

A FAREWELL TO AUTHOR ELMER KELTON

DINNER FROM THE GULF

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER

**PECANS**  
Pick of the Crop

**SPEAK OUT**  
ABOUT ENERGY COST!

SEE PAGE 18



authentic blues in the Delta > a cosmopolitan capital city with a thriving entertainment district.

uniquely charming Victorian village nestled in the Ozarks > a booming northwest metropolis > New

> world-record fishing > a river valley wine country

Go from legendary natural thermal spas nestled in the Ouachita Mountains to a

## WHERE RUSTIC EARTH TONES MEET BRIGHT CITY LIGHTS.



RIVER MARKET, LITTLE ROCK



VAN BUREN



OZARK MOUNTAINS NEAR JASPER



GARYAN WOODLAND GARDENS, HOT SPRINGS



LITTLE ROCK



FUREBA SPRINGS aka "LITTLE SWITZERLAND"

Learn more about these photos at [Arkansas.com](http://Arkansas.com)

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Text "INFO" to TOURAR (868727) for fall color updates and more.





# October 2009

VOLUME 66 NUMBER 4



## FEATURES

### 8 Pick of the Crop

By Ellen Sweets  
Photos by Kent Barker

*The pecan is our state tree, one of our major crops and one of our favorite treats. We visit a farm where two generations are shaking the most out of their productive crop.*

### 14 He Wanted To Be a Cowboy

By Jeff Tietz

*But Elmer Kelton had to settle for "just" writing about cowboys—just about as well as anybody ever has.*

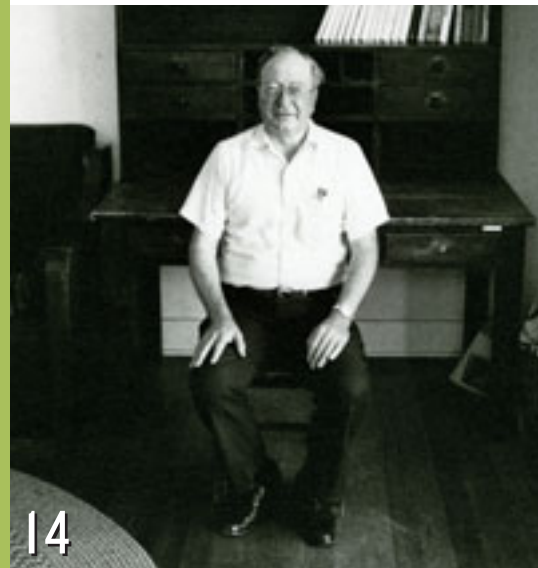
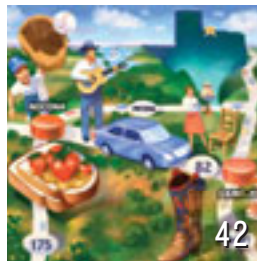
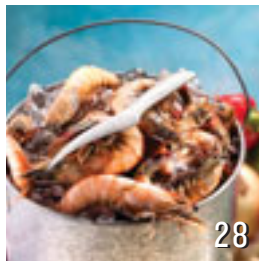
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## TEXAS CO-OP POWER

*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

## PARADISE FOUND

My wife and I recently spent part of a day rummaging around Booked Up in Archer City, Larry McMurtry's bookstore.

The 200,000-volume bookstore south of Wichita Falls would have been one of those best-kept secrets without Jeff Tietz's article ("A Bookish Paradise," August 2009 issue). The soft-spoken manager, a persistent purring black and



white resident cat that welcomed us, an immediately recognizable musty smell of old books, row after row of really old and not so old one-of-a-kind books of all sorts, sizes and shapes was a unique and memorable event.

Including our Dairy Queen lunch where one of the local pearl-buttoned cowboys showed my wife how spurs are fastened to cowboy boots, this day will be one of those moments never to be forgotten.

**MIKE AND DEANNE SILVERSTEIN**  
*Farmers Electric Cooperative*

## COUPON WEBSITES SAVE DOLLARS

In your August 2009 Recipe section ("Have a Plan Before You Go to the Store"), you gave

# POWER TALK

information about cost-saving tips while grocery shopping. I have been clipping coupons for the past year using two websites that basically did all the pricing work for me. One site is [www.the-grocerygame.com](http://www.the-grocerygame.com). There is a nominal charge for this site. The other is [www.couponmom.com](http://www.couponmom.com), a free site. These sites do all the homework for you, so no notebook or research is needed.

Just buy the Sunday paper and keep the coupon booklets in a folder, as sales are cyclical. Each website references the Sunday date of the coupon and from which flier it can be clipped. For products not listed with coupons, say meats and produce, the websites list all those items on sale that week and the percentage savings on those items. You'll also discover there are some weeks when items with coupons are actually free!

**GINGER BELSHA**  
*Houston*

## BRAVO FOR BANDANAS

"An Ode to the Bandana" by Kenneth L. Canion in the August 2009 issue was a great story. I've been a tomboy bandana user since I can remember. I still use them today. I once tied one to a calf's tail out in the pasture because at the moment we didn't have a way to mark it for special treatment later. When working, I like old, soft, worn-out ones and camouflaged colored for hunting and sharp-colored ones for

dressing up. And add hunting face mask, trail marker, animal tag and fashion accessory (other than Western wear) to Canion's list of uses.

Thank you for reminding folks of another simple thing that seems to be falling by the wayside. I can't leave home without one!

**JUDY BISHOP JUREK**  
*Wharton County Electric  
Cooperative*

**Editor's note:** "An Ode to the Bandana" did not appear in all editions of *Texas Co-op Power*, but it can be found at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).

## PANDEMIC MIGHT BE WORSE TODAY

I appreciated the article by Shannon Oelrich ("The Forgotten Pandemic," August 2009 issue), which brought out many important facets about the 1918 pandemic. However, one important fact seems to have been omitted. As I understand, the virus actually began at Fort Riley, Kansas. When American soldiers went to Europe, they introduced the virus to the European continent. The virus then mutated into its most deadly form, and the returning soldiers brought back with them the more

dangerous strain.

The lesson here is that the same critical result could apply to the H1N1 virus (swine flu). However, the world is much smaller today, and interaction between people around the world heightens the prospect of international exposure and the potential of a mutation may be greater than that of the 1918 virus.

**RAMON C. NOCHES**  
*Austin*

## GRANDMOTHER SURVIVED 1918 INFLUENZA

The article about "The Forgotten Pandemic" in the August 2009 issue reminded me of a story I heard my grandmother tell. She was born in 1904 and had "the influenza" as she called it, when she was 14, which would have been in 1918.

When Maggie Adeline (Hayes) Emerson had the influenza at 14, she was so ill that her parents took her to the hospital in Ada, Oklahoma. Maggie saw funerals every day from her room, but she remembered one day in particular when she watched six funeral processions go by in the same day. Thankfully she recovered but came home to find that two of her friends had died.

Thank you for helping me to make a family connection to "The Forgotten Pandemic."

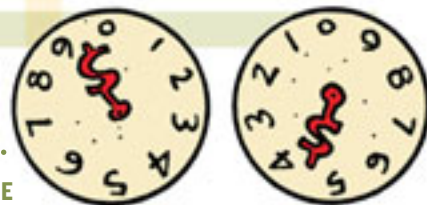
**JAN GREENLEE HAYES**  
*South Plains Electric Cooperative*

We want to hear from our readers. Send letters to: Editor, *Texas Co-op Power*, 1122 Colorado, 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, or e-mail us at [letters@texas-ec.org](mailto:letters@texas-ec.org). Please include the name of your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length and will be printed as space allows. Read additional letters at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).

## GLOSSARY

### FUEL ADJUSTMENT CLAUSE

A correction or modification on a consumer's monthly electric bill caused by an increase or decrease in the cost of an electric utility's fuel supply. It also is called a **POWER COST ADJUSTMENT**.







## HAPPENINGS

Shiver me timbers, it's treasure-hunting time at **PIRATE DAYS OF THE COLONY**, a swashbuckling adventure for buccaneers of all ages.

Set for October 17-18, this festival is born of a fanciful fable: Modern-day pirates in Galveston found a treasure chest full of gold buried by legendary pirate Jean Laffite. But the disoriented pirates, with their map turned upside down, got lost and went north—way north, above Dallas—winding up in The Colony on the southeastern shore of Lake Lewisville.

As far-fetched as that tale is, there is real treasure to be found here, starting with the festival's high-tech scavenger hunt in which wannabe pirates equipped with GPS devices search for hidden souvenirs. Meanwhile, there's enough entertainment to keep anyone from walking the plank: Actors re-enact pirate history, dogs and humans compete in pirate costume contests, and in pirate school, children learn to walk and talk like a pirate. Yarr! For more information, call (972) 625-8027 or go to [www.piratedays.org](http://www.piratedays.org).



As detailed in the book *Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History* (1984, Texas Monthly Press), the Rio Grande has had many imaginative names throughout the history of mapmaking. Early Spanish explorers were responsible for many of them, including: Rio de la Concepción, Rio de las Palmas (River of the Palms), Rio de Nuestra Señora (River of Our Lady), Rio de San Buenaventura del Norte (River of Good Fortune of the North) and Rio Guadalquivir (Great River).

## BALL AND SPANISH MOSS ARE HARMLESS HITCHHIKERS

“The propensity for both of these bromeliads to thrive on the dead or dying branches of living trees gives the mistaken impression that they are responsible for the tree’s demise. Actually, naturally dying branches simply provide good habitat for the bromeliads, because they are bare and generally offer the best conditions of light and relative humidity.”

—Matt Warnock Turner, *Remarkable Plants of Texas: Uncommon Accounts of Our Common Natives*, University of Texas Press, 2009

ANDY AND SALLY WASSERK



## DIAMONDS ARE A GRID'S BEST FRIEND

Apollo Diamonds is growing diamonds synthetically for future use in computer chips, other small electronics and—ta-da—the electric grid. We learned something about it on the June 30 installment of PBS’ “Nova Science Now.”

The diamond is an excellent insulator of electricity. And blue diamonds could serve as conductors because they contain the chemical element boron. A cubic centimeter of diamond could withstand 10 mil-

lion volts of electricity. Electric grids using diamonds could speed power across lines and with much less hardware than the current copper-based systems.




FUTURE TALK

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 **Texas Electric Cooperatives**  
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# Solar Water Heating the Easy Way

*Low-tech system taps direct sunlight.*

By Jill K. Cliburn

**I**F YOU'RE INTERESTED IN SOLAR energy, you might find that solar water heating is the simplest and most cost-effective way to put this renewable resource to work. New solar industry standards promote quality products and installations, and new federal solar tax credits can take 30 percent off the installed cost of solar water heating for your home or business.

A solar water heater, which harnesses sunlight to produce hot water, features a solar energy collector and a storage tank. It is designed with a dark, heat-absorbing material inside the collector—typically a glazed box or tube. A heat-exchange fluid passes through the collector, gets hot and then runs through a heat exchanger, which transfers the heat to the water in a storage tank.

In the United States, a typical solar water heating system is likely to meet more than half of a household's water heating needs over the course of a year.

