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OCTOBER 2008

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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letters

BREWING MESQUITE TEA

RE: Letter writers' ongoing discussion about mesquite: My wife and I look at the mesquite tree as our food tree. We strip off about a handful of leaves from several trees until we have about a gallon of leaves. We place them into a plastic bag and fluff them one to two times a day until they are dry. They make a good green tea.

After the beans have matured and fallen off the tree, they can be harvested and ground into flour for cookies, fry bread, pancakes, etc. My wife cooked the beans into syrup, I think, equal to Log Cabin Syrup. We have also made mesquite wine. In my research, I have found instead of using the wood, use the bean to barbecue your meat.

LARRY DUNBAR

Cooke County Electric Cooperative

BIRDS SHOULDN'T BE A CONCERN

Subject: John Abrams in his (August 2008) letter about windmills generating electricity and killing birds. I've never seen a windmill kill a bird; however, I have seen plenty of birds killed by automobiles. Perhaps John should stop driving his car and mount a campaign for the rest of us to do likewise. Windmill-generated electricity is a safe, clean way to help with the energy problem we are now facing. I was pleased to read in this morning's Corpus Christi paper that the co-op has signed on to the wind generators on the King Ranch.

EDWARD OTTI

Nueces Electric Cooperative

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

POWER TALK



COPPER GRINCH STEALS CHRISTMAS

We know copper thieves are pulling down utility lines, gutting air-conditioning units, raiding homes under construction and threatening the lives of people on life support. Now they've stolen 15,000 feet of underground wiring that provides the magical lighting on Austin's Trail of Lights. Approximately \$85,000 worth of copper disappeared from Zilker Park in August. The thieves pulled up manhole covers to get to wiring.

Leaders say they will transfer money from some other key program to ensure that the annual Christmas event is lighted in its usual style. So Austin is joining many other towns and cities that are making it harder to access underground wiring.

Meanwhile, Wood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) in East Texas has turned to technology to foil the ever-growing plague of copper thieves. WCEC is adding DataDot markers to property throughout its distribution system to help identify stolen property. The microdots, no larger than a piece of glitter, are laser etched with specific codes registered to the cooperative. While very hard to see with the naked eye, the presence of DataDots can be detected through the use of a special kit, which only takes seconds to use.

"We believe this product will offer WCEC a technological advantage, and we hope it makes anyone think twice before vandalizing our system. Their actions are causing dangerous conditions for the public, which cannot be tolerated," said Debbie Robinson, general manager and CEO of the cooperative.



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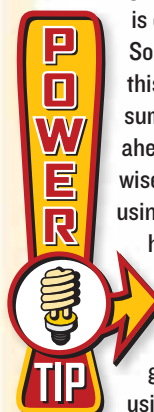
This long, hot and dry summer is coming to a close. So why not take time this fall to prep for next summer? You will be ahead of the game and wisely water-thrifty by using the lowly soaker hose and faucet timers for all your beds and trees, soaking the ground rather than using sprinklers, where water is subject to evaporation.

MATERIALS NEEDED: soaker hoses in 25- or 50-foot lengths, garden staples and mulch. Faucet timers are optional.

THE THREE EASY STEPS:

1. Snake the soaker hoses around the roots of the chosen vegetation.
2. Pin the soaker hoses down with garden staples—steel wire bent into "U" shapes about 6 inches long.
3. Cover with mulch to a depth of 3 to 4 inches, leaving the hose end connector showing for hookup to your regular hose whenever you want to water.

Voila! You now have a water-wise, zoned irrigation system. How easy is that?



H A P P E N I N G S

"Howdy, folks!" Big Tex, all 52 feet of him, is greeting millions of visitors to the **STATE FAIR OF TEXAS** for the 56th consecutive year. From fried corn dogs and midway rides to livestock, car, dog and light shows, the fair offers something for every age.

For 24 days every year, the fair—which runs through October 19 at the 277-acre Fair Park in Dallas—becomes the fried food capital of Texas, serving up such delicacies as fried Twinkies, fried guacamole and even fried Coke. Don't get too full, though. You'll want to ride the Texas Star Ferris wheel—at 212 feet tall, it's the tallest in North America—and the Texas SkyWay, a gondola ride that spans 1,800 feet from one end of the midway to the other.

Stick around each evening for the Starlight Parade that features colorful floats, glittering costumes and giant puppets.

For college football fans, it doesn't get any bigger than the Red River Rivalry: The University of Texas and University of Oklahoma collide October 11 at the Cotton Bowl on Fair Park grounds.

For more information, call (214) 565-9931 or go to www.bigtex.com.

ROWN/STATE FAIR OF TEXAS

A TRAVELER'S HAVEN ON I-35

Modern stagecoaches roar by where the horse-drawn variety once stopped at the Stagecoach Inn in Salado. The 82-room inn and its restaurant draw weary, hungry travelers off adjacent Interstate 35 south of Temple. The site has been a stop for folks going between Waco and Austin since the early 1860s, when it opened as the Shady Villa.

After a renovation in the early 1940s, Dion and Ruth Van Bibber reopened the inn in 1943 as a tea-room. Their food became so popular that they stopped taking lodgers and focused on the restaurant. A nephew took over for them when they retired in 1959 and added the motel and other facilities.

Today, the tree-shaded complex draws guests on vacation and on group retreats.

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



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March 2008

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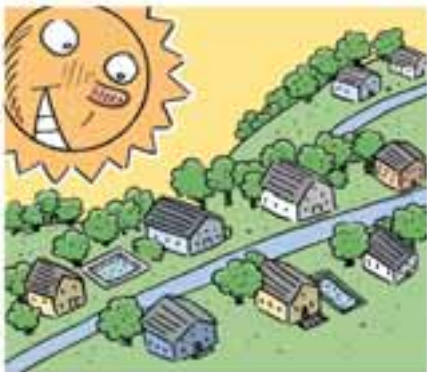


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FUTURE TALK

SOLAR POWER

Engineers are trying to perfect a large-scale solar technology that turns the sun's energy into electricity—but doesn't involve expensive semiconductor cells. Solar thermal



power systems magnify the sun's heat and direct it onto fluid-filled pipes, heating the fluid to boiling point. The super-hot liquid is then used to power a turbine generator.

You may be familiar with solar cells, which create electricity when photons from the sun force the transfer of electrons between layers of material. Solar trough plants, on the other hand, involve no chemical reactions. They use an array of mirrors to direct solar heat to a central pipeline filled with water. One such plant in the testing phases in Southern California could help power more than 100,000 homes using a square mile of collectors.

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF



Thousand-watt smile: The future's bright for valedictorian Nick Wilhite.

BUILDING BRIDGES

BY CAMILLE WHEELER
PHOTOS BY
WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Graduation was over, and Charlotte Wilhite couldn't find her son. Nick Wilhite, valedictorian of his 2008 senior class, had disappeared into the crowd gathered outside R.L. Davis Auditorium on the Texas School for the Deaf campus.



Carrying high expectations, Wilhite arrives for his senior year.

CHARLOTTE, CAMERA BAG AND VIDEO recorder on her shoulder, politely threaded her way through hundreds of people, shaking hands, hugging friends and family members, and greeting person after person on this momentous night. She gushed about her son, who confidently stalked the stage during his valedictory speech. "Isn't he just amazing? Isn't he just fantastic?" But still, no sign of Nick.

Then she saw him. Nick Wilhite, who once longed for friends, was now surrounded by them. A bevy of well-wishers, classmates and close friends crowded around him, all trying to touch him, talk to him. Still wearing his blue graduation gown, gold valedictorian medal and thousand-watt smile, Nick's hands happily flew as he signed conversation after conversation.

