

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

JULY 2008

MINIATURE HORSES

WORLD'S LITTLEST SKYSCRAPER

HIT THE ROAD

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

# SOLAR POWER

*Waiting for the Clouds To Part*



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By Bill McCann, Kaye Northcott and Kevin Hargis

*Solar-generated electricity for all is still but a glimmer in our future, but new technologies hold great promise for sunny Texas.*

### 14 Mini Blessings

By Karen Branz Leach  
Photos by Will van Overbeek

*Miniature horses offer visitors a gentle greeting at the Monastery of St. Clare.*

## FAVORITES

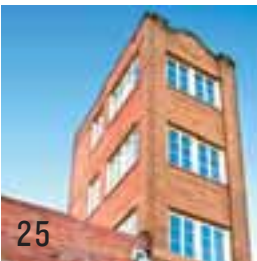
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## TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

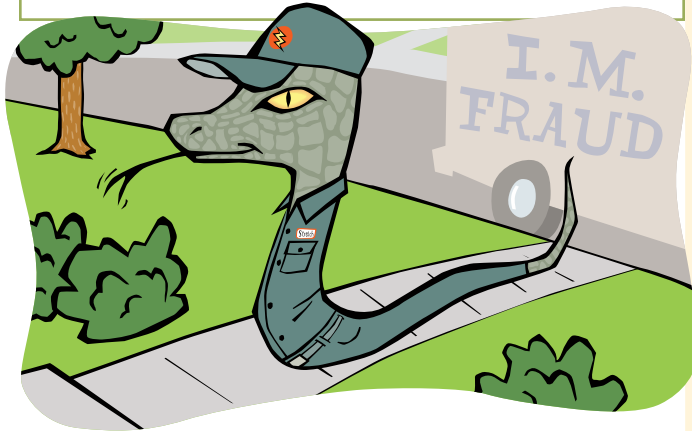
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# POWER TALK



## BEWARE OF CON ARTISTS OR THIEVES POSING AS UTILITY WORKERS

Sam Houston and CoServ electric cooperatives in Texas and a major utility in Iowa have reported that scam artists posing as collection agents have been calling utility customers and demanding that a payment be sent by check or the Internet to the scam agency to preclude disconnection of service. Sometimes they ask for a credit card number.

Most cooperatives do not use collection agencies. And electric payments should go only to your cooperative. If you receive a questionable call, please contact your cooperative or law-enforcement authorities.

While we're on the subject of people preying on trusting folks, from time to time we hear of someone posing as a utility employee and wanting to gain entry to a home to check electric service. If you let someone into your house without verifying credentials, you may discover later that cash or a small valuable has disappeared.

Be on the safe side:

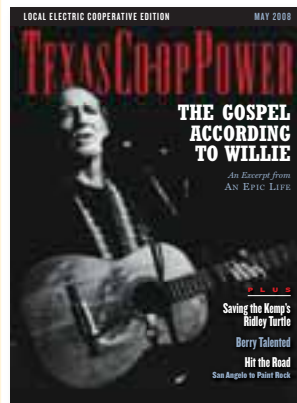
1. Always ask for company identification or an employee identification number.
2. Don't provide any personal or banking information to anyone who calls you. Instead, you should dial the co-op or other business to ensure you are talking to a legitimate party.
3. Employees may, on occasion, be dispatched to a customer's home for an unscheduled maintenance call. If a visitor or caller is unable or unwilling to provide his or her name or employee identification number, please call your cooperative and report the incident.

# letters

## WILLIE STORY LEAVES HIM COLD

You let Joe Nick Patoski write a boring, one-sided piece on Willie Nelson's visit to his hometown and the Abbott Methodist Church ("The Gospel According to Willie," May 2008), but it doesn't tell about Willie, the man, or his feelings about life or anything else for that matter. And the reference to "the putrid skunk aroma" of Willie weed coming from the bus was totally inappropriate in such an article.

CHRIS BURNETT  
cburnett@ectisp.net



## HOORAY FOR HEAT PUMPS

There is legislation in Congress to outlaw the resistance electric light bulb and require use of fluorescent bulbs. But if you are going to save energy, you have to go to the heat pump. Congress should require every new house that is going to use electricity for heat to be built with heat pumps. Property owners should be required to notify their tenants about the source of heat used in their buildings.

JOHN D. BENNETT  
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

## NO WOLVES, JUST COYOTES

I am pleased to see your announcement about Mineola

Nature Preserve on the Sabine River in the April issue. However, there is one error in the article. Unfortunately, there are no longer any wild wolves in East Texas, but coyotes are common.

RAY C. TELFAIR II  
Certified Wildlife Biologist  
Cherokee County Electric Cooperative

## 'RUN LIKE A RABBIT!'

Your article, "A Permanent Memory," in the April issue was a blast!

My mother gave all our neighbors perms, but when it came my turn every six months, she was so afraid that she might damage my short, thin hair. Once, she accidentally dropped the glass bottle of neutralizer. In those days, moms didn't drive, so she yelled for my brother, Don, to "run like a rabbit" to the store and buy a new permanent kit. Until he returned, she held my head under the kitchen faucet. Everything turned out fine. Love your magazine.

JOANNE COVEY  
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

## MESQUITE MAKES MUSIC

I can't help but respond to the letter in June from Guy Matthews saying, "mesquite wood's most useful purpose is its embers, which flavor Texas barbecue ..."

Maybe mesquite's purpose of flavoring Texas MUSIC has not been considered before turning it to embers! I've been building guitars out of mesquite for about 10 years. It has proven to be a great sounding tonewood, not to mention its natural beauty and durability.

VINCE PAWLESS  
Cooke County Electric Cooperative

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, e-mail us at letters@texas-ec.org, or submit online at www.texascoopower.com. Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and are printed as space allows. Read additional letters at www.texascoopower.com.

# H A P P E N I N G S

Don those swimsuits and spring into **SPRING HO**, Lampasas' annual festival that invites participants to make a big splash while enjoying events galore, such as a carnival and county fair.

The 36-year-old festival, scheduled for July 7-13, honors the rejuvenating powers of Lampasas' mineral springs.

One of the coolest—or coldest—ways to celebrate during the festival is to jump into the Hancock Free Flow Swim Area, a spring-fed swimming pool. Meanwhile, there are so many activities scheduled, festivalgoers won't know what to dive into first. For example, there's the Spring Ho Beauty Pageant, the Hayloft Party Talent Contest, the Kiddie Fishing Derby, the Keystone Square Museum special exhibits, a pet parade, a barbecue cook-off, a 10-kilometer race and the Spring Ho Dance on the Square in the National Registered Historic District in downtown Lampasas.

For more information, call (512) 556-5301 or go to [www.springho.com](http://www.springho.com).



Hancock Springs' historic bathhouse

ADRIAN JACKSON

## THE QUEEN OF THE GULF

Weathering hurricanes and economic downturns, the Hotel Galvez has stood proudly for decades on the south shore of Galveston Island, offering elegant accommodations to thousands of visitors. The hotel, built in the mission/Spanish revival style, opened in 1911 and



was instrumental in helping rebuild the island city's economy after the devastating 1900 hurricane.

The "Queen of the Gulf," which had faded after a tourism downturn sparked by raids in 1957 on the city's illegal gambling establishments, was restored to its former glory in the mid-1990s and now gives guests magnificent views of the Gulf along the city's protective seawall, just blocks from the historic Strand District.

— From *Historic Hotels of Texas: A Traveler's Guide*, Texas A&M University Press, first edition, 2007

## WHO KNEW?

There were no PR people around when these places were named (counties in parentheses).

**CALAMITY CREEK**  
(Brewster)

**COW TRAP LAKE**  
(Brazoria)

**DEADMAN CREEK**  
(Callahan)

**DEVIL'S SINKHOLE**  
(Edwards)

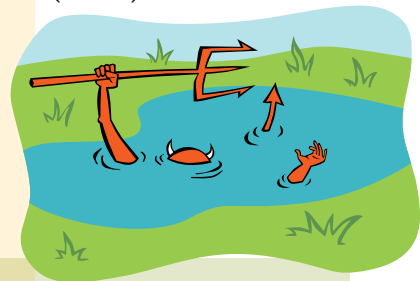
**FOOL CREEK**  
(Glasscock)

**SHORTERS DEFEAT**  
(Cherokee)

**STAMPEDE CREEK**  
(Bell, McLennan)

**STARVATION CREEK**  
(Hutchinson)

**SWINDLER CREEK**  
(Newton)




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 **Texas Electric Cooperatives**  
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## FUTURE TALK

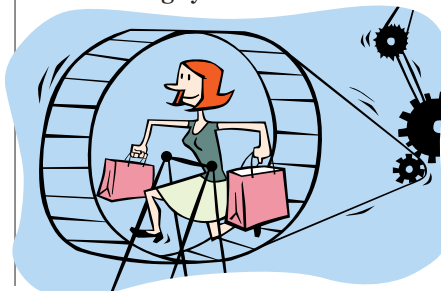
### GOOD VIBRATIONS

The next time the floor vibrates beneath your feet, think of it as renewable energy in the making. You've probably experienced this phenomenon someplace such as a multistory shopping mall during the Christmas rush. Thousands of shoppers walking the corridors at the same time can create a mini-earthquake. Buildings are designed to withstand this motion, which structural engineers call "dynamic load."

A London architectural firm has unveiled a proposal for capturing all that footloose energy and converting it into electricity. Plans are under way to build an energy-harvesting staircase with small hydraulic generators embedded in the floor of a London

subway. Estimates are that each footstep can generate 3 to 5 watts of power. Multiply that by tens of thousands of walkers each day, and you could light an entire building.