Don't confuse solar water heating with solar electric systems, also known as high-tech photovoltaics, which use a semiconducting material to convert sunlight into electricity. By comparison, solar water heating is low-tech. It puts the radiant heat energy of the sun directly to work, heating water for household or commercial use.

For best results, solar panels should face south and should be unshaded year-round and for years to come. Some people forget how quickly trees will grow or how long the shadow of an evergreen tree can be.

## WHICH DESIGN IS THE BEST FOR YOU?

Closed-loop antifreeze systems use an antifreeze heat transfer fluid in the collector as freeze protection under harsh winter conditions. A circulating pump, powered by household electricity or by a small photovoltaics panel, moves the fluid through the system. A heat

exchanger transfers heat from the fluid to household water. In four-season climates, this is the most popular generic design.

Closed-loop drain-back systems use distilled water with a corrosion inhibitor as the heat transfer fluid that circulates through the collector. Like the antifreeze system, this system also uses a heat exchanger, so the fluid does not mix with household water.

Open-loop direct systems heat and circulate household (potable) water directly through solar energy collectors. One type of open-loop system is a batch heater—simply a tank filled with water and placed on the roof either in a glazed box or attached to a solar collector panel. This type of heater has few parts and is generally reliable. However, it must be protected from freezing or drained for the winter. The design is common for do-it-yourself projects that serve summer homes or workshops.

## SHOPPING TIPS

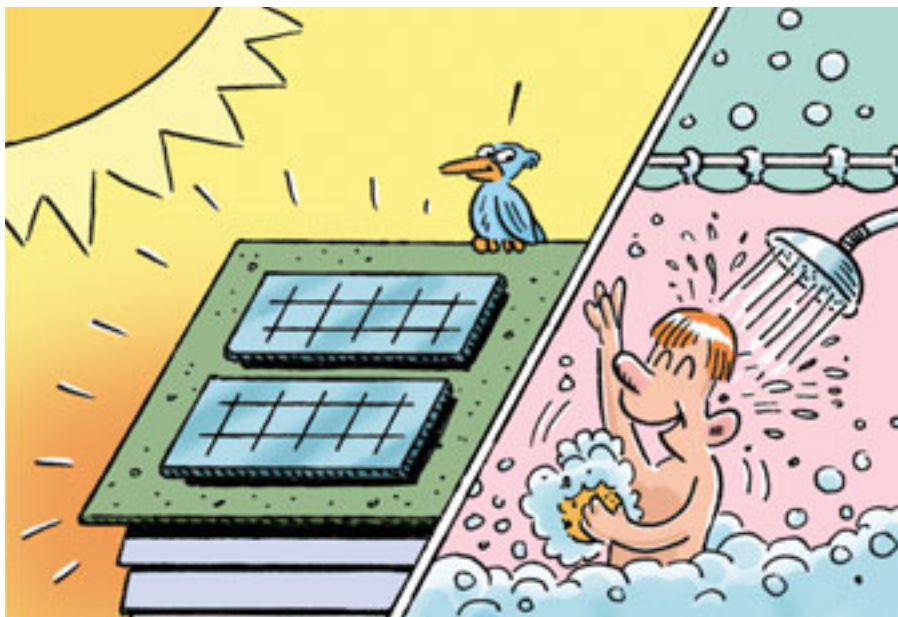
Your electric cooperative is one source of information about qualified solar equipment dealers. Other sources include the Solar Energy Industries Association ([www.seia.org](http://www.seia.org)), the State Energy Conservation Office ([www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us](http://www.seco.cpa.state.tx.us)) or the American Solar Energy Society ([www.findsolar.com](http://www.findsolar.com)).

Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)) began to label solar water heating equipment and other energy-efficient water heaters.

## FIRST COST, INCENTIVES AND SAVINGS

Before incentives, installed costs for a two-panel household solar water heating system typically run between \$5,000 and \$9,000, depending on the level of freeze protection and other features. Whatever the cost of the installed system, you may be eligible for a 30 percent cost reduction, thanks to the federal tax credit on solar, which now applies to the installed cost (within guidelines) of the system. Check the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency ([www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org)) to see if you qualify.

*Jill K. Cliburn has written several reports for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*





WOMEN'S HEALTHY SKIN UPDATE

# Erase Wrinkles Instantly

Reduce the appearance of fine line and wrinkles INSTANTLY with the tool that top makeup artists use to get leading ladies ready for their high-definition close-ups!

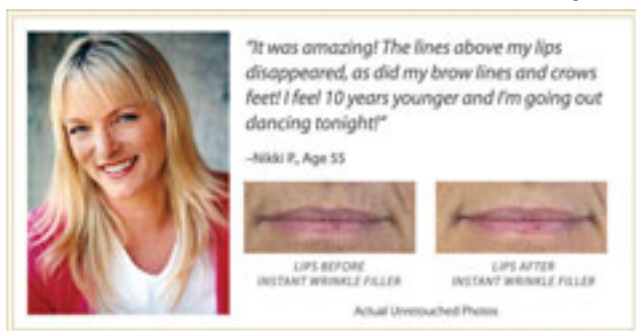
**Try it FREE for 30 DAYS!** *Read below to find out how...*

High-Definition is great for television but it scares the daylights out of actresses over 35. Fear of the unforgiving lens has them screaming behind the scenes, "Make me look younger." As one of the leading makeup artists in show business, Rachel has to deal with the panic and anxiety among older actresses who must face a high-definition camera. She's become an expert in performing minor miracles. Some transformations can take hours, but when everything depends on Rachel's ability to work fast, she reaches for a secret weapon in the bottom drawer.

Rachel has found that the fastest way to minimize the visible appearance of wrinkles—even the most stubborn ones—is with **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler**. That's why it goes with her on every job and never fails when called on to help leading ladies get ready for their close-up... even in high-definition.

## Women Are Raving That It Really Works

But it's not only Rachel who believes in the magic of **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler**. In all of the years of market testing, we've never had a product test so high. But seeing is believing! Once the women who participated in the test saw how amazing they looked they didn't want to give back their trial supply.



Actual Same Day Results – Unretouched Photos

## Developed by a Surgeon

Endorsed by one of the country's top plastic surgeons, and previously available only through plastic surgeon's offices, **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler** is available for the very first time in small quantities to the public. Finally, the same smoothing power that makes women look younger in front of the camera can do the same for you in your own bathroom mirror!

## Immediately Visible Results

You don't need to wait long to look younger. The silicone micro beads in **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler** trigger an immediate and significant optical wrinkle elimination. The super-hydrating ingredient, Hyaluronic Acid, rapidly plumps up lines from the inside. Just smooth the filler into your laugh lines, crow's feet or even depressed scars for instant results. The results look amazing, even in close-up situations.

Additionally, the breakthrough ingredients in **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler** help reverse the signs of premature aging of the skin, while helping to minimize the damaging effects of stress and the environment.

## It's a Safe and Painless Alternative to Treatments

Even though Los Angeles has been called "The Face-Lift Capital of the World," there are still some celebrities who'd rather avoid the pain and complication of cosmetic surgery. Even though they can well afford it, they'd rather skip the uncomfortable side effects that come along with treatments.



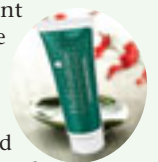
## Years Disappear in Minutes

With a simple topical application of **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler**, you can see instant results in the fight against unsightly deep lines and wrinkles. What's more, **Hydroxatone®** can be applied to all areas of the face, neck, and body—not just to "crow's feet" around the eyes.

The **Hydroxatone®** anti-aging system was developed in conjunction with a top board certified plastic and reconstructive surgeon. He is an internationally recognized expert on plastic surgery, publishing over 20 articles, books and textbook contributions.

## Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler 30 day RISK FREE trial

We are so confident in the wrinkle reducing benefits of **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler** that we want to offer you a 30-Day Risk Free Trial, so you can experience the results first hand. But this trial offer is limited, so you must call today to get your risk free supply of **Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler**...because seeing is believing! If you're not 100% satisfied with the amazing results, simply return the unused portion for a complete refund (less shipping and processing)



**Call 888-425-8180 Today to Get Your 30 day Risk Free Trial of Hydroxatone® Instant Wrinkle Filler**

**Mention Promotional Code HW100119**

# PICK *of the* CROP

*The pecans rain down  
at Sorrells Farms,  
where there's a whole  
lot of shakin' going on*

BY ELLEN SWEETS • PHOTOS BY KENT BARKER







Kinley Sorrells, above, and his son tend 1,200 acres of pecan trees, 48 trees per acre.



GAYLAND SORRELLS CLIMBS ABOARD A big, oddly shaped yellow machine and pushes a button. The machine rumbles to life, its front attachment looking more like the pinchers of a gigantic, angular beetle than an invaluable piece of pecan-picking equipment. This machine is, in fact, a significant part of harvesting the Lone Star State's favorite nut, a product that Gayland and his father, Kinley Sorrells, have been tending for three decades.

"Go 'head," Kinley Sorrells says, urging his son to continue the starting-up process. "Fire her up."

With the push of another button, hydraulic action forces the pinchers to separate. With the press of yet another button, they come together, the better to clamp on to a tree trunk and shake the living daylight out of it. Ripe pecans rain down. California-based Orchard Machinery Corporation claims to be the only company in the country that makes the Shock Wave Mono Boom, a wickedly efficient piece of equipment that helps the Sorrells harvest their crop. This is a far cry from the Depression years when pecan thrashing was done by hand.

Every fall, during harvest season, a variation on a theme of the same scene

is repeated throughout Comanche County, home to 10,000 acres of managed, or farmed, pecan trees—the state tree of Texas.

Once the shaker forces branches to release their fruit, another piece of machinery sweeps the pecans into rows, and a tractor-pulled harvester—complete with rotating rubber and wire fingers—gathers the pecans. After a vacuum fan blows out the trash, such as leaves and twigs, the pecans are carried by conveyor belt into a harvesting trailer and then hauled to a cleaning plant. Pecans consist of about 25 percent moisture when they're shaken from trees; ideally, that number should drop to 4 percent during the drying process.

With a growing season that lasts from six to seven months and an average annual rainfall of 30 inches, Comanche County farmers produce a variety of agricultural products, including pecan, grain, hay, watermelon, cantaloupe and peanut crops. In 2008, the sales of dairy cattle and their milk, beef cattle, sheep and goats accounted for 86 percent of the county's \$143 million total cash receipts for agricultural commodities, with crops accounting for the remainder. Pecans, which typically produce about \$5 million in annual sales,

generated \$2.7 million in a down year in 2008.

Sorrells Farms is one of the county's farms that contributes a variety of agricultural products. Thirty miles southwest of Stephenville and five miles east of Comanche, just a quarter-mile past the point where blacktop gives way to a well-traveled dirt road, the farm is home to a 30-year-old family business that also includes cattle, hay, watermelons, cantaloupes, squash, zucchini, jalapeños, onions, peaches and tomatoes.

But it's pecans where the farm really makes its mark, and patriarch Kinley Sorrells has been watering, feeding, harvesting and selling them since completing undergraduate and graduate studies in agricultural education and soil science at Tarleton State University in Stephenville. Gayland followed in his father's tracks with a degree in agricultural economics.