Even TSD Superintendent Claire Bugen had to wait her turn. "I'm in line

to hug the celebrity," she said, teasingly telling Nick that he had her "crazy worried" when he initially had threatened not to give a graduation speech.

But Wilhite, who graduated first in a class of 64 and challenged his classmates to pursue collegiate success, ultimately decided he had plenty to say. "It's time for us to walk across that bridge that's been made into a new tomorrow," he told his fellow seniors in sign language, striding across the stage and punctuating his point with outstretched hands. Wilhite, who took off his cap and gown to deliver his speech, moved freely about the stage, sometimes even pointing at the audience to drive his message home as an interpreter voiced his words.

Wilhite quoted Leonardo da Vinci: "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." With a wicked grin on his face, Wilhite then promised to keep his speech

short and challenged the speakers taking the stage after him to do the same.

Applause and laughter welled up from the standing-room-only crowd. Throughout the night, hearing and deaf members of the audience applauded the graduates by both clapping their hands and waving them in the air—the traditional form of applause in deaf culture. At times, the clapping was so loud it sounded like running water.

If anyone knows about crossing bridges, it's Wilhite, who transferred to TSD as a junior, moving to Austin from Arlington where he attended a mainstream public school as a sophomore. A straight-A student, Wilhite never worried about his grades. But as the school's only deaf student, he couldn't communicate with his peers. He struggled to make friends and said he often sat alone before school or between



The TSD Rangers football team notched another successful season, advancing to the playoffs.

classes. And Wilhite felt frustrated in the classroom, where instead of communicating directly with the teacher he had to rely on interpreters.

"I'd go to chemistry and sit there and just watch the interpreter and that's it," said Wilhite, now a freshman studying architecture at the University of Texas at Arlington. "In woodwork-ing class, I would work by myself. There was no way to chat with other people. There's no fun and interaction in that."

With his eyes on the interpreter, "I'd miss what other students asked," Wilhite said. "When I'd get home, I'd read the chapter again, what the teacher had already gone over in the classroom. I'd have to read it and say, 'Oh, this is what that meant.'"

SO WILHITE TOLD HIS PARENTS THAT HE wanted to move to Austin and attend

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

What: A public residential and day school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students that's fully accredited by the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf. The state agency serves students from birth to the age of 22 and serves the entire state through outreach programs. Young adults in the post-secondary transitional program focus on academics, vocational training and work experience, and independent living.

Where: Austin

Superintendent: Claire Bugen, who received the 2007 Robert R. Davila Award of Merit from the Conference of Educational Administrators Serving the Deaf. The national award recognized her meritorious contributions to the field of deafness.

2007-08 enrollment: 492 students, from the parent-infant program through the transitional program

Enrollment represents: 63 counties and 129 school districts in Texas

TSD HISTORY

Founded: By state Legislature in 1856

Opened: January 1, 1857

First teacher: Matthew Clark, who traveled to neighboring counties to tell parents of deaf children about the new school. In October 1856, he was paid \$40 for his travel expenses.

First campus buildings: Three one-room log cabins



Elementary students chill out in simulated snow.



Lunchtime is good conversation time.



The 2007 girls Gallaudet volleyball camp was a big hit.

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TSD, where deaf and hard-of-hearing students are, well, just typical kids.

TSD, the state's oldest continuously operating publicly funded school, founded in 1856, serves about 10 percent of Texas' estimated 4,800 deaf students in its on-campus programs and an additional 20 percent in its summer and short-term programs. TSD, a state agency, also serves all of Texas through outreach programs such as workshops,

distance learning, family weekend retreats, sign language classes and interpreter training.

At TSD, students from birth through the age of 22 are "coming into an environment where they have access to total 24-hour communication," Bugen said.

TSD STUDENTS CAN COMMUNICATE WITH anyone, at any time, through American

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

ASL, a natural language distinct from spoken English, comes complete with its own grammar and syntax. At TSD, educators believe that exposure to ASL and English in its printed form is the best way for a child to develop literacy. According to the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), ASL is accepted by colleges and universities and has been accepted in fulfillment of the foreign language requirements at the high school, bachelors, masters and doctoral levels in schools and states across the United States. In January 2008, the NAD reaffirmed its stance that acquisition of language from birth is a human right for every person, and that deaf infants and children should be given the opportunity to acquire and develop proficiency in ASL as early as possible.



Wilhite and Lloyd Williams, a 1948 TSD graduate, get to know each other at a football game.



Go Rangers! Students show their spirit during the homecoming pep rally.



Learning starts young at TSD.



All ages cheer on the Rangers.

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Looking good on prom night.



Wilhite delivers a fiery valedictorian speech.

Sign Language (ASL). With language barriers destroyed, TSD students find themselves empowered in a new world, said Wess Smith, the school's sign language and assessment coordinator.

"You look at the kid who's the little wallflower in the public school, and they come here and they're our head cheerleader and our valedictorian," he said. "You look at the kid who gets teased on the playground, and they come here and end up being student body government president."

The loneliness many deaf students experience in mainstream schools vanishes at TSD, where students walk and talk in twos and threes across campus. They laugh when everyone else is laughing, grasp the full context of conversations without needing an interpreter and merrily interrupt their friends in the middle of rowdy conversations in the cafeteria.

They cheer at athletic events, both verbally and by waving their hands, and go wild at the homecoming pep rally as cheerleaders take their cue from a small bass drum.

In the classroom, they raise their hands and compete to be the first to answer a teacher's question, always conversing in ASL.

There's a special sense of belonging on TSD's campus where students immerse themselves in a world that includes deaf role models: 55 percent and 65 percent, respectively, of the teaching and residential staffs are deaf.

ONE OF THOSE ROLE MODELS IS MARLENE Etkie, a teacher in the parent-infant program and fifth- and sixth-grade girls volleyball coach. "I don't like to feel left out, and here you don't feel left out," Etkie said. "Everyone has equal access to communication, equal opportunities for their wants, desires. You can depend on yourself—you don't have to depend on someone else."

Nick Wilhite certainly found independence, especially in interactions with his peers. Charlotte Wilhite said her son didn't "have to go through adults to talk to kids in an imperfect way. He was able to do it his own way, perfectly."

And now Wilhite, the architecture student, is building yet another bridge.

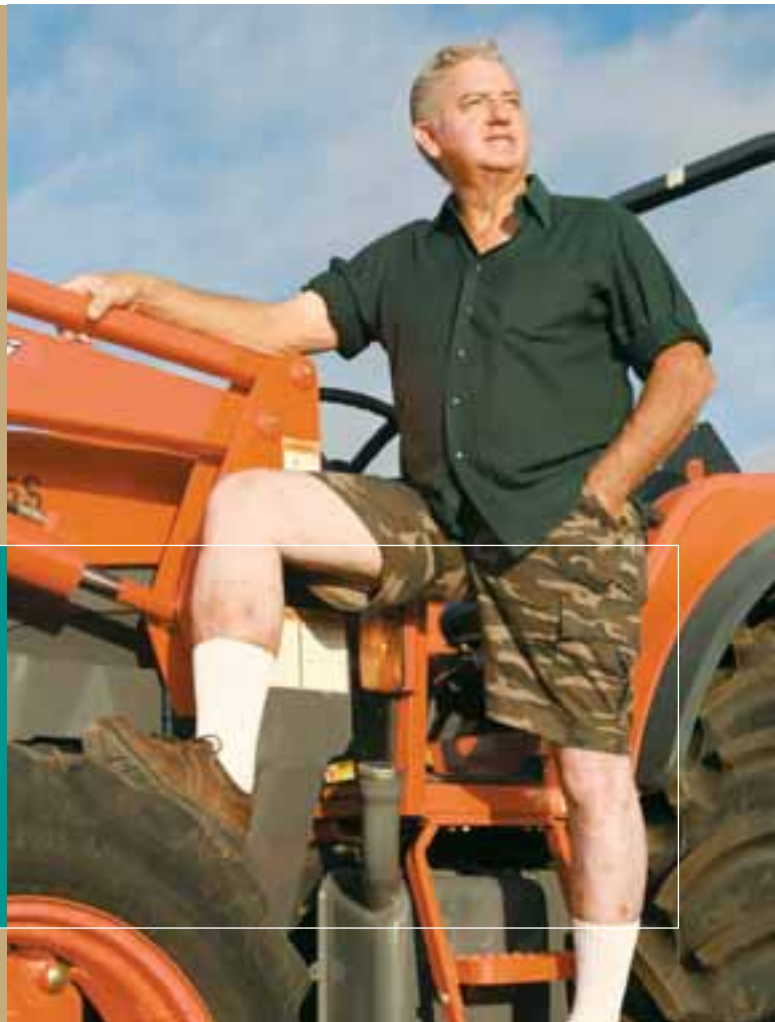
Camille Wheeler is staff writer for Texas Co-op Power.

