started drying up, and prices started heading up. It burns clean, but is there enough to go around?

Within ERCOT, natural gas generated almost half of the electricity consumed last year.

It's cleaner burning than other carbon-based fuels, such as coal. For example, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, on average in the United States, coal emits 2,249 pounds of carbon dioxide for every 1,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of generation, whereas natural gas emits 1,135 pounds for every 1,000 kWh.

Texas co-ops located outside of ERCOT also rely heavily on power generated by natural gas. These include co-ops within the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), the Southeastern Electric Reliability Council (SERC) and the Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC).

The fact that the cost of natural gas has tripled since 2002, taking electricity prices up accordingly, has cooperatives rethinking what fuels to use in the future. Although the cost of natural gas has moderated, it is no longer a low-cost fuel source,

and prices can be volatile.

Texas' current supply of natural gas is adequate for the near future, but the easiest gas to get has been got, so to speak. Extraction from remaining domestic gas fields, such as the Barnett Shale in North Texas, requires expensive new drilling techniques. The Independence Hub, a major new underwater gas field in the Gulf of Mexico some 120 miles from Biloxi, Mississippi, has begun producing. It is expected to increase the nation's natural gas production by 2 percent by the end of the year. But, again, this high-tech extraction process—from a platform with living quar-

WHAT IS ERCOT?

The Electric Reliability Council of Texas, an electric grid manager, is one of eight Independent System Operators in North America. ERCOT is the traffic cop for a major portion of the Texas electric grid. If a hot afternoon prompts millions to crank up their air conditioners simultaneously, ERCOT can direct more power where it is needed by asking more generation plants to go online. Three similar power pools control the remainder of the state's electric network.



Texas' natural gas resources are getting harder and harder to tap, and the more work it takes to get them, the higher the cost to the consumer.

ters for 16 probing for gas 8,000 feet deep—is costly.

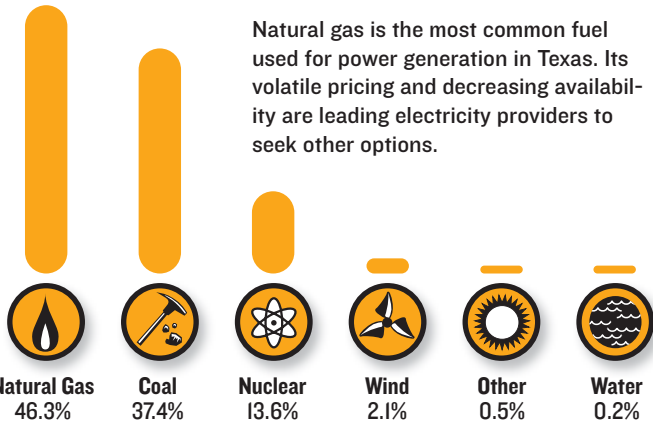
It's possible to import gas, but it must first be turned into a liquid. An overseas facility creates liquefied natural gas (LNG), then ships it in specially built vessels to the U.S. Here, the LNG goes to a docking and conversion station where it's re-gasified and injected into pipelines for distribution. While some stations already exist in the U.S., a fair amount of the ultimate supply of gas will depend on stations that are still being planned or built.

NATURAL GAS

PROS: Burns clean, can be carried by pipeline.
CONS: The easy-to-tap reserves are tapped out, and supplies are expensive; U.S. reliance on imports is growing.
OUTLOOK: Construction of liquid petroleum gas sea terminals and on-shore re-gasification plants will make imports available. Explorers are looking for new pockets of gas and ways to extract it.



FUELS USED TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY IN ERCOT (2006)



Natural gas is the most common fuel used for power generation in Texas. Its volatile pricing and decreasing availability are leading electricity providers to seek other options.



COAL

Our most plentiful fuel attracts attention, but not in a positive way. Environmental advocates don't like its emissions, but by necessity, it will likely remain a generation mainstay. Will technology provide the answer?

Power plants emit 39 percent of all U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council. When Texas Utilities (TXU) announced plans this year to build 11 new coal plants in Texas, it ignited a firestorm of opposition from people who said the emissions would make air quality worse in many small towns and force some cities to further curtail vehicle emissions to offset those from the coal plants. TXU subsequently agreed to drop or postpone eight of the plants and arranged to sell its holdings to a private partnership, which pledges to be a better environmental steward.

Sid Long, executive vice president and CEO at Concho Valley Electric Cooperative, sums up the coal challenge this way: "Obviously, the environmental issue must be resolved in order to use our most abundant resource for electrical generation. Without coal generation, we can expect to pay much more for our electric energy in the near future."

Coal is the most abundant fossil fuel in the United States, with some estimates projecting a 250-year supply available if consumed at the current rate. Texas has an estimated 200-plus years of lignite, a brownish substance that is lower quality than higher-burning bituminous coal. Lignite occurs in deposits in East and Central Texas and along the Texas Coastal Plain. Some G&T cooperatives already use lignite, which has the advantage of proximity. Higher quality coals must be imported by rail, adding significant costs and risk of supply disruption. The cost of using coal goes even higher if the negative effect on the environment is computed. Although nitrous oxides and sulphur oxides are relatively easy to scrub from coal plant emissions, carbon dioxide and mercury are not. Newer coal plants will have improved emission-control technology, such as a proposed plant in Kansas, part of which will be dedicated to serving loads in Texas.



Coal is relatively cheap and plentiful in Texas, but the price to the environment is a growing concern.

“This new coal-fired plant will operate 10 percent more efficiently than the coal plants that were formerly providing this power,” said Bob Bryant, president and general manager of Golden Spread Electric Co-op. His G&T is partnering with three other co-ops in the project. But even as new plants are designed for cleaner emissions, some in the government are supporting taxes on coal itself or carbon dioxide emissions.

Most technologies for reducing carbon dioxide from coal plants are costly. In fact, most are experimental. For example, coal gasification, which turns coal or lignite into a gas used to power jet turbines, increases the cost of producing electricity by about 50 percent. Only recently, the Texas-based Tondur Corp. canceled plans to build a coal

gasification plant in Corpus Christi because the technology turned out to be too expensive.

Still, there are innovations on the horizon. The

most advanced research in clean coal technology may be coming to Texas. FutureGen Industrial Alliance Inc., a nonprofit industrial consortium, is planning on building the world’s first integrated gasification combined-cycle coal-fired plant with near zero emissions. Two of the four finalist sites for the plant, scheduled to open in 2012, are in Texas: Penwell, near Odessa, and Jewett, east of Waco.

An April 2007 *New York Times* poll indicated that 69 percent of Americans polled would approve building advanced coal plants that produce less air pollution even if they had to pay more for their electricity.

LIGNITE

PROS: Texas has lots; it’s easy to dig up and doesn’t require expensive rail transportation.