Together, father and son tend their 1,200 acres. With 48 trees per acre, it is an exercise in continual vigilance. During the growing season, from April through October, the trees require one to two inches of water per week from rain and/or irrigation. One acre-inch of water, which would cover an acre of ground an inch deep, equals 27,154 gallons.

Hydraulic pinchers grab on to a pecan tree trunk and shake the nuts down.







## Packaged Treats Round Out Business

Martha and Larry Newkirk of San Saba have certainly got the right idea about incorporating pecans into luscious edibles. From their 340-acre spread of 7,000 trees at The Great San Saba River Pecan Company, they sell preserves that include pecans grown on their farm on the San Saba River. The 10 flavors include jalapeño peach and pecan; cherry pecan; and their award-winning peach, pecan and amaretto—not to mention a knockout pecan pie. Sip a complimentary cup of pecan coffee while you shop.

The Newkirks are among a handful of growers who allow you to pick your own pecans. Martha Newkirk stores the long-cane “thrashing sticks” used to whack branches. No word on whether a protective helmet is needed.

“Kids love it, and harvesting pecans makes a nice family outing,” she says. “You can bring a picnic basket and sit by the river after beating the trees. It’s one way to work up an appetite.”

**The Great San Saba River Pecan Company**, 1-800-621-8121, [www.greatpecans.com](http://www.greatpecans.com). Call for hours and directions.





When the Sorrells aren't irrigating, praying for rain to start or praying for it to stop (which hasn't happened lately), they're on the lookout for raccoons, deer, opossums and, of course, squirrels that can make short work of a crop if not strongly discouraged. Here and there are massive ruts where wild pigs rooting up the ground in search of food have made their presence known.

"When we're not getting after the wild pigs, we're on the lookout for the other pests—bugs and disease," Kinley Sorrells says as he navigates corridors of trees in his dusty four-wheel-drive Ford pickup. In addition to guarding against such diseases as pecan scab, stem end blight, fungal leaf scorch and powdery mildew, farmers must also look out for aphids, stink bugs and the dreaded pecan nut casebearer, a moth whose larvae tunnel into pecan nuts.

"You really have to look out for casebearers," Sorrells says. "They grow into moths and can really do you in. The adults come up out of the ground, get into the trees and deposit eggs on the tip of the nuts. They know just when the tree

is pollinated. That's when they hatch. Larvae burrow into the young fruit. They can destroy a whole cluster, so we have to spray at just the right time."

The right time to spray pesticides, Sorrells says, is when casebearers start arriving on the scene and are lured into pheromone traps. The traps contain the female moth's pheromone—the chemical she releases to attract the male moth—and snag the moths with a sticky, glue-like substance on the bottom. Coordinating spraying with the use of the traps lowers the use and cost of pesticides, he says.

Under Environmental Protection Agency regulations, pesticide sprays used in pecan orchards must pass registration requirement testing—for example, no pesticide residue may be found in pecan kernels—before they can be sold in the United States.

As he crisscrosses his orchard in his dusty pickup, Sorrells stops in a stand of trees, picking a pecan and slicing away a horizontal cross section to demonstrate the maturation process that will in time yield a fully formed

pecan. The varieties that he grows include Cheyenne, Kiowa, Wichita, Pawnee, Mahan, Cape Fear and Kanza.

"Pecan growing has had its ups and down what with the fluctuating price of pecans, but things had been on an upswing until the economy tanked this year; then we had the same problems everybody else had," he says. "The problem we're facing this year, actually the past two years, has been the increase in fuel costs, and it hit us hard. Chemicals and fertilizers are tied to oil as well, so we've had increased costs."

Pecans grow wild only in the United States and Mexico. Here in Texas, where pecans are grown in roughly 200 counties from the Panhandle to the Rio Grande Valley, the nuts are the state's most important native horticultural crop, according to John Begnaud, a retired extension horticulture specialist with Texas A&M University's AgriLife Extension Service.

The United States and Mexico remain the world's largest exporters of pecans, with Texas ranking second only to Georgia in U.S. production. Sorrells sells locally, statewide, nationally and internationally, with mainland China, Hong Kong and Mexico as customers. Pecans as a cash crop have spread to 30 countries as far away as Australia, China, India, Israel and South Africa.

Because pecans are such a viable crop, there are active breeding programs to improve pest resistance, prevent disease and encourage early maturation to accommodate various growing zones. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Agricultural Research Service, oversees a high-profile pecan genetics and breeding program in College Station.

Despite their broad appeal, many in this country still think of pecans and pecan products as a seasonal treat for Thanksgiving or Christmas. Fortunately, we Texans know better.

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*For more information about Sorrells Farms, which is served by Comanche Electric Cooperative, call (254) 879-4677, go to [www.sorrellsfarms.com](http://www.sorrellsfarms.com) or e-mail [giftnuts@sorrellsfarms.com](mailto:giftnuts@sorrellsfarms.com).*

*Ellen Sweets, who wrote about Austin chef Hoover Alexander in the March issue of Texas Co-op Power, is a former food and feature writer for The Denver Post.*

## Pecans Fill the Bill

Research at Temple-based Scott & White, one of the nation's largest multispecialty health-care systems, has established that pecans are one of our healthiest foods.

Indeed, cholesterol-free pecan meat is an antioxidant rich in calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium and fiber. One ounce of pecans has about the same amount of fiber as a medium-sized apple and provides 10 percent of the recommended daily value for fiber.

Vitamins? Check: A, B and E

An ounce of pecans has more zinc than a 3.5-ounce piece of skinless chicken breast. Season a chicken breast with a bit of salt, a dash of pepper, a bit of thyme and a dusting of pecan flour and sauté it. Zinc will go about its business guarding against infections, even as you serve the bird with a drizzle of pecan gravy.

**Pecans can be stored in massive refrigerated warehouses until they go to market.**





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Elmer Kelton at J. Frank Dobie's Paisano Ranch by Bill Wittliff



# He wanted to be a cowboy. But instead, Elmer Kelton saddled up for a legendary ride in the literary saddle. BY JEFF TIETZ

**“Dad tried to make a cowboy outta me, but I never had the natural talent it took,” legendary Western writer Elmer Kelton told me recently at his home in San Angelo. “I just wasn’t as good at it as I oughta been. I wanted to be a cowboy, but it just wasn’t there. One thing was I was nearsighted and it took a long time to figure that out, so I’d go out and couldn’t see the men on either side of me and fall behind and mess up the drive.”**

Kelton’s father, Buck Kelton, was the foreman of the McElroy Ranch, a 230-square-mile spread overlapping Upton and Crane counties in West Texas. When it came to cowboying, Buck sometimes said his son was “as slow as the seven-year itch.”

“That gave me an inferiority complex, for sure,” Kelton said. “I was always out there trying, with the cowboys who were so adept at what they did, and my younger brothers coming along—they were all better hands than me. I always felt a little out of place wherever I was. When I was with the cowboys I wasn’t at their level, and in town I was regarded as a cowboy, not a town boy.”

Soon after he discovered he was nearsighted, tuberculosis confined Kelton to bed for almost a year. He’d always been a “bookish kid”—“Very often I beat the girls at spelling bees,” he said—but while ill, his bookishness flourished.

“That inferiority complex pushed me further toward the creative work,” he says. He read and drew and made up stories and sketched mock-ups of newspapers on notebook paper, crafting news columns and headlines about ranch affairs.

He returned to ranch work after he got well, but “the die had already been cast to some degree,” he says. “There was just a natural weaning process that went on.” He would become a cowboy writer, he realized, and not a cowboy. “But writing seemed kind of a sissy thing,” he said, “so I didn’t boast about it.”

Kelton lives with his wife, Ann, an Austrian whom he

met in Ebensee, Austria, while serving in World War II in the U.S. Army, in a brick, ranch-style home on a quiet street near the groomed campus of Angelo State University. They have supplied their thick-carpeted living room with prints of Western scenes, bronze statuettes of cowboys on horseback and porcelain Austrian villagers in holiday costume.

“It’s like a museum,” Kelton said, “and we’re gettin’ to be museum pieces.”

Elmer Kelton is 83 and quiet-looking. He is neither tall nor wide. He wears glasses with large, round lenses and favors plain, snap-button shirts. His conversation is relaxed.

Kelton has almost finished his 51st novel, *Other Men’s Horses*, which is scheduled for publication this fall. Several of his books, including the novels *The Time It Never Rained* and *The Day the Cowboys Quit*, are considered classics of the genre and notable works in American fiction.

Kelton has won just about every Western writing award there is, including seven Spur Awards from the Western Writers of America, which in 1995 named him the greatest Western author of all time. The annual Spur Award represents the finest in literature about the American West. Four of Kelton’s books have won the Western Heritage Award from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame.

In his life and work, Kelton has stayed close to his original vision of himself, to the particular cowboy lifestyle into which he was born but not fully bred. He left Crane County to get a journalism degree at the University of



Texas, then returned to ranch country as a farm and livestock reporter for the *San Angelo Standard-Times*—a professional observer of his past. He left the *Standard-Times* after 15 years to edit *Sheep and Goat Raisers' Magazine* and then became associate editor of the *Livestock Weekly*. Until he retired from that publication in 1990, he was a moonlighting novelist, fictionalizing much of what he reported. “Do you know there’s someone out there with your name writing Westerns?” a subject once asked him.

Kelton has written many pulp westerns—he got his start in college in the 1950s, composing stories like “His Gun Was the Law” and “Blind Canyon” for magazines like *Ranch Romances* and *Thrilling Western*—but he has steadily moved away from formulaic writing toward literary work.

“I feel that progression, I sense it when I look at all my books,” he says.

Kelton’s best novels are minutely naturalistic, sparsely plotted and meticulously sociological—devotional portraits of ranch life in West Texas. In them, he attends to the sensory effect of machinery (“The steel windmill pumped a small gush of water into the concrete tank with each clanking stroke of the sucker-rod”), conjures the hellishness of unending weather dependency, and reconstructs racial and economic hierarchies. His readers watch, at sheep-shearing time, as fleeces “fold away from the animal’s body and expose the bright cream color of the inner wool”; they see how raindrops striking desiccated soil fail to soak in, but instead “swirl and run away, following the contours of the land, seeking out the draws and swales”; and they learn that a rancher low on feed will burn the spines off prickly pear cactus by making “a slow, gentle pass with the flame,” allowing the thorn “to burn back to a stub without the pear itself having time to singe.”

Representations of ranch life are everywhere in Kelton’s home. The mantelpiece shelf is taken up by five bronze cowboys on horseback, a bronze cowboy holding a coiled lariat and a bronze cowboy holding a saddle. These are awards from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame, the National Cowboy Symposium and the Western Writers of America.

Yet another mounted cowboy statuette sits on a columnar coffee table that functions as its plinth. On its base, a nameplate reads:

“Keepers of the Heritage”  
with Elmer Kelton

I was surprised to learn that the sculpted cowboy on the horse was Kelton himself.

Kelton would never confer the term “real working cowboy” on himself, but for two summers he was. Buck Kelton had his own cattle operation, the Lea Ranch, on 20 square miles of leased land adjacent to the McElroy Ranch. After Elmer’s junior and senior years in high school, Buck asked him to manage it. Kelton was the only full-time hand; his three younger brothers took turns coming out to help.