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at the difference
it’s made.”

Don Wall, 65

Scott & White VNUS closure patient May 2007

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A BOWL OF RED

Texas chili as hot as ever

by Jeff Siegel



I'm craving a good bowl of chili. What I'm hungering for is not that canned brown goop, mind you, but a sure-nuff homemade bowl of red, built from the ground up. I don't want it made with chili powder, but with the boiled and skinned pulp of genuine chili peppers, dried black in the sun. One other thing. No beans. Beans have no place in my dream bowl of chili.

—Donnis Baggett, *The Eagle*

Paul Petersen is a big-deal chef, the kind who gets glowing reviews in food magazines for his New Texas cuisine. His Gage Hotel restaurant in Marathon, near Big Bend National Park, has been described as “lovely: comfortable, warm, and unpretentious, yet with an aura of elegance and refinement.” He makes a mean pepper-crusted elk medallion, served with potato gratin and truffled mushroom demi-glace.

So what’s on the restaurant’s bar menu during football season? A bowl of red, of course.

“I don’t think real Texas chili, the kind without any beans, is in any danger of dying out,” says Petersen, who grew up in San Antonio and attended the internationally known Culinary Institute of America. “And it never will. As far as Texas goes, the real bowl of red is going to stay around for a long time.”

That’s some of the best news that those of us who care about these things have heard in a long time. Yes, chili is the official state dish of Texas, and yes, it has a long and storied tradition in the state. Songs have been sung about it, prayers have been written about it, and cook-offs—lots and lots of cook-offs—have been held in its honor. But this is the 21st century, and the food police are everywhere. And chili, that legendary bowl of red, is made mostly of things we’re not supposed to eat much of any more, like beef and fat. Even some franchisees of Chili’s Grill & Bar, the Dallas-based restaurant chain, opt not to include a bowl of red on the menu.

Nevertheless, chili is thriving. “You know, we’ve had requests to put vegetarian chili on the menu,” says Paul Ryan, who married into the first family of Texas chili. He and his wife, Kathleen Tolbert Ryan, run Tolbert’s, a restaurant in Grapevine, where they carry on the tradition started by Kathleen’s father, legendary newspaperman and pioneer “chilihead” Frank X. Tolbert. “But we haven’t done it yet. It goes against the grain. Chili without meat? Aw, c’mon. What kind of chili would that be?”

What makes a bowl of red? Everyone knows what chili is—beef and fat, water or stock, and a kitchen pantry full of spices. No beans—historically speaking, Texas chili was made with what was on hand, including meat and chile peppers—and maybe some cheese and onions on the side. Brown the meat in the fat, add the spices and liquid, and cook until tender. Getting past that point is another story. Chiliheads are not big on detail.

“Well, I can tell you that most of us use 80-20 (80 percent lean and 20 percent fat) beef,” says Ken Rodd, a chilihead who handles public relations for the Chili Appreciation Society International, which runs the annual Terlingua International Chili Championship. “And I can tell you that most of the best competitors use specialty-store spices these days instead of grocery-store spices.”

Other than that, you’re on your own. Recipes are top secret. Ask Paul Ryan how Tolbert’s grinds its beef, and he hems and haws. Ask Jim Heywood, a chilihead who teaches at the Culinary Institute of America, about his recipe, and he is appropriately vague. You can find recipes on the Internet, even on the websites of groups that sanction cook-offs. But are those there to inform or to lead would-be chiliheads astray, a bit of intentional misdirection?

There is more to this recipe reticence than tradition and paranoia. Chili is simple, which makes every ingredient, no matter how minor, important. A dash of this instead of a bit of that could be the difference between winning Terlingua and not even making the finals. It’s also one reason cooks are searching for better

quality spices instead of the staples from years past, such as Adams and Gebhardt. Pendery’s in Fort Worth is a popular supplier; it sells almost two-dozen chili powder blends, including several concocted by Terlingua winners.

In fact, says W.C. Jameson, a Hill Country author who has written two books about chili, this simplicity is one reason the dish has remained so popular for so long. Anyone can make it, and he or she can use almost anything in the refrigerator to do so, including rabbit, armadillo, venison, ostrich, potatoes, white beans and tomatillos. Tolbert and Wick Fowler, of chili powder fame, added masa harina (Mexican corn flour), which to this day baffles many modern chiliheads.

But that’s just the start. How about Cincinnati chili, a thinner, sauce-like concoction, made with allspice and cider vinegar and served over spaghetti? (Thankfully, says Jameson, it’s only popular in and around Cincinnati.) Along some parts of the East Coast, chili is made with canned pork and beans, while lima beans are used in Michigan. And there is an entire generation of Midwestern baby boomers whose mothers browned grocery store hamburger and then mixed it with something called chili hot beans—canned kidney beans in a spicy gravy.

In this, chili has come a long way from its roots. There are any number of colorful stories about its origin: Some say it was invented by chuck wagon cooks on cattle drives, or that it migrated from Mexico to Texas before the Civil War, carried by poor immigrants who couldn’t afford anything but the cheapest cuts of meat and some dried chiles. There are tales of San Antonio’s colorfully dressed chili queens, who sold chili on the city’s streets in the half century before the Depression. Each story, says Jameson, probably has some truth to it.

The dawn of a new era: Chili’s modern history begins in the 1960s, when Tolbert published his seminal chili history, *A Bowl of Red*. A few years later, Tolbert and Fowler held the first Terlingua event. By the 1980s, the idea of the chili cook-off had caught hold, and today, there are two major cook-offs in Terlingua, plus two national sanctioning organizations that hold local and regional chili contests. Rodd’s chili appreciation group has seen the number of cook-offs it holds double in the past decade, while the International Chili Society sponsors some 200 cook-offs a year. Both note that participation is better than it has ever been. Even in the latter group, which includes events for green chili and salsa, the prestige competition is traditional chili.

“Green chili has become accepted over the years,” says Heywood, who competes in chili society events. “But traditional chili hasn’t become any less popular. There will always be people who think of that when they think of chili.”

Irving’s Doris Coats, whose 1991 Terlingua win is one of her many titles, has been cooking in chili contests since 1977. She and her husband, Bob, whose numerous titles include winning Terlingua in 1999, see chili cook-offs as not just something that’s fun but as an important ingredient for Texas and Texans.