Harnessing energy from human and natural activity is a growing enterprise. Don't be surprised if someday your workout at the gym will help power the facility's air-conditioning system.



THE ENERGY FROM SUNSHINE FALLING ON A SINGLE ACRE OF LAND IN WEST TEXAS IS CAPABLE OF PRODUCING THE POWER

# A SPARK



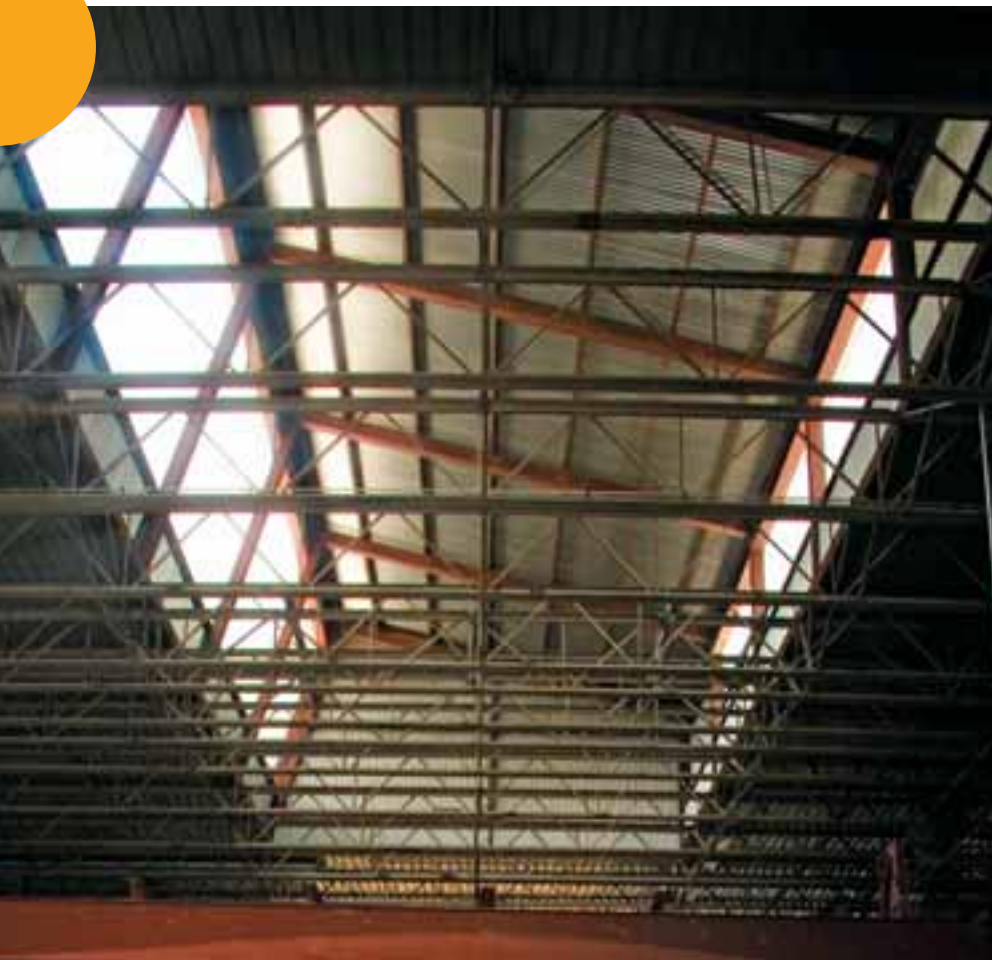
# FOR SOLAR POWER

BY BILL McCANN

SAN ANTONIO'S CITY-OWNED POWER PROVIDER HAS THE SUN IN ITS EYES. LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE, CPS ENERGY HAS TEAMED WITH A SAN ANTONIO COMPANY TO INSTALL A ROOF FULL OF SOLAR PANELS AT A 67,000-SQUARE-FOOT FORMER WAREHOUSE BEING REBUILT AT THE SHUTTERED PEARL BREWERY ON THE NORTHERN EDGE OF DOWNTOWN. THE PANELS ARE CAPABLE OF GENERATING 200 KILOWATTS OF ELECTRICITY—EQUAL TO ABOUT ONE-FOURTH OF THE BUILDING'S TOTAL ENERGY NEEDS. IT IS THE LARGEST SUCH PROJECT IN THE STATE.



SANDY POWERS



**WITH AN OPERATING LIFE OF MORE THAN 40 YEARS, THE PROJECT EVENTUALLY WILL HAVE A POSITIVE CASH FLOW, ACCORDING TO ANDREW McCALLA, PRESIDENT OF MERIDIAN ENERGY SYSTEMS. BUT WHILE PAYBACK IS IMPORTANT, THIS KIND OF PROJECT IS NOT JUST ABOUT THAT, HE SAID. IT IS ABOUT USING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THAT ALSO BENEFITS THE ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE ITS OPERATION DOES NOT POLLUTE THE AIR OR WATER.**

Solar electric panels were installed in June, and tenants are scheduled to move into the building in August. Known as the Full Goods Building, where beer once was temporarily stored before being shipped out, the building has been converted from a warehouse into a combination residential, office and retail facility. Besides the solar panels, the building has one of the most energy-efficient air-conditioning systems available. It also has a system to capture, store and recycle rainwater for landscape irrigation.

The solar power unit is not cheap, but it will have many benefits, CPS Energy officials say. For one thing, it will be a valuable test bed and learning laboratory for solar power. For another, it will help educate architects, engineers and CPS Energy's own municipal researchers as well as the general public about this emerging technology. And it just might provide the needed spark to get other businesses and public utilities to give solar energy a try, too.

The solar project is part of an ambitious effort by Silver Ventures, a San Antonio real-estate investment firm, to redevelop the 22-acre Pearl Brewery site into a multipurpose urban village on the San Antonio River. The company has been reworking historic structures at the old brewery and adding new construction to create an urban center that includes residential, commercial, retail, educational and entertainment facilities.

Because Silver Ventures is emphasizing environmental stewardship in the redevelopment, solar energy and energy and water conservation are an important part of the effort.

"We think that the Pearl Brewery redevelopment is great for San Antonio, and we are excited to be a part of it," said Valerie von Schramm, CPS Energy's senior research manager for renewables, distributed energy and environment. "By participating in the solar project, CPS Energy is stepping out front in a big way for solar energy in the community while helping [the utility] to diversify our energy sources."

CPS Energy will monitor the solar project closely, using state-of-the-art metering equipment to test its viability in a real-world setting. The utility also will share what it learns to assist public and private organizations that may be interested in installing their own solar electric systems, von Schramm said.

A public display will allow visitors to the Pearl site to see for themselves how the solar unit is operating, she said.

"We believe the project will be a useful educational tool for students and the public as well as a model for future commercial uses of solar energy," von Schramm added. "We have received many inquiries about the solar project and expect the high level of interest to continue."

The solar electric panels were installed in June, and tenants are



scheduled to move into the building in August. It is known as the Full Goods Building, where beer once was temporarily stored before being shipped out. The building has been converted from a warehouse into a combination residential, office and retail facility. Besides the solar panels, the building has one of the most energy-efficient air-conditioning systems available. It also has a system to capture, store and recycle rainwater for landscape irrigation.

Silver Ventures and CPS Energy have committed \$1.35 million for the solar project: \$950,000 from Silver Ventures and \$400,000 from CPS Energy. CPS Energy is the nation's largest municipally owned energy operator, providing electricity and natural gas service in and around the country's seventh-largest city. It serves about 680,000 electric customers and 320,000 natural gas customers.

The Pearl Brewery operated from 1883 until 2001. Silver Ventures bought the property in 2002 and began converting buildings in the brewery complex to residential, office, meeting and training spaces. Silver Ventures and CPS Energy announced the joint solar project in June 2007.

Hooking up with CPS Energy for the solar project made sense because both organizations saw the potential benefits and both were willing to invest in it, said Darryl Byrd, development director for Silver Ventures.

"It has been a good partnership and a very positive thing for the community," Byrd said.

The project uses solar cells, or photovoltaic cells, that convert sunlight directly into electricity. Solar cells have been around for decades and are used in everything from pocket calculators to orbiting satellites. They are not cheap, but costs have come down considerably as the technology has continued to improve. Also, increased demand has reduced production costs.

Solar cells have no moving parts. They are made of special materials that can generate a small amount of electrical current when sunlight strikes their surface. A large number of cells can be packaged to form a panel. An installation of a large number of panels is called a photovoltaic array.

The Pearl project is the largest solar-cell array in Texas, said Andrew

## SHEDDING LIGHT ON SOLAR

BY KAYE NORTHCOTT AND KEVIN HARGIS

Practically speaking, solar-generated electricity is still but a glimmer in our future, but new technologies hold great promise for sunny Texas. Our electric cooperative members use photovoltaic arrays primarily to pump water for remote stock tanks or to heat swimming pools and household water tanks. Many cooperatives have rules and procedures for members who wish to supplement their grid power with home arrays. Contact your cooperative to see if it has solar programs.

### COST CHALLENGES

The primary drawbacks to solar are the necessity to back up this source of electricity with a conventional energy source that works on cloudy days and at night, and the current high cost of solar technology. The good news is that the solar industry anticipates solar technology will get cheaper. Current costs are about 25 to 50 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for solar-generated electricity compared to 13 cents per kWh for electricity from coal or natural gas.