The work was simple. Kelton rose at dawn and fixed biscuits and coffee. He brought in the work horses and saddled his favorite. He rode the length and width of the ranch, inspecting fencelines and windmills, checking cattle for screwworm and painting disinfectant where he found blowfly bites. If a fence was broken, he’d get tools and wire from the house and bring them back in a wagon; if a windmill was broken he’d go get the McElroy’s windmill, Cliff Newland. He was on a horse all day. Without trying, he memorized the landscape.

For dinner, Kelton and his brothers ate canned red beans and fried steak—beef from their father’s herd. For variety, they trapped and roasted quail. They swam in the ranch’s stock tanks, raced horses and shot jackrabbits for practice. On a hand-crank phonograph, they played Bob Wills, Gene Autry and the Sons of the Pioneers. By the light of a kerosene lamp, Elmer Kelton read *The Ox-Bow Incident* and *Tombstone*.

What chiefly occupied Kelton’s mind those summers were the weather, the wildlife and the progress of the seasons.

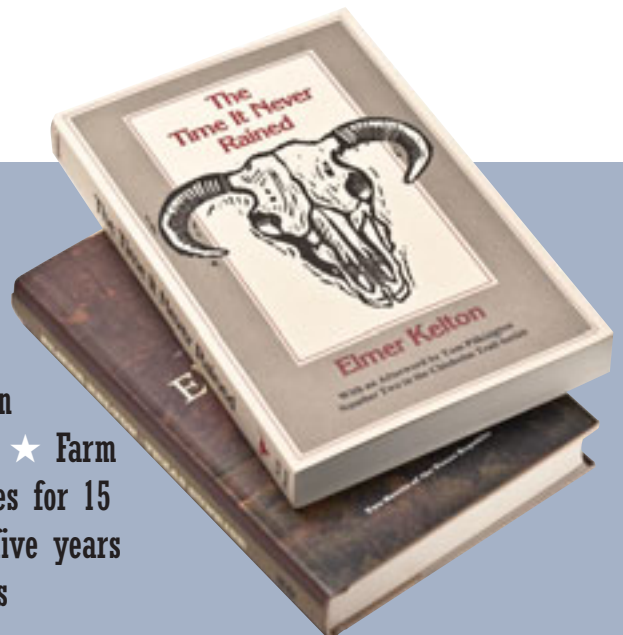
“They were probably the freest times I ever had,” he said. “I’d have been content to stay out there forever.”

---

*Jeff Tietz, who is based in Austin, wrote about the Quebe Sisters Band in Texas Co-op Power’s June 2009 issue.*

## **Elmer Kelton:** Graduate of the University of Texas

- ★ Author of more than 40 novels
- ★ Seven-time winner of Spur Awards from the Western Writers of America
- ★ Four of Kelton’s books have won the Western Heritage Award from the National Cowboy Hall of Fame
- ★ Farm and livestock reporter for The San Angelo Standard-Times for 15 years
- ★ Edited Sheep and Goat Raisers’ Magazine for five years
- ★ Associate editor of the Livestock Weekly for 22 years







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## Texas Electric Cooperatives

Dear Co-op Member:

We need your help. Congress is considering climate-change legislation that could significantly increase your monthly electric bill if not done right. As electricity prices go up, it impacts the cost of nearly everything—including your household budget.

You can do something about it. Please tell your U.S. Senators that climate-change legislation must be done in a way that protects you.

This legislation creates new government policy for energy use and production. It charges you for the greenhouse gases emitted when electricity is produced.

Some want to force consumers to pay more than their fair share because of where they live—that's unfair! We can make sure climate-change goals are achievable and affordable, protecting you from electric price shock, if our elected officials work with us.

Our Senators need to fight for a bill that is:

- **FAIR**—Climate-change legislation needs to recognize regional differences in how electricity is produced. You should not be penalized because of where you live.
- **AFFORDABLE**—Any climate-change plan must keep electric bills affordable for all Americans.
- **ACHIEVABLE**—Climate-change mandates must be realistic to ensure long-term success.

**Please take a moment right now to sign and return the two attached postcards.** They will be hand delivered directly to each of your U.S. Senators. This is our grassroots effort to make your voices heard in the halls of Congress.

Our job at the electric cooperatives in Texas is to keep your electric bills affordable. Please help by sending these postcards today. Thank you very much.



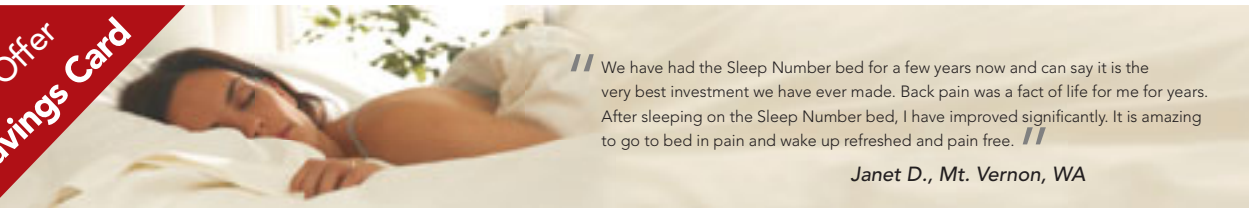
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## Hazards from Generators Require Extra Caution

The death toll from carbon monoxide (CO) associated with generators has been steadily rising in recent years. In 2005, the last year for which the data is considered to be substantially complete, there were 94 deaths from generator-related CO poisoning. Many of the deaths occurred after hurricanes, ice storms or blizzards. While reporting of incidents for the subsequent years is still ongoing, there were 83 and 43 deaths in 2006 and 2007, respectively, reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) as of June 30, 2008.

Remember these facts about generators and carbon monoxide if you are going to use a generator:

- CO from a generator is deadly and can kill you in minutes. One generator produces as much CO as hun-

dreds of cars. It can incapacitate and kill consumers within minutes.

- NEVER use portable generators indoors or in garages, basements or sheds. They should always be used outside well away from windows, doors, vents or any other opening.

- Always have a working CO alarm in your house.

- Also, never use charcoal grills indoors, even with ventilation. Charcoal also quickly produces deadly CO.

In January 2007, CPSC required manufacturers to place a danger label on all new generators and the generators' packaging reminding users of the immediate danger carbon monoxide can pose.

Carbon monoxide is not the only danger associated with generators. Improperly hooking the generator to a home's wiring can cause an entirely different problem. In a major power outage, crews from your electric cooperative or other utilities will be working to restore power. If you have a generator hooked directly to the house wiring, it can cause a backfeed of electricity onto the lines. Workers who rely on the fact that the lines are "dead" have been injured or even killed by electricity from a distant generator.

Always plug appliances you want to power directly into the generator unless you have a double-pole, double-throw transfer switch that's been professionally installed by a licensed electrician.

Generators can be useful tools in a prolonged power outage. But used improperly, they can lead to death for you, your loved ones or the



© ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/ANKYA

## Protect Children from Electrical Hazards

Accidents around the home result in millions of injuries to the most vulnerable members of your family—young children—each year. For example, approximately 2,400 children receive emergency room treatment annually for injuries caused by inserting objects into electrical receptacles, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

With a few precautions, these and other injuries can be avoided:

- Install tamper-resistant outlets that protect against small children inserting foreign objects into them. Simple plastic caps typically used can be easily removed by some children.

- Keep electrical cords tied up or out of sight.

- Unplug all appliances, such as hair dryers or coffee makers, when they are not being used.

- Keep appliances out of children's bathrooms.

- Teach children not to touch appliances when they have wet hands and to keep appliances away from water.

- Teach children other basic safety tips such as staying away from outlets and not touching electrical cords.



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# Get the Jump on Drafty Windows

Windows provide our homes with light, warmth and ventilation. But when winter sets in, they can have a downside.

Placing your hand against a window pane on a chilly fall morning proves the point: If the pane feels cold, it's a good bet you can reduce energy costs by either insulating your existing windows or installing new, energy-efficient upgrades.

Insulating with draperies is a low-cost, quick fix to drafty windows and can reduce heat loss from a room up to 10 percent. And they're just as helpful in hot summer months by blocking sunlight. White plastic-backed drapes can reduce heat gain by up to 33 percent.

Interior storm window panels are another low-cost fix (available at most hardware stores) and consist of flexible or rigid plastic installed over or adhered to existing windowpanes. Installation is fairly simple, and panels are either taped on or mounted with Velcro, magnetic strips or snap-in seals. Put them up in autumn and remove them in spring to reduce winter heat loss by up to 50 percent.

If you're in the market for new windows altogether, be sure to choose energy-efficient models that will shave heating, cooling and lighting costs year-round.

Energy Star® has established a set of energy performance ratings, tailored to

## What makes a window energy efficient?



### IMPROVED FRAME

Wood composites, vinyl and fiberglass frames reduce heat transfer and insulate better.

### LOW-E GLASS

Special coatings reflect infrared light, keeping heat inside in winter and out in summer. They also reflect damaging ultraviolet light, protecting interior furnishings.

### GAS FILLS

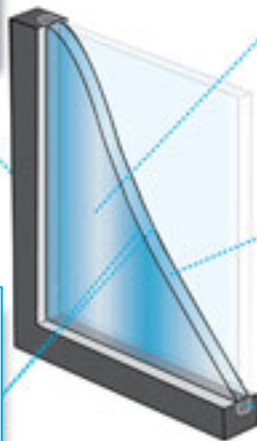
Some windows have argon, krypton or other gases between the panes. These odorless, colorless, nontoxic gases insulate better than regular air.

### MULTIPLE PANES

Two panes of glass, with an air- or gas-filled space between them, insulate much better than a single pane. Some include three or more panes for greater efficiency, impact resistance and sound insulation.

### WARM EDGE SPACERS

A spacer keeps a window's glass panes the correct distance apart. "Warm edge" spacers made of steel, foam, fiberglass or vinyl reduce heat flow and prevent condensation.



Source: ENERGY STAR

four climate zones across the United States, to guide you in selecting windows perfect for your home. These performance ratings are broken into several categories, although the two most basic are U-Factor and Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC), which can be found on window stickers or packaging.

In simple terms, U-Factor measures how easily heat can flow through a window, not counting direct sunlight. The lower the number, the more energy efficient the window.

SHGC measures how much heat

from sunlight the window can absorb. A high number means the window remains effective at collecting heat during winter. A low number provides greater shading ability and may be best for southern climates.

Here in Texas, windows for the south/central climate zone are best. Look for a U-Factor and a SHGC that are both less than or equal to 0.40. You can also visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) for more details on our climate zone and other criteria to consider when shopping for new windows.

## Preseason TLC Worth It for HVAC System

Servicing your heating system is a lot like getting an oil change or tuneup for your car. Sure, it's an expense—but it's still cheaper than waiting until it breaks down to call a technician.

It typically costs less than \$100 a visit to have your heating system inspected by a professional, and you won't have to worry about the unit

making it through another season.

Some contractors offer an annual preventive maintenance program, which will cost a few hundred dollars a year and typically includes a fall inspection of your heating system and a spring once-over for your air conditioner and discounts on repairs and equipment. A better deal most often is to pay as you

go for individual inspections.