“The taste for real chili never really leaves,” she says. “It’s like the bluebonnet. There are things about Texas that you just don’t want to let go of. Texans are the proudest people in the world, and chili is one of the things that we have to be proud of.”

Especially when it doesn’t have beans.

Jeff Siegel is a Dallas-based food writer who has written about salsa and chicken-fried steak for Texas Co-op Power.

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When Cars and Power Lines Collide

If your car comes in contact with a power line, a state of panic may set in. Try to stay calm and follow these tips:

You should remain inside your vehicle. If you are in your car, you are not part of electricity's path, which always looks for the shortest way to the ground. Honk your horn to alert passers-by.

If someone stops to help, roll down the window and warn them not to touch the car or the power line. Ask them to phone 911 and contact the local electric utility immediately.

Wait in your car until qualified electrical workers turn the power off and tell you it's safe to leave the car.

If you have to leave the car because of fire or other danger, open the door and jump away from the vehicle so no part of your body touches the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Make sure to jump with both feet



together so that they land on the ground at the same time.

After you land with both feet together, shuffle away, keeping both feet in contact with the ground constantly.

Do not try to help anyone from the vehicle. If you do, you may become a path for electricity and be injured or killed.

Source: National Weather Service

Watch Out for Those Energy ‘Vampires’

Beware: There's a power-hungry fiend haunting your house—and, no, it's not a Halloween visitor. With vigilance, you can stop the drain on your pocketbook by fighting the electricity “vampires” that you may find lurking in every room.

Vampire power, also called standby power, is the energy used by many appliances

when they are turned off but still plugged in.

TVs, DVD players and stereos all use standby power after you shut them off because they need

to stay energized to remain responsive to your remote control.

Your desktop computer also uses electricity when it's in sleep mode. And anything with a built-in clock uses electricity even when the appliance isn't running.

You can turn those items off and unplug them when you're not using them. Or, better yet, plug them into power strips with a switch and turn the strip off.

Each appliance wastes just a little bit of power in standby mode, and those kilowatt-hours add up. In fact, the U.S. Department of Energy reports that standby power can account for as much as 20 percent of home energy use.

This year, slay the vampires in your home. Here's how:

■ Unplug all of your electronics—

including the pieces of your entertainment system—if you go away for the weekend.

■ Unplug seldom-used electronics like a second TV or your old VCR until you want to use them.

■ Power down desktop computers and laptops when you're finished working. If you have a home office, the same goes for printers and fax machines.

■ Choose new products that bear the Energy Star label. They typically use less standby power.

■ Invest in an “intelligent” power strip for your computer equipment. It “knows” when you turn your computer off—and it turns off your monitor, printer and scanner at the same time, so you don't have to remember. It turns them all back on when you power up the computer.



October Is National Cooperative Month

There's something special about the utility that brings electricity to your home: It's a consumer cooperative, and you're more than a customer. You're a member.

The hallmarks of a cooperative business are its seven guiding principles. They are:

1. VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP. Your electric cooperative offers membership to everyone who lives in its service area.

2. DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL. Because you're a member of the cooperative, you're eligible to run for a seat on its board of directors and help the management make decisions. Don't have time to serve? You can still vote for others from your community who run for the seats.

3. MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION. When you pay your electric bill, you're doing more than buying electricity. You're contributing to the financial health of your electric cooperative. In return, your cooperative will send you a refund if it takes in more money than it needs after meeting all of its obligations to you and the community. These refunds are called capital credits.

4. AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE. Your electric coopera-

tive doesn't sell stock to Wall Street investors. Cooperatives are locally owned and controlled by their members.

5. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION. You're reading this publication because your cooperative is committed to keeping its members up to date about what's going on at your utility. It also makes sure that the community members who serve on the board of directors—along with managers, employees and others—are trained and knowledgeable about the business of the cooperative.

6. COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES. If you've ever seen a bucket truck with an unfamiliar logo on it after a storm, it could be from a neighboring electric cooperative that has lent its crews to help out during an emergency. Likewise, your utility pitches in when other cooperatives need help.

7. CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY. The managers and staff who work for your cooperative also live in the community. So the utility takes a keen interest in the economic development and well-being of the neighborhoods it serves.

Electric cooperatives practice each of these principles every day as they provide members with the high-quality service they deserve.



Jobs.

Cooperative businesses are run by those who live and work in the community. So we keep jobs at home.

And co-ops employ a lot of Americans... more than half a million, in fact. Our payrolls exceed \$15 billion annually.

From Main Street storefronts to Fortune 500 companies, co-ops generate jobs and economic growth in our communities. Because that's where we come from.

Cooperatives.

Owned by Our Members,
Committed to Our Communities.

Figures published Dec. 2006



A Real Scream

*Don't talk to
the monsters.*

BY MARCO PERELLA

The line to enter the Tower of Terror winds around the block, down the street, around another block and halfway down a second street. It seems everybody in Houston is out celebrating Halloween by lining up to get the bijiminy scared out of them.

I tell Jeremy, my haunted-house partner for the night, that the line is too long and we should try another one of the seemingly endless number of haunted houses scattered around the city: Haunted Hilton, House of Horror, Hell House, Halloween Horror House ... alliteration must be the ticket in the lucrative world of Haunted Housery.

I say lucrative because Jeremy and I just plunked down \$30 for our pair of tickets.

I'm in this situation because I'm an actor, and I had an audition in town today. Not wanting to make the long drive home to Austin in my state of post-audition creative exhaustion (I was trying out for the backyard grill guy part in a new George Foreman commercial), I applied for lodging at my friend Jay's house. In a moment of magnanimous insanity, I volunteered to take Jeremy, Jay's teenage son, to the Tower of Terror.

There's no getting out of it now. The Tower of Terror proprietors have very wisely taken our money up front and then sent us to the back of the line to wait an hour and a half.

Jeremy regales me with glowing reviews of the haunted house we're about to enter. He hasn't been inside, but his teenage pals tell him it rocks. Jeremy assures me that I will be scared witless. (Oh goody.) He gives me instructions about how to proceed when entering the attraction. I am to stick close to him and keep my mouth shut except to scream.

We are nearing the front of the line. We can hear the bloodcurdling screams cascading from behind the stark plywood walls of the Tower of Terror.

Jeremy's demeanor is changing. Just before a teenage worker takes down the chain and beckons us through the entrance, Jeremy jumps behind me and tells me to go first. Then, as the door opens into the blackness beyond, he starts yelling and shoves me into the pit.

We are in a dark hallway, only partially illuminated with black lights. Spider webs and creepy-crawly rubber bugs dangle on us. I sort of expected that, but what I didn't expect was Jeremy shoving me into the blackness while yelling in my ear.

I start laughing.

"DON'T LAUGH!!" he screams. "JUST KEEP GOING!"

"What's the hurry?" I reply. "We waited in line for an hour and a half—don't you want to get your money's worth?"

Down into the bowels of the Tower of Terror we go, Jeremy using me as a battering ram to push through the collection of monsters we meet along the way.

We come into a red-lighted area in which the walls seem to run red with gore. Suddenly Freddy Krueger lunges out of a closet and yells at us through his rubber mask. Jeremy howls. I crack up and start talking to the actor behind the mask.

"That was great, man! You really nailed us that time! Good work, dude!"

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!" Jeremy screams. "YOU CAN'T TALK TO THE MONSTERS!!!"

"No problem. He's a kid about your age."

"NO HE'S NOT! HE'S A MONSTER AND YOU CAN'T TALK TO HIM! HURRY UP!!"

Just then a cackling crazy woman with a half-eaten face jumps out of a coffin and offers us a bowl of maggots.

"Are you hungry, kiddies?"