CONS: Requires heavy emissions cleanup. Carbon dioxide and mercury emission reduction processes are still being developed.

OUTLOOK: Long-term supply available. Technology improvements expected.



WHY SWITCH TO COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHT BULBS?

There are 45 light bulbs in the average American home. Reducing that number by just one would be equivalent to removing nearly a million automobiles from the road.

The New Yorker, May 14, 2007

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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NUCLEAR

A renaissance of interest in this energy source has been sparked by the fact that it produces no greenhouse gases. Technological advances have made plants safer, but what to do with that waste?

Texas G&Ts do not produce nuclear power, but they could invest in nuclear power in the future. Government statistics for 2005 show that nuclear energy accounted for 11 percent of Texas' electricity, compared to about 19 percent nationwide and 16 percent worldwide. After a three-decade-long hiatus in U.S. construction, nuclear plants are again being planned. The plants are very expensive to build—as much as \$2,000 or more per kilowatt—and require an average of seven to nine years for construction, following a lengthy permitting process. (It would cost less than a third of that per kilowatt and take just two years for construction of a natural gas turbine.)

Once a nuclear plant is in operation, its variable cost of energy production is about the same as a coal plant. Nuclear power could supply about half the state's expected growth in electricity and displace about 80 million tons of carbon dioxide emitted by coal-burning plants. But while nuclear plants do not emit carbon, their radioactive waste will have to be stored and monitored longer than any civilization has ever existed. Plutonium, a radioac-

tive by-product of power reactors, has a half-life of 24,000 years. The planned Yucca Mountain Repository in Nevada, a project of the U.S. Department of Energy, is slated to begin accepting the nation's nuclear waste in 2017. However, many question mankind's ability to safeguard such a concentration of nuclear waste for the thousands of years it would remain hazardous.

A *New York Times* poll June 1 showed 51 percent of Americans sampled approved building more nuclear power plants, but 55 percent disapproved of having nuclear power plants built in their communities.

NUCLEAR

PROS: Power with no air pollution, at approximately the same cost as coal.

CONS: Plants are expensive to build and retire. Radioactive waste is with us for thousands of years.

OUTLOOK: New technologies are making plants safer and more efficient, but permitting and construction take years.



Nuclear energy is being touted even by environmentalists these days, but no one yet has a good answer for what to do with radioactive waste, which will be around for hundreds of generations to come.

Getting to School

SCHOOL SAFETY ABCs

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

Safety Comes First:

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

Riding the school bus:


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

Riding a bike:

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



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ENERGY MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY

Cutting electricity usage and waste could stretch our supply. But will enough people embrace this less-is-more philosophy?

When all is said and done, progress in the electric power industry for the near future may be measured not in kWh sold but in kWh saved. Certainly that is the case in Texas. As pointed out by Ray Beavers, CEO of United Cooperative Services and vice chair of Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC), the co-ops' statewide association,

"There just isn't enough time to site, plan and construct new power plants by the time ERCOT predicts Texans may experience electricity shortfalls starting in 2009–2010." However, according to Beavers' calculations,

"If Texas consumers reduced their peak energy use by 10 percent, they would save 7,000 megawatts of generating capacity, or almost the same generating capacity TXU's 11 plants would have provided—without pollution, transmission and utility debt."

Electricity shortages could well produce rolling blackouts when the temperature reaches 100-plus and the whole household is busy making the electric meter spin, for example, or when a key plant has to go off

line for maintenance during a period of high demand. A cooperative's base-load electricity resources will be producing at their maximum. Those peak-energy consumption times are handled

by "peaking" units. Beavers thinks one key strategy for getting through the coming crunch is for co-op members to dedicate themselves as never before to energy efficiency.

If "peak" demand can be reduced, the demand for new electricity generating plants can also be reduced, thus buying time for improved technology to come on line.

Conservation and technology go hand in hand. Electric cooperatives across the country are investing millions in new technologies. But research needs to be done on such a massive scale that it can only be accomplished through a national commitment. "The federal government should go into hyperdrive to fund energy research," said Greg Jones, chair of the TEC board and general manager of Cherokee County Electric Cooperative. "If the government will work in partnership with the electric industry rather than mandating what may turn out to be impossible goals, we will arrive more quickly at our mutual goal of making electricity generation cleaner and more efficient."

The old energy philosophy, "Use as much as you want. We'll make more," is no longer applicable.

Co-ops and cooperative members are an integral part of the debate over how much money and effort we are willing to spend to keep up with demands for more and cleaner power. Co-op by co-op, we will have the opportunity to consider what technologies are best for the future.



SIZE MATTERS

The average single-family home had 769 more square feet in 2006 than it did in 1976, census figures show. Thirty-nine percent of homes have four or more bedrooms, double the rate of 20 years ago. And 26 percent have three or more bathrooms, almost three times the rate from 1986.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power. Roxane Richter is a Houston-based business writer.

COMING NEXT MONTH



PART TWO of ENERGY REALITY CHECK, covering renewable energy: wind, solar, hydro and biofuels.

TAME YOUR TREES

Tree Trimming


We love our trees, but when branches are too close to power lines, they can cause power outages, fire hazards and safety concerns.

Here are some rules to follow:

- If a tree or a large branch is touching or falls on an electric line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Tree sap is an excellent conductor of electricity, so a downed branch on a line is an electrocution hazard as well as a fire hazard.
- Never trim trees that grow close to power lines; that is a job for professionals. Call your electric co-op for assistance and guidance.
- Don't allow children to climb trees or build tree houses close to power lines.
- When planting a tree, plan ahead. A tiny tree may eventually grow large enough to damage power lines and possibly interrupt power during storms. At maturity, your trees should not be within 10 feet of a power line.
- Plant appropriate distances from all power lines—those along the street or right-of-way, as well as those running to your home and outbuildings.



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Watch Out for Electric System Overload

An overloaded electrical system in your home can create a serious shock and fire hazard. Nationwide, millions of homes have outdated electrical wiring and are at risk—particularly older homes.

The wiring of many homes is not equipped to properly handle and support today's increased electrical demands. Homes at least 30 years old,



The frequent need for power strips could be a sign that your home's wiring needs updating.

which account for more than half the homes in the U.S., are likely to have wiring that was designed to handle only about half of the electrical demands of today's residents.

Overloaded electrical circuits and faulty equipment and wiring can cause not only inconvenient power outages, but also hazardous conditions that could result in injury or even death.

Watch for these warning signs. If you notice any of them, you should have your home inspected by a professional immediately:

- Lights often flicker, blink or dim momentarily.
- Circuit breakers trip or fuses blow often.
- Cords or wall plates are warm to the touch or discolored.
- Crackling, sizzling or buzzing is heard from outlets.

A home electrical inspection to find and correct hidden hazards could prevent many tragedies. The time and money spent in having a qualified electrician check your residence and perform a few home repairs and upgrades are small compared to the protection and safety such a visit may provide to your family and home.

No matter the season or age of homes, residents should be vigilant and check for electrical hazards such as cracked or fraying electrical cords, overloaded outlets and circuits, and lamps and light fixtures with inappropriate light bulbs. Also, make sure smoke alarms are placed and functioning properly.



KEEP PETS SAFE FROM SPOOKS THIS HALLOWEEN

Halloween can be scary enough for kids and their parents. Imagine how your pampered pet feels.

As you transform your quiet abode into a spooky, haunted house with electric lights and decorations, use caution when furry friends are afoot. Follow these tips to keep your pet safe on the scariest night of the year:

- Position strings of lights, wires and cords so they're off the beaten path—and out of the way of children and pets. Curious pets might try chewing decorative lights, putting them at risk of electric shock or even ingesting shards of glass.

- Batteries also pose a risk for pets. Although they're fun to bat around on the floor because they roll, the ingredients in batteries are toxic to pets and children.

- Save the candy for the kids. Chocolate can kill your dog or cat. It's toxic to them. Keep candy wrappers out of the way also, as aluminum foil and cellophane can cause vomiting and intestinal blockages.

- A jack-o-lantern may look like a yummy treat to a pet, but after sitting outside for a few days, yours will probably grow bacteria that could be a problem for a pet that nibbles on it.

- Avoid lighting candles in any area your pet might frequent. Excited pets can knock them over. Plus, cat hair can catch fire in a split second.

- Save the cute costumes for your kids. On a pet, a costume can be restricting and make it hard to hear and see.

- Doorbells and screaming children are especially frightening to some animals, so keep them inside in a quiet, secure area.

WHICH WOULD YOU RATHER DO WITHOUT? LUNCH OUT, OR ELECTRICITY FOR A DAY?



For about the cost of lunch at your favorite restaurant, most of our members get all the convenience and comfort of electricity for a day.

Which would you rather give up? Lunch out? Or your heating, cooling, hot water, entertainment, clean clothes, lights and home-cooked meals?

Electricity—it's still a great value.

Turning Off Some Electric Myths

Looking for ways to reduce your energy use is a great way to save money and do something good for the environment. Although there are a lot of good ideas out there, there are a lot of misconceptions as well about what is really effective. Here are a couple of the most common myths and the facts to set you on the right path.

MYTH: Computers, monitors and other office equipment will use less energy and last longer if they are left running all the time.

FACT: Turning equipment off overnight does not shorten its life, and the small surge of power that occurs when some devices are turned on is much smaller than the energy used by running equipment when it is not needed. In fact, leaving computers and other office equipment running overnight and on weekends wastes significant amounts of energy and also adds

to the wear and tear on the equipment.

In general, turn off equipment you are not using or make sure that energy-saving features on networks or individual machines are enabled. Some office equipment, including printers and scanners, feature small transformers that use energy even when the equipment is turned off. Plug all such devices into a power strip so that they can be shut down completely with one flick of the switch.

MYTH: I should run my central heating/cooling unit around the clock to avoid an increased demand charge from the “spike” that occurs when the equipment starts.

FACT: Although turning on AC equipment will cause a power spike on the order of fractions of a second, this period is not long enough to have any impact on demand charges. Demand charges are based on the

average power used in a facility during 15-minute periods. The spike from turning on such equipment does not significantly affect this average.

Not only are there no significant demand savings from running air-conditioning equipment continuously, but there is also a significant downside. Equipment life can be considerably shortened, and unless the equipment is designed to operate at continuously variable capacities, it likely will not be able to properly match the cooling or heating load and will waste energy and potentially decrease comfort.



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Cooperatives.

Owned by Our Members,
Committed to Our Communities.



On Being Mileage Wise

We are smiling all the way to the gas station, which we don't have to visit very often.

BY JANE C. PERDUE

Buying a house is one of the most important financial decisions you will ever make, the real estate agents and attorneys tell us, so be sure you are getting what you want. However, that decision is not a simple one when you have lived in several different areas of the country and cannot decide where to buy, let alone what to buy.

That was our dilemma in 2000. My spouse retired in 1998 from being a full-time pastor in El Paso. We loved our time in that beautiful border city, but we knew we did not want to stay there in retirement.

I was born and raised in North Carolina, and my husband was born in California, so it was natural for us to try to find an area that combined the best of the South and West. Having lived in Austin for almost 10 years in the 1970s and raised our five children there, we both agreed on the idea of landing in Texas for retirement. We had always loved the Hill Country. After several months of searching, we found a little house in the Canyon Lake area—perfect for retirement. And best of all, we could afford it!

It was on a cul-de-sac with vacant lots all around. We bought lots on both sides of the house to ensure privacy and moved in. Since the initial purchase, we have not lived in Canyon Lake on a full-time basis because my spouse continues to serve interim pastorates around the country. When we are there, however, between times, we have made some interesting life changes.

Most of our married life, we have lived in big cities—Atlanta, Austin, Jacksonville, Detroit and El Paso. Driving was never a problem. Interstates made quick routes to wherever we needed to go. Gas was cheap, and we never hesitated to jump behind the wheel of whatever type of gas-guzzler we had at the time and drive, drive, drive.

Today in Canyon Lake, things have changed a bit. Gas is no longer inexpensive. Our children and grandchildren who live in Texas are in Austin—more than 50 miles away. The church we attend is about 25 miles away in New Braunfels. Gasoline bills can quickly eat away at a retirement income. So our lifestyle has begun to shift to accommodate those realities. Here are some strategies that have worked for us:

We have better organized our lives. For instance, we plan our shopping so that we buy groceries only once or twice a month at one of the larger grocery stores in



New Braunfels. We usually shop on Sundays after church. If we happen to be in Austin or San Antonio visiting our children and grandchildren, we will shop there before returning to our home. In between trips, we purchase items such as bread and milk at a smaller store near our house.

As for shopping for nonessentials, we don't! We are retired. We have a lifetime of accumulated "stuff" that we actually need to purge instead of adding more to the inventory. We have begun giving away items that might be of special value to our family and friends. My husband gave away most of his library (38 boxes of books) to a young seminary graduate just starting out in ministry.

When possible, we support local businesses. It allows us to meet our neighbors and get to know the community. In nearby Sattler, there is a well-stocked library, an office-supply store, a post office, a hardware store, a gym and a recreation program.

We order over the Internet. We often find that if we cannot locate items in nearby stores, it saves time and money to order online. This eliminates a lot of driving, and prices are more than competitive.

We subscribe to a mail-order pharmacy service. This eliminates trips to the pharmacy.

We use the phone book. We have discovered that we can save lots of travel time looking for services and merchandise by using the phone book to obtain good information before starting out.