But paying a pro to maintain your heating and cooling system is worth the money. Qualified, licensed service technicians are trained to spot problems that most homeowners overlook. Schedule the appointment before the season begins so there is time to order any replacement parts.

AUSTIN

# The New Sodbusters

*The green grass  
of home could  
be on your roof*



By Staci Semrad

A new kind of sodbuster is taking root in Texas, akin to the original ones of the 1800s who moved west, built houses of sod and began plowing the soil on their newly claimed farmland.

Today's homebuilding sodbusters are constructing roofs with soil and vegetation as a way to reduce their carbon footprint and conserve energy. Just as sod houses on the prairie stayed cool in the summer and warm in the winter, modern sod-roof and vegetated-roof houses provide a similar weather-shielding effect. They can help lower air-conditioning costs and reduce the peak demand on area power plants.

Kathy Zarsky, founder and president of HOLOS Collaborative, an Austin-based sustainability management company that helps clients build environmentally responsible and resource-efficient structures, is one such homeowner in the Austin area. A winding drive through fields of yucca, wildflowers and sumac, juniper and live oak trees leads to her home. The wild Texas landscape continues across part of her rooftop, where native plants jut up from the roofline.

From the entry to her home at the base of a large, round limestone tower, she climbs a winding stairwell to a door on the second floor and steps out onto her garden roof. There, a small patio of limestone pavers is surrounded by a garden of native, drought-hardy plants, including agave, Mexican feather grass, spineless prickly pear and a small patch of dwarf thyme. Her rugged rooftop plants blend with the Hill Country vista to the south.

Zarsky, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member who obtained an architecture degree from the University of Texas in 1994, advocates the benefits of green, vegetated and sod roofs. The sustainability consultant explains the three terms:

**GREEN ROOF**—A broad term referring to any environmentally beneficial roof that typically is covered with vegetation and makes a structure more energy efficient. But green roofs—which don't necessarily involve plants or anything the color green—can also feature such green technology as solar panels.

**VEGETATED ROOF**—Synonymous with the term "garden roof," this is a type of green roof covered with a soil mixture and a variety of plants.

**SOD ROOF**—A type of green roof that incorporates soil and grass.

Zarsky and her husband, Jon, began building their Austin-area house seven years ago with a vegetated roof incorporated into the design. The garden roof is above the living room and occupies about one-third of the home's total roof area.

Garden roofs, though not widespread, are of increasing interest, she said, noting at least eight finished commercial garden-roof projects in the Austin area, at least that many finished residential ones and many more currently under design.

Building a green roof was a simple decision for the Zarskys. "We wanted to be water-conserving and replace a portion of landscape we disturbed when we built the house," she said.

They were also inspired by other benefits of a well-designed garden roof:



- A quality garden roof of native plants requires minimal maintenance and only needs watering when plants are getting established or are stressed.
- A vegetated roof has a lower surface temperature than other roof types, thus reducing both electricity bills and the heat-island effect created in cities when buildings, concrete and asphalt absorb heat from the sun, thus making the area hotter.
- Because a good soil mixture contains water-retaining elements, water runs off more slowly and the surrounding land has more time to absorb it, reducing storm-water runoff.
- Water running off a garden roof that does not use fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides is cleaner than that coming off of a conventional roof, which improves the quality of storm-water runoff.
- A garden roof provides natural habitat.

#### GARDEN ROOF INGREDIENTS

Though the Zarskys chose a multilayered garden roof system, there are other and simpler ways to design a vegetated roof, Kathy Zarsky said.

“Our philosophy is we want to be low maintenance,” she said, explaining that they opted for native plants that can take care of themselves. “We’re trying to replicate natural systems and just let them do their thing as much as they can.”

Natives are preferable because they are adapted to the heat and water cycles in the climates where they’re found, but roof plants have a shallower area for their roots, so not all natives will do as well on the roof as on the ground, Zarsky said.

Her roof sits in a rubberized asphalt membrane that functions like a bathtub. The membrane is covered by several layers, including root-barrier and filter fabrics, insulation, a moisture-retention mat, drainage trays and sheets and a soil mixture 6 inches deep.

A vegetated roof must support foot traffic and generally weighs more than a conventional roof because of soil, vegetation and rain saturation, so it needs a strong supporting structure. Zarsky’s garden roof weighs about 31 pounds per square foot. It looks flat but is slanted slightly down toward the edge to allow drainage.

An existing house could be retrofitted to accommodate a garden roof but only after several questions are answered, such as how much weight the house’s roof can bear, she said. Another major structural consideration is whether a vegetated roof will leak. With proper installation, it probably won’t, she said.

Zarsky and her family have appreciated the multiple benefits of their garden roof.

“It has exceeded every expectation we had,” she said. “The plants have all thrived, and it’s a very enjoyable place for us to visit.”

*Staci Semrad is an Austin-based freelance writer.*



KATHY ZARSKY

Detail of sod roof edge and gutter

#### CONSERVATION IN THE FUTURE

Considering population growth and an increasing demand for energy, Austin-based sustainability consultant Kathy Zarsky predicts that over the next decade, people will adopt new habits to conserve energy and lower utility bills. Zarsky suggests that:

- We will use smart devices to turn appliances and equipment off for us and stop phantom electrical loads.
- We will get better at turning off lights.
- We will adjust our tolerance for hot and cold by a couple of degrees.
- We will walk more when we can and drive less.
- We will start selling electricity back to the grid.



# The Hole Story

*Mom's recipe for Saturday-morning doughnuts: Biscuits, powdered sugar and lots of love.*

BY NIKKI LOFTIN

**T**oday, I am going to make doughnuts for my sons. "We're going to make them?" my 5-year-old responds as if I have just announced my plans to make a television. "Like, from the ingredients?"

"Yes," I reply. "Just like my mother used to make."

I still remember those Saturday mornings when I awakened to the clanging of pots downstairs. If the rattling went on long enough, my sister and I knew that Mom was searching for the big pot.

The big pot was only used for doughnuts. If we got downstairs fast enough, we could help with the ingredients: two cardboard tubes of white biscuit dough, a paper sack and a box of powdered sugar.

We weren't allowed to help with the oil.

Mom handed me the biscuits. I peeled the paper encasing the tubes away in a messy spiral, then bashed the tubes against the counter. They burst open with a satisfying sigh. Pressing the top of an empty aspirin bottle into the dough, Mom carefully popped the centers out, making perfect wheel shapes and tiny little spheres.

A moment in the grease, a quick flip with the slotted spoon, a short rest on a paper-towel-covered plate, and they were ready to be sugared.

My sister and I fought over who got to shake them in the bag of sugar. We also fought over who got the first one and who had to clean up.

My boys are waiting expectantly in my kitchen now. I want this to be perfect, so I call Mom.

"Hello?" She sounds slightly worried. I think she was asleep; it is 7 o'clock on a Saturday morning.

"Sorry, Mom," I say. "I just need a recipe."

She laughs. I have been married for 11 years, and I still call her every time I attempt one of "her" recipes. Hey, I'm not that good of a cook. I'll take all the help I can get.

"What are you cooking today?"

"Well, I was telling the boys about my favorite breakfast when I was a kid, and I'm making that." I pause. "I bet you can guess."

"Huh? Waffles?" she asks. "Don't you know how to open a box of Bisquick? The recipe's on the back."

"No, Mom. Doughnuts."

"I never made you doughnuts," she replies, confused.



"No, Mom, the ones made from biscuits. I think I have everything, the powdered sugar, an Advil bottle for the holes ..." I trail off. She is laughing at me.

"That was your favorite breakfast?" she splutters.

"Yes."

"Why in the world?"

"Well, because you only made it on special days, I suppose."

"Oh, sweetheart," she says, laughing. "I made those on the days when we had absolutely no money."

What is she talking about?

"Those biscuits only cost a nickel a can," she explains. "So at the end of a really bad month, if I had a dime, I could feed you kids. I hated making those doughnuts. Those were the worst days of my life. I used to try not to cry into the grease."

I am dumbstruck. Those mornings when my sister and I raced to the kitchen, wondering at the miracle that had brought us doughnuts ... those were the worst mornings of her life?

As a child, I knew we weren't well-off. My parents both worked two jobs most of the time. Mom said chores were character building, and so my sister and I did the dishes, the dusting, the vacuuming ... you name it. Of course, Mom was usually working while we cleaned, teaching piano lessons in the living room or making our clothes at her sewing machine. Sometimes, the thought of the homemade clothes made me cry; for her, it was those doughnuts.

She almost never cried in front of us. But I remember a few times when she did: that awful Mother's Day when we all forgot to get her anything, the night when Papa, my grandfather, had a stroke. She taught me to be careful with my own tears and how to be strong for my children in bad times.

We are both quiet, remembering. "Wow," I say at last, wondering if it's appropriate to make the doughnuts now.

"How much do the biscuits cost these days?" she asks.

"About 50 cents a pop." I had bought the cheapest ones, the brand she had used.

"What a rip-off!" She laughs, and everything is OK again. She talks me through the simple recipe, warning me not to let the boys near the oil. "Don't let my grandkids eat themselves sick, OK?"

I hang up, and my boys rush to help open the biscuits and pop the centers out.