Screams erupt behind me as Jeremy loses what is left of his mind. I, meanwhile, offer more artistic appreciation.

"Hey," I say to the woman. "Cool makeup! How did you get that bone hanging out like that? Looks great!"

"YAHHH! STOP TALKING TO THEM!" Jeremy shrieks as he pushes me away.

"Hey, I want to find out where she gets her makeup," I say. "I could use some of that ..."

"NO! YOU'RE DRIVING ME CRAZY! HURRY UP!"

Jeremy's goal is to escape as quickly as possible. I, on the other hand, have turned into a real fan of this haunted house. I was raised in the theater, and I gaze in admiration at the great décor, the lighting, the attention to detail shown in the guts hanging on the stair rails, the meticulous care that has been given to zombie makeup and hidden compartments that disgorge walking corpses at your side just as you step into the most vulnerable area of the room.

Jeremy is behind me now, gibbering witlessly. We must be approaching the exit. I'm still laughing with appreciation at the jolly good show, congratulating the zombies on their tireless work.

We enter the last room, a big room. Most of the areas have been cramped, but now we are in some kind of ballroom of horror. Let's see ... what manner of Big Scare would need this much space? I stop to ponder. Jeremy pounds on my back.

"YOU'RE STOPPING AGAIN! WHY ARE YOU STOPPING? WHY? WHY?"

I note that he is free to head for the exit, but he's too busy hiding behind me to listen.

"This is probably the last big scare so we ought to just stand here and wait for it," I say.

Suddenly Leatherface comes crashing out of a fake bookcase and fires up his chain saw with a sinister roar. He lunges at us with a real chain saw! Jeremy is screaming in my ear again, but this time I barely notice because I'm screaming right along with him.

We stumble, blithering, through the exit into the Houston night.

Jeremy and I are moaning in a combination of post-traumatic stress and hysterical laughter. We mock each other's cowardice.

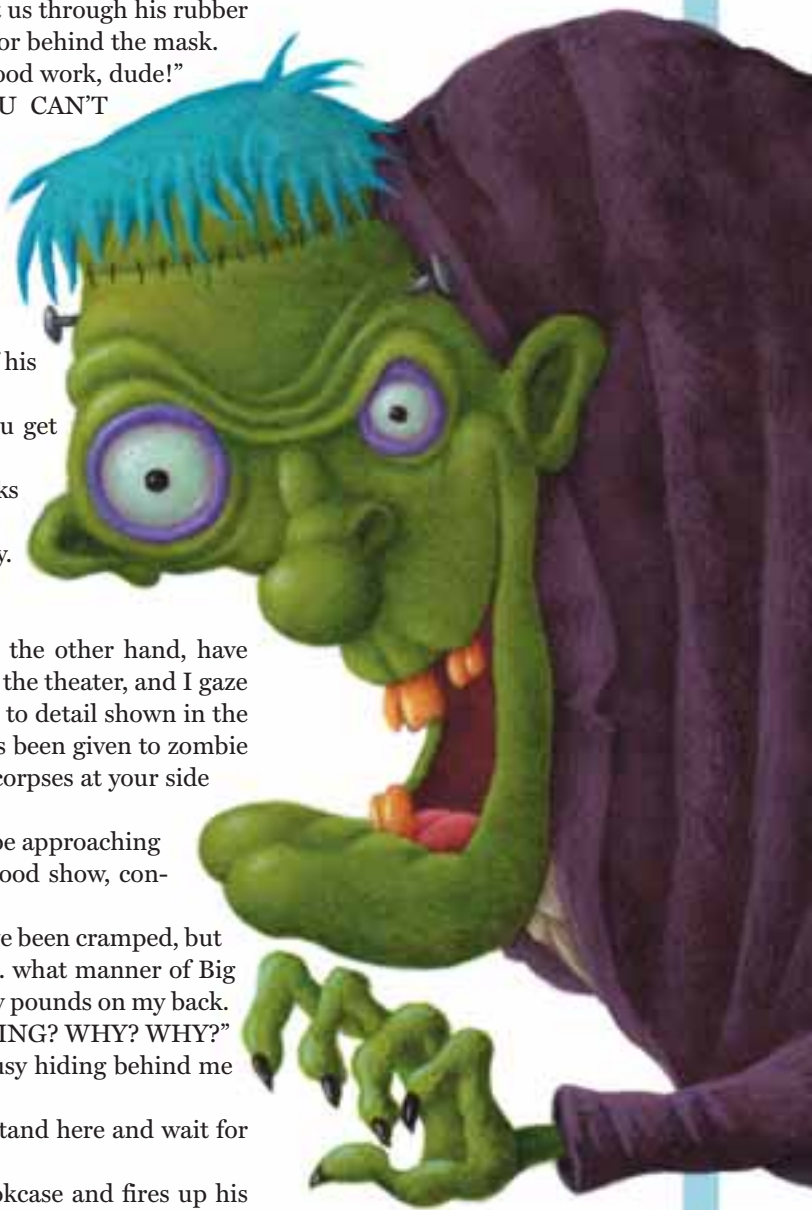
"YOU WERE SCREAMING LIKE A BABY!"

"Well, how about wiping that drool off your chin, dude?"

We wander around until we remember where we parked the car. Jeremy is blissfully happy after his near-death experience. He thanks me profusely.

"Thanks, dude! That was way cool!"

And then, "The Dormitory of Death is just around the corner on Westheimer ... what do you say?"



MARATHON

MOMENTS IN TIME

by Woody Welch



That is what I love about still photography. Human experience in a unique place, a particular spot with a certain light reflecting from it into our eyes. Capturing that split second and freezing that moment is what I love to do. This image happened this way:

The day had been mostly cloudy, and we were arriving in West Texas at the height of the rainy season. As always, we did not know exactly what to expect with the weather and were prepared for any situation. One of the most exciting and frustrating things about being a location shooter is this ever-changing weather variable. The Big Bend receives up to 80 percent of its rainfall in August, and we were arriving just in time to possibly experience a Big Bend monsoon storm, which can break up as fast as it forms. The light show that usually follows the abundant moisture that drops from the clouds is often spectacular and unique.

I believe that as a professional photographer I should always be prepared for these moments as if



they would never happen again. We pulled into Marathon for a good night's rest at the Gage Hotel, ready to take a break and prepare for the next four days of shooting in the Chisos Mountains. Just seconds prior to nightfall the sun peeked at us, bathing the scene with a red, orange and purple beauty. My assistant and I captured 15 images in less than 3 seconds and then the light was gone. Immediately we downloaded the images to find one perfectly focused, composed and exposed image.

It was a moment in time conveying a place and time in a way that will never be again. Light landing on life.

For more images of this shoot you can visit www.woodywelchphotography.com and see the Green Desert portfolio.

Woody Welch is an award-winning photographer based in Austin.

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Newton Gang Played It Safe

BY NORMAN L. MACHT

Texas is known for its outlaws, from Sam Bass to Bonnie and Clyde. But the most successful bank and train robbers of them all were members of the Newton Gang.

Compared to the Newtons, John Dillinger was a two-bit operator, Jesse and Frank James were amateurs and Butch Cassidy was a small fry. The Newtons made blowing safes and robbing trains big business and pulled off the largest train robbery in U.S. history.

Willis Newton, born in 1889, was the sixth of 11 children born to a farming family in Cottonwood in Callahan County. He and his brother Wylie, known as Doc, didn't take to farming. They preferred to steal the cotton (Willis maintained that Doc did it) that other farmers grew. That brought them a two-year prison sentence. They escaped, were recaptured and served almost five years.