We no longer run to the store for some forgotten item. Now, we just do without until it is part of a regular trip.

Another thing—probably the most important—we have purchased a hybrid car. It gives us an average of 50 miles to the gallon as we cruise the Hill Country on one of our "planned" shopping sprees. And we have noticed something: Some of the larger cars and trucks are not very friendly. They don't seem to like us. But we don't care! We are smiling all the way to the gas station, which we don't have to visit very often.

Jane C. Perdue and her husband, The Rev. Roland Powell Perdue III, have most recently lived in New York City, where he is interim senior pastor at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. They still plan one day to live full time in Canyon Lake.

DENTON

TWU's Cookbook Cornucopia

According to Ann McGuffin Barton, 'Cookbooks are not just recipe holders. They're reflections of love, politics and commerce.'

by Cathy Cashio



How would you like to find shelf space in your kitchen for more than 15,000 cookbooks? Texas Woman's University houses this many in its library, making it one of the biggest cookbook collections in the United States. The collection is deep as well, going back to the 1600s.

Cheryl Alters Jamison and Bill Jamison, authors of several cookbooks exploring American regional cuisine and four-time winners of the prestigious James Beard Award, use the collection as their primary research center. Bill, a former American history professor, says, "I can attest that this is as fine a collection of older American cookbooks as you can find anywhere."

The cookbooks are part of the Woman's Collection of the Blagg-Huey Library, which also includes personal papers, photographs and oral histories in such areas as African-American women, women in the military and aviation, and female writers, politicians and educators. The library, a regal structure with columns, polished floors and golden chandeliers, is a 107,000-square-foot, Georgian-style building in the heart of the Denton campus.

Ann McGuffin Barton, library assistant and an expert on the cookbook collection, greets me on the second floor, where the collection lives. She looks like a stereotypical librarian, with her glasses and coiffed hair, but carries herself with the stately air of a priestess in her temple. "Cookbooks are not just recipe holders," she says. "They're reflections of love, politics and commerce. They offer insight into what brings all humans together: meals."

Barton says cookbooks are instruction manuals that chronicle the history of mankind.

"Cookbooks are part of culture that shows a common bond between groups," she says. "People have ownership of food. How they cook it, present it and eat it sets them apart from others. Food represents a group's identity. Texans love barbecue. Cajuns love seafood."

The history of a culture characterizes its cuisine, and that's what draws visitors to view this collection each year. From abundance to diets, from Prohibition to war, this compilation of cookbooks richly illustrates decades of America's changing relationship with food.

Barton pulls out the preface to the 1922 *Picayune Creole Cook Book*, which apologizes for changes to recipes as a result of the anti-alcohol Volstead Act: "In previous editions of the *Picayune Creole Cook Book*, directions for the use of wines and liquors were included as a matter of course in all recipes demanding such flavorings. As it has now become unlawful to acquire such ingredients, reference to them has been eliminated . . . very serious efforts are being made to find substitutes that will add to the desirable flavors of the fruit and berry brandies . . . without violating the anti-alcoholic enactment."

Dallas gourmet Marion Somerville Church provided the gift that established the

collection in 1960. Following his wishes, his sister Mrs. P.R. Gilmer of Shreveport, Louisiana, who had a deep interest in the university's work in foods and homemaking, donated 249 books, several printed in the 1850s. She also donated Church's famous regional cookbooks as well as hundreds of menu cards from hotels, restaurants, clubs, railroad lines, airlines and steamship lines.

Barton points to a litany of donors who have contributed in the wake of Church's initial donation. From all parts of the United States, many remarkable cookbooks and related materials have been acquired over the years.

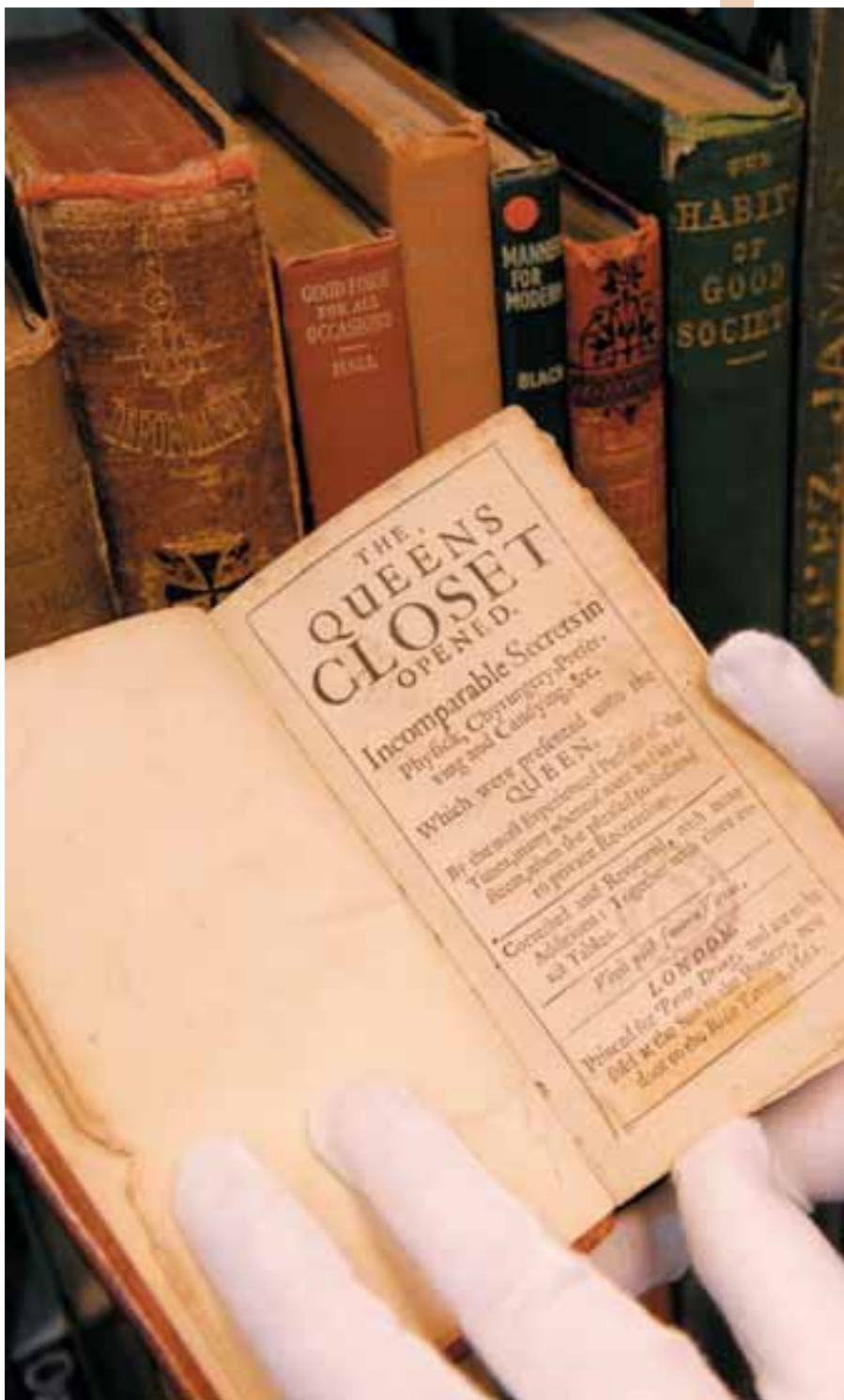
The collection includes books you'd expect, such as 31 editions of Fannie Farmer's books, including the much overlooked but very influential *Food and Cookery for the Sick and Convalescent* (1907). The library has 10 iterations of *The Joy of Cooking*, from the first trade edition in 1936 to the recently updated 75th anniversary edition, published in 2006. (The very first edition was self-published in 1931 by author Irma S. Rombauer.)

There are also unexpected finds, like the punnily named *Kitchen-Ranging: A Book of Discover-y* from 1928, or *How To Bake a Church* (1950), a fund-raising cookbook from St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Arlington.

Toward the end of my tour, Barton ushers me to the cold vault, where rare cookbooks are preserved. She moves stacks of books so we can ease in between rows. She leads me to one of the oldest books in the collection, *The Queens Closet Opened*, which was published in 1661. It looks like an aged prayer book, and Barton opens it with great reverence.

She points to the name of a recipe, "To comfort the Hearts and Spirits, and suppress Melancholly." The name itself suggests a panacea—who wouldn't want such a thing from time to time? The recipe itself, however, sounds noxious: an infusion of herbs, juice, sugar, ground pearls and ambergris (the waxy, sweet-smelling whale by-product used in perfumes of old), although the writer suggests adding some saffron "to make it more cordial."

This rare cookbook gives a window into life in the 17th century, as all cookbooks somehow reflect the periods in which they were written. Food is not only a basic human need; it sustains our bodies and connects our souls.



One of the oldest books in the collection, *The Queens Closet Opened*, was published in 1661.

You'll find Texas Co-op Power's 60 Years of Home Cooking among the treasures in the collection. Most of the cookbooks are available for the public to peruse, although you cannot check them out. The collection is on the second floor of the Blagg-Huey Library on the Denton campus. Normal operating hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but vary according to semester schedules. For more information, contact Barton at (940) 898-3752 or visit www.twu.edu/library/woman/wm_cook.htm.

CoServ Electric supplies power for much of the area around Denton.

Cathy Cashio has been a correspondent for the Gallup Independent newspaper in New Mexico, The Houma Courier newspaper in Louisiana and Indian Country Today in New York. She lives in Denton. This is her first article in Texas Co-op Power.

Hurricanes

Any time a hurricane approaches the Texas coast, you're likely to be reminded to take precautions. But the time for planning should begin well before hurricane season arrives.


Follow these tips to prepare yourself and your home for hurricanes:

- Develop a plan for installing covers for windows.
- Don't waste time taping windows. When a 100 mph wind blows an object at your window, tape won't stop it.
- Remove weak and dead trees and tree limbs on your property.
- Know whether your home is in a zone that could be flooded.
- Have a "grab and run" bag ready with important papers (like your homeowner's insurance policy) and prescription medicines in the event you have to evacuate.
- Have a plan in place for where you will go if you evacuate, the route you will take, and how others can contact you.
- Have a survival kit ready with nonperishable food, water, a first-aid kit and other things you may need.
- Keep a battery-powered radio handy. And don't forget the extra batteries.
- Don't hesitate to evacuate, especially if you are living in a manufactured home or a house that may not be sturdy enough to stand up to the wind.

DON'T BLOW OFF HURRICANES



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Van Cliburn: Texas' Cultural Emissary

BY STACI SEMRAD

At the height of the Cold War, the United States and the USSR struck a note of accord through the magical music of a thin, gentle Texas resident named Van Cliburn.

In 1958, the 23-year-old pianist from Kilgore earned the respect of both countries and worldwide acclaim when he won the inaugural International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in Moscow.

In the tense political climate of the day, the Soviets certainly had not created their contest to demonstrate American cultural superiority, but Cliburn's outstanding performances and an eight-minute standing ovation pointed to the indisputable winner. Cliburn became an Elvis-like sensation in the Soviet Union and returned a hero to the United States, where New York City celebrated his victory with a ticker tape parade. Meanwhile, the young man with blue eyes and wavy, blond hair made the cover of *Time* magazine next to a banner reading, "The Texan Who Conquered Russia."

Cliburn's continued success was more in harmonizing with international friends than in conquering them. In his diplomatic way, Cliburn invited Kiril Kondrashin, the Russian conductor with whom he had played his prize-winning performances in Moscow, on a performance tour in the United States. Their recording of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 during Kondrashin's visit ranked as the best-selling classical album in the world for more than a decade and became the first classical recording to reach platinum status.

Born Harvey Lavan Cliburn Jr. in 1934 in Shreveport, Louisiana, Van Cliburn started learning piano at age 3 from his mother, Rildia Bee O'Bryan, a concert pianist.

When Cliburn was 6, he and his family moved to Kilgore, and at age 12, as the winner of a statewide piano competition, he made his debut with the Houston Symphony. At 17, he entered the Juilliard School of Music in New York City.

At the time of his Moscow triumph, the author of the May 1958 *Time* article described Cliburn as "gregarious," "unsofisticated" and "a gangling (6 ft. 4 in., 165 lbs.), snub-nosed, mop-haired boy out of Kilgore, as Texan as pecan pie."

"Instead of medals, he carried a well-thumbed Bible," *Time's* journalist wrote. "Instead of doeskin gloves, a single dress shirt, a plastic wing collar given to him by a friend, a ratty grey Shetland sweater that often showed under his dress jacket when he took his bows."

Cliburn had an electrifying effect on his Russian fans.

"Total strangers, men and women, hugged and kissed him in the street, flooded him with gifts, fan mail, flowers (one bouquet came from Mrs. Nikita Khrushchev)," the 1958 *Time* article said. "Women cried openly at his concerts; in



Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, like his countrymen, was quite taken with the tall Texan.

Leningrad, where fans queued up for three days and nights to buy tickets, one fell out of her seat in a faint."

Cliburn handled his fame humbly and went on to give stunning performances in major concert halls on his tours across the United States and around the world.

The rigorous schedule, however, began to exhaust him by the mid-1970s, and he drifted into an 11-year hiatus from public life. As he said upon returning to the stage in 1989, "The life of a musician is the most solitary life. Sometimes I did find it very difficult."

Still, he has led an active music career and over the years has won numerous awards. Today, Cliburn lives in Fort Worth, where he is considered a city treasure. He continues to do concert tours.