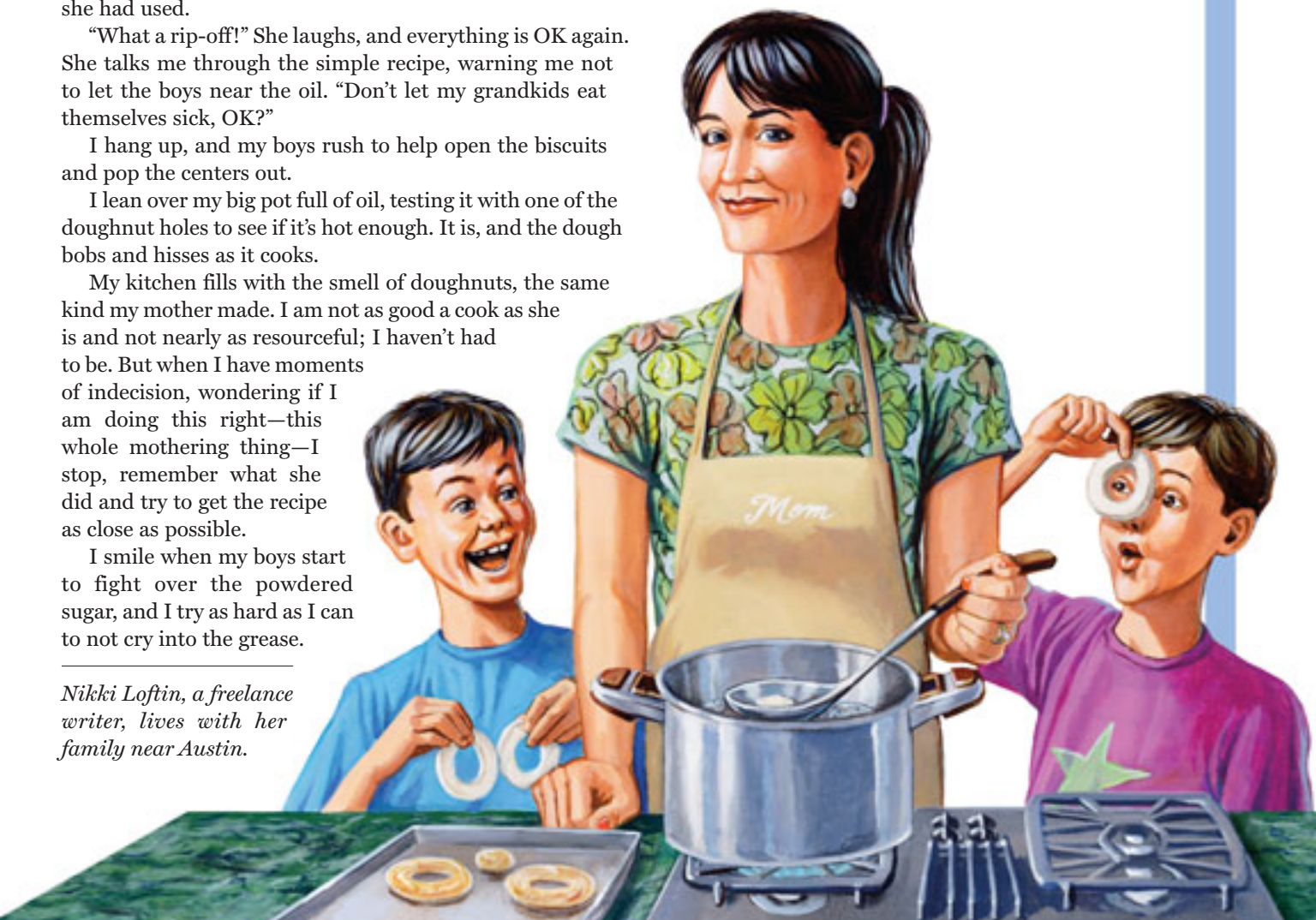
I lean over my big pot full of oil, testing it with one of the doughnut holes to see if it's hot enough. It is, and the dough bobs and hisses as it cooks.

My kitchen fills with the smell of doughnuts, the same kind my mother made. I am not as good a cook as she is and not nearly as resourceful; I haven't had to be. But when I have moments of indecision, wondering if I am doing this right—this whole mothering thing—I stop, remember what she did and try to get the recipe as close as possible.

I smile when my boys start to fight over the powdered sugar, and I try as hard as I can to not cry into the grease.

---

*Nikki Loftin, a freelance writer, lives with her family near Austin.*





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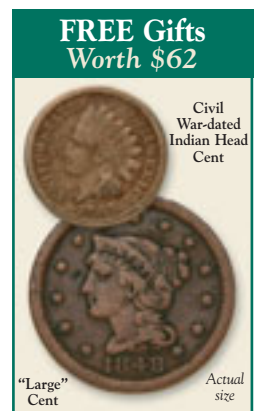
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# Dinner from the Gulf

**BY KEVIN HARGIS** As a kid, I used to take seafood for granted. Growing up less than 20 miles from the Gulf Coast gave me plenty of opportunities to eat delicious shrimp, crab, fish and oysters that came right off the boat. I also learned firsthand what it took to catch, clean and cook food from the briny depths. Some days, instead of buying seafood at the store, we would head down to the beach to collect our own.

There were early morning fishing trips with my dad. We would get up before dawn and head to the granite jetties marking the mouth of the Freeport Harbor Channel. There, we would toss our lines in the water, hoping for flounder, speckled trout or, if we were really lucky, a redfish or two. I never had much luck myself, tallying more lost tackle than fish, but when the fish were biting, we'd have a delicious fresh supper.

The canals and marshes near the beach were another hunting ground. Armed with stakes, string and cheap chicken parts, my mom, sister and I would try to catch blue crabs. Meanwhile, my dad would go after shrimp with his cast net.

Successful crabbing took a little finesse. We'd shove a stake into the mud, tie a string to it and secure a piece of chicken to the other end. Then we'd toss the chicken into the water and wait. After a few minutes, we'd ever so gently reel in the string. Feeding crabs would follow the meat into shallow water, where it was simple to net them.

Not so simple was untangling the crabs from the net and putting them in a big plastic bucket. If we dropped one, it would quickly scuttle back toward the water, pincers held high and ready to snap little fingers. But even the ones that got away sometimes were swept up again minutes later.

While we filled our buckets, Dad would stand nearby and with an easy, practiced toss spin the cast net into deeper water, hauling up shrimp, which we kept,

and other curious critters, such as croaker fish, which he'd toss back.

Back home after a long, sun-baked morning, we'd clean our catch. Mom would put a huge pot of water on to boil and before long, the crabs were cooked, and we'd feast on sweet claw meat, or she'd make stuffed crab in the shell.

The shrimp either went in the freezer or were immediately boiled or fried. Crunchy, and sweet, fried shrimp are a wonderful treat—and not a staple for those watching their waistlines.

Cleaning and deveining shrimp is a bit of a chore, but so worth it.

You should also peel and devein the shrimp for this creamy soup, which pits the sweetness of corn and shrimp against the spiciness of red pepper and green chile. Thanks to Katherine Bevins, wife of our sales director, Martin, for sharing the recipe.

## SHRIMP AND CORN BISQUE

- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 onions, diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 1/2 pounds small shrimp (peeled and deveined)
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) tomatoes and green chiles
- 2 cans (14 ounces) cream-style corn
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh basil or 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 3 cups milk
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper, or more to taste
- Salt to taste
- 1/2 bunch green onions, chopped

Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onion, garlic and bell pepper until onions begin to turn translucent, about 5 minutes. Add shrimp and cook until pink, about another 5 minutes. Add cream cheese and stir until melted. Stir in tomatoes, corn, basil, milk and black and red pepper. Turn down heat and simmer 10 minutes. Taste, add salt and adjust spices. Add green onions and serve.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 406 calories, 25.5 g protein, 19 g fat, 33.4 g carbohydrates, 714 mg sodium, 184 mg cholesterol







**DONNA L. ZABOJNIK** *Navarro County Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Shrimp Tortilla Soup**

When the call went out for recipes featuring shrimp and oysters, we received a boatful of responses, most of them featuring shrimp. Oysters, being somewhat more of an acquired taste for many, were not as well represented, but we did get some good recipes featuring the mollusks. The best of the bunch according to our taste testers was a tortilla soup with shrimp, adding a decidedly Gulf Coast twist.

## SHRIMP TORTILLA SOUP

- 1/2 pounds medium shrimp
- 1/2 tablespoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoons white pepper
- 1/2 teaspoons ground oregano
- 1 tablespoon salt (or to taste)
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoons sugar
- 12 corn tortillas
- 2 cups peanut oil
- 1 large bunch scallions, finely chopped
- 2 1/2 cups chopped onion
- 1 cup chopped cilantro
- 2-3 finely chopped jalapeños
- 6 cups chopped tomatoes
- 3 cups tomato juice
- 1 pound Monterey jack cheese, shredded
- 3 avocados, diced

Peel and devein shrimp and set aside. In small bowl, combine paprika, cayenne and white pepper, oregano, salt, garlic powder and sugar. Set aside. Cut tortillas into 1/2-inch strips. In 4-quart Dutch oven or heavy pot, heat oil to just below boiling. Fry strips in two batches until golden brown; drain well. Allow oil to cool, then remove all but 3/4 cup of oil. Return pot to heat; add scallions, onion, cilantro and jalapeño and sauté until the onion is just transparent. Stir in tomatoes and reserved spice mix and simmer about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add tomato juice and three cups of water and simmer another 10 minutes. Add shrimp and cook five more minutes or until shrimp are pink and done. To serve, place a layer of tortilla strips in bottoms of soup bowls. Ladle in soup, then top with shredded cheese and avocado.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 474 calories, 25.7 g protein, 10.4 g fat, 62.8 g carbohydrates, 7.4 g fiber, 1,815 mg sodium, 129 mg cholesterol

## OYSTERS FLORENTINE

- 1 stick (8 tablespoons) butter, softened

- 2 teaspoons onion juice
- 1/4 teaspoon seasoning salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 cup seasoned breadcrumbs
- 1/2 pound fresh spinach, stems removed or 1 package (10 ounces) frozen spinach, thawed
- 12 large oysters
- Rock salt

Combine butter, onion juice, salt, pepper and breadcrumbs; mix until well blended. Set aside. If using fresh spinach, cook and drain thoroughly. Coarsely chop spinach. Distribute spinach equally among six scallop shells sold for baking purposes (or use individual ramekins). Cover surface of baking sheet with rock salt. Place shells atop salt. Put two oysters on each shell. Top oysters with butter mixture, dividing it equally among shells. Preheat broiler on high. Put pan under broiler until butter

melts and oysters are slightly brown around edges. Serve immediately.

Serving size: 1 shell. Per serving: 181 calories, 3.8 g protein, 15.2 g fat, 5.7 g carbohydrates, 1 g fiber, 220 mg sodium, 55 mg cholesterol

**LYNDA HOUSLEY**

*Navarro County Electric Cooperative*

## SHRIMP LOUISIANE

- 2 slices white bread, cubed
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3/4 cup chopped bell pepper
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 pounds shrimp
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- 3 cups cooked rice
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- Paprika

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Soak bread cubes in milk. In large saucepan, sauté onion, bell pepper, mushrooms and garlic in butter until crisp-tender. Add

### OYSTERS: ONLY IN 'R' MONTHS

It's an old rule of thumb that if you're going to eat raw Gulf oysters, you should only do so in months ending in "R" (September-December). The reasons for this are twofold: Oysters spawn in warmer weather, spoiling their flavor for raw consumption. In addition, a bacterium called *Vibrio vulnificus* occurs naturally in warm Gulf waters and can cause severe illness or even death, even in healthy individuals, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. Any time of year, you should know that eating raw shellfish is risky, especially for those with weakened immune systems. Cooking oysters is the safest way to go.

### THE LOWDOWN ON SHRIMP

Size	Count in a Pound	Best for
Extra Jumbo (Colossal)	10 or fewer	Shrimp cocktails, grilling
Jumbo	11-15	Grilling, boiling, frying
Extra Large/Large	16-30	Boiling, frying
Medium	31-35	Boiling, stir-frying, sauce dishes
Small	35-45	Soups, pasta toppings, sandwiches

### Buying Tips

- Look for shrimp with firm, uniformly translucent flesh.
- Take a whiff. If you smell an ammonia odor instead of the ocean, the shrimp are likely past their prime.
- You'll likely not find fresh, never-frozen shrimp away from the seashore.
- Watch the labels to differentiate between farmed and wild-caught.

shrimp and cook 3 minutes longer or until shrimp is pink. Stir in soup, rice, parsley, lemon juice and seasonings. Add soaked bread and mix well. Spoon into buttered, shallow 2-quart casserole; sprinkle with paprika. Bake for 30-45 minutes. Serves 6.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 270 calories, 34.9 g protein, 6.5 g fat, 34.2 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g fiber, 1,014 mg sodium, 241 mg cholesterol

**JOYCE MOORE**

*Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative*

- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 ounces snow pea pods, fresh or frozen

Hot cooked rice to serve

Boil and peel shrimp. Set aside. Combine ketchup, soy sauce, sherry, red pepper, ginger, sugar and salt in small bowl and mix well. Slice bell pepper into 1-inch strips. Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat and stir-fry bell pepper for 1 minute; add green onions, garlic and snow peas and cook another minute.