Austin Energy, a leader in Texas municipal utilities, gives a generous \$4.50-per-watt rebate for customers who install solar energy. The city estimates that this pays between 45 percent and 75 percent of the cost of installing a system. But a 1,000-watt (1 kilowatt) photovoltaic system, which is considered the smallest practical residential array, would still cost between \$6,000 and \$10,000. Even with this rebate, less than 1 percent of the city's residential and commercial customers have installed solar systems.

### TEXAS SHINES LIGHT ON SOLAR

The Texas State Energy Conservation Office, or SECO, has several programs designed to promote increased use of solar energy, both photovoltaic and passive. The agency has sponsored or is in partnership on several demonstration projects, ranging from lighting systems for city parks to a parking garage installation at the University of Texas-Houston Health Sciences Center.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is working with the Alternative Energy Institute at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, which focuses mainly on wind power research, to monitor photovoltaic output at a demonstration project at Sheldon Lake Environmental Center.

For Texas electric cooperatives, SECO offers the Stand-Alone Photovoltaic program, which aims to educate co-op workers and leaders about stand-alone systems without grid ties. They are usually photovoltaic panels used for water pumping, electric fences and other small-scale uses in areas away from power lines.

One of the agency's biggest solar projects is Texas Solar for Schools. Under the program, which began in 2001, SECO has supplied 1- to 3-kilowatt solar systems to school districts across the state. The systems allow schools to save money on their electric bills while giving students the opportunity for hands-on learning. The Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) has partnered with SECO over the past three years in the program.



CHARLIE RICHARDSON FOR U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

More families are adopting photovoltaic arrays for home use. The price is moderating, but government subsidies are still necessary to make small projects feasible.



TI WOIWENE

Bastrop Intermediate School received solar panels with the help of the State Energy Conservation Office, LCRA and Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative.



MERIDIAN ENERGY SYSTEMS, INC.

Applied Materials in Austin has a 24.8-kilowatt solar display. It received \$100,000 in rebates for installing the eight freestanding arrays, which will provide just a fraction of the power that the chip maker requires.

### INCENTIVES FOR SOLAR

The state of Texas provides some incentives for solar power installation for consumers, mainly in the form of a property tax exemption for certain solar systems. For businesses engaged strictly in solar energy sales, installation or manufacturing, there is a franchise tax exemption. In addition, Texas corporations can deduct the cost of a solar energy device they own and use from their franchise taxes. SECO provides a guide to federal tax credits for solar installation on its website, [www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us](http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us).

### INTO THE FUTURE

Photovoltaic arrays, roof-mounted silicon solar panels, are the most common technology for solar electricity and could soon be replaced by flexible solar film that is relatively inexpensive to produce.

- Many companies offer thin film that requires glass to hold it in place.
- Even better, perhaps, are the new thin-film solar cells being developed by HeliVolt and Ascent Solar Technologies. HeliVolt has announced plans for a manufacturing facility in Austin. Ascent plans to be selling rolls of solar cells by 2010.
- Farther down the road may be quantum dot solar cells as small as a nanometer (a billionth of a meter). The theoretic efficiency of normal solar cells is about 43 percent, according to the *EnergyPulse* newsletter. Quantum dots could increase that efficiency to as much as 60 percent.

### EVEN SMARTER BUILDINGS AND WINDOWS

What if your windows and walls could automatically reflect light when it is hot outside and let light in when it is cold, helping to keep inside temperatures relatively stable? Such windows and walls are expected to be available this year from RavenBrick of Denver ([www.ravenbrick.com](http://www.ravenbrick.com)). Its thermo-reflective filters are transparent at low temperatures and highly reflective at high temperatures.



RANDY MALLORY, SANBIA

The experimental Solar Two project in the Mojave Desert used molten salt to store heat from the sun. The hot salt was used to produce steam to drive an electric generator. A similar project, Solar Tres, is under way now in Spain.

### LARGE-SCALE SOLAR COLLECTORS

Just as there are huge wind farms now providing backup power for conventional electricity generation, central solar power towers will likely do the same in the future. The facilities generate electric power from sunlight by focusing concentrated solar radiation on a tower-mounted receiver. Hundreds of thousands of small sun-tracking mirrors called heliostats or large, flat sun-tracking mirrors reflect sunlight to the receiver. In some technologies, liquid salt is pumped and heated through the receiver and then stored until power is needed from the plant. The molten salt is then pumped into a steam-generating system that turns a conventional electric generator.

In November, an Australian company signed a \$500 million agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric to produce 177 megawatts at a solar-thermal plant in California's

Central Valley. The project should be on line in 2010.

The experimental Solar Two plant in California's Mojave Desert, financed in part by the Boeing Company and Bechtel Corp., is being followed by Solar Tres, a commercial solar collector in Spain. Meanwhile, Torresol Energy, an international consortium, recently announced it will design, build and operate three central tower receivers in Spain. Beyond Spain, the company has its sights set on developing other commercial solar generating plants in sunbelt areas around the world, including the United States.



COURTESY SILVER VENTURES

Once home to Pearl Brewery's draft horses, the meticulously renovated Pearl Stable now provides an elegant site for business events and social occasions for up to 500 people.

McCalla, president of Meridian Energy Systems, an Austin-based firm that designed and installed the equipment.

"We are elated to be a part of this important project," McCalla said. "We have projects around the state and nation, but this one is our shining star."

With an operating life of more than 40 years, the project eventually will have a positive cash flow, according to McCalla. But while payback is important, this kind of project is not just about that, he said. It is about using advanced technology that also benefits the environment because its operation does not pollute the air or water.

Bill Sinkin, founder of a nonprofit solar advocacy group called Solar San Antonio, agrees.

Solar energy brings many benefits that are not always easy to calculate, according to Sinkin, whose group has been credited with helping Silver Ventures and CPS Energy get together on the project.

"We love that solar project," Sinkin said. "The new Pearl Brewery owner [Silver Ventures] is a good environmentalist and is setting the tone here in San Antonio for building with the environment in mind. And, thanks to the owner and CPS Energy, we believe this solar project is also setting the tone that will encourage and promote the future use of solar energy."

*Bill McCann is a retired communications manager and journalist who takes on freelance writing and editing assignments when the fish aren't biting.*

HOME • FARM • RANCH

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*Well actually, it probably is*

"New & Improved" might look just fine on a box of laundry detergent. But when you're shopping for an insurance company, "Tried & True" is a better way to go. At RVOS, we've been serving Texas homeowners, farmers and ranchers the same way for over 100 years—because the way we see it, honesty and respect never go out of style. To protect your family just like grandpa did, call or visit us online.

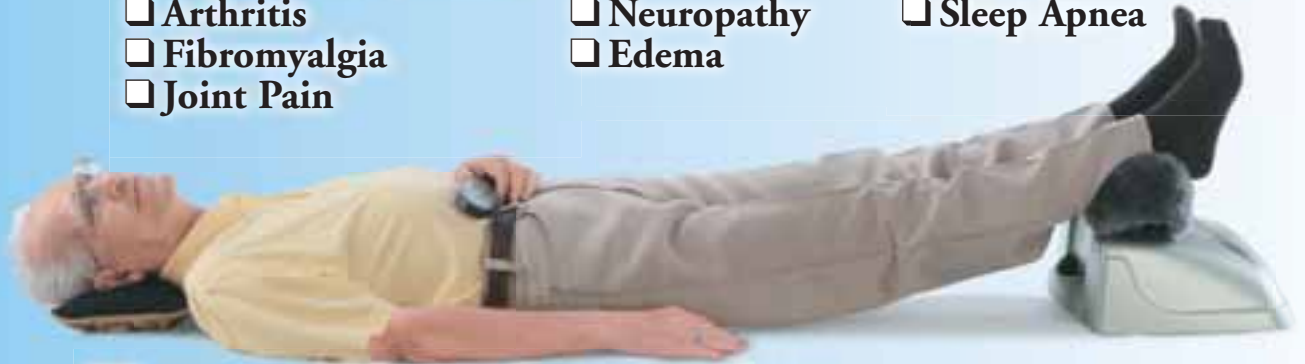
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# What people are saying about the Exerciser 2000 Elite™

After using the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ twice a day for one week the swelling in my ankles went away. It has also helped my breathing, as I can get out and walk without having to stop and catch my breath! Thank you. —*Shirley H., Florida*

As a Chiropractor, I would like to say that the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ enables people to benefit themselves at home. It is a valuable asset in moving lymph fluid, oxygenating the blood, increasing immune system function, maintaining mobility in the spine, and additionally freeing up a spine that has become stiff and arthritic. —*Garry Gorsuch, D.C.*

The ad I saw almost sounded “too good to be true”. With your no risk money back guarantee I figured I had nothing to lose so I purchased the machine... and boy, am I glad I did! I am 75 years old and suffer from sciatica, which makes my back and legs tighten up and causes numbness. I was taking 8-10 Aleve™ every day. After using the machine for only 4 minutes, I noticed my lower back loosening up. Since I have been using the machine I haven't taken any pain pills and have been pain free. My sciatica is not giving me problems anymore and my body stays loosened up. I have also had a snoring problem for quite some time, however, since using the machine my snoring has subsided. My wife is so excited! I cannot tell you how much this machine has turned my life around. —*C. Cummings*

After having a stroke, I could no longer exercise the way I used to. As a result, I developed edema. A friend of mine introduced me to the Exerciser 2000 Elite™. I loved it and I purchased one for myself. After using the machine daily for a few weeks, my symptoms of edema were completely gone. I now use the machine twice a day for 16 minutes each time on speed 3. What a wonderful way to exercise. —*Robert M.*

I love using the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ after my morning workout. It is an excellent way to cool down and it helps to start my day off right. —*Deanna C., Kansas*