He also is the namesake of a contest rivaling the International Tchaikovsky Piano Competition in prestige. The Van Cliburn International Piano Competition has been held every four years in Fort Worth since the early '60s to discover talented young musicians.

Through the years, pianists from a variety of countries have taken the competition's top honor.

The next Van Cliburn contest will be held May 22 to June 7, 2009, at Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth. For details, check out www.cliburn.org.

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

All Grown Up

BY SHANNON OELRICH In her seminal cookbook, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (1918), Fannie Farmer proclaimed, “Macaroni is valuable food, as it is very cheap and nutritious; but being deficient in fat, it should be combined with cream, butter, or cheese, to make a perfect food.” Thus proclaimed, macaroni mixed with cheese and cream became a staple on American family tables.

These days, macaroni and cheese is seen mostly as a dish for the elementary school crowd, but some cooks have started reclaiming this standard of comfort food by going well beyond the familiar blue box. It’s seen on menus at gourmet restaurants with chunks of lobster, finished with a drizzle of truffle oil. That’s going a little beyond the pale for us home cooks, but we can dress up the old favorite without too much fuss.

Here is a sophisticated version from **LINDA SANDERSON MOORE**, who gave us all those great blue-ribbon tips back in the August issue. She says, “My family loves this recipe because it tastes like fondue. The sauce is creamy and flavorful, and the dressing mixture on the top makes it a little crunchy.” She and her family are members of South Plains Electric Cooperative.

“MOORE” MAC ‘N’ CHEESE

- 8 ounces macaroni
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt (divided), plus more for cooking pasta
- 3½ tablespoons butter (divided)
- ½ cup finely chopped shallots
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- ⅔ cup heavy whipping cream
- 7 ounces Gruyère cheese, grated
- 3 ounces aged Gouda cheese, grated
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon minced fresh chives
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- ⅛ teaspoon each cayenne and nutmeg
- ½ cup packaged dry herbed dressing

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cook pasta according to package directions in well-salted water until tender to the bite. Drain, but do not rinse.

In large frying pan over medium-high heat, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter. Add shallots and cook until light golden, about 3 minutes. Sprinkle shallot-butter mixture with flour; cook, stirring often, 1 minute. Add wine and stir, picking up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Add cream and stir well.

Sprinkle in cheeses, one large handful at a time, stirring until each handful is mostly melted before adding the next. Stir in 2 tablespoons chives, mustard, ¼ teaspoon salt, cayenne and nutmeg. Stir cooked pasta into cheese mixture and pour all into a 2-quart greased baking dish.

Combine dry dressing with remaining 1½ tablespoons butter, 1 teaspoon chives and ¼ teaspoon salt. Stir until thoroughly mixed. Sprinkle mixture over top of casserole and bake until top is browned and cheese is bubbling, about 15–20 minutes. Makes 6 servings.

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 454 calories, 16 g protein, 24 g fat, 36 g carbohydrates, 601 mg sodium, 80 mg cholesterol

This tasty twist on macaroni and cheese will have them asking for “Moore”!





LINDA KINARD Navasota Valley Electric Cooperative

Prize-winning recipe: **MacQuiche**

This no-crust quiche is an imaginative dish of things you wouldn't necessarily combine, but all the flavors work well together. There's enough cheese and macaroni to please the little ones, while adults will savor the flavors of smoked ham and Parmesan, plus everyone gets some veggies.

MACQUICHE

- 4 cups whole-wheat macaroni
- 3 tablespoons butter (divided)
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 cup diced zucchini
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions
- 1 large clove garlic, pressed or minced
- 1 cup diced smoked ham
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1 cup 2-percent milk
- 2 cups half-and-half
- 3 large eggs
- 2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 2 cups shredded Mexican-blend cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook macaroni in unsalted water to al dente (slightly firm). Drain and allow to cool to room temperature. Melt 1 1/2 tablespoons butter in medium-sized skillet over medium heat. Add carrots and sauté for 1 minute. Melt remaining butter in same skillet with carrots; add zucchini and sauté for another minute. Add green onions and garlic and sauté for another 30 seconds. (Veggies will be crisp-tender.) Stir in ham, Parmesan and seasoned salt. In large bowl, combine veggie/ham mix with macaroni and 3 cups of Cheddar and Mexican cheeses (mixed together), reserving the other cup for topping.

Spoon macaroni mixture into buttered 2 1/2-quart casserole dish. Beat eggs and combine with milk and half-and-half. Pour over macaroni mix. Bake 30 minutes and sprinkle remaining cheese

evenly over top of casserole. Bake until knife blade inserted in center shows only a little thickened custard (about 10 more minutes or so). Serves 6-8.

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 508 calories, 26 g protein, 30 g fat, 38 g carbohydrates, 756 mg sodium, 139 mg cholesterol

Cook's Tip: Wash and chop veggies and ham a day or two before dish is cooked. You can also put the whole casserole together and store in refrigerator the night before baking.

CHEESY MACARONI AND CHEESE

- 3 slices white bread
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter (divided)
- 2 3/4 cups milk
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 9 ounces grated sharp Cheddar cheese (divided)
- 4 ounces grated Romano or Gruyère cheese (divided)
- 1/2 pound elbow macaroni

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Butter a 2-quart casserole dish; set aside. Remove crusts from bread and tear into quarters. Place bread in medium bowl. Melt 1 tablespoon butter. Pour butter over bread and toss lightly; set aside.

Warm milk in saucepan over medium heat. Melt remaining butter in high-sided skillet over medium heat. When butter bubbles, add flour and cook for 1 minute while stirring. Whisk the warmed milk a little at a time into flour mixture until smooth. Whisking constantly, continue cooking for about 8-12 minutes, until mixture bubbles and thickens.

Remove pan from heat and stir in salt, nutmeg, black pepper, cayenne, 1 1/2 cups Cheddar cheese and 3/4 cup Romano or Gruyère, then set aside.

Boil macaroni until it begins to soften, approximately 2-3 minutes. Drain in colander and rinse in cold water. Drain well, then stir into the cheese sauce. Pour mixture into prepared casserole dish. Sprinkle remaining cheese and bread crumbs on top. Bake for 30 minutes, until golden brown. Serves 6.

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 430 calories, 20 g protein, 24 g fat, 34 g carbohydrates, 729 mg sodium, 75 mg cholesterol

KATHLEEN GORDON

United Cooperative Services

CHICKEN CHEESE MELT-A-WAY

- 1 1/2 cups cooked, cubed chicken
- 2 quarts chicken broth
- 1 cup elbow macaroni
- 1/2 stick butter
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup flour
- 2 cups milk
- 4 slices American cheese

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. If you prepared the chicken yourself, reserve the broth and cook the macaroni in it. If not, use 2 quarts of canned chicken broth to cook the macaroni. Drain and set aside.