Add shrimp and ketchup mixture. Stir and continue to cook until all is thoroughly heated. Serve over rice.

Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 261 calories, 36.6 g protein, 6.6 g fat, 14.5 g carbohydrates, 2.5 g fiber, 1,179 mg sodium, 229 mg cholesterol

**JOANA AGERTON**

*Big Country Electric Cooperative*

Past recipes are available in the Recipes Archive at [www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.com).

## SPICY SHRIMP AND RICE

- 2 pounds shrimp
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons sherry
- 1 teaspoon red pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 bell peppers, seeded
- 2 tablespoons cooking oil
- 2 cups chopped green onion

## RECIPE CONTEST

February's recipe contest topic is **Filling the Breadbox**. Bread is the staff of life, the old saying goes. Do you have a recipe for a favorite loaf that doesn't involve a bread machine? The deadline is October 10.

Send recipes to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado, 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may also fax them to (512) 763-3408, 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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## SWEET POTATO PIE WITH PECAN CRUNCH TOPPING

- 4 cups cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 2 unbaked 9-inch pastry shells

Combine sweet potatoes, butter and eggs, mixing well. In separate bowl, combine sugar, flour and salt, then stir into sweet potato mixture. Mix buttermilk and baking soda; add to potato-sugar mixture and blend well. Stir in vanilla.

Divide filling evenly between pastry shells. Bake at 350 degrees

for 60 to 70 minutes or until set. Spoon Pecan Crunch Topping evenly over pies and broil 5 to 7 inches from heat about 2 minutes or until topping is golden and sugar is dissolved.

## PECAN CRUNCH TOPPING

- 1/4 cup butter or margarine
- 2 cups chopped pecans
- 1 cup brown sugar

Heat butter in saucepan over low heat until melted. Remove from heat and stir in pecans and brown sugar.

*Recipe from the Texas Co-op Power cookbook  
60 Years of Home Cooking*



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Grandma's  
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I've traveled paths you've yet to walk  
Learned lessons old and new  
And now this wisdom of my life  
I'm blessed to share with you

Let kindness spread like sunshine  
Embrace those who are sad  
Respect their dignity, give them joy  
And leave them feeling glad

Forgive those who might hurt you  
And though you have your pride  
Listen closely to their viewpoint  
Try to see the other side

Walk softly when you're angry  
Try not to take offense  
Invoke your sense of humor  
Laughter's power is immense!

Express what you are feeling  
Your beliefs you should uphold  
Don't shy away from what is right  
Be courageous and be bold

Keep hope right in your pocket  
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When it's near, you'll find a way

Remember friends and family  
Of which you are a precious part  
Love deeply and love truly  
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The world is far from perfect  
There's conflict and there's strife  
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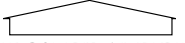
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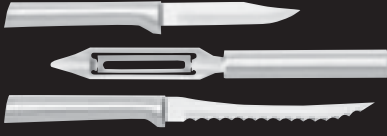
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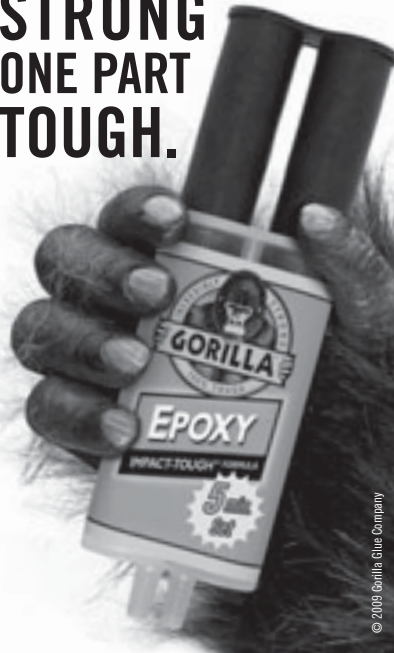
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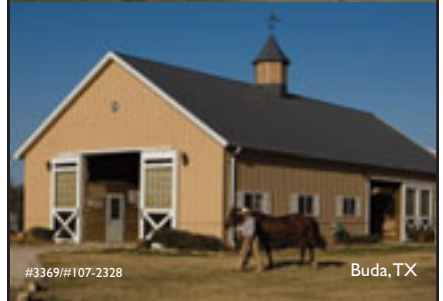
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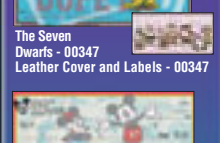
Disney Princess Stories - 00342 Leather Cover and Labels - 00342



Tinker Bell Magic w/verse "Too Cute" - 00343 Leather Cover and Labels - 00343



The Seven Dwarfs - 00347 Leather Cover and Labels - 00347



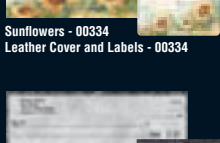
Sketch Book Mickey - 00348 Leather Cover and Labels - 00348



Serendipity - 00100 Leather Cover and Labels - 00100



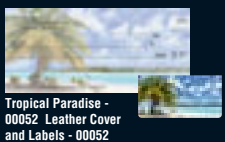
Thomas Kinkade's Country Escapes - 00162 Leather Cover and Labels - 00162



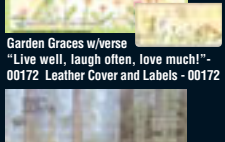
Sunflowers - 00334 Leather Cover and Labels - 00334



Imperial - 00165 One image. Leather Cover and Labels - 00165



Tropical Paradise - 00052 Leather Cover and Labels - 00052



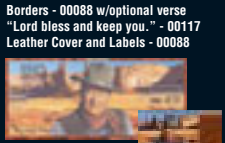
Garden Graces w/verse "Live well, laugh often, love much!" - 00172 Leather Cover and Labels - 00172



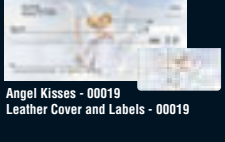
Prayers of Serenity w/verse "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" - 00194 Leather Cover and Labels - 00194



Kaleidoscope - 00225 Leather Cover and Labels - 00225



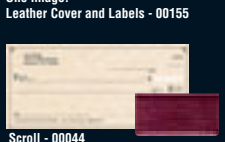
Thomas Kinkade's Faith for All Seasons w/verse "Believe all things are possible with God" - 00105 Leather Cover and Labels - 00105



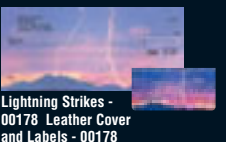
Lena Liu's Floral Borders - 00088 w/optional verse "Lord bless and keep you." - 00117 Leather Cover and Labels - 00088



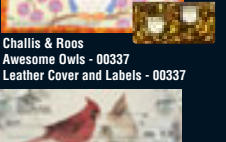
John Wayne: An American Legend - 00204 Leather Cover and Labels - 00204



Angel Kisses - 00019 Leather Cover and Labels - 00019



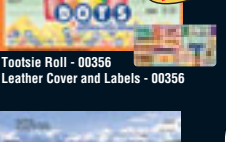
Lightning Strikes - 00178 Leather Cover and Labels - 00178



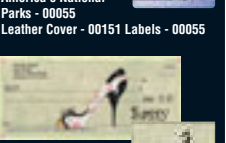
Challis & Roos Awesome Owls - 00337 Leather Cover and Labels - 00337



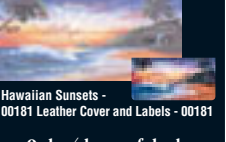
Lena Liu's Morning Serenade - 00029 Leather Cover and Labels - 00029



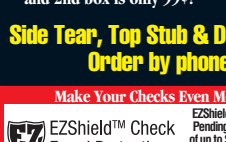
Maxine w/verse "I tried paying my bills with a smile. They wanted money." - 00234 Leather Cover and Labels - 00234



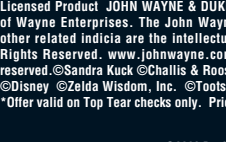
America's National Parks - 00055 Leather Cover - 00151 Labels - 00055



Stepping Out w/verse "Sassy" - 00240 Leather Cover and Labels - 00240



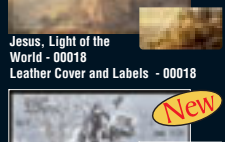
Hawaiian Sunsets - 00181 Leather Cover and Labels - 00181



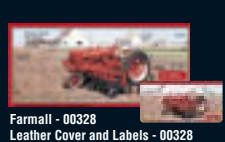
Blue Safety - 00027 One image. Leather Cover and Labels - 00155



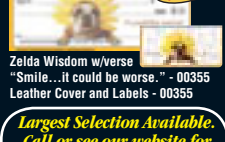
Spirit of the Wilderness - 00024 Leather Cover and Labels - 00024



Jesus, Light of the World - 00018 Leather Cover and Labels - 00018



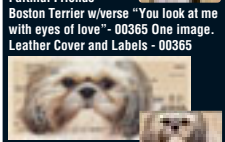
Chance Encounters - 00350 Leather Cover and Labels - 00350



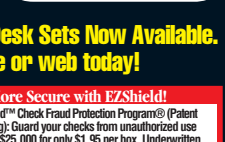
Farmall - 00328 Leather Cover and Labels - 00328



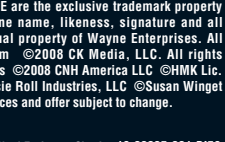
Faithful Friends - Pug w/verse "You look at me with eyes of love" - 00098 One image. Leather Cover and Labels - 00098



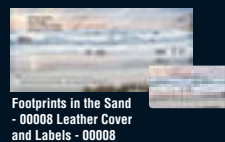
Faithful Friends - Shih Tzu w/verse "You look at me with eyes of love" - 00286 One image. Leather Cover and Labels - 00286



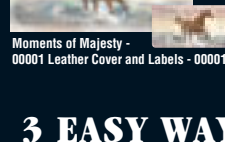
Faithful Friends - Boston Terrier w/verse "You look at me with eyes of love" - 00365 One image. Leather Cover and Labels - 00365



Zelda Wisdom w/verse "Smile...it could be worse." - 00355 Leather Cover and Labels - 00355



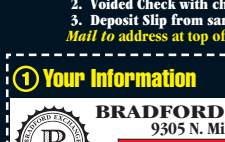
Footprints in the Sand - 00008 Leather Cover and Labels - 00008



Moments of Majesty - 00001 Leather Cover and Labels - 00001



Live, Laugh, Love, Learn w/verse "Life is not measured by the breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away" - 00332 Leather Cover and Labels - 00332



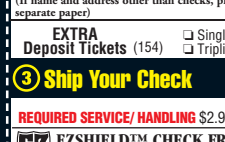
Hope Springs Eternal - 00094 Leather Cover and Labels - 00094



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Lena Liu's Morning Serenade - 00029 Leather Cover and Labels - 00029



Lena Liu's Floral Borders - 00088 w/optional verse "Lord bless and keep you." - 00117 Leather Cover and Labels - 00088



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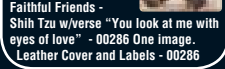
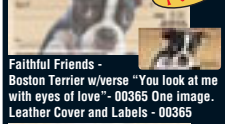
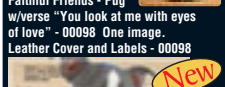
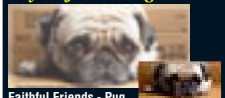
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**COWGIRLS**

Move over, Annie Oakley! Texas boasts cowgirls from way up yonder to down below. Y'all forked over such a heap of wonderful pictures depicting cowgirls of yesterday, today and tomorrow that many treasures got left up the spout after deciding on our finalists. Thanks for showing us how the West really was won.