Willis pulled his first train robbery near Uvalde in 1914, making off with \$4,700. For the next five years he and his gang, operating at night, blew open safes in stores and banks all over Texas and as far north as Michigan. The youngest Newton, 19-year-old Joe, joined him in 1920, and a year later, brothers Jess and Doc made it a family business.

Willis was the CEO. Through payoffs, he arranged dropped charges, inside information, shortened sentences, paroles and at least two governors' pardons. He chose the target banks and trains, directed the research—which could take several months—hired the extra men when needed, scouted the hideaways, choreographed the operations, disposed of the bonds they took and divvied the proceeds.

The Newtons carried pistols and sometimes shotguns for persuasive purposes, but remarkably, they never killed anybody.

The gang preferred to work in small towns, where security was lax, there weren't many people, and police forces were small and ineffectual. This was the early 1920s; new, round burglarproof safes were just being introduced, replacing the old square ones that blew open with a shot of nitroglycerin. Even the most powerful automobiles strained to go 60 mph. Telephone and burglar-alarm wires were easily cut. After a late-night job, the Newtons would hide in a predetermined cornfield or woods until nightfall the next day, then be picked up by an accomplice after dark.

Nor did they mind having spectators watching them work. They arrived in San Marcos in the early morning of January 5, 1924. Their target was the First State Bank. Five men cut wires and stood guard in the streets while two broke in through the bank's front door. At 3:30 a.m., their first shot of nitro blew the vault door 20 feet through the building and woke up the neighborhood. For the next 45 minutes, as

six more explosions broke open one safe and failed to crack a second, about a dozen people watched the entire operation from apartment windows and a bakery across the street. Those who ventured outside or came upon the scene on their way to work were persuaded to go inside. At 4:15 a.m. the two safecrackers emerged carrying sacks containing \$24,000. One whistled, and the gang's guards came out of the darkness, and they all walked calmly out of town.

The Newtons' career culminated on June 12, 1924, when they pulled off the biggest mail train robbery in U.S. history just outside Chicago, making off with \$3 million. But brother Doc was accidentally shot by one of the gang's longtime confederates during the holdup, and they had to hole up in a Chicago apartment while he was patched up. That's where they were nabbed. Most of the money went to payoffs and returns to the insurance company in exchange for lighter sentences in Leavenworth federal prison.

Willis owned real estate in Chicago, gas stations and nightclubs in Tulsa, and ran whiskey into dry Oklahoma. Ironically, he and Joe served time for an Oklahoma bank robbery they didn't do; their reputations convicted them. Doc did a stretch for trying to break into a gun shop when he was 77. Jess worked on ranches in Mexico and Oklahoma.

All four of the Newtons wound up in Uvalde, where Willis and Joe became local celebrities and living museum exhibits, giving talks about the good old days. Willis died in 1979 at the age of 90. Joe died 10 years later at 88. Jess died in 1960 at 73, and Doc died in 1974 at 83.

Norman L. Macht wrote about the history of major-league baseball spring training in the March issue.



A Treat from the Trees

BY KEVIN HARGIS The house where I grew up, and where my family still lives, has a yard full of pecan trees. In the fall, we would search in the grass for their bounty. Most of the whole nuts went into a large paper bag for cracking and picking out later. Some never even made it that far. They ended up smashed and eaten in a rush of instant gratification.

Later, we'd crack the nuts, break them open and clean out the meats, making sure to remove every piece of the bitter inner shells. Then we could enjoy the fruits (or nuts) of our labor in gooey pies or roasted with spices.

But desserts and snacks aren't the only things you can make with pecans. Their versatility lends itself to every course, including some intriguing main dishes.

In her book *In Praise of Pecans* (Bright Sky Press, 2007), June Jackson traces the history of the nut's use, from Native Americans 9,000 years ago up to modern farming, harvesting and processing techniques.

Along with this history and a discussion of the pecan's impact on early Ameri-

can settlers, Jackson, who grew up in Louisiana, also relates her personal memories of her family's use of pecans, including a touching recollection of her mother's candy making.

"As far as I know, she made her last batch of pralines in February 2001, a few days before she died. She used that same recipe, the one people had begged off her for over 60 years, and its goodness never failed her.

"When my mother got out the waxed paper, I knew she was getting ready to make candy. I had seen her reach for the skinny box, colored the same light blue and red, for as long as I could remember. This gesture meant she had an urge to make candy, be it divinity, date loaf, caramel fudge or pralines."

Among the traditional recipes for candy, pie and condiments featuring pecans in Jackson's book are some featuring not-so-common ingredients—duck, quail and kohlrabi. Here's a twist on pizza featuring pecans.

Pecan pieces add crunch to this easy-to-assemble pizza.



FOUR-CHEESE PECAN PIZZA

- Pizza crust (fresh or refrigerated)
- 2 tablespoons pecan or olive oil (divided)
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 1 package (3 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup goat cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled feta or blue cheese
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pecan pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup minced fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Put dough on a 12-inch pizza pan. Brush with 1 tablespoon oil. Place in oven for 3 minutes (to prevent soggy dough). Remove from oven and set aside.

In a large skillet, heat remaining oil. Cook onions over low heat until caramelized, about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Combine cream cheese and goat cheese; spread over prepared crust. Top with the onions, feta, mozzarella and pecans. Bake for 5 to 7 minutes or until cheeses are melted and top is lightly browned. Sprinkle with parsley. Serve hot. Yields 8 slices.

Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 341 calories, 11.4 g protein, 21.7 g fat, 24 g carbohydrates, 2.5 g fiber, 367 mg sodium, 31 mg cholesterol.



JUDITH BALDWIN *Mid-South Synergy*

Prize-winning recipe: **Pecan Pesto Chicken Lasagna**

The crunchy, cheesy topping on this lasagna was a favorite feature for taste-testers. Judith Baldwin says she developed the recipe while recovering from a foot injury. "I had lots of pecans and developed the recipe from what I found in my pantry and the herbs growing on the back porch," she said. "I have made pecan-crusted chicken before so the combination of ingredients just seemed to go together."

PECAN PESTO CHICKEN LASAGNA

- 1 cup pecan halves (divided)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 cloves garlic
- 30 leaves fresh basil
- 7 tablespoons olive oil (divided)
- 1 lemon, juiced
- 8 sheets lasagna noodles
- 2 diced shallots
- 8 chicken tenders
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/4 cups cream
- 2 cups Monterey jack cheese, shredded (divided)
- Nutmeg, to taste
- 1/4 cup crushed potato chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine 1/2 cup pecans, Parmesan cheese, garlic, basil, 2 tablespoons oil, lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste in food processor. Pulse until well combined. Set aside. Cook lasagna noodles as directed on package. Set aside. Sauté shallots in 3 tablespoons oil for 2 minutes, then add chicken and cook until juices run clear. Add mushrooms and cook 1 minute longer. In a bowl, beat eggs, cream and 1 cup Monterey jack cheese. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste. Butter a rectangular 6-cup gratin dish, then line bottom with layer of noodles. Make layer of filling, first spreading half of pesto, then half of chicken mixture, then half of cream mixture. Add another layer of noodles, then repeat filling layer, using remaining pesto, chicken and cream. Put another layer of noodles on top. Combine potato chips, 1/2 cup finely chopped pecans, remaining oil and remaining Monterey jack cheese and spread over top. Bake about 35 minutes or until cheese is bubbly.

Serving size: 1 1/2 cups. Per serving: 566 calories, 47 g protein, 32.6 g fat, 16 g carbohydrates, 1.2 g fiber, 286 mg sodium, 192 mg cholesterol.

CHOCOLATE PECAN LATTICE TART

- 1 package (15 ounces) refrigerated pie crust
- 1/3 cup chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 3/4 cup pecan halves, plus more for topping
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Soften pie crust according to package directions. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Combine chocolate chips and butter in microwave-safe bowl; microwave on high 20 to 40 seconds until melted and smooth, stirring after 20 seconds. Finely chop 3/4 cup of pecans; add to chocolate mixture. Whisk in brown sugar, egg, corn syrup and vanilla. Set aside. Unroll one pie crust onto lightly floured pizza stone or pan and roll into 13-inch circle. Unroll second crust and fold gently in half. Starting in center, cut folded crust crosswise into 12 strips, each 3/4-inch wide. Spoon pecan mixture over center of circle of crust and spread in 10-inch circle. Carefully twist six of the crust strips and place evenly over filling in horizontal rows. (Place longest strips over widest point.) Repeat with remaining strips, placing them vertically to form lattice. Fold edge of crust over ends of strips, pinching edges to seal. Put pecan half on each square between lat-

tice strips. Bake 28 to 30 minutes until golden brown. Remove from oven and allow to cool 10 minutes. Cut into 12 wedges to serve.

Serving size: 1 wedge. Per serving: 264 calories, 2.4 g protein, 14.8 g fat, 30.9 g carbohydrates, 1.3 g fiber, 148 mg sodium, 20 mg cholesterol.

PAGE DANIEL

Bailey County Electric Cooperative

Cook's tip: Pecans keep up to two years when frozen. When the new crop comes in around the end of the month, buy extra and store in an airtight container in the freezer.

TEXAS VEGETARIAN BURGER

- 1 can (15 ounces) pinto or great northern beans
- 1 cup vegetarian burger (textured vegetable protein)
- 1 cup seasoned bread crumbs
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup chopped pecans (finely or coarsely)
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chunky picante sauce
- 1 can (4 ounces) green chilies
- 1 package bacon-flavored topping
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 3 eggs, beaten

Evaporated milk, optional

Mash or puree beans. Mix all ingredients well. If needed to form into patties, add evaporated milk. Pan fry, broil or grill and serve on bun with hamburger condiments. Makes 8 to 10 medium patties.

Serving size: 1 burger. Per serving: 314 calories, 11.1 g protein, 20.7 g fat, 20.3 g carbohydrates, 4.7 g fiber, 580 mg sodium, 75 mg cholesterol.

MARTHA FAUTHEREE

Houston County Electric Cooperative

RECIPE CONTEST

February's recipe contest is **A BAKED BREAKFAST (PASTRIES)**. What could be better on a cold morning than eating a breakfast hot from the oven? Send us your top breakfast treat recipe. The deadline is October 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, or submit online at www.texascooppower.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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▲ **Michael C. Davis** of Medina Electric Cooperative found this home that apparently still has occupants off U.S. Highway 90 near Flatonia. “I think they should leave the very colorful and artistic wash hanging out all the time,” he said.

OLD HOUSES

Thank you, photographers, for all of your entries. While we received pictures of homes both restored and dilapidated, there is something about each of these time-worn buildings that evokes a sense of mystery and speculation. Having stood for ages and left to weather the elements, what secrets do these old walls house?

—ASHLEY CLARY

Arthur and Sherri Jackson of Medina Electric Cooperative sent in this remarkable photo that Sherri took outside Midland. “There was absolutely nothing around for miles, the temperature was freezing and the wind was so strong it was difficult to stand still. Who had built this house? What dreams had existed in its walls?” Arthur asked. ▼



▲ Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member **Andrea Haschke**, a new resident of Bastrop, found this old relic while on a scenic drive with her husband. “One chilly spring afternoon we passed this house near Cedar Creek. It was haunting, fragile and stoic at the same time,” she said.



▼ We weren’t sure what we were looking at here. **Ronda Hollingsworth**, a member of Navarro County Electric Cooperative, came across this rock building just off U.S. Highway 67 near Glen Rose. The land that this building stands on is actually for sale!

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Dec	Costumes	Oct 10
Jan	Odd Farm Equipment	Nov 10
Feb	Silly Poses	Dec 10
Mar	Caught in the Act	Jan 10
Apr	Bridges	Feb 10
May	At the (Texas) Beach	Mar 10

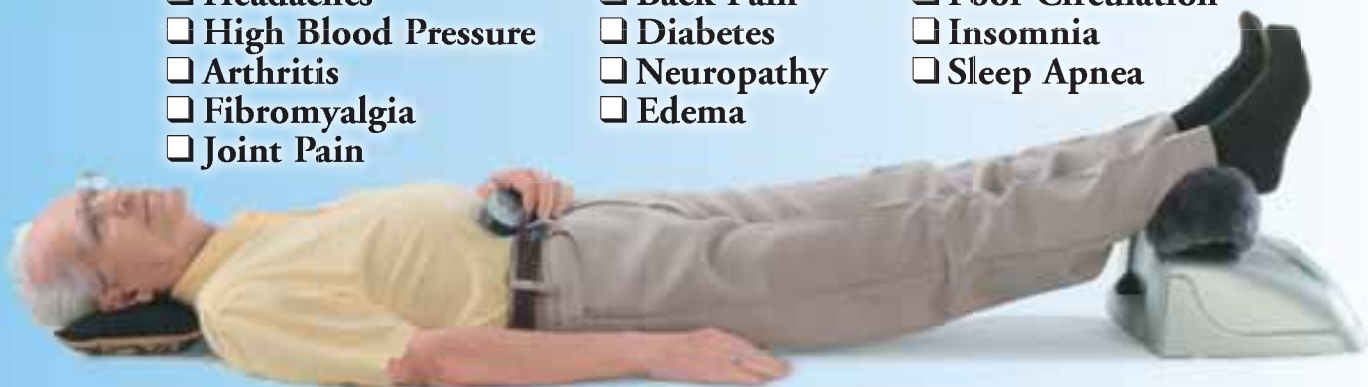
COSTUMES is the topic for our **DECEMBER 2008** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Costumes, Focus on Texas**, 2550 S. IH-35, Austin, TX 78704, before **October 10**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if 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, or submit them on our website at www.texascoopower.com.



◀ North Plains Electric Cooperative member **Craig Clyburn** found this abandoned home off a lonely stretch of a Panhandle highway.

If you suffer from

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress | <input type="checkbox"/> Constipation | <input type="checkbox"/> Restless Legs Syndrome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches | <input type="checkbox"/> Back Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Circulation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High Blood Pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arthritis | <input type="checkbox"/> Neuropathy | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep Apnea |
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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. After using the machine for only 4 minutes, I noticed my lower back loosening up. Since I have been using the machine I have been almost 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. 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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CHAPPELL HILL [11-12]
Scarecrow Festival, 1-800-225-3695, www.chappellhillmuseum.org

ELGIN [11-12, 18-19]
Pumpkin Festival, (512) 281-5016, www.elginchristmastreefarm.com

12 SALADO [12-13]
Christmas in October, (254) 947-5040, www.salado.com



BROWNSVILLE
Latin Jazz Festival

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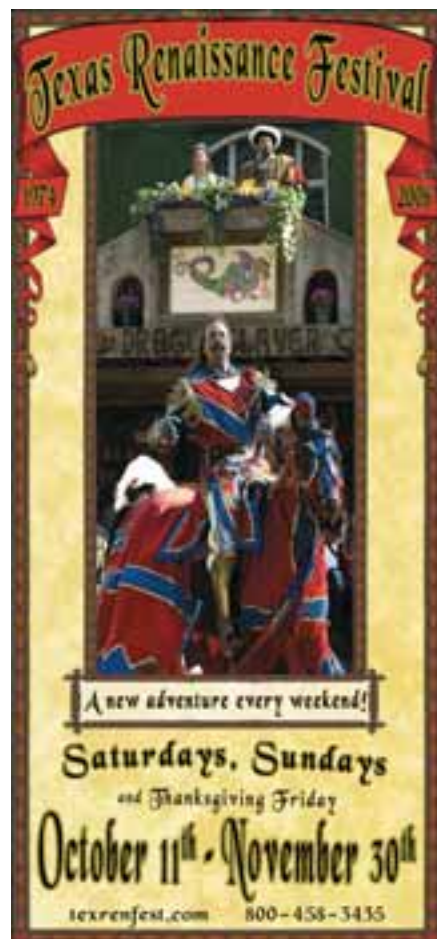


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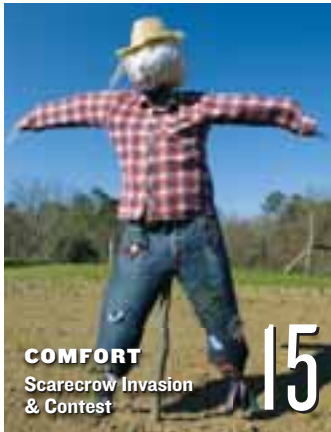
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15 COMFORT [10/15-11/10]
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Invasion & Contest,
(830) 995-3131,
www.comfortchamberofcommerce.com

17 YORKTOWN [17-19]
Western Days Festival,
(361) 564-2661,
www.yorktowntx.com

18 JEFFERSON
Texas Bigfoot Conference,
1-877-529-5550,
www.texasbigfoot.org

KERENS
Cotton Harvest Festival,
(903) 396-2665

MIDLOTHIAN
Fall Festival,
(972) 723-8600,
www.midlothianchamber.org

EDOM [18-19]
Festival of the Arts,
(903) 852-3990,
www.edomfestivalofthearts.com

19 SLATON
St. Joseph's German
Sausage Festival,
(806) 828-3379

24 WEST POINT [24-26]
Indigenous Elders
Gathering,
(979) 242-5474

25 ELGIN
Hogeye Festival,
(512) 281-5724

ROSENBERG
BOOberg Fall Festival,
(281) 633-2846

WAXAHACHIE
Texas Country Reporter
Festival, (972) 937-2390,
www.waxahachiechamber.com

GRANBURY [25-26]
Harvest Moon Festival,
(817) 573-5299

GRUENE [25-26]
Texas Clay Festival,
(830) 629-7975,
www.texasclayfestival.com



GRUENE
Tour de Gruene Bicycle Classic

26 BUFFALO GAP
Historic Village Fall
Festival, (325) 572-3365

31 CANYON LAKE
Halloweenfest, 1-800-
528-2104, www.canyonlakechamber.com

NOVEMBER

01 GRUENE [1-2]
Tour de Gruene Bicycle
Classic, (210) 828-6856

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

Event information can be mailed
to Around Texas, 2550 S. IH-
35, Austin, TX 78704, faxed to
(512) 486-6254, e-mailed to
aroundtx@texas-ec.org, or
submitted on our website at
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The Rio Grande Valley's semitropical climate turns fall and winter journeys into pleasurable cruises past citrus groves, palms and mesquites. From Roma southeastward to Mission, U.S. Highway 83 passes Spanish land grants from the 1700s, riverboat ports of the 1800s and the rich delta farmland that spurred the Valley's agricultural boom 100 years ago. A 65-mile trip through this stretch of southernmost Texas brings experiences you won't find elsewhere.

ROMA

Settled in 1765 by Spanish colonists, Roma perches on a bluff overlooking the Rio Grande. At **ROMA BLUFFS OBSERVATION DECK OF THE WORLD BIRDING CENTER**, use the free telescope to check up and down the fast-flowing river for colorful and noisy kingfishers, green jays and great kiskadees.

On weekdays, City Hall will send someone to open the **ROMA MUSEUM** for you. At this hodgepodge collection housed in a historic peach-colored building, you can discover oddities such as high-button boots from a long-closed shop, vintage projectors from the Roma Movie House and the vast old cistern that underlies half the building. Posters from the **VIVA ZAPATA** festival acclaim the movie filmed here 56 years ago when the streets were unpaved.

RIO GRANDE CITY

Eastbound and westbound lanes of U.S. Highway 83 hug the central blocks of Rio Grande City, which 100 years ago was winding down from its heyday as a thriving riverboat port. Stop at **LA BORDE HOUSE**, once a busy dry-goods store and boarding house, but now restored as a seven-room inn and café. You can tour the Victorian-era bedrooms, the courtyard and the marvelous second-floor veranda. Walk a block south to the bluff above the long-gone pier, past beautiful old brickwork buildings, all of which, according to local legends, had secret tunnels for the illegal goods that flowed back and forth

ROMA to MISSION

Border cities harken back to when riverboats plied the Rio Grande.

BY EILEEN MATTEI



across the Rio Grande during Prohibition and revolutions. If you're hungry for a meal more Mex than Tex, try the entomadas or puffy tacos at **CARO'S RESTAURANT**.

A drive around **FORT RINGGOLD**, established in 1848, takes you past old army barracks with their arched verandas and the parade grounds where cavalry troops once assembled. Today, any ghosts are shouted by the schoolkids who attend classes in old and new buildings at the fort. Call ahead to book a ride on the town's trolley tour of Fort Ringgold, historic buildings and a replica of the **GROTTO OF LOURDES**.

La Borde House, (956) 487-5101

Trolley tour, (956) 488-0047

Caro's Restaurant, (956) 487-2255

LOS EBANOS

Twenty miles east on U.S. Highway 83 at Sullivan City, turn south onto FM 886 to Los Ebanos and follow the historical marker signs. The hand-pulled **LOS EBANOS FERRY** carries pedestrians and three cars at a time over the Rio Grande at a narrows known to Indians, Spanish explorers, Mexican settlers,

Texas Rangers and centuries' worth of smugglers. Many passengers lend a hand, pulling on the rope, which is anchored to a 250-year-old ebony tree. Since the river is barely more than five times wider than the ferry, the crossing takes only a few minutes. Pedestrians pay 50 cents. Halfway across the fast-flowing river, you're in Mexico, so be sure to bring your passport.

MISSION

The end of South Bentsen Palm Drive provides two delightful reasons to stay outdoors. The **WORLD BIRDING CENTER** at **BENTSEN-RIO GRANDE VALLEY STATE PARK** lists more than 300 species of birds observed in the park. Hop on bicycles or the tram to visit the bird-feeding stations and observation decks, since no cars are allowed in.

One mile east, down Military Highway, the remarkable **NORTH AMERICAN BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL BUTTERFLY PARK** and its native plant gardens are a magnet for 175 species of wild butterflies, particularly during fall butterfly migration. Mission's **TEXAS BUTTERFLY FESTIVAL**, which includes field trips, runs October 16-19.

From FM 1016, go south to FM 494 and **LA LOMITA CHAPEL**, a small 1865 mission used by circuit-riding priests on horseback. This whitewashed, thick-walled chapel set amidst mesquite trees gave the city of Mission its name. Just yards from La Lomita, relax under the thatch-roofed patio at **PEPE'S ON THE RIVER**, possibly the only place in Texas where you can watch the Rio Grande flow past while you enjoy a cold drink and fried catfish. On your way home, get freshly picked grapefruit from **SHARYLAND ORCHARDS** at Shary Road and 4 Mile Road.

NABA Butterfly Park, (956) 583-9009

Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, (956) 584-9156, www.worldbirdingcenter.org

Eileen Mattei is a feature writer based in Harlingen.




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