I have had constipation problems for over 25 years. Since I have been using the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ I have been regular every day and have begun to lose weight. This is truly a blessing and is so easy to use. —*Jeannie*

I am in my late 80's and have diabetes. The first thing I noticed when I started using my machine was that my feet were warm when I went to bed. They were always ice cold before. Because one of my problems is poor circulation, I use the machine three times a day for 10 minutes each; in the morning, late afternoon and just before bed. I almost forgot to mention that I have not been able to lift my arms above my head. Now I can do it. You think that's no big deal until you can't do it anymore. —*Ralph K.*

My husband and I have been into natural products all of our lives but nothing has ever affected us like the Exerciser 2000 Elite™. My husband is 72 and delivers flowers. He carries 5 gallon buckets of water. Since using the machine, his back hasn't hurt him at all. My hips would hurt if I stood too long and I would get weak and have to sit down. Now I can walk and sit as long as I want. I don't take pain medication anymore. In the morning, when I get out of bed I'm not stiff anymore. At 65, wow, this is great! Thank you for offering such a great machine. We are going to tell everyone we know about it. —*Cheryl J.*

I had suffered with sleep apnea for many years and had been taking drugs for it. I was told I would have to use a breathing apparatus. In the meantime, I was introduced to the Exerciser 2000 Elite™ and decided to purchase one. Within two weeks, I was sleeping more deeply and restfully than ever before. —*David B.*

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BY KAREN BRANZ LEACH • PHOTOS BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK

# Mini Blessings at the Monastery of St. Clare

MINIATURE HORSES OFFER VISITORS GENTLE GREETING





**I**t's October, and the sky is a deep blue color that occurs only on a perfect autumn day. It's warm but not hot, and the sky is so clear that it seems you could see a thousand miles from the right hilltop. It's a great day to be headed out of the city and into the country on a drive that will take me to Brenham to see the miniature horses at the Monastery of St. Clare.

The monastery is run by the Franciscan Poor Clare Nuns, a nonprofit religious organization devoted to a contemplative life of prayer. In an operation called Monastery Miniature Horses, the nuns raise and sell the tiny equines to support their community.

When I arrive, I check in with Sister Angela, the abbess of the monastery as well as chief miniature horse wrangler. She is busy with customers in the gift shop, so I agree to talk with her later. It's the annual AutumnFest at the monastery, and there are dozens of families out for the day to play games, eat snacks and pet the horses. While I wait for Sister Angela, I wander out to a pasture where several of the horses are standing in the shade.

As I lean against the fence, three of the little guys come over to take a look. They stand quietly, gazing at me with gentle curiosity. I gaze back and find myself mentally slowing down and breathing deeper. It feels almost like meditation. The horses are just hanging out, being themselves, but their gaze is attentive and accepting. By some mysterious process, they transfer their calmness to me. This moment alone is worth the drive to Brenham.

Though each horse has a personality all its own, the horses are bred to be calm and friendly, Sister Angela says. Approach a corral fence, and they'll almost always come over to check you out. Their coats are denser and fuzzier than that of most standard-sized horses, and the fuzz on their faces is particularly soft. When they poke their heads through the fence, it's obvious that they want to be touched.

The nuns first began raising the miniature horses in Corpus Christi in 1981, at the behest of Sister Bernadette, the abbess at that time. Sister Bernadette, who died in 1990, was an animal lover and believed that the horses could provide the revenue needed to support the community.

Sister Angela, who became abbess and manager of the horse farm after Sister Bernadette's death, says the monastery sells 12 to 15 horses a year, earning from \$500 to \$5,000 each, depending on the horse's age, training and breeding ability. The nuns supplement this income with entrance fees from an estimated 20,000 visitors each year and the sales of ceramics produced in their Art Barn.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the monastery bred and trained 70 to 100 horses a year, but not all of the horses belonged to the monastery. Some of the horses were bred at the monastery, while others were brought there for training. During those years, a well-trained horse might have sold for several thousand dollars.

In 1984, the Sisters of St. Clare bought a former cutting-horse farm 7 miles outside Brenham on State Highway 105

and moved the monastery. There, a chapel and living quarters were built for the nuns.

According to John Garza, who ran the monastery's breeding and training program from 1981 to 1996, there were fewer than 20 breeders in the United States in 1981 and only about 2,500 to 3,000 miniature horses.

Over the past decade, however, competition has increased in the miniature horse world. Now, there are more than 100 breeders and nearly 160,000 horses registered with the American Miniature Horse Association (AMHA).

Meanwhile, the miniatures are just that: Sister Angela explains that the AMHA defines "miniature" as a horse that doesn't exceed 34 inches in height. In all other respects, she says, they are genetically identical to full-size horses. The miniature horses typically are 16 to 21 inches tall at birth.

Garza, a volunteer for AutumnFest, says the horses were bred during the 17th century in Europe as pets for royalty. And it is believed that from the 1800s until about 1950, miniature horses were used as "pit ponies" in European and American coal mines, hauling carts to the surface.

Garza says miniature horses are a different breed from Shetland ponies—once also used in coal mines—which are famous for their less-than-amiable temperaments. Like Shetlands, however, miniatures are strong for their size and can be trained to pull a small cart. Some of the miniatures from the monastery are sold to owners who use them in cart-driving competitions.

Garza says the horses—which in many situations are used as therapy animals—mostly are sold as pets. "The minis are

fun," he said. "They are easy and inexpensive to care for, compared to a full-sized horse. Children love them, and they become a member of your family. They bond with you. And you can raise a couple of them in your backyard."

In addition to petting the miniature horses, you can have a picnic on the monastery grounds (drinks and snacks are available for purchase) or create your own hand-painted ceramic horse. The nuns offer molded bisque ware models of horses (and a wide variety of other animals) that they make, and they provide all you need to decorate your piece. You may also purchase the exquisite hand-painted ceramics created by the nuns.

## If You Go

The monastery is open to visitors from 1:30 to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$3 for seniors and \$2 for children ages 3 to 12. Self-guided tours are available every day (stop in at the Art Barn to pay your fee and get a map of the property). Late afternoon (between 3 and 4) is often a good time to visit, as the horses in the pastures tend to come to the fences to wait for their supper.

Guided group tours are available by reservation. For more information, call the monastery at (979) 836-9652 or go to [www.monasteryminiaturehorses.com](http://www.monasteryminiaturehorses.com). Autumn Fest is October 11 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To reach the monastery, take State Highway 105 about 7 miles north-east of Brenham. The monastery will be on your right.

One tip: Don't wear a straw hat. The little horses will think you've brought them a yummy treat, and the nuns don't want you to feed the horses. (My own hat came away a little worse for the wear.)

*Karen Branz Leach is an Austin-based freelance writer.*

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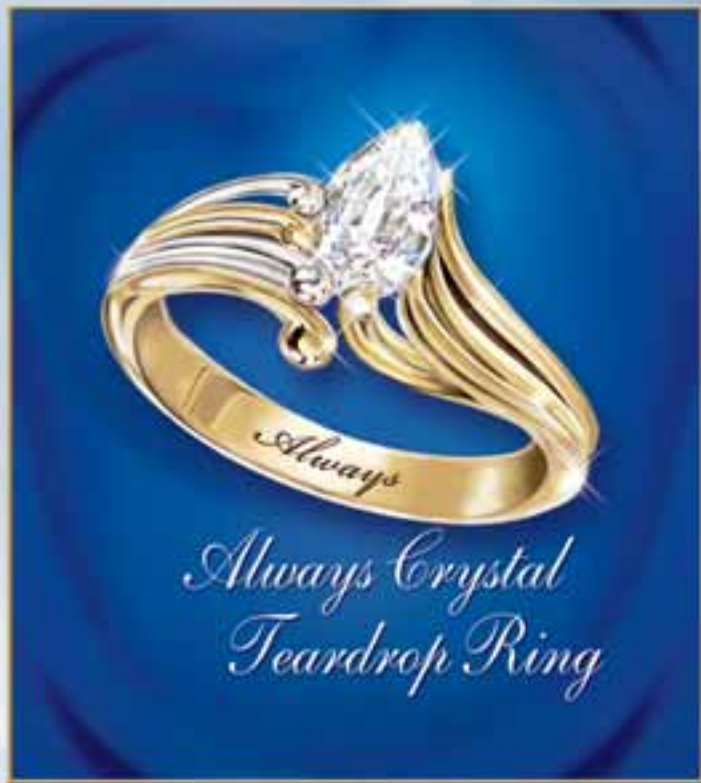




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## Celebrate Safely—Leave Explosions to the Experts



Beautiful and dangerous—even sparklers can cause severe burn injuries.

**F**ireworks are an Independence Day tradition, but lighting them is a job better left to the professionals.

Mishandled fireworks can cause serious fires and life-threatening burns. Exploding fireworks are especially dangerous if they come into contact with power lines.

The National Council on Fireworks Safety reports that more than 9,000 people are treated for fireworks-related injuries every year. Even tiny sparklers—a favorite of little kids—can reach a staggering 1,800 degrees, quickly causing dangerous burns even with minor skin contact.

Keep kids entertained with safe alternatives. Buy inexpensive glow sticks or glow-in-the-dark necklaces and bracelets that will stay lighted all night. Battery-operated fiber-optic sparklers will put on a colorful show year after year without the danger of fireworks.

Instead of putting on an amateur show at home, take your family to see a local display that's put on by experts

and supervised by fire officials.

If at-home fireworks are legal in your community and you do choose to light them, follow these safety tips from the National Council on Fireworks Safety:

- Check that all fireworks come from a reputable source. Follow all safety directions on the package.
- Light fireworks outdoors only and keep a bucket of water nearby in case of fire.
- Never let small children touch, hold or light fireworks.
- Prepare an area for shooting off fireworks and keep spectators far away.
- Never relight a “dud.” Wait 20 minutes, then drop it in a bucket of water.
- Alcohol and fireworks do not mix.
- Only use fireworks as intended. Never alter or combine them.
- Never throw or point fireworks at someone, even in jest.
- Soak all fireworks in a bucket of water before throwing them in the trash can.

## KEEP THE POOL SAFE AND COOL

**F**ew things refresh like a quick dip in a cool pool on a hot summer day. Keep your family's summer fun safe.

Kids require constant supervision as drowning can happen in mere seconds. And any place that water and electricity potentially meet can quickly become a hazard. Pools and spas often have electric underwater lights, circulating pumps and heaters. Improperly installed or poorly maintained wiring can pose a danger.

Here are a few tips for poolside safety:

- Build a fence or other barrier to separate the pool from the house and yard. Padlock fence gates to keep your children safe and to prevent neighborhood children from wandering into the pool area.
- Never leave children alone near the pool or any water source.
- Install ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) on all outlets that power outdoor electric equipment. When a GFCI detects an electricity leak, it immediately shuts off power to prevent an electrical shock.
- Never use extension cords to power pool equipment.
- Hire a licensed electrician or qualified pool professional to check that your pool's wiring and installation are up to code and pose no hazards.



# Surge Protection Not Just for Storms

It only takes a second for a power surge to destroy your computer, plasma TV or other expensive electronic equipment.

Power surges happen when electricity flow is quickly disrupted and restored or when something sends electricity flowing back into your home. Some power surges are internal and happen every day when large appliances start up and shut down.

The most dangerous and noticeable ones usually happen during storms, when trees topple onto power lines. These surges can cause instant damage to anything plugged into your home's power circuit. But even smaller surges over time can slowly damage your appliances and shorten their useful life.

The most common surge protectors are those that plug into the wall and have multiple outlets, much like a power cord. But not all power strips offer surge protection.

A good surge protector will have an indicator that tells you when a surge has been blocked. Look for surge protectors with a "joule rating" of 400 to 600. This measures the device's ability to absorb surges.

These can protect your equipment, but only to a certain degree. If the surge is larger than that joule capacity,



The right surge protection can keep your valuable equipment safe.

anything plugged into the protector can be damaged.

The best protection can be found in a whole-house surge protector, which connects at your electric panel. Though they cost \$150 to \$300, these surge protectors will guard against both daily surges and devastating storm surges for all of your home's equipment, and they can handle a much greater surge capacity.

Whether your electronic equipment is big or small, protect it with a surge protector.

For extra protection, turn off and unplug all unused appliances or electronics prior to a storm. If the electricity goes out, turn off the appliances that were in use to avoid a surge when electricity is restored.

## HAVE YOU REPLACED YOUR WINDOWS?

Most homes have single-pane windows, which means there's not much separating the inside of your home from the outside.

During summer, the sun's hot rays can beam right through a flimsy, single-pane window, making your air-conditioning system work overtime. In winter, leaky windows can account for 10 percent to 25 percent of your heating bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Consider replacing your windows with energy-efficient, double-pane models. While you shop, look for windows with a high R-value, which measures how much heat can get through the window in an hour. The greater the R-value, the greater your energy savings will be.



Installing energy-efficient windows can lower your electric bill.

The Department of Energy recommends a double-pane window with a high-performance coating, which can have an R-value of 5. Choose a window with a low-emissivity (low-E) or spectrally selective coating, which will prevent the heat from penetrating the glass in the summer. R-values as high as 10 are for homes in super-cold climates.

Choose windows that bear the Energy Star label, which means they meet strict energy-efficiency standards. If you are building a new home, installing energy-efficient windows might save you money by allowing you to purchase a smaller heater or air-conditioning unit.

## DOWNED POWER LINE? STAY AWAY

If you see a fallen power line, call your electric cooperative immediately. Call 911 if it is a medical or life-threatening emergency. Never touch a downed power line. Always assume all power lines to be energized. Stay at least 100 feet away.

Remember, if a power line is touching someone, stay away. If you attempt rescue, you could easily become a victim yourself. Call for emergency help.

If a downed power line falls across your vehicle, stay in the vehicle. Do not get out unless the vehicle is on fire! If you must get out of the vehicle, try to do so without touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time.

# Don't Mess with My Mug

*Nobody knows  
who invented  
the coffee mug.*

BY MIKE COX

I finally stumped Google when I typed in my question about coffee mugs. I started thinking about coffee mugs one morning as I sipped my first cup of the day. It came to me, along with that mind-clearing caffeine rush, that when I open the kitchen cabinet every morning in search of a cup, my eyes—quickly followed by my hand—always go to the mug with words or images on it. Unmarked cups are a distant second choice for me.

As I write this, for instance, I am drinking from a white Menger Hotel mug. It has a green 19th-century drawing of the venerable San Antonio hotel, along with the words “Menger Hotel” and “Established 1859.”

So why do I like that mug? The answer was simple, once I gave it some thought: Every time I see it, it triggers a pleasant memory of one of many occasions I have stayed at the Menger. All of my favorite coffee mugs are evocative. There’s my Frio River mug, my 40th high-school reunion mug, my John Wayne mug, my Texas Rangers mug and my Texas Capitol mug, to name a few.

Those of us who are inveterate coffee drinkers can get quite attached to a particular mug. When I was spokesman for the Texas Department of Public Safety, for instance, I once had to try to explain to recently retired *San Antonio Express-News* columnist and curmudgeonly exposé-of-government-waste Roddy Stinson why a crime-fighting DPS trooper had filed a theft charge against someone who had tried to appropriate his favorite coffee mug. You don’t mess with Texas or a Texan’s well-seasoned coffee mug.

If you’re troubled by someone borrowing your cup at the office, see if you can find the lockable mug someone invented. It has a hole in the bottom plugged by a removable stopper you can keep on your key chain. When you’ve got the key, your coffee mug is useless to anyone else.

Beyond the memories associated with coffee mugs, from the perspective of those businesses that either give them to customers or sell them as souvenirs, a mug with something printed on it is a near perfect form of advertising. Well, as long as you’re targeting coffee drinkers. You only pay for it once (and not much if you buy in bulk), but the mug keeps shouting your brand day after day until it gets accidentally dropped or the owner’s spouse puts it back in the garage-sale box.

As consumer items, coffee mugs also are as green as an unroasted coffee bean when it comes to protecting the environment. An old friend like a ceramic or

metallic mug used day after day is one fewer disposable paper or Styrofoam cup in the landfill. (According to the website [www.groovygreen.com](http://www.groovygreen.com) Americans discard in excess of 14 billion hot beverage cups each year, enough to loop the Earth more than 55 times. That number is expected to grow to 23 billion by 2010.)

I have dozens, maybe scores of coffee mugs. And I'm not even an official coffee-mug collector.

Back to my Google question: "Who invented coffee mug advertisement?" The vastness of the Internet is largely silent on the matter. Judging from several websites devoted to coffee mug collecting, the railroad industry and restaurants produced the first "advermugs."

Typing "Who invented the coffee mug?" did net me a Yahoo! Answers page where someone had posted that question. The best response was: "The guy who was sore from burning his lips on the coffeemaker!" Someone else posited Mr. Coffee as the inventor, but another respondent got it right: "No one truly knows who did. That's like who invented a vase or a door?"

(A couple of interesting websites are: [www.restaurantwarecollectors.com](http://www.restaurantwarecollectors.com) and [www.vintagecups.com](http://www.vintagecups.com).)

If you feel you have too many mugs or want to start enjoying new memories, here are a few ideas:

Used coffee mugs, assuming they are not chipped or worn, are great for re-gifting—again, at least for other coffee drinkers. Who but you has to know the mug came from your own kitchen?

Consider the one-in, two-out rule. Popular with the anti-clutter crowd, this rule holds that anytime you acquire one thing, you must get rid of two of the same category of things. In other words, if you buy a Far Side mug, select two old mugs to re-gift or donate to a charity or thrift shop.

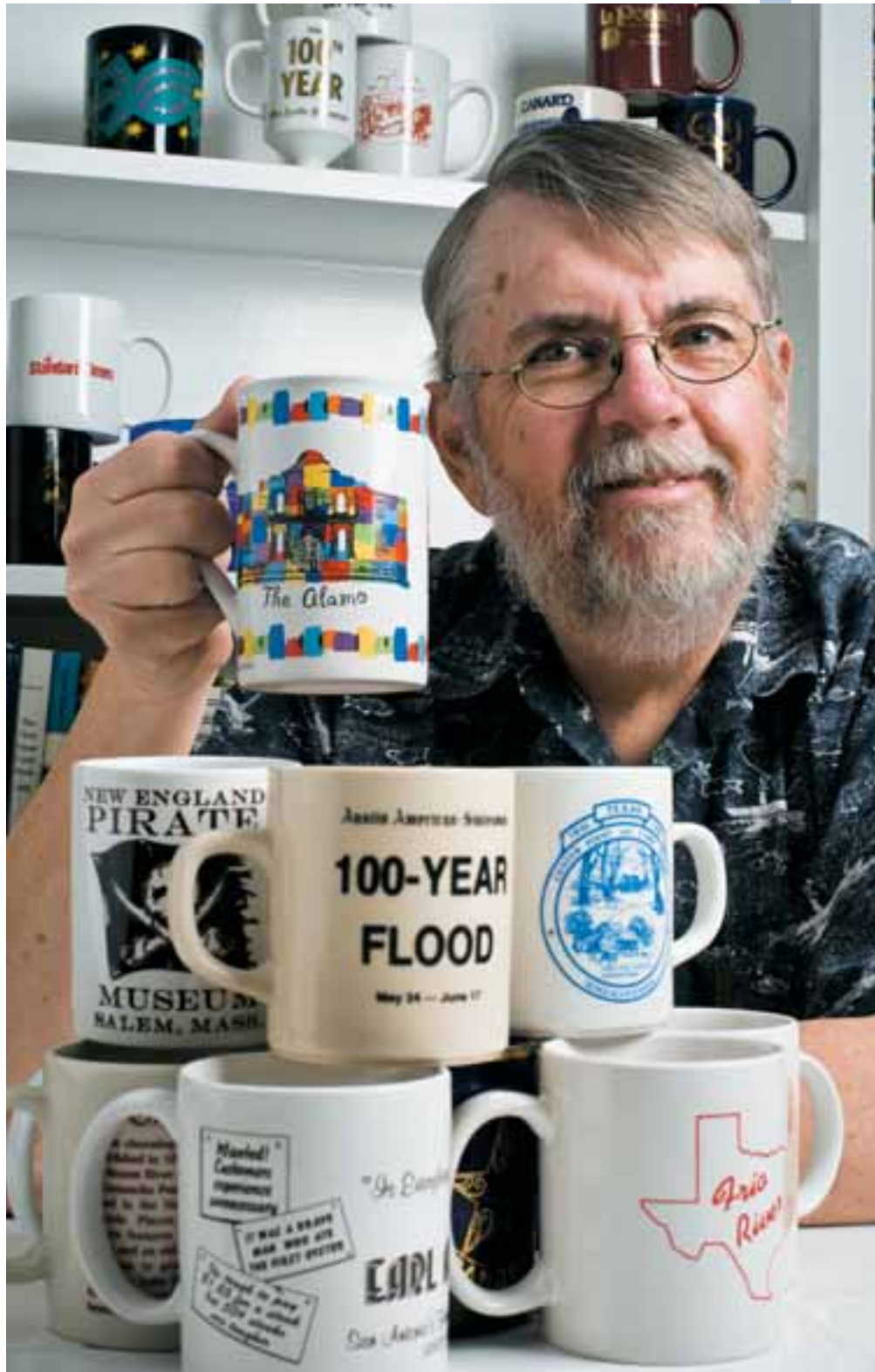
You just might be drinking coffee from a valuable antique you can sell for a lot of money. A 1994 Starbucks cup recently fetched \$1,283.65 on eBay.

As much as I like my coffee mugs, selling a used mug for that much money would make for a wonderful memory to cherish over my next cup of joe.

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*Mike Cox is author of the new book *The Texas Rangers: Wearing the Cinco Peso, 1821-1900* (New York: Forge Books, 2008).*

**Mike Cox with his coffee mugs.**



## CARRIZO SPRINGS

# Sweet Taste of Success

*Dixondale Farms produces 420 million onion plants a year.*

by Eileen Mattei



Spend enough time in the fields where thousands of young onion plants are being harvested, and you, like Bill Martin, will crave a juicy hamburger topped with fried onions.

Such cravings are a daily work hazard for Martin and his brother-in-law Bruce Frasier, who belong to the fourth generation of an onion-raising family in Carrizo Springs. Their Dixondale Farms lays claim to being the oldest and the largest grower of onion plants in the United States, shipping more than 420 million pungent plants a year.

The Dixondale crew stopped raising eating-size onions in 1965. Instead, it plants onion seeds and harvests small plants to be shipped to other growers. And they can chow down on their onions bought at the local grocer or across the country.

Martin, vice president of Dixondale Farms, keeps a bushel of onion lore under his smudged white Stetson. For example, onions are daylight-sensitive rather than temperature-sensitive, he explains. The onions that thrive in the northern states' 16 hours of summer light will never develop much of a bulb in Texas' shorter summer days. The North's longer days produce hotter onions. Texas, by contrast, is known for its 1015 SuperSweet onions, which are to be planted in the Rio Grande Valley on October 15 for April harvest. Dozens of varieties for various climates get their start at Dixondale Farms.

"People in Georgia [known for its sweet onions] don't want it known, but a lot of Vidalia onions start life here in Dimmit County, Texas," Martin says. The farm ships Bermuda onion plants to Bermuda, too.

Dixondale Farms staggers its plantings from late August through January on 350 to 400 acres laid out in a narrow three-mile strip for easier harvesting access. During one week in October, crews planted 28 varieties of onion and leek seeds in double rows—about 60 million seeds. Before the seed goes in the ground, the growers know where 80 percent of the plants are headed: mail-order customers, farm and garden stores, and retailers such as Lowe's, Wal-Mart and The Home Depot.

In October, harvesting of the slender, tender plants begins, with onions going to supply growers and gardeners in the Rio Grande Valley and Florida. Cutting and bunching is still done by hand. Earning up to \$800 per week, the field hands kneel in the cultivated soil, unearth the plants, bind 60 plants together with fat rubber bands and trim the tops off, leaving behind what looks like the entire world's supply of chives. A bunch of tiny, green-topped bulbs fits in a circle made by your thumb and index finger.

"When it gets hot in the afternoon, cutting the tops off makes your eyes water," Martin says. At this size, it's impossible to tell varieties apart, so careful record-keeping is essential.

"You control growth in onion plants by when you water," Martin explains. Dixondale relies on its 1,000-foot-deep wells, drawing on a water table that is

much higher now than it was 50 years ago. That's because the region's farmland has transitioned to hunting leases. Because onions wear out the soil, Dixondale Farms rotates cantaloupes, onions and leeks over the farm's 2,200 acres.

Martin says all the best-tasting dishes have onions in them. That's why, besides overseeing onion harvests and the family cattle ranching operation and giving visitors tours, he likes to contribute onion recipes to the *Onion Patch*, Dixondale Farms' quarterly newsletter.

Joseph McClendon, the great-grandfather of Martin and his sister Jeanie Martin Frasier, founded Dixondale Farms in 1913. While their father, Wallace Martin, still knows his onions, Jeanie's husband, Frasier, known as the Onionman, is president of Dixondale Farms. When Frasier came into the business run by his father-in-law in the 1980s, he shifted the business to mail-order selling. The U.S. Postal Service custom-designed a shipping box with air ventilation holes to keep the onion plants fresher, and the farm mails tractor-trailer loads of boxes at a time.

The packing crew fills orders for the popular sampler of red, yellow and white onions based on the length of day at the destination. Trucks line up to haul drop shipments of plants for backyard gardeners and a dozen mail-order nurseries in the eastern United States. People with roadside stands often order 30 bunches of assorted plants.

"The people up north, snowed in, are among the first to order," Martin says.

"A lot of customers pick up the phone and want to visit with us to brag about their onion crop," Frasier says. "We're trying to educate. If the same question comes up, we address it in the newsletter."

Photos of grinning customers proudly displaying their prize onions fill the catalog, newsletter and website. "I don't know what our future will be. None of the fifth generation has yet committed to coming back," Frasier says. But given Dixondale Farms' tradition of having a son-in-law lead the company, the family has no reason to cry about the onion business.

---

*Dixondale Farms: P.O. Box 129, Department WP08, Carrizo Springs, TX 78834-6129; for more information, call 1-877-367-1015 or go to [www.dixondalefarms.com](http://www.dixondalefarms.com).*

*Harlingen writer Eileen Mattei is a Nueces Electric Co-op retail member.*

## ONION TRIVIA

According to the National Onion Association, the average American eats 20 pounds of onions a year.

- Texas' state vegetable is the sweet onion.
- Men eat 40 percent more onions than women.
- Chewing a few sprigs of parsley gets rid of onion breath.
- For each leaf, there will be a "ring" on the onion. The larger the leaf, the larger the ring becomes.



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## Hydroxatone® Vs. Other Products

Hydroxatone® is a real Botox® alternative without the same risks associated with Botox®. There have been a number of anti-wrinkle products introduced over the last few years. Few of these provide valid scientific evidence that they provide real results. The leading bio-chemist that developed Hydroxatone® with Dr. Fiorillo decided to incorporate the three leading and complimentary anti-wrinkle ingredients into Hydroxatone® (Argireline®<sup>85</sup>, Matrixyl™ 3000<sup>3</sup>, and Hyaluronic Acid) to provide real results. Hydroxatone® was the first to combine these three, resulting in the unrivaled scientifically advanced anti-wrinkle product on the market.

## Up To 68% Reduction Of Deep Wrinkles

Unless you've actually tried Hydroxatone®, it's hard to imagine it can work the miracles users claim it does. But women and men of all ages are using Hydroxatone® and seeing real and noticeable results every day. The cumulative results that are seen within two weeks will continue with daily use. Over six months this will increase to as much as 68% reduction in deep wrinkles.

## Why Hydroxatone® Is So Effective

Hydroxatone® is unlike any other skin cream you've ever tried because it relies on THREE proven ingredients: Matrixyl™ 3000<sup>3</sup>, Argireline®<sup>85</sup> and Hyaluronic Acid.



*"Within two weeks of using Hydroxatone®, I was getting compliments on my skin from friends and co-workers. My skin not only feels great, but it looks great too! You've made me a Hydroxatone® believer!"*

*Results not typical*

— Robin B., Los Angeles

But Hydroxatone® doesn't stop there! It also includes other natural antioxidants, botanicals, vitamins, and peptides... designed to nourish your skin while fading wrinkles.

## There Is No Comparison

Forget Botox® or any other radical and dangerous treatments. Throw out other creams that simply don't work! Hydroxatone® is the anti-wrinkle cream that is proven. Within two weeks Hydroxatone® users will start to see results. With continued use, their skin

## Advanced Anti-Wrinkle Results

- ▶ 68% Reduction Of Deep Wrinkles In Just 6 Months
- ▶ Diminished Age Spots & Increased Suppleness
- ▶ Enhanced Production Of Healthy, Radiant New Skin
- ▶ Tightened And Toned Skin

will become softer, smoother, more radiant, and younger-looking...and that's GUARANTEED.

## Having A Hard Time Finding Hydroxatone® ?

For years consumers have only had expensive and ineffective alternatives to achieve younger looking skin. You may have seen other inferior anti-wrinkle products costing hundreds of dollars at some high priced salons and upscale department stores. The manufacturer of Hydroxatone® is so confident in their anti-aging treatment that they are offering a 30-day risk free trial offer...because seeing is believing!



Call today to get your supply of Hydroxatone® risk free, for just a small S&H fee. Our operators are available to let you try one of the greatest breakthroughs in wrinkle fighting technology without spending hundreds of dollars.

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WHY CHOOSE HYDROXATONE®			
Products	Argireline® <sup>85</sup>	Matrixyl™ 3000 <sup>3</sup>	Hyaluronic Acid
Olay® Regenerist <sup>1</sup>	NO	NO	NO
Strivectin SD® <sup>2</sup>	NO	YES	NO
La Mer™	NO	NO	NO
Hydroxatone®	YES	YES	YES

*"I'm 51 years old and my skin hasn't looked and felt this good in 15+ years. All the tiny wrinkles and lines have virtually disappeared. This product is fantastic."*

—Rose P.

*Results not typical*

\*Botox® is a registered trademark of Allergan, Inc. — 1Olay® Regenerist is a registered trademark of Procter & Gamble. — 2Strivectin SD® is a registered trademark of Klein-Becker IP Holdings, LLC. — 3Matrixyl™ 3000 is a registered trademark of Sederma S.A.S. — 4La Mer™ is a registered trademark of Max Huber Laboratories, Inc. — 5Argireline® is a registered trademark of Lipotec S.A. — Hydroxatone® is not endorsed by Allergan, Inc, Procter & Gamble, Klein-Becker IP Holdings, LLC, Sederma S.A.S., Max Huber Laboratories, Inc., or Lipotec S.A.



# Legend of the World's Littlest Skyscraper

BY CARLTON STOWERS

In Wichita Falls, they've turned the state's bragging art form on its head. Can you tell me another place in Texas where townspeople proudly boast of having the smallest tourist attraction?

Dallas and Houston may have sparkling skyscrapers so tall that they require oxygen in the penthouses, but has Ripley's Believe It or Not ever paid them attention? Do travelers make special detours to gaze in wonder?

Visitors to the North Texas city of Wichita Falls are routinely given directions to the edge-of-downtown corner of Seventh Street and LaSalle where, since 1919, the World's Littlest Skyscraper has stood. The four-story red brick structure, just 40 feet tall with 118 square feet per floor, has survived tornadoes and fire and years of neglect to stand as a monument to the greed and graft of the region's long-ago oil boom days.

This is the story visitors are told:

When the discovery of black gold in nearby Burkburnett turned thousands of Wichita County residents into instant millionaires, mineral rights deals were being made on street corners and in the shade of quickly erected tents that served as oil company headquarters. There was a desperate need for office space in Wichita Falls, and a Philadelphia oil man/promoter named J.D. McMahon came running to the rescue.

With blueprints in hand, he set about quickly selling \$200,000 in stock to investors caught up in the quick-buck frenzy of the day. What would result, McMahon promised, was a multistory office building that would go up just across the street from the thriving St. James Hotel.

What the promoter failed to mention, legend has it, was that the scale of his blueprints was in inches rather than feet. Apparently too busy to keep an eye on construction, investors ultimately found themselves owners of a building that looked more like an elevator shaft than high-rise office space. The completed building's outside dimensions were a closet-sized 11 feet by 19 feet. Stairwells that led to the upstairs floors occupied 25 percent of the interior.

And by the time construction was completed, McMahon was nowhere to be found. Duped investors unsuccessfully chased after the scam artist and sought legal remedy only to be told they had no case. McMahon had built exactly according to the blueprints they'd signed off on.

Still, with office space in such demand, oil companies squeezed desks into the tiny space and called it home until the boom finally fell silent. Then came the Depression, and the little building was boarded up and forgotten.

In 1986, the city deeded the building to the Wichita

County Heritage Society, which attempted to preserve it. In time, however, it was again orphaned, and there was steadily growing talk of having it demolished before the architectural firm of Bundy, Young, Sims & Potter was hired by the city to stabilize the down-trodden structure. So fascinated did Dick Bundy and his partners become with the historic site that in 2000 they arranged a partnership with Marvin Groves Electric, purchased the building and spent \$180,000 remodeling it.

"Frankly," says Bundy, "it wasn't a very smart investment, but so many people wanted it preserved. And, it's a unique part of our local history." Plus, he says, it is a great conversation piece. On a recent visit to Harvard University for a conference on the construction of high-rise office buildings, Bundy casually mentioned his firm's involvement with the World's Littlest Skyscraper. Before the gathering ended, he was asked to the podium to tell the story of the building and his history.

Today, it serves as more than an attraction for a steady stream of curious tourists. Local antiques dealer Glenda Tate recently leased the building, which now houses her business, The Antique Wood. Upstairs, Bundy's artist wife, Merri, has converted the third floor into her studio.

Her husband, meanwhile, is off on a new quest. He is trying to confirm that author-adventurer Robert L. Ripley gave the building its nickname and publicized it in Ripley's Believe It or Not cartoons.



*Carlton Stowers wrote about Dorothy Scarborough and her novel The Wind in Texas Co-op Power's December 2007 edition.*

Kevin loves to cook with vegetables picked fresh from the garden he and his wife, Lisa, planted in their backyard.



## Play with Your Food

**BY KEVIN HARGIS** I love to eat good food. And since I love to eat good food and didn't want to eat at a restaurant every night, I learned how to cook.

I was blessed with parents who both knew their way around a kitchen. They gave me an appreciation of well-prepared meals and taught me the art and science of cooking. I remember those dinner staples my mom or my dad would whip up—beef enchiladas, a pot of slow-simmered beans, Sunday fried chicken and fresh-off-the-boat shrimp made into creole or fried golden brown and served with homemade hush puppies and coleslaw.

My folks didn't just stick with those standards; they also liked to shake things up. A fondue set brought more than one evening of melted cheese heaven. A visit to a German restaurant inspired home-cooked potato pancakes and applesauce. Dad's culinary experimentation led to many successes and one memorable—if not appetizing—conglomeration of macaroni and cheese with ham and pineapple, proving to us that the sum was sometimes less than the parts. But it was his willingness to try something different that stuck with me.

Dad died several years ago, but Mom is still a great cook. She can toss off those old family favorites with practiced ease. And her cakes, pies and cookies fly off the table at bake sales. I picked up much of my cooking knowledge from her, and Dad imparted to me a willingness to play around with a recipe, to cook by feel as much as rote. I love sampling new cuisines and enjoy the challenge of trying to re-create a dish I have eaten.

So I will approach my new position as food editor with the attitude of exploration. I will share with you the best of the many good recipes that are sent to our offices by our loyal readers every month. And I'll share my thoughts as I broaden my food horizons.

I'd like to hear your suggestions for recipe topics you'd like to see in the future. It could be a new twist on an old favorite or an area of cooking you'd like

to explore. Turn on your creative minds and send me your suggestions. I'll send a copy of our *60 Years of Home Cooking* cookbook to the person who sends me the most interesting topic.

You can mail suggestions to: Recipe Topics, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704 or e-mail them to [recipes@texas-ec.org](mailto:recipes@texas-ec.org).

### BASIC BARBECUE RUB

One of my earliest memories of food are the barbecues my parents used to throw for friends and family. It wasn't just the meat itself, but the heaps of potato salad, coleslaw, beans and other side dishes covering tables. And the meat that came off the old pit smoker Dad had made from a surplus drum just seemed to melt in my mouth, especially the chicken with beautifully browned and crisp skin that had been spiced with a simple rub. So good, you didn't even need his homemade sauce.

Use marinade in addition to a rub to impart maximum flavor, but if you don't have time to marinate, rubs are a quick way to spice up your grill. Here's a good, all-purpose barbecue rub that you can use as a base for your own cooking explorations. I'll give it to you in proportions so you can make as much or as little as you like.

- 4 parts salt
- 4 parts brown sugar
- 4 parts cracked or coarse-ground black pepper
- 4 parts paprika
- 2 parts garlic or onion powder
- 1 part chili powder
- Ground red pepper (cayenne, ancho or chipotle, for example) to taste

Thoroughly mix spices in a bowl with a tight lid. Rub generous amount on all surfaces of meat before grilling or smoking. Keep surplus rub covered.

When using this rub with pork, try adding ginger, dry mustard or turmeric. For beef, crank up the red pepper. Toss in a little lemon pepper or citrus zest with chicken.

Play with your food. You might like what happens. And even if your dish is a dud, you've learned something.

**1<sup>st</sup>** **GREGG ROSZKOWSKI** *Pedernales Electric Cooperative*  
Prize-winning recipe: **BBQ Rub**

We tested Gregg Roszkowski's rub on pork ribs, and it added a nicely balanced flavor. Not too salty, not too sweet, with a hint of spice that didn't overwhelm the meat.

Gregg said he had tried different rub recipes he'd found online and in magazines and nothing was quite what he wanted. He found a version that was close, but it had too much cumin and chili powder for his taste. So he decreased the amounts of those spices and added some cayenne pepper and creole spice mix to liven things up a bit.

"I haven't ruined a piece of meat in a long time, now that I have this rub," he joked.

Gregg also offered a tip for preparing meat for barbecuing without a lot of mess: Inject marinade right into the heavy plastic bag in which big cuts are packaged in the grocery store. Tape over the hole and store for a few hours in the refrigerator, rotating it occasionally for even coverage. Drain the marinade and pat the meat dry before applying the rub.

## BBQ RUB

- 1½ cups dark brown sugar, firmly packed
- ½ cup garlic powder
- ½ cup kosher salt
- ½ cup paprika
- 2 tablespoons dried onion, minced or crushed
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 tablespoon creole seasoning
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 tablespoon cayenne pepper
- 1½ teaspoons cumin
- 1 tablespoon black pepper

Mix all ingredients in bowl. Rub generous handful on both sides of meat. Best on ribs or pork butt; will work fine on any barbecue. Makes enough rub for several applications.

Serving size: 1 tablespoon (approximate). Per serving: 32 calories, .5 g protein, .2 g fat, 7.5 g carbohydrates, .5 g fiber, 1,138 mg sodium

## HOLY MOLY CHICKEN RUB

- 1 tablespoon cocoa powder
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons chili powder

Mix all ingredients in bowl. Rub generous handful on both sides of chicken. Cover coated chicken and let sit at least 30 minutes before cooking.

Serving size: 1 tablespoon (approximate). Per serving: 14 calories, .8 g protein, .7 g fat, 2.8 g carbohydrates, 1.5 g fiber, 304 mg sodium

**ALLISON JORDAN**

*Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative*

## ANYTHING RUB

- 4 tablespoons paprika
- 4 teaspoons coarse ground black pepper
- 4 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 teaspoons orange zest, fresh or dried

Mix all ingredients in bowl. Rub generous handful on both sides of meat. If using on poultry, rub its skin with olive oil before applying spices.

Serving size: 1 tablespoon (approximate). Per serving: 23 calories, .8 g protein, .5 g fat, 5 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g fiber, 709 mg sodium


**DONNA TINSLEY**

*Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative*

## RECIPE CONTEST

November's recipe contest topic is **COOKIE SWAP**. We want your fanciest cookie recipe suitable for trading at the holidays. The deadline is **JULY 10**.


Send recipes to Home Cooking, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704. You may also fax them to (512) 486-6254, e-mail them to [recipes@texas-ec.org](mailto:recipes@texas-ec.org), or submit online at [www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.com). Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. 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.




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### PECAN-CRUSTED CATFISH

- 2 cups pecans
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 large egg
- 1½ tablespoons milk
- 4 catfish or red-snapper fillets, about 4 ounces each

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Grind pecans in a food processor with on-off pulses, leaving some larger pieces intact and some of the pecans almost a powder. Set aside.

Mix flour with salt, pepper, garlic powder and cayenne to taste. Whisk together egg and milk in a shallow bowl. Rinse fish and pat dry. Coat with seasoned flour, shaking off excess. Dip in egg mixture, letting excess drip off. Firmly press on pecans, coating fish completely.

Arrange fillets on a baking sheet, being careful not to overlap. Bake for 15 minutes at 450 degrees. Serves 4.



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**UNDERWATER**

Take a deep breath as we go underwater—or almost all the way underwater, in some cases—to explore readers’ photographic creativity. Several people sent in beautiful photos from such places as Cozumel, Mexico, and the Bahamas, but our focus is on Texas as reflected in the pictures below. —CAMILLE WHEELER

◀ Cowboy **Steve Carlson** and his horse Drifter are hat and ears above water as they traverse a pond near Wheelock in northern Brazos County. Photographer **Ronda Weston**, a Bryan Texas Utilities member, says that besides enjoying a good swim, Carlson and Drifter have also competed in working cow-horse events.

▼ Much to **Kaitlyn Muckleroy’s** delight, Otis, a golden retriever puppy, sticks his nose underwater and blows bubbles in their wading pool. The picture was submitted by grandmother **Lisa Everitt**, a Sam Houston Electric Cooperative member, who says that Kaitlyn—2 years old in the photo and now 5—is celebrating her first year in remission after being diagnosed with neuroblastoma cancer before she turned 3. “We thank God for each day we have together,” Everitt says.



▲ **Glenda Self**, a United Cooperative Services member, submitted this photo of her grandson **Brody Self**, who seemingly is suspended in water during a swimming lesson at the age of 3.

► **Linda Riley**, a Bandera Electric Cooperative member, snapped this photo of her granddaughter **Paige Jannise** in the Frio River. “It’s so clear you can hardly tell she is about 2 feet underwater!” Riley says of Paige, who is signing “I love you.”



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ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Sep	Perfect Pets	Jul 10
Oct	Old Houses	Aug 10
Nov	Signs	Sep 10
Dec	Costumes	Oct 10
Jan	Odd Farm Equipment	Nov 10
Feb	Silly Poses	Dec 10

**PERFECT PETS** is the topic for our **SEPTEMBER 2008** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Perfect Pets, Focus on Texas, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704**, before **July 10**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). **Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate.** We regret that **Texas Co-op Power** cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to [focus@texas-ec.org](mailto:focus@texas-ec.org), or submit them on our website at [www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.com).

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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. 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](mailto:recipes@texas-ec.org)), you must include "Holiday Recipe Contest" in the subject line and submit one recipe per e-mail (no attachments). For official rules, visit [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com) or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the address above.

Up in the Panhandle, where flat land abruptly gives way to ancient, rugged canyons, it's easy to imagine dinosaurs digging their claws into the earth millions of years ago.

Those dinosaurs vanished long ago, but some of their bones are on magnificent display at the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Canyon.

Just outside Amarillo, I studied the bones of modern-day dinosaurs—vintage tail-finned cars—at Cadillac Ranch. And within city limits, I strolled the skeleton of the legendary Route 66 in a historic district designed to bring the road and its commerce back to life.

Our trip starts in the Route 66 district and then heads 3 miles west of Amarillo on Interstate 40 to Cadillac Ranch (the cars are just south of the interstate on the eastbound side). Next, we travel 15 miles south on Interstate 27 and U.S. 87 to Canyon to visit Texas' largest history museum.

## AMARILLO

Born in 1926, **ROUTE 66** symbolized freedom and mobility on the open road.

Ultimately, Route 66 was replaced by bigger interstates, such as I-40 that roars through Amarillo. But the city's historic district, the heart of which is a 15-block section on Southwest Sixth Avenue between Georgia and Western streets, is trying to pull in tourists and business. Business owners believe that their eclectic mix of antique stores and others—not to mention the allure of Route 66 itself—is sufficiently attractive.

Some of the district's buildings are listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

One such building, the **NAT**, which houses a gigantic used bookstore and ballroom, originally was an open-air natatorium built in 1922. The reportedly haunted building was enclosed in 1923 and later converted to a dance hall with 10,000 square feet of maple flooring covering the pool area.

The highlight for me was supper at the **GOLDEN LIGHT CAFE**, which opened in 1946. I spent \$7.58 on a burger, soft drink and not-so-small basket of fries. Now that's a price from yesteryear.

# AMARILLO to CANYON

*Discover dinosaur bones and Cadillac fins not far from fabled Route 66.*

**BY CAMILLE WHEELER**



Route 66 district, 1-866-645-0666, [www.amarillo66.com](http://www.amarillo66.com)

## CADILLAC RANCH

Out in a wide-open pasture, the wind whipped my pants legs and mournfully whistled through the bodies of 10 old Cadillacs, their noses buried in the ground and tail fins stuck in the air. Mesmerized, I could hear Bruce Springsteen's "Cadillac Ranch" in my head:

*Cadillac, Cadillac  
Long and dark, shiny and black  
Open up them engines let 'em roar  
Tearing up the highway like a big  
old dinosaur.*

These Cadillacs—which, with every inch covered in colorful graffiti, resem-

ble spray-painted Easter eggs—no longer roar down the road. But their appeal is so strong that travelers wielding cameras and spray-paint cans pull off the interstate every few minutes to check them out.

Stanley Marsh 3, who dreamed up **CADILLAC RANCH** 34 years ago, said the cars represent the period from 1948 through 1964 when Cadillac put tail fins on its vehicles.

It's all about art, Marsh said, noting that the tail fins cut the horizon just beyond the barbed-wire fence and spray-painted iron gate that visitors swing open to walk to the cars.

"I think that art on the High Plains, where it's flat, should look different from art in a forest or the mountains or the beach," he said.

## CANYON

Here's my advice for anyone visiting the **PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM**: Give yourself a whole day. Or two.

With 2 million artifacts, 102,004 square feet of total exhibit space, 33,095 photographs, 300 works of art available for viewing at any time and 15 permanent collections that include ranching and Native American life, transportation, firearms, windmills, geology and a replica of a pioneer town—just to throw out a few numbers—the museum simply can't be savored on a quick walk-through.

The museum's collections range from the strange—a large autograph collection includes a lock of George Washington's hair—to the bigger than life: Among many impressive findings, the paleontology exhibit boasts one particularly scary-looking specimen, a labyrinthodont amphibian. The large aquatic animal sported a medial third eye on its flat, bony skull.

The museum's art galleries alone are worth the trip and, among several high-profile artists, feature the works of Frank Reaugh (1860-1945), known as the dean of Texas painters.

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*Camille Wheeler is staff writer at Texas Co-op Power.*

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- **We Consider Anything Of Value On Trade**

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