—ASHLEY CLARY

◀ Sisters **Bijou, Bliss** and **Bianca Taylor**, ages 16, 7 and 12, share not only the close bond of sisterhood, but also of being cowgirls. Dad **Jeff Taylor** of CoServ Electric sent us this family photo.



▶ Three-year-old **Gracie Clemons** barrels out of the gate during her first rodeo event, mutton bustin', at the Georgetown Rodeo. This brave little lass is the daughter of Pedernales Electric Cooperative members **Rebecca** and **Bryan Clemons**.



▲ Weslaco High School student **Mary Noell**, 18, is the only female Charro performer with the Mercedes Caballo de Puro Azteca Rancho. She and her Mexican Azteca horse Sofia, shown here performing in the Onion Fest, also have made appearances at the Houston Livestock Show and Rose Bowl Parade. Mary's parents, **Martha** and **Robert Noell**, are affiliated with Magic Valley, Bluebonnet and Pedernales electric cooperatives.

▲ **Carrie Kaylor** of Jasper-Newton Electric Cooperative sent us this action shot of her 14-year-old daughter **Brooke Allen Kaylor**, who has been rodeoing since the age of 4. Brooke is the current champion break-away roper in Region V Junior High School Rodeo.

▼ A hot July afternoon found cowgirls **Laura Trcka**, **Donna Egenolf** and **Kathy Mostofi**, all Pedernales Electric Cooperative members, cooling off in the windmill trough after a horseback ride. Thanks to Kathy for sending in this "cool" shot.



Upcoming in **Focus on Texas**

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Dec	Roughin' It	Oct 10
Jan	Snow Daze	Nov 10
Feb	Firsts	Dec 10
Mar	Backyard Gardens	Jan 10
Apr	Barnyard Babies	Feb 10
May	Farmers Bounty	Mar 10

**ROUGHIN' IT** is the topic for our **DECEMBER 2009** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Roughin' It, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St. 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, 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](mailto:focus@texas-ec.org), or submit them on our website at [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com).

# AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

## OCTOBER

- 02 SCHERTZ** [2-3]  
SchertzFest,  
(210) 619-1017,  
www.schertz.com
- 03 ATLANTA**  
Hoot "N" Holler BBQ  
Cook-Off, (903) 796-3296,  
www.atlantatexas.net
- COLEMAN**  
Fiesta de la Paloma,  
(325) 625-2163,  
www.colemantexas.org



**9**  
**ROCKPORT**  
Seafair

- 03 PROSPER**  
Arts & Music Festival,  
(972) 342-8420,  
www.prosperartsandmusic  
festival.com
- SNOOK**  
Fall Craft Fair,  
(979) 324-8550,  
http://mix-it-up.biz
- EDNA** [3-10]  
Jackson County Youth Fair,  
(361) 782-3337,  
www.jcyf.org
- 09 CONCAN** [9-10]  
Fall on the Frio Festival,  
(830) 232-6580,  
www.friofest.com
- MINEOLA** [9-10]  
Quilt Celebration 2009,  
(903) 569-8877,  
www.mlota.org
- CUERO** [9-11]  
Turkeyfest, (361) 275-2112,  
www.turkeyfest.org
- JACKSONVILLE** [9-11]  
Mud Stock,  
(903) 586-6992

- 09 ROCKPORT** [9-11]  
Seafair, (361) 729-6445,  
www.rockportseafair.com
- 10 CANYON**  
Panhandle Plains Fall  
Festival, (806) 651-2235
- FLORENCE**  
Friendship Days,  
(512) 635-5170,  
www.florencechamberof  
commerce.org
- GREENWOOD**  
Fall Festival,  
(940) 466-7997
- MINERAL WELLS**  
Crazy Water Festival,  
(940) 682-9598
- 11 WESTPHALIA**  
Homecoming & Picnic,  
(254) 584-4701
- 16 MADISONVILLE** [16-17]  
Texas Mushroom Festival,  
(936) 348-3592,  
www.texasmushroom  
festival.com



**16**  
**MADISONVILLE**  
Texas Mushroom Festival

- 17 BURTON**  
Barn Dance & Dinner  
Gala, (979) 289-3378,  
www.cottonginmuseum.org
- COOPER**  
Delta County Chiggerfest,  
(903) 395-4314,  
www.deltacounty.org
- GRAPEVINE**  
Butterfly Flutterby, 1-800-  
457-6338, www.grapevine  
texasusa.com
- KERENS**  
Cotton Harvest,  
(903) 396-2665,  
www.kerenslibrary.org

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- Pecan Bake Contest
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(806) 323-6234,  
[www.canadiantx.com](http://www.canadiantx.com)

**SLATON [17-18]**  
German Sausage  
Festival & Fun Fest,  
(806) 828-3379



**23 PERRIN [23-24]**  
Bluegrass Festival, (940)  
798-4615, [www.mitchellresortandrvpark.com](http://www.mitchellresortandrvpark.com)

**24 BASTROP**  
Lost Pines NatureFest,  
(512) 303-0904,  
[www.visitbastrop.org](http://www.visitbastrop.org)

**BEN WHEELER**  
Fall Feral Hawg Fest,  
(903) 833-1070,  
[www.benwheelertx.com](http://www.benwheelertx.com)



**24 PARIS**  
Festival of Pumpkins,  
1-800-727-4789,  
[www.paristexas.com](http://www.paristexas.com)

**SAINT JO**  
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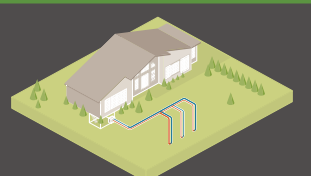
**07 SAN SABA**  
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Austin, TX 78701, faxed to  
(512) 763-3407, e-mailed to  
[aroundtx@texas-ec.org](mailto:aroundtx@texas-ec.org), or  
submitted on our website at  
[www.texascoopower.com](http://www.texascoopower.com).  
Please submit events for  
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In North-Central Texas, just south of the Oklahoma border, the 14-mile trek from Nocona to Saint Jo on U.S. Highway 82 delivers the musky scent of leather, taking you to other socked-away memories—whether it's saddling up your steed to herd cattle or taking a long, scenic drive in that old car with those wonderfully worn leather seats.

## NOCONA

Just east of Wichita Falls, you'll find the town of Nocona, named for Comanche Chief Peta Nocona. Here, the smell of leather greets you as soon as you reach downtown where the **NOCONA ATHLETIC GOODS COMPANY**, which started making baseball gloves in 1934, is the last mass-production company in America still doing so. Other glove-making companies have long since outsourced their factory work overseas.

Visitors can tour the facilities at set times Monday through Thursday (although staff members will try to accommodate visitors or small groups at any time) and see gloves made from start to finish. See the leather arrive fresh from the tannery, cut into the proper shapes, sewn, stitched, cut again for the inside padding, laced, pounded into shape and softened with oils. When done, browse the facility's museum and see rare, signed memorabilia and replicas of gloves used by some of the most famous men to play the game, such as Babe Ruth. The exhibit includes a replica of Nolan Ryan's first glove, a Nocona.

# NOCONA to SAINT JO

*Ah, the smell of leather: Experiences on this short trip fit like a glove.*

BY ASHLEY CLARY



While downtown, stop at **TIMES FORGOTTEN STEAK HOUSE**, a restaurant and club open Wednesday through Sunday lunch. The Western-themed establishment has antlers and saddles on the walls, wrought-iron railings and lots of menu choices, including Texas staples such as delicious burgers, chicken-fried steak and barbecue. And there are unique options, too, like a PB&J that goes beyond the household version by adding freshly sliced strawberries and crushed peanuts.

If bunking for the night, go to **DADDY SAM'S SALOON** for Nocona Nights, a monthly meal and concert held on Saturdays from October through early May that has featured bands such as Two Tons of Steel and The Derailers. When done, stay at the **NOCONA INN**, also in the heart of downtown. The rooms are modest, but the family-run establishment caters to your every whim, featuring free wireless Internet access and an accommodating staff. If time allows, travel to nearby Lake Nocona and its 40

miles of shoreline. It is perfect for fishing or recreational boating.

**Nocona Athletic Goods Company**, (940) 825-3326, [www.nokona.com](http://www.nokona.com)

**Times Forgotten Steak House**, (940) 825-6100

**Nocona Inn**, (940) 825-8800

**Nocona Chamber of Commerce**, (940) 825-3526, [www.nocona.org](http://www.nocona.org)

## SAINT JO

From Nocona, head southeast on U.S. Highway 82 to the sleepy little town of Saint Jo. There are cute little antique stores to visit on the town square, such as the aptly named **GRANDMA'S STUFF**, but be sure to stop in at **TRAIL TOWN CUSTOM LEATHER**, where everything is custom-made. Leather products include boots, chaps, belts, gun holsters and knife sheaves, and for a tuition, which includes everything except room and board, you can attend one of C.T. Chappell's bootmaking classes. The two-week class includes everything you need—from glue to thread to your choice of leather—to

make your very own pair of cowboy boots. Call for class schedules.

If there's time to kill, turn south onto FM 677 off U.S. 82. After about a mile and a half you'll find the locally named "Sculpture Yard" in a field of the **RUNNING HEN RANCH**. There are several pieces of eye candy to gaze upon: Anchored wooden poles standing on end at different angles form a 20-foot-tall fan, and five red and rusty Volkswagen Beetles are lined up as if caravanning to an unknown destination. Five metal sunflowers, painted just like the real versions, wave hello with their giant green "leaves." Metal sequoia cacti seemingly reach the sky at this unique little road stop. Don't forget your camera!

**Trail Town Custom Leather**, (940) 995-2600, [www.trailtowncustomleather.com](http://www.trailtowncustomleather.com)

**Saint Jo Chamber of Commerce**, (940) 995-2188, [www.saintjochamber.com](http://www.saintjochamber.com)

*Ashley Clary is field editor for Texas Co-op Power.*

*Visit [www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com) for our Hit the Road archive.*





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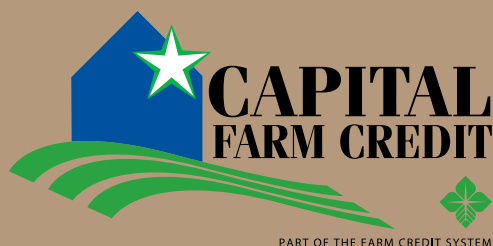
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