In saucepan, sauté onion in butter 3-5 minutes. Stir in salt, pepper and flour. Gradually add milk and cook until sauce thickens, stirring constantly. Mix cubed chicken and macaroni in a 2-quart casserole dish. Arrange cheese slices on the top. Pour sauce over mixture. Bake uncovered for 25 minutes. Serves 4-6.

Serving size: 1 large serving spoonful. Per serving: 518 calories, 32 g protein, 36 g fat, 17 g carbohydrates, 1,578 mg sodium, 133 mg cholesterol

PATSY COX

Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative

RECIPE CONTEST

The topic for February's recipe contest is **MUFFINS**. Muffins are great for breakfast, brunch or a snack. Send your recipe 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 **October 10**. The top winner will receive a copy of *60 Years of Home Cooking* and a Texas-shaped trivet. Runners-up will also receive a prize.



Shooting Safety

Texans love to hunt. Nature beckons. There's suspense and excitement and escape from the daily routine.

Here are the “ten commandments” of shooting safety:


- Always point the muzzle of your gun in a safe direction.
- Treat every firearm or bow with the same respect you would show a loaded gun or nocked arrow.
- Be sure of your target.
- Unload firearms and unstring conventional bows when not in use.
- Handle firearms, arrows and ammunition with care.
- Know your safe zone-of-fire and stick to it.
- Control your emotions when using weapons.
- Wear hearing and eye protection.
- Don't consume alcohol or drugs before or while handling firearms or bows.
- Be aware of circumstances that require added caution or safety awareness.

If you practice these rules, you'll help to ensure a safe future for yourself, for others and for the shooting sports.

STRAIGHT SHOOTING ON SAFETY



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HATS AND CAPS

Whether ten-gallon hats and sombreros or baseball caps and visors, most Texans find themselves needing something to keep the sun out of their eyes. The photo submissions for this month illustrate the fact that the hats and caps of Texas are as diverse as the folks (and animals) who wear them. DACIA RIVERS

◀ Emily Purcell of Fannin County Electric Cooperative sent in this picture of her bantam rooster, Truffle. “You’ve heard of ‘Rooster Cogburn,’ right?” Emily joked.

▼ Two-year-old Dean Orrell III hams it up for his mom in his coonskin cap. Dean and his family live in Frisco and are members of CoServ Electric Cooperative.



▲ Pedernales Electric Cooperative member Melissa Fontenette-Mitchell took this photo of her 2-year-old daughter, Meghan, who decided to use her tutu as a hat while playing dress up. “Meghan thinks that being a princess includes a pretty dress and hat,” Melissa said.

▼ Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member Brynn Fontenot sent in this photo she took of her mother, Terry McIntosh, on an airboat swamp tour during a family vacation. The tour guide picked the lily pad from the water to demonstrate the plant’s many uses. “My mom has always been a hat person, and this only proved it,” Brynn said.

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

| ISSUE | SUBJECT | DEADLINE |
|-------|---------------------|----------|
| Dec | Holiday Decorations | Oct 10 |
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| Feb | Landscapes | Dec 10 |
| Mar | Typically Texan | Jan 10 |
| Apr | Smiles | Feb 10 |
| May | Cowboys | Mar 10 |

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS is the topic for our DECEMBER 2007 issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Holiday Decorations, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before October 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org. (If you have questions about your camera’s capabilities and settings, please refer to the operating manual.)



▲ Rebecca Nicole Steele, 16, took this photo after a big rain in Atascosa County. Rebecca found the spadefoot toad and dressed it up with a daisy rain cap before snapping the picture. Rebecca and her family are members of Karnes Electric Cooperative.



AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

OCTOBER

- 03 ROUND TOP** [3-6]
Antiques Fair,
1-888-273-6426
- 04 CENTER** [4-6]
East Texas Poultry
Festival, (936) 598-3682,
www.shelbycounty
chamber.com
- 05 FREDERICKSBURG** [5-7]
Oktoberfest,
(830) 997-4810,
www.oktoberfestinfbg.com
- 06 BONHAM** Public
Library's Pumpkin Patch
Bazaar, (903) 583-3128
- BURTON** Half Pint
Rodeo, (979) 255-4870
- COLEMAN** Fiesta de la
Paloma, (325) 625-2163
- HILLSBORO** [6-7, 13-14]
Middlefaire Renaissance
& Medieval Festival,
(254) 582-3001

- 06 JOHNSON CITY**
Wild Game Benefit,
(830) 833-5335
- MASON** Old Yeller Day,
(325) 475-3200,
www.masontxcoc.com
- SCOTLAND** [6-7]
Centennial & Oktoberfest,
(940) 541-2285
- TABLE ROCK** [6, 13, 20]
Fall Shakespeare Festival,
(254) 247-0220,
www.tablerock.org
- TYE**
Tye Wheel Fest,
(325) 695-8253
- 10 NACOGDOCHES** [10-14]
Pineywoods Fair,
(936) 564-0849
- 12 BURNET** [12-13]
Cultural Arts Festival &
Benefit, (512) 756-1800
- DECATUR**
Swap Meet & Antique
Tractor/Farm Equipment
Show, (940) 393-2155

- 12 FISCHER**
Cowboys for Jesus
Gospel Music Festival,
(830) 935-2920,
www.wimberleygospel
music.com
- MINEOLA** [12-13]
Material Girls' Quilt Guild
Celebration 2007,
(903) 569-8877
- 13 BOERNE**
Cibolo Celebration,
(830) 537-9184
- BURLESON**
Founder's Day Celebration,
(817) 343-2589
- CHAPPELL HILL** [13-14]
Scarecrow Festival,
1-888-273-6426,
www.chappellhillmuseum
.org
- ELGIN** [13-14, 20-21]
Pumpkin Festival,
(512) 281-5016,
www.elginchristmastree
farm.com

- 13 MARSHALL**
FireAnt Festival,
(903) 935-7868
- ROSENBERG**
Ride to Rosenberg Car
Show, (713) 816-2624
- WIMBERLEY**
St. Francis Pet Blessing,
(512) 847-6969,
www.emilyann.org
- 15 COMFORT** [15-31]
Scarecrow Invasion,
(830) 995-3131,
www.comfortchamberof
commerce.com
- 18 MISSION** [18-21]
Texas Butterfly Festival,
1-800-580-2700,
www.texasbutterfly.com
- TYLER** [18-21]
Texas Rose Festival,
1-800-235-5712,
www.visittyler.com
- 19 BRENHAM** [19-20]
Oktoberfest,
1-888-273-6426

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AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

- 20 ATLANTA**
Pumpkin Patch Festival,
(903) 796-8247
- ENNIS**
Fall Festival,
1-888-366-4748
- MADISONVILLE**
Texas Mushroom Festival,
(936) 348-3592,
www.texasmushroom
festival.com
- MIDLOTHIAN**
Fall Festival,
(972) 723-8600
- SAINT JO**
Fall Festival & Scarecrow
Festival, (940) 964-2682,
www.saintjochamber.com
- SEABROOK [20-21]**
Gulf Coast International
Dragon Boat Regatta,
(832) 687-7208
- SHALLOWATER**
Harvest Festival,
(806) 832-5594

- 25 PORT ARANSAS**
Harvest Moon Regatta,
1-800-452-6278,
www.harvestmoon
regatta.com
- 26 MERIDIAN [26-28]**
National Championship
Barbecue Cook-Off,
(254) 435-2966
- NEW BRAUNFELS [26-27]**
Friends of the Library
Annual Book Sale,
(830) 221-4300
- PARIS [26-27]**
Festival of Pumpkins,
1-800-727-4789
- ROCKPORT**
Halloween on the Harbor,
(361) 729-1271
- SAN AUGUSTINE [26-27]**
Sassafras Festival,
(936) 275-3610
- 27 BULVERDE**
Jubilee Celebration,
(830) 228-4356

- 27 COLDSRING**
Holiday Shore
Chili Cook-Off,
(832) 289-1558
- FRISCO**
Barktoberfest 2007,
(972) 498-8980,
www.friscohumane
society.com
- PALESTINE** Hot Pepper
Fest, (903) 729-6066,
www.palestinechamber.org
- SAN ANGELO**
Wiener Dog Races
Benefit, (325) 942-8096
- WACO [27-28]**
Lone Star Gourd Festival,
(806) 523-9092, www
.texasgourdsociety.org
- WAXAHACHIE**
Texas Country Reporter
Festival, (972) 938-9617,
www.texascountry
reporter.com
- 28 INGRAM** Hunters
Festival, (830) 367-4322

- 28 SAN BERNARD**
Friends of the River Fund-
raiser, (979) 417-5584,
www.sanbernardriver.com

NOVEMBER

- 01 ABILENE [1-4]**
Junior League Christmas
Carousel, (325) 677-1879
- 02 PALACIOS [2-3]**
Texas Fishermen's
Seafood Festival,
1-800-611-4567,
www.texasfishermens
festival.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 December by October 10.

Events are listed according to space available; see the full listing at www.texascooppower.com.

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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. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

I like to surprise folks not lucky enough to live in Texas by taking them deep down into the Piney Woods. To see the looks of astonished wonder as they discover the raw beauty unfolding across four national forests in the southeast corner of the state is so satisfying. Of course, the trip is most stunning in autumn.

Buried within the forests are unexpected lessons in history and nature. A route festooned with little jewels winds about 80 miles through the woods from Huntsville to Lake Livingston to the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation and on to the incomparable Big Thicket National Preserve. Just as non-Texans uncovering these souvenirs of nature, you may learn a thing or two, too.

HUNTSVILLE

This town, established as an Indian trading post about the time Texas won independence in 1836, is the place to go to become better acquainted with a primary figure of the day. You can't miss "A TRIBUTE TO COURAGE," the mammoth image of Sam Houston rising nearly 70 feet into the sky near the Interstate 45 exit. On the north side of the downtown square, there's a fascinating **TRIO OF MURALS DEPICTING HOUSTON'S LIFE**. Starting at 1836 Sam Houston Avenue, on 15 acres that belonged to Houston, you'll find a museum-memorial complex named in his honor, complete with two of his homes, his law office and personal items belonging to Santa Anna when Houston's army captured the Mexican leader at San Jacinto. On Ninth Street and Avenue I, **OAKWOOD CEMETERY** holds Houston's final resting site, along with those of other Texas heroes, Civil War soldiers and pioneers. Note that Houston's tomb inscription bears the tribute from Andrew Jackson: "The world will take care of Houston's fame."

Huntsville Chamber of Commerce, (936) 295-8113 or 1-800-289-0389; www.huntsvilletexas.com

HUNTSVILLE to THE BIG THICKET

See the forest, the trees and the remnants of the Big Thicket in the Piney Woods.

BY JUNE NAYLOR



LAKE LIVINGSTON

Follow U.S. Highway 190 east from Huntsville as it wraps around the north end of big but exquisite Lake Livingston. It's 44 miles to Livingston, a town with many historic homes, which is also the headquarters of Sam Houston Electric Co-op. Another eight miles south and west via U.S. Highway 59, FM 1988 and FM 3126, you'll find **LAKE LIVINGSTON STATE PARK**, a pretty, 645-acre refuge covered in loblolly pine and water oak. You can sign up for a horseback ride at the local stables or check out the ranger-led nature hikes, which often include spotting critters such as deer, raccoons, armadillos, swamp rabbits and squirrels. Rangers also give fishing classes on specified Saturdays, but bring your poles anytime to try for catfish, bass, crappie and perch.

Lake Livingston State Park, (936) 365-2201; www.tpwd.state.tx.us

ALABAMA-COUSHATTA INDIAN RESERVATION

Just 15 miles east of Livingston via U.S. Highway 190, this segment of the

southern forest tribes lives in a section of woods dedicated as its home in the 1850s, mostly thanks to their good friend Sam Houston. Book a seat on the 20-minute **INDIAN CHIEF TRAIN RIDE**, the 25-minute **INDIAN COUNTRY BUS TOUR** or the 45-minute **BIG THICKET BUS TOUR** to learn more about the people and their forest. The **LIVING INDIAN VILLAGE** walking tour shows you how the

Alabama-Coushattas lived, made weapons and created their signature crafts, such as their pine-needle baskets, which you can buy in the gift shop. Call ahead to get schedules for traditional dance shows, the annual pow-wow and the outdoor summer drama called "Beyond the Sundown." Come hungry, as the Twelve Clans Restaurant serves buffalo burgers and that addictive fry bread.

Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation, 1-800-926-9038; www.alabama-coushatta.com

BIG THICKET NATIONAL PRESERVE

One of my favorite spots in this natural treasure trove is **COLLINS POND** in the Big Sandy area, found a little over three miles south of U.S. Highway 190, off FM 1276. Walk **THE WOODLANDS TRAIL**, a 5.5-mile loop that wanders through this primeval forest's rare collection of plant life. You'll see fan palms typically found on subtropical coasts, as well as delicate ferns sprouting from dense beds of deep green, downy moss clinging to old plantation pines. Extravagantly frilled lichen and giant wild mushrooms cling to tree trunks, and some 20 varieties of orchids bloom at certain times of year. Or choose one of the many other wonderful trails in the preserve's 97,000 acres that scientists have called our country's biological crossroads. Bring plenty of bug repellent and drinking water.

June Naylor is the author of Texas: Off the Beaten Path (Globe Pequot Press).