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THE

MIGHTY MITES

THE ORPHANS WHO COULD



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By Eileen Mattei

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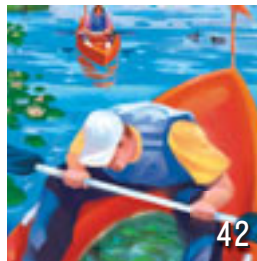
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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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AND THE WINNER IS...

RAY BROWN, son of Christine and Raymond Brown of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, is the grand prizewinner of \$1,500 in Texas Co-op Power's 2009 "Co-op Teens Power Texas" video competition. Canyon Lake High School, where Ray is a senior, received \$1,000 for its support in producing the winning entry. Ray used a quiz show format to demonstrate money-saving, energy-efficiency tips in the home.

"I was really interested in the topic of energy tips and did some research and playing with the numbers," Ray said. "I found out you could save about \$360 a year with simple energy-saving practices. It's a great message, especially for teenagers." Ray will apply his winnings toward tuition at Full Sail University, a film, animation and design school in Winter Park, Florida.

The six runners-up, who each received \$250, are: **JORDAN WILLIAMS**, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative; **KEVIN-LUC IKELLE** and **DAVID JONES**, both of Bryan Texas Utilities; **WILL BUTCHER** and **KEEGAN HOPE**, both of Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative; and **JOHN AREVALO** of Magic Valley Electric Cooperative.

To view all seven winning videos, go to www.texascooppower.com and click on the Co-op Teens Power Texas link.

POWER TALK

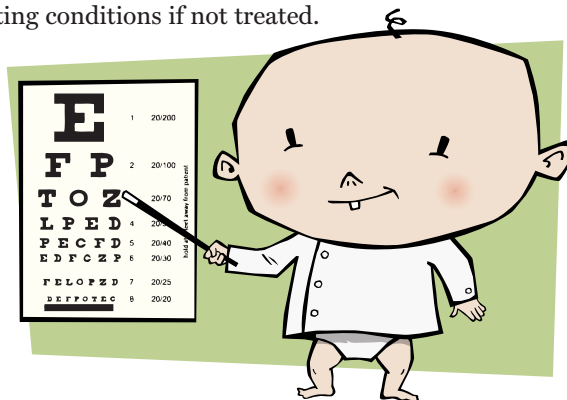
THE LITTLE EYES OF TEXAS

Free Vision Screening for Tots

It's been estimated that nearly 80 percent of the residents at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Austin would not be there today had they been tested for vision problems before the age of 4, according to Michelle Calhoun, a registered optician. Calhoun is spearheading a program of free screenings for every Texas child who can be reached.

But up until two years ago, such testing for babies and very small children was not possible.

Thanks to new technology and the dedication of volunteers for the Registered Opticians Association of Texas (ROATx), children are now being tested for conditions that could lead to permanent blindness or other debilitating conditions if not treated.



During the past year, ROATx volunteers have screened more than 200 children ages 6 months to 4 years. More than 40 of those children have been referred to a pediatric ophthalmologist or optometrist for treatment.

The free screenings are being scheduled throughout the state with support from local civic and community organizations, such as Lions Clubs and Masonic Lodges.

"It is estimated that one in every four children has a vision issue, and 50 percent of learning disabilities among children today can be attributed to vision problems," said Sam Johnson, who serves as president of ROATx and on the board of its Early Childhood Vision Screening program. "Our sole mission is to prevent childhood blindness by detecting problems while it is still possible to have a nearly 98 percent cure rate."

For a schedule of free early childhood vision screenings in your area, or for more information about this program, go to <http://ecvs.roatx.org>. If your community service organization would like to sponsor a screening event, e-mail info@roatx.org.

letters

PAYING TRIBUTE TO ELMER KELTON

Thanks for the tribute to author Elmer Kelton by Jeff Tietz in the October 2009 issue. One of the great thrills I have had as a freelance writer was having lunch one day in Boerne with Elmer and Ann Kelton. We talked about the beautiful Salzkammergut region of Austria, where Mrs. Kelton grew up and met her husband during World War II, and afterward how they lived in a little trailer while he studied journalism at the University of Texas. Mr. Kelton also mentioned that he worked at The Daily Texan there and remembered his own thrill of interviewing the popular country singer Eddy Arnold.

Apart from being an extraordinary writer, Elmer Kelton (who died on August 22 at the age of 83) was a gracious and unpretentious human being.

RON HUNKA

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

NUTS ABOUT PECAN STORY

I loved the article about Texas pecans ("Pick of the Crop," October 2009) and will never complain about the price of pecans again!

The story brought back memories from the '30s of a little girl sitting like a little bird at the feet of her grandpa, waiting, mouth watering, as he carefully carved each end of a pecan, slit it down the side and pulled out two perfect nuts. It was a wonderful communion between two souls as we savored our pecans.

OMA LEE AND JACK VAN HEEL

Magic Valley Electric Cooperative

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

H A P P E N I N G S

Douse the red nose, Rudolph: With millions of lights to guide him, Santa's coming in for a safe landing on the **TEXAS HILL COUNTRY REGIONAL CHRISTMAS LIGHTING TRAIL** that cuts a luminous swath through 11 towns.



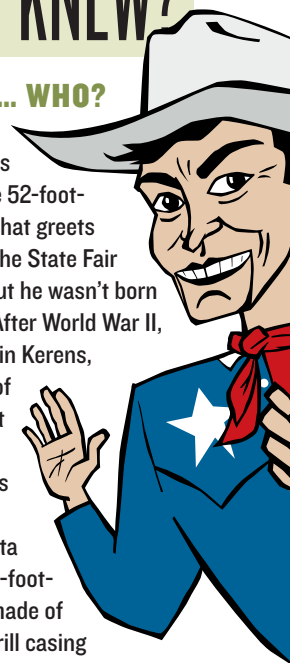
Neatly situated within easy driving distance of Austin and San Antonio—connect the dots on a map, and the trail, with a little imagination, forms an oddly shaped Christmas tree—the locales of Boerne, Burnet, Dripping Springs, Fredericksburg, Goldthwaite, Johnson City, Llano, Marble Falls, New Braunfels, Round Mountain and Wimberley deck their downtown areas with all things Christmas. From lavish decorations to parades, carriage rides and photo ops with Santa, each community packages memory-making experiences for thousands of visitors. New to the trail this year is a five-tiered, 26-foot-tall Christmas pyramid—a wooden tree—that was handmade in Germany and shipped to Fredericksburg.

But to really get plugged into the holiday spirit, bask in the glow of the trail's spectacular light shows, from the brilliant display on the Blanco County courthouse in Johnson City to the Walkway of Lights on the Lake Marble Falls shore. For more information about the trail—which is expected to remain open through at least January 1—call 1-866-839-3378 or go to www.tex-fest.com.

WHO KNEW?

HO, HO ... WHO?

Yep, you know him as Big Tex, the 52-foot-tall statue that greets visitors to the State Fair of Texas. But he wasn't born a cowboy. After World War II, merchants in Kerens, southeast of Dallas, built what they claimed was the world's largest Santa Claus: a 49-foot-tall figure made of iron-pipe drill casing and papier-mâché with 7-foot lengths of unraveled rope for a beard. After initial success in 1949, the novelty wore off and in 1951, State Fair President R.L. Thornton bought Santa's components for \$750 and hired an artist to turn them into a giant cowboy. Big Tex made his debut at the 1952 State Fair.



BRUCE LEANDER



LONG LIVE THE HORSETAIL

"If any terrestrial vascular plant deserved the moniker 'living fossil,' it would be a horsetail. If we could go back in time to the late Devonian (more than 350 million years ago), we would find their immediately recognizable ancestors (known as *sphenophytes*), not only in the form of understory plants but also as immense woody trees 60 feet high with bases 2 feet thick that formed some of Earth's first extensive forests."

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

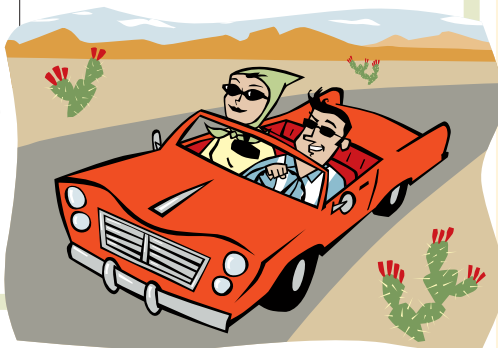
CHECK THEM OUT

TEXAS' TRAVEL GEMS

AOL Travel includes five Texas destinations in its list of Top 10 Underrated Natural Wonders in the United States (<http://travel.aol.com/travel-ideas/galleries/underrated-natural-wonders>). The Lone Star State picks are: **No. 3—Palo Duro Canyon State Park** (south of Amarillo); **No. 4—Padre Island National Seashore**; **No. 5—Natural Bridge Caverns** (north of San Antonio and west of Interstate 35); **No. 9—Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site** (northwest of El Paso); and **No. 10—Big Bend National Park**. None of these destinations should surprise Texas Co-op Power readers. We've

covered them all.

If you're wanting to visit little-known destinations outside the state, check out the Nos. 1 and 2 picks, respectively: **Topsail Hill Preserve State Park** (Santa Rosa Beach, Florida) and **Big Basin Redwoods State Park** (south of San Francisco).




ILLUSTRATIONS BY EDD PATTON

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Warming Trend

Electric space heaters have their place

By Kaye Northcott

Let's talk about radiant space heaters—those small electric gizmos you can plug in to keep yourself toasty while reading or working in a relatively frigid room.

The Cooperative Research Network (CRN), our national research arm, has started answering individual cooperatives' questions on topics such as when it makes sense to use a radiant heater. First off, our gurus point out, radiant heat has to reflect off an object needing warming—say Dad in the barn office, or you reading all day in the lake cottage or a new litter of puppies in the garage. These little portable heaters are not designed to heat a whole room, although if the heater warms you up

your body heat may transfer some of that warmth to the rest of the room.

Space heaters are called space heaters because they are designed to heat only a limited space that someone is occupying. It's possible to cut way back on central heating if you intend to use only a limited area in your home on a particular day. Some advertisements for radiant space heaters claim that they save large quantities of energy. That holds true only if they are used very specifically in such instances as mentioned above. You have to turn down the central heating system considerably and then use radiant space heaters to heat only occupied areas.

Don't be misled by the cost of a

space heater. The most expensive ones do the same work as the cheaper ones. It's worth it, however, to pay extra for a tip-over safety switch.

In general, the efficiency of an electric space heater is essentially 100 percent. In other words, all of the electricity it consumes will be given off as heat. Space heaters that burn natural gas have a typical efficiency ranging between 55 percent and 80 percent, because some of the heating energy in the fuel is lost during combustion.

Electric space heaters may use quartz tubes, carbon tubes, metal coils or halogen lamps to emit radiated heat in a specific direction.

The most commonly purchased space heater is the combination heater that uses both radiant and convection techniques. Any space heater with a heating element and an internal fan can be classified as a combination heater. These heaters can be used to warm an entire room (although not as evenly as a true convection heater) and to heat a stationary person (again, not as efficiently as a true radiant heater). Many people enjoy the versatility of these portable types.

All of these heaters can be a fire hazard, so it is important to operate them in areas where they're unlikely to tip over or come into contact with flammable materials such as paper.

Before you jump onto the space heater bandwagon, it makes sense to take easy and inexpensive energy-saving measures at your workplace or home. Any one of these measures could solve your heating problems without any additional heating equipment:

- Weatherize the building: Caulk and install weatherstripping around doors and windows and add insulation.
- Clean or replace the furnace air filter regularly.
- Insulate heating ducts.
- Verify that heat registers are not blocked (by furniture or other objects) or clogged.
- Seal off registers in unused spaces.

These measures can be implemented in just a few hours, and any costs are usually recouped in savings over just a few months.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.



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THE MIGHTY MITES



BY JIM DENT • UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON ARCHIVAL PHOTOS COLORIZED BY PHOJOE

THE ORPHANS WHO COULD

One of the most noble experiments in the history of Texas sports took place in 1927 on a rough patch of land not far from downtown Fort Worth. A little band of orphans lined up shoulder to shoulder on a football practice field better suited for grazing goats and began cleaning up the rocks, gravel and prickly pear.

Hardy Brown, above, the son of a murdered bootlegger, moved on from the Fort Worth Masonic Widows and Orphans Home Mighty Mites to become, in the words of author Jim Dent, 'the meanest man in pro football.'

A stranger walking through the gate of the Masonic Widows and Orphans Home that day would have laughed at the sight of the small boys wearing patchwork football uniforms. Only six leather helmets were available to the dozen or so players who showed up for tryouts. A tall, thin, bespectacled man roamed the parched field, taking stock of the youngsters he had recently recruited from the “milk slimes,” the boys who milked the cows down at the dairy barn. They hardly looked like football players, and their practice field was in terrible shape. At that moment, Coach Rusty Russell asked himself once more why he had walked away from a decent job at Temple High School, where in 1925 he had led his football team to the state semifinals.

Russell was in Fort Worth to fulfill a promise. A decade earlier, while serving as a medic at the Battle of St. Mihiel during World War I in France, Russell’s platoon had been poisoned by mustard gas delivered in huge doses by German forces. Even after losing his eyesight that day, Russell continued to render aid to his fellow soldiers as he crawled along the ground in virtual blindness. The mustard gas so damaged his eyes that he would spend the next six months in a

Paris hospital. His promise to God was to help kids in any way possible the rest of his life if he could just see again.

Now it was time to deliver on that pledge. Russell had stumbled onto this opportunity when a close friend accepted the coaching job at the Masonic Home and then changed his mind. What better way to repay his debt than to counsel, coach and cajole a group of orphans who needed him more than anyone he could ever remember? Here was a bunch of kids who had suffered the trauma of losing one or both parents before being tossed together in a faraway orphanage like so many uprooted weeds. His first day on the job was both disconcerting and a bit depressing, but he would stand firm on this commitment. Even his wife, Juanita, instantly recognized that her husband’s magic might not be sufficient enough to beat these odds.

Juanita said over breakfast one morning that the boys sure didn’t look like football players. In fact, they might not be able to spell “football.”

Russell smiled and said he sensed an unmistakable spirit about them. They were a tough bunch of rascals who would fight each other over nothing.

In spite of the thin resources, Russell never stopped believing. At the Masonic Home, it seemed that everything

After Rusty Russell, center, was blinded by mustard gas during World War I, he made a promise to God that he would help kids for the rest of his life if his sight were restored. He kept that vow by accepting the head football coach’s job at the Fort Worth Masonic Widows and Orphans Home. Here, Russell stands with star players Dewitt Coulter, left, and Ray Coulter.





Left photo: Leonard ‘Snoggs’ Roach practices public speaking at the Masonic Widows and Orphans Home as Hardy Brown sits listening. Right photo: As teammate Cecil Moseley watches, Coach Russell has weighty expectations of the scales after handing some rocks to player Lester Villines.

was either broken or held together by chewing gum and balancing wire. At first, the team did not even have a football to practice with, so instead the players used two socks stuffed together. With the 1927 football season approaching, Russell suddenly realized that he did not even have gas money to transport the team to road games, or even the home games, for that matter. He soon learned from Principal Thomas Fletcher that there was no contingency fund.

This news stopped Russell in his tracks. Never could he imagine a scenario of such destitution. He would be transporting a high school team around North Texas in an old Dodge that belched smoke every time he hit the gas. The truck known as “Old Blue” had formerly been used to haul hay and pigs. At least he had coaxed a couple of workers at the Masonic Home to build a wooden railing around the truck’s bed so the players wouldn’t fall out of the back on sharp turns.

What transpired in the opening game that season was beyond comprehension. The Mighty Mites traveled west to Mineral Wells to face one of the toughest teams around. Few people gave the Mighty Mites much of a chance against one of the state’s perennial playoff teams. Before the game, Russell approached the Minerals Wells

coach and offered a proposition. He said, “I was just wondering, Coach. If we happened to win the game—and I doubt we will—could we possibly take home the game ball?”

“Sure,” the coach said. “We’ve got plenty of footballs.”

Not only did the Mighty Mites win, but they won big—34-14.

What Russell and the ragtag Mighty Mites accomplished over the next few years was staggering. Russell managed to earn a \$250 check from Sherman High for playing an exhibition game at the end of the season, and that money was spent on new footballs, uniforms, and, most important, letter jackets. In virtually no time, Russell built a culture of winning as the Mighty Mites finished that first season with an 8-2 record. One of his players, Abner McCall, would someday become the president of Baylor University and later a justice on the Supreme Court of Texas.

Because his teams were always dwarfed by the competition, Russell built his offense around a spread formation that allowed his players to run through the competition like a bunch of field mice. By lining up players from sideline to sideline, Russell had already invented the spread offense that would become immensely popular in the NFL in the 1980s. It is an offense that now dominates much of the college game.

Five years after entering the Texas Interscholastic League, the Mighty Mites—who were playing at the Class B level—were voted into Class A, the largest classification of Texas high school football, by the District 7A coaches in Fort

Worth. In 1932, the Masonic Home, with a high school enrollment of slightly more than a hundred students, would compete against schools with more than a thousand.

The undermanned Mighty Mites went undefeated against the big-time competition and made it all the way to the state championship game in Corsicana, where more than 20,000 fans jammed a stadium built for about 5,000. Many drunken fans encroached on the sideline before local police relented and allowed them to stand behind the offensive huddle and watch the game. In the third quarter, the west stands collapsed. Miraculously, no one was seriously injured. The 0-0 tie, in spite of the lack of offensive production, would be remembered as one of the craziest and most entertaining games in the history of Texas high school football.

With future pro football stars like Hardy Brown and Dewitt Coulter coming into the program, the Mighty Mites would reach the state semifinals in 1934, '38 and '40. One of the most memorable games in the state's history was the 12-12 tie against Highland Park in 1938, when the victory was awarded to the Masonic Home because of a 3-2 edge in

penetrations. As the Mighty Mites went deeper into the playoffs that season, the Highland Park fans took up a collection and bought the orphans new black and orange uniforms.

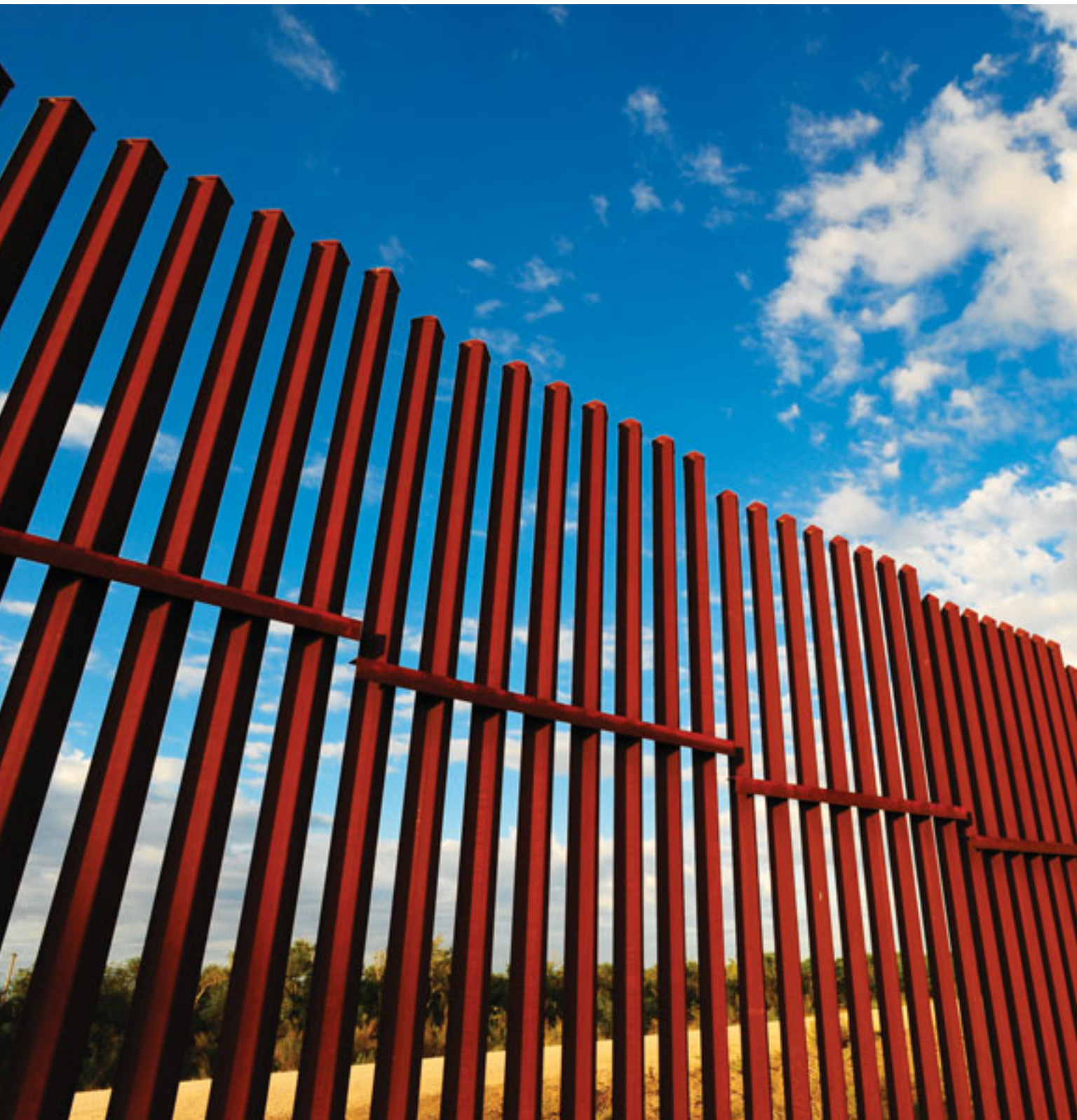
The 1940 season would develop into the most exciting story in the history of Masonic Home football as Brown dominated each game on both sides of the ball, and the Mites reached the semifinals once more against Amarillo High. With the Mites trailing the Golden Sandies 14-7, Brown carried the ball to within inches of the goal on the final play and the dream of another state title died. But as the orphans walked off the field, 12,000 fans began to chant, "Mighty Mites! Mighty Mites!"

With World War II on the horizon, most of the players were shipped off to the Pacific to become paratroopers. Russell left the Masonic Home for Highland Park, which had been trying to hire him away for years. Never again would the Mighty Mites compete for a state championship on the highest level. But they would never be forgotten.

Jim Dent is the author of Twelve Mighty Orphans: The Inspiring True Story of the Mighty Mites Who Ruled Texas Football (2007, Thomas Dunne Books). A new film production company, 12 Productions, LLC, has acquired the movie option rights to the book, which is Dent's sixth.

Hardy Brown shows the sort of grit that made the Mighty Mites a statewide phenomenon during the Great Depression.





BORDERLINE When it comes to the Texas/Mexico wall, no one's sitting on the fence

Controversy swirls around the South Texas border fence like a dust devil. The intermittent concrete and metal barrier erected parallel to the Rio Grande in the name of national security and protection against terrorists has sparked battles over property rights, transparency, rule of law and wildlife survival.

Called the Southwest Border Fence by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the border wall in Texas stretches around El Paso for 165 miles, then appears briefly at the cities of Del Rio and Eagle Pass, which opposed the wall with no success.

In the lower Rio Grande Valley, the brawl over the wall is in the final rounds. The last 36 intermittent miles of fence in Cameron County have been going up—through the city of Brownsville, through private property, family farms and wildlife preserves. The structure here is a combination of fence and reinforced levies along the Rio Grande's flood plain. Despite protests, injunctions and negotiations, the wall was nearly complete by mid-June. But several lawsuits were pending.

Of the planned 55 miles of fence for the Rio Grande Valley, about 33 have been completed.

A 2008 Rasmussen Reports poll showed 52 percent of Texans favored the fence. But along the border, it seems that many residents rarely have a good word to say about it.

"The wall is unnecessary. It doesn't accomplish anything," said Bill Summers, president and CEO of the Rio Grande Valley Partnership, the regional chamber of commerce. He pointed out that the wall, which is "definitely not pretty," stops when it reaches a country club and a golfing resort along the river. The local joke is that terrorists are afraid of being chased by golf-club wielding retirees.

"It's a waste of money. The whole thing is a farce!" said 79-year-old M.G. Dyer, who serves on the board of directors for the Mercedes-based Magic Valley Electric Cooperative. Barbara Miller, a fellow board member, describes herself as "ambivalent," saying, "I don't think the wall will deter immigration. It might shift (immigration) patterns a little."

The fence itself, the border wall, consists of 18-foot-tall, rust-red hollow posts sunk six inches apart in a concrete base. With a cost of about \$6.5 million per mile for pedestrian fence and about \$1.7 million per mile for vehicle fence (made of concrete and reinforced steel), it is projected to cover about 340 of the 1,250 miles that form the Texas-Mexico border. California, Arizona and New Mexico combined have another 350 miles of intermittent fence, which innovative drug smugglers and others have used tunnels and blowtorches to get through.

Gaps of from three-quarters to 10 miles separate some segments of the fence in Cameron County in the southern tip of Texas. That's why when asked, "Will the border wall make you and the U.S. more secure?" the typical response from border residents is a laugh.

The Secure Fence Act of 2006 was aimed to detect and/or deter illegal-entry attempts. Ideally, the patchwork wall would prevent terrorists, illegal immigrants and smugglers from blending into urban populations by funneling them to areas where surveillance is easier. What it seems to do, some say, is momentarily delay illegal-immigrant entries ... and aggravate the people who have to live with what they call an outrageously tall wall running through their farms, private property or towns.

The DHS was given authority to waive 30 laws to speed construction of the barrier. In the Valley, that led to people riled by what they said was the difficulty in getting official information on the wall's route and on the periods for public comment. Citizens in the path of the fence felt the procedure of land taking was chillingly un-American. Some people say they have no guaranteed access to their land on the south side of the barrier, although government officials say that property owners do have guaranteed access. And in some areas where levies and fencing have not been completed, property owners don't know where gates will be placed.

FARMERS IN THE PATH: Some property owners made peace on their terms. They sold strips of land for decent money (for example, \$24,700 was offered for 1.75 acres of farmland), which is fine, unless that strands hundreds of acres of productive land in no-man's land between

the fence and the river.

East of Brownsville where the Rio Grande zigzags like a dropped ball of string, the Loop brothers grow watermelons, corn and grain. To avoid the river's deep meanders, the border wall here can be as many as two miles from the river. For the Loops, that leaves approximately 700 acres of good tillable soil and a home east of the projected fence, in no-man's land. The Loops are not alone in saying they never receive confirmation on the type of gates that will go in the wall and who will control access through them.

"I'm sick to my stomach about this, that as Americans this is happening to us," said Debbie Loop, the brothers' mother. The wall is slated to stop shortly after their property ends, so the Loops just don't see the point. The family said a federal agent told them that if an orange-level (high) terrorist security alert occurred, one of her sons could not stay on his farm east of the wall. "I believe in border security," Debbie Loop said, but she questions why technology isn't being used instead of the disruptive wall. The Loops were granted a temporary stay in early summer, halting wall construction across their land.

Miguel Diaz-Barriga, an anthropology professor at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania who's writing a book about the border fence, conducted focus groups in the Rio Grande Valley. Deep patriotism and concern about national security were the predominant feelings expressed by those who participated. Yet the overwhelming majority did not believe the border wall would work at deterring illegal immigrants or making the nation safer. Most saw the wall as pure political grandstanding, a waste of good money and a scar on the land. Others opposed the wall because it seemed to be a giant land grab, with the government invoking eminent domain on some families who had held their land since the early 1800s. Government officials say eminent domain was exercised after some landowners turned down fair and equitable offers.

"Opposition to the border wall in the Valley is not color or culture specific," Diaz-Barriga said. The 18-foot wall, people joke, has prompted a run on 19-foot ladders.



Magic Valley Electric Cooperative Director M.G. Dyer stands on the Texas side of the controversial border fence in Hidalgo County. Behind him, on the other side of the fence, is a white Border Patrol vehicle. On some gaps in the fence, such as this one, gates will be installed so only landowners can have access. Other gaps will be open, and law enforcement authorities will be expected to patrol them.

THE LONELY PALMS

For 30 years, public and private organizations have worked to restore habitat along the river, creating the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary and other refuges. The Valley heavily markets its eco-assets: semitropical birds, butterflies and plants.

The fence, which has 50-foot-wide strips of bare earth on either side, isn't expected to impede the flights of most birds, but it is expected to cut off the access of other wildlife to water. And sadly, officials say, the Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary is now closed and will remain so until sustained funding can be secured and the fence status is finalized.

As for the rare Texas native sabal palms growing in the fence's wide path, five organizations—The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Texas, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection—and a private contractor, Kiewit, have transplanted at least 150 of the trees to the conservancy's Lennox Foundation Southmost Preserve and the Sabal Palm Audubon Sanctuary.

COMPROMISES: University of Texas system negotiators fought to prevent the looming wall from running through the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) campus, which abuts the Rio Grande. The university was allowed to install a white, 10-foot-tall fence. Rotarians from Brownsville and Matamoros and UTB students and staff then planted flowers and vines along the one-mile, \$1 million stretch.

Upstream in Hidalgo County, local authorities, who had been unable to get federal funding to repair 22 miles of deteriorated levees along the Rio Grande, reached a compromise with the DHS: If the levees were repaired, the fence could go up north of the levees, without opposition. Improvements were made, and about 20 miles of fence was built on or near the levees.

The Harlingen Irrigation District, which oversees a pumping plant on a Rio Grande inlet, also got the compromises it sought, according to General Manager Wayne Halbert. "We've negotiated with all the powers that be," he said. "Everything they've done so far has accommodated us." The fence stops near the plant entrance.

Magic Valley Electric's Dyer is relieved that his home and farm south of the levee were not stranded from the mainland as they would have been had

the wall's route not been placed north of the levee. Dyer says he regularly sees illegal immigrants ducking through his citrus grove along the Rio Grande near the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge. He reports his sightings to the U.S. Border Patrol, which promptly comes out in force. He believes reviving the immigrant worker or *bracero* program of the 1950s is the best way to cut down on illegal immigration. The program allowed much needed workers to enter the United States to do agricultural labor. If work is legalized and Mexicans don't have to sneak across the border for work, the Border Patrol can turn its attention to drug smugglers and other threats, Dyer says.

At any rate, the Rio Grande Valley now hosts a very tall, very expensive, intermittent wall. Will future generations have trouble discerning what purpose the border wall served? Unlike the Great Wall of China, which in its time must have seemed like a reassuring defense, it's hard to imagine that the Great Here and There Fence will ever defend against the porous Texas/Mexico border or be a venerable tourist attraction.

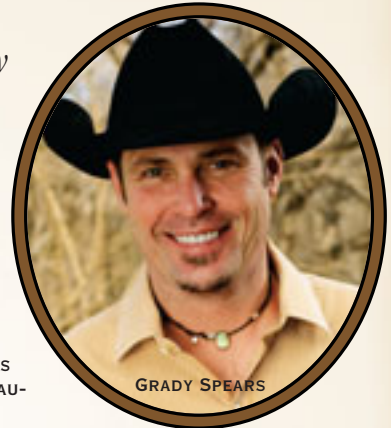
Eileen Mattei has lived on both sides of the Rio Grande and in Harlingen for 16 years.

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- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, toss the pecans in the melted butter until they are completely coated. Sprinkle the chile powder over the nuts and toss them until coated completely. Add the sugar and toss them with your hands to keep the sugar from forming lumps. Spread the mixture onto a lightly oiled baking sheet, scrap-

ing the residue from the bowl on top of the nuts. Bake for 20 minutes, or until the nuts begin to brown and the butter begins to spread. At this point, the coating won't be crunchy, but as the nuts cool, the coating will harden. These nuts can be stored in an airtight container until needed for up to two weeks.



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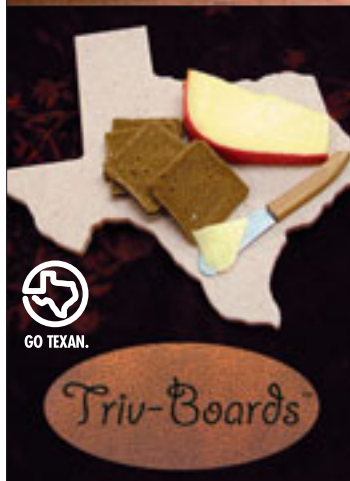
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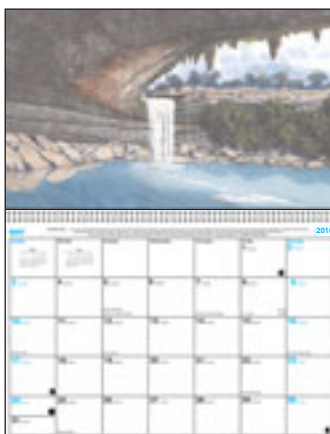
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For Happy Holidays, Follow Safety Tips

Keep electrical safety in mind when decorating for the holiday season:

- Before decorating, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions concerning installation and maintenance of all decorative electrical products.

- Indoors and out, use lights and other electrical decorations certified by a recognized independent testing laboratory such as CSA, UL or ETL.

- Outdoors, use lights and other electrical decorations certified for outdoor use.

- Carefully inspect each decoration before plugging it into an outlet. Cracked, frayed, loose or bare wires and loose connections may cause a serious electric shock or start a fire. Replace damaged items.

- Always unplug decorations before replacing lightbulbs or fuses.

- Don't mount or support light strings in any way that might damage the cord's insulation. Never nail or staple light strings or extension cords.

- Do not connect more than three light string sets together. Light strings with screw-in bulbs should have no more than 50 bulbs connected together.

- Don't overload extension cords—they can overheat and start a fire.

- Keep all outdoor extension cords and light strings clear of snow and standing water and well protected from weather.

- Don't decorate near power lines. Contact with a high-voltage line could lead to electrocution.

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree.

- Don't allow children or pets to play with electrical decorations.

- Turn off all electrical decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

- Plug outdoor lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Portable GFCIs can be purchased wherever electrical supplies are sold.

Buy the Ultimate Gadget for Your Electronics Lover

There's always one person who seems impossible to buy for around the holidays: the electronics lover who already has every TV, DVD player, sound system, computer, printer and handheld gadget you can think of.

Rather than add to the collection, try a creative gift that will help the technology lover on your list manage and protect those expensive electronics.

For someone who has the ultimate home theater or office, buy a smart power strip that cuts down on "phantom" or "vampire power"—the small amount of electricity that electric devices use even when they are turned off or put in sleep mode. The strip will have one control outlet for a computer or TV and additional outlets for printers, fax machines, speakers, DVD players and the cable box, for example. When the TV is shut off or the computer enters sleep mode, the strip will cut power to the other outlets. This not only makes it easier to shut off all electronics at once, but it will also save the lucky recipient money on power



bills effortlessly. Most strips come with separate outlets that don't shut off with the others—for devices like clocks that need to run all the time.

To encourage your gadget lover to save money on larger appliances like refrigerators and flat-screen TVs, give a watt reader, such as the Kill-A-Watt, which will reveal the home's biggest energy guzzlers. Plug the device into the wall and plug appliances in one by one to find out how much energy each appliance is using in real time. By multiplying the electricity used by the cost of electricity (which can be found on the monthly power bill), your electronics whiz can find out how much money it costs—or saves—to flip each appliance on or off.

Well Pump Problems: A Hidden Energy Waster

A leaky faucet or toilet can be more expensive in a house that gets water from a well instead of a utility company. That's because a leak can cause the well pump to run more than it needs to, wasting energy with every drip.

Repairing leaks isn't the only way to keep your pump in top shape. Regular maintenance not only can help your pump operate more efficiently, but it can also help extend the life of the equipment. A service technician should inspect your pump to see if it has fallen victim to either of these two major energy wasters:

- A waterlogged pressure tank. If this problem exists, the pressure sensor inside the tank becomes overactive, causing the pump to start and stop continuously. Because the pump uses the most energy when it's starting up, such unnecessary cycling can put a drain on your energy bill.

- The pump is oversized for your needs. Many homes have 3- to 4-horsepower pumps, when they really need only 1- to 2-horsepower pumps. A properly sized pump can save about 100 kilowatt-hours of electricity a year.

How Is Your Home's 'Physical Fitness'?

The “physical fitness” of your home can make the difference between soaring energy bills or comfortable savings this winter.

An energy-efficient home is a strong defense against winter winds, rain, sleet, snow and chill while also protecting the environment by cutting wasteful energy use. A home “energy diet” benefits your pocketbook and the planet, notes the Alliance to Save Energy, which offers consumers step-by-step home physical fitness tips to cut energy bills and increase comfort:

Plug Energy Leaks

- Plug air leaks with sealant, caulking and weatherstripping to increase your comfort, make your home quieter and cleaner and reduce your cooling and heating costs.

- “Insulate” yourself from price shocks. Appropriate insulation can increase your comfort and reduce your heating costs up to 30 percent. Start with attic insulation, followed by exterior and basement walls, floors and crawl spaces. Insulate and seal attic air ducts.

- Go “window-shopping” at www.efficientwindows.org to discover how high-performance Energy Star-labeled windows can cut heating and cooling costs by as much as 30 percent while increasing indoor comfort and keeping your home furnishings from fading.

- Refinancing your home or obtaining a home equity loan to remodel? The big news is home decorating and remodeling. Consider wrapping in energy-efficiency home improvements to your refinancing package. Interest could be tax-deductible, and you could reduce your monthly energy bills comfortably.

Use Heating Wisely

- Consider replacing a faulty or inefficient HVAC system with a unit that has earned Energy Star certification. Installed correctly, these high-efficiency heating and cooling units can reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 20 percent.

- Let a programmable thermostat “remember for you” to automatically coordinate the indoor climate with your daily and weekend patterns. This reduces heating costs by some 10 percent when you’re home and saves energy when you’re not.

- Open curtains and other window treatments during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home; close them at night.

Look for the Energy Star label, the symbol for energy efficiency, when replacing your heating and cooling systems—as well as appliances, lighting, windows, insulation and home electronics. Find retailers near you at www.energy star.gov.

Lighten Up Efficiently

- Popular halogen torchiere lamps are relatively inexpensive to purchase but are expensive to operate and can cause fires. Consider safer, more efficient Energy Star torchiere lamps instead.



Let a programmable thermostat help you save energy.

- Don't like coming home to a dark house on short winter days? Instead of leaving lights on, put timers on a few of the lights in your home, or install motion detectors and daylight sensors. Motion detectors on exterior floodlights improve your home security at a lower operating cost.

- Replacing four 75-watt incandescent lightbulbs with 23-watt compact fluorescent lightbulbs that use two-thirds less energy and last up to 10 times longer saves \$190 over the life of the bulbs. If all our nation's households did the same, we'd save as much energy as is consumed by some 38 million cars in one year.

- Turn off everything not in use: lights, TVs, computers.

The Alliance to Save Energy is a coalition of business, government, environmental and consumer leaders who promote the efficient and clean use of energy.

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*‘That’s right you’re
not from Texas,
but Texas wants
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TERRI H. CLAMONS

W

hat’s that?” Silence startled me from my daydreams. “I don’t know,” Fred whispered.

We were south of Kyle on Interstate 35 when our pickup engine abruptly stopped. We coasted down the nearby exit ramp, passed under the traffic light that turned green in the nick of time and coasted up the gas station driveway where we finally stopped.

Welcome to San Marcos, Texas.

Fred and I planned our move from Kansas to be closer to two of our three children and their families. They had discovered Texas almost 10 years earlier. We had been visiting Central Texas towns, searching for that “hometown feeling,” and our older son from Buda contacted a real-estate agent to meet with us that afternoon.

Now we sat quietly in the truck, speculating about what had happened on the busy interstate. The friendly face of a constable appeared at the window next to Fred, who looked frustrated about our vehicle.

“You folks need help?” he asked, a welcoming smile spread across his weathered face.

Fred opened the door and stepped out. “Yes, we have some car problems. It stopped, dead on the highway. The exit was right beside us, the light was green and the gas station right here. We were lucky we got off the road before we lost our momentum.”

“Sounds to me like you were meant to be here,” the man said with a slight chuckle. “Pop the hood. Let’s see if we can figure out what’s going on.”

I stretched my legs and listened to the conversation under the hood. Before long, Fred handed me the pickup keys. “We’ll be right back,” he said and climbed into the patrol car with the word Constable painted proudly across the door. They returned with a new battery that didn’t solve our problem, so the officer summoned a tow truck and our pickup was taken to an auto repair shop. When the constable dropped us off at a car-leasing agency to arrange our transportation, he handed me his business card and reminded us to call him if we needed any more help.

“Thanks for all you’ve done,” Fred said as the officer climbed into his car.

The constable smiled. “Helping each other is what we’re about around here.” He tipped his big Texas hat. “Good luck finding a new home. I have a feeling we’re going to have some new Texans in town.”

And, that’s the way our move to Texas began. With each person we met, we

became convinced that our vehicle forced us off the road because we were destined to become “the new Texans” right here in San Marcos, south of Austin.

We drove our rental car around the courthouse square, then branched out into residential areas. We got lost and found several times—a good way to become familiar with any new community. Quite soon, south of town, we saw the house I had dreamed about—a Texas stone ranch—with a “For Sale” sign in the yard. We drove in circles through the winding streets of the neighborhood, and each time we thought we had found our way out, we were led past that Texas stone ranch house again. We couldn’t escape its charm.

I’m sure you know the end to our story. We rendezvoused with our real-estate agent and arranged to visit the house. It had all the features we wished for, including a fenced yard for our dog, Sweet Jenny. We were drawn to that house like we ended up at the gas station with the constable. This was to be our new home. We were going to be “the new Texans” in town.

Our agent gave us lists of workers and retailers. When our furniture arrived, she came with lunch and information about churches and her favorite places to eat. A new bank account included more than banking information when the young man shared local history and the best places to eat Mexican food. Our new insurance agent shared more warm hospitality: “I grew up here and left like young people sometimes do. But I came back, and I’m glad I did.”

Conversations with the women behind the counter where we got new Texas driver’s licenses and license plates resulted in information about buying plants, household items and hardware. What fun it is to be “the new Texans” in town!

I connected with Pedernales Electric Cooperative, trash pickup, water, cable and phone providers. Friendly people everywhere asked: “Have you been to ...? Have you seen ...? Have you eaten at ...?” A young woman at our cell phone office said, “I came here for college, loved it and never left. Actually, I couldn’t leave the river.” We had just arrived, and already we understood her affection for the San Marcos River.

Sunday, we attended church and sat gingerly in the pew for fear it was someone else’s place. The couple in front of us turned around with a warm greeting and introduced us to others nearby. By the time we left for home, my new church friend had invited me to her home for a women’s gathering. It’s exciting being “the new Texan” in town.

“Everyone seems so happy,” I told my daughter, who lives north of Houston.

“That’s Texas, Mom. That’s just Texas,” she said.

I’ve survived many Midwest winters and never liked snow, so I always suspected Texans were happy because they aren’t cooped up in the house half the year. But we’ve discovered Texans are happy because Texas is a great place to live.

It’s great to be “the new Texans” in town. Howdy, y’all! (Did I say that right?) Thanks for making us feel at home.



After writing nonfiction professionally for many years, Terri Clamons now focuses on writing adult and children’s fiction.

SAN ANTONIO

Putting Back the Pieces

San Antonio's San José tile heritage rescued from oblivion.

By Soll Sussman



A simple tile mural rescued from demolition offers a quiet reminder of San Antonio's history.

The mural of a Mexican village scene—one of the highlights along the impressive new northward extension of the San Antonio River Walk—features the maguery cactus in bloom that was the logo of Ethel Wilson Harris at the Mexican Arts and Crafts Workshop she owned on the banks of the San Antonio River. The mural was made in the 1930s at the workshop just steps from its new location. And the route it took to get back to its prime new spot on the River Walk's wall beneath the El Tropicano Riverwalk Hotel is part detective story, part history lesson.

"My idea was that this linked the old part of the river to the new part," said Susan Toomey Frost, a collector and patron who saved the mural and has played a central role in identifying and recovering much of San Antonio's tile heritage. "It came out really cool, I think—considering what it came through to get here. This is as close as possible to where the tile was made."

The mural was commissioned for a relative's private home by Maury Maverick, a congressman and mayor of San Antonio from 1939-41. "It was in a long galley kitchen. It was like a big backsplash—10 feet long and 3 feet high," Frost said. "It was a bear to get it out."

Frost is an enterprising collector, so she was contacted when the home, whose ownership had changed hands, was scheduled to be torn down in 1998. "I didn't know it existed," she said. "So I purchased the mural and got the guy to come take it out." The "guy" was a California tile restorer, who arrived with a slim saw expecting a day of work and instead found the tiles set in concrete.

Frost is still amused as she recalls how the restorer kept going back to The Home Depot to purchase bigger saws, finally getting the tiles out safely several days later with big chunks of concrete attached to them. The concrete was removed from the back of the tiles at a workshop in Lytle, south of San Antonio. From there, they were taken to the Dunis Studios in nearby Bulverde, north of San Antonio, for final work that included the preparation of text tiles explaining the mural's origins.

The restored mural portrays a variety of village scenes in its 100-plus original tiles, including men wearing sombreros, colorfully dressed women and white-washed buildings in the foreground below three snow-capped volcanoes.

"Everybody along the way was very conscientious," Frost said, tracing the line of one of the few visible cracks in the mural. "This crack was originally there."

The Mexican Arts and Crafts Workshop turned out tile from 1931-41 in downtown San Antonio, on North Saint Mary's Street in what had been a barn for a 19th-century mansion. In 1941, the workshop, now called Mission Crafts, moved within the walls of Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, where artisans created tile and pottery until 1977.



The workshop's founder, manager and promoter was Harris, who registered the trademark maguey. "She was really good at marketing," Frost said, speaking fondly of Harris after years of research, almost as if she had known her in person.

Harris also served as technical supervisor for the Work Projects Administration's arts and crafts division during the Great Depression. Mural subjects included the U.S. military and a century of sports in San Antonio, as depicted in four huge murals above the entrances to Alamo Stadium.

Meanwhile, the so-called San José tile being produced in San Antonio, primarily at Harris' workshops, became a visible part of many projects, including two murals on the original River Walk.

The vast majority of the scenes and images portrayed on the tiles, bowls, plates and other pottery from the workshop are images straight from Mexican and South Texas rural life. Among the scenes in the vibrantly colored tiles are families riding to church on horseback, female dancers in flowing regional dresses, male guitarists with puffy-sleeved shirts, duck hunting, animals, fruit, calla lilies or sometimes traditional, geometric designs.

Toward the end of the 20th century, however, San Antonio's tile heritage was becoming just a vague memory.

Frost, who as a collector uses the name "benignobsession" on eBay, started putting the pieces of history back together. As for the mural she helped rescue, some people presumed that the tiles came from San José, California. But knowing their San Antonio origin, Frost was intrigued enough to start almost two decades worth of research. The result is not only a major collection but also an art book, *Colors on Clay: The San José Tile Workshops of San Antonio* (Trinity University Press, 2009). A San José tile exhibit at the Witte Museum is scheduled to be up through March.

"This was too important historically; nobody had put it all together," Frost said. "I like to collect things that nobody else recognizes at the time. We have a huge amount of tiles here and a wonderful tile history."

The 1.3-mile expansion of the River Walk, known as the Museum Reach, opened at the end of May, and visitors can walk by the restored tile mural or see it while floating by on a river barge. Karen Adams of the San Antonio River Foundation said the project design used bridge underpasses along the route to develop a linear, outdoor art gallery.

Plans also are well under way for the eight-mile Mission Reach that will reconnect the river and the city's historic Spanish missions with hike-and-bike trails, parks and public art. Frost has another tile mural ready to donate to the River Foundation for public view close to Mission San José.

Soll Sussman is a former correspondent and news editor for The Associated Press in Mexico. He returned to Austin to work on alternative and renewable energy projects and writes about everything except politics.

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The (Mostly) Friendly Caddo

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

Early travelers along the fabled Camino Real, or the King's Highway, in what is now Cherokee County in East Texas saw a series of mysterious mounds in a prairie opening in the forests not far from the Neches River. Some of those travelers had probably seen similar earthen structures, sites of former ceremonial and burial grounds, along the Natchez Trace in Mississippi and elsewhere.

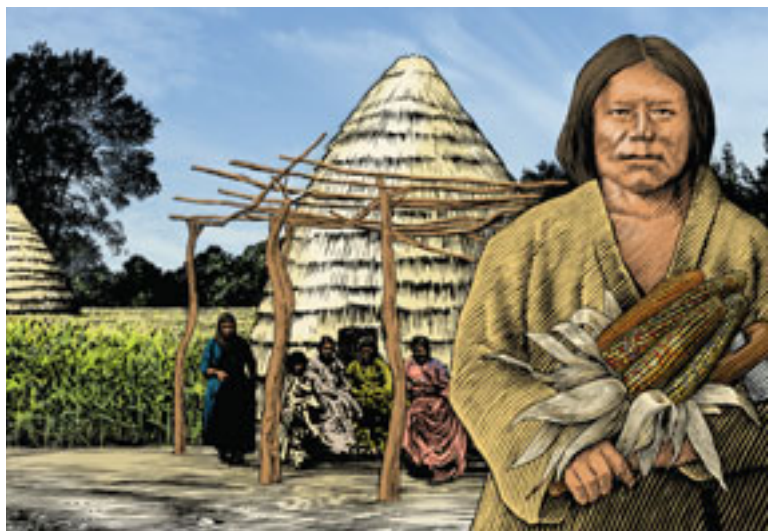
The mounds, now known as the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, are the most visible reminders of the Caddo people, who flourished all over East and Northeast Texas for hundreds of years, their farms and villages spilling over into modern-day Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma. The Caddo are also credited with giving Texas its name, which has been loosely translated to mean "friendly."

The Caddo existed for the better part of a millennium on the southern and western fringes of the great Mississippian native cultures. The Texas branches, sometimes referred to as confederacies, settled in the valleys and near the banks and tributaries of the Red, Sabine and Neches rivers. The Texas Caddo consisted of the Kadohadacho along the Red River; the Hasinai in the Neches and Angelina River valleys; and the Natchitoches on the Red River.

The Hasinai called each other "Tayshas," which meant "friends" or "allies." The Caddo welcomed Spanish explorers as "Tayshas," which the Spanish wrote as "Tejas" and we know as Texas. Some of La Salle's hard-luck sailors are said to have deserted to the Caddo because they were friendlier than their French comrades.

That information might lead some to think of the Caddo as always docile, but that would be wrong. The Caddo were known as fierce warriors, particularly in battles with enemy tribes, as well as farmers, potters and traders. They fought the Apache and Choctaw and were reported to have been every bit the match of the Comanche and other tribes noted by history for their savage torture techniques. The first Europeans to encounter the Caddo, Hernando De Soto's army in 1541, were attacked. The Europeans left the Caddo alone for the next 150 years or so.

The Caddo set themselves apart from most Texas tribes by becoming accomplished farmers, growing the "three sisters" crops of corns, beans and squash along with watermelons, sunflowers, tobacco and other crops. Ever resourceful, the Caddo planned for dry years by saving and protecting two years' worth of seed corn "so that, if the first year is dry, they will not lack for seed the second year," as recounted in C. Allan Jones' book *Texas Roots: Agriculture and Rural Life Before the Civil War*.



Archaeologists have determined that the early Caddos chose to settle at the Caddo mounds site about 800 A.D. and stayed until the 14th century, when the mounds were abruptly and mysteriously abandoned.

Some of the artifacts found at the Caddo mounds are trade items from as far away as Illinois and Florida and include shell from the Gulf Coast and copper from the Great Lakes region. Caddo pottery is well constructed and functional and includes plain and finely decorated ceramics.

Though historians believe the Caddo culture was already in decline by the time they were "discovered," the arrival of Europeans dramatically hastened the demise. Smallpox struck the Caddo in 1690 and became a plague in the 1700s. The Caddo were placed on the Brazos Indian Reservation in 1855, and in 1859 a thousand or so Caddos were removed to the Washita River in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma.

Aside from the mounds, the Caddo left behind a sterling reputation in Texas.

"For hundreds of years the Caddos were the most highly organized and successful people in what is now Texas," Jones wrote in his book. "The Caddo food system was reliable, sustainable, and its communal nature gave the Caddos and other Mississippian peoples the leisure to develop complex hierarchical societies with impressive material cultures."

The best glimpse into that culture comes via a visit to the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site six miles southwest of Alto on State Highway 21. The 93-acre property features a museum and an interpretive trail and is open Tuesday through Sunday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call (936) 858-3218 or go to www.thc.state.tx.us.

Clay Coppedge, who lives in Granger, co-authored "The Dukes of Duval County" in the May 2009 issue of Texas Co-op Power.

Holiday Recipe Contest

SPONSORED BY TEXAS PEANUT PRODUCERS

BY KEVIN HARGIS The peanut is evidently a popular ingredient among cooks out there in co-op land.

This year marked Texas Co-op Power's first Holiday Recipe Contest sponsored by the Texas Peanut Producers Board, and we received an amazing response from our readers. More than 1,400 entries, a record for the magazine's annual holiday contest, poured into my inbox and mailbox, and the versatile legume was

Myrna Tote with her Peanut 'Meat' Balls



featured in every way imaginable: from soup to, well, nuts.

Picking the winner from among all the strong competitors was a tall order: Staff members here at Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC) cooked and ate their way through many entries before settling on our finalists.

My thanks to my fellow Texas Co-op Power staff members who cooked and everyone at TEC who sampled and shared their opinions. I'd especially like to thank our sponsor, the Texas Peanut Producers Board, which represents peanut farmers across the state.

Picking the best recipe from among the finalists was no easy task, but Myrna Tote's Peanut "Meat" Balls won us over with their easy preparation, sweet and sour flavor and remarkable meaty texture—although they don't contain an ounce of meat.

Take these to your next potluck, either as an hors d'oeuvre or a main dish, and I'll wager no one will guess your secret.

\$3,000 GRAND PRIZEWINNER:

Myrna Tote

Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative
Myrna said she first developed her meatless meatballs years ago when she lived in Michigan and needed to come up with something suitable for a dinner for new church members who were vegetarians.

Over the intervening years, she made the dish several times, adjusting the ingredients and improving the recipe.

Myrna, an educational psychologist, is married to Paul and is currently staying at home in McKinney to care for their twin son and daughter.

Paul II and Jasmine turned 2 in October, a day after their mom turned 40. "I had so much excitement on my [38th] birthday that I went into labor the next day," she said.

She cooks often for the family, describing her culinary style "as throwing stuff together."

"I'm not a cookbook cook," she explained. But when creating this recipe for the contest, she says, "I actually had to go through the process of measuring and writing stuff down."

We think she did a great job.

PEANUT 'MEAT' BALLS

- 1 1/4 cups cracker crumbs
- 3/4 cup finely ground raw peanuts
- 3/4 cup shredded mild Cheddar cheese
- 4 eggs
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon cardamom
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sage
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 3 tablespoons minced parsley
- Apricot Barbecue Sauce

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix well all ingredients except Apricot Barbecue Sauce in a bowl. Form into 1 1/2- to 2-inch balls (about the size of a small lime) and put into 12x9-inch casserole dish. Pour Apricot Barbecue Sauce over top and bake, covered, for 30 minutes.

APRICOT BARBECUE SAUCE

- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup apricot jam or preserves
- 2 tablespoons grated onions
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Dash hot pepper sauce

Mix all ingredients in saucepan and bring to boil.

Servings: 6. Serving size: 2 meatballs. Per serving: 528 calories, 15.7 g protein, 25.1 g fat, 60.6 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 877 mg sodium, 155 mg cholesterol

\$500 RUNNER-UP: Dena Torres Whisenant

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

Dena says her father's grill helped inspire this recipe, in which a hint of peanut butter sweetness complements the spicy-salty bacon-wrapped jalapeños. Dena, who has taught at Blanco Elementary School for 15 years, said she and her three children love to go to her dad's house in Marble Falls for cook-outs, and grilled jalapeños are often on the menu.

She says she likes to read the recipes section in Texas Co-op Power to her kids,



Grilled Stuffed Peanut Butter Jalapeños

and her oldest, a sixth-grader, shares her creative zeal in the kitchen.

GRILLED STUFFED PEANUT BUTTER JALAPEÑOS

- 1 cup cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup shredded Colby jack cheese
- 3/4 cup smooth peanut butter
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 4 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 24 large jalapeños
- 48 slices bacon

Mix cream cheese, shredded cheese, peanut butter, onion, salt and garlic. Cap or cut slit in jalapeños and seed them, then stuff with cream cheese mixture. Wrap jalapeño with two slices bacon, being careful not to overlap bacon ends too much, and secure with toothpick. Grill 30 to 45 minutes on low heat or until bacon is crisp.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 2 peppers. Per serving: 388 calories, 25.2 g protein, 29.2 g fat, 7.4 g carbohydrates, 2.3 g fiber, 2,437 mg sodium, 65 mg cholesterol

COOK'S TIP These jalapeños can also be cooked in an oven

broiler at low heat. Use tongs to turn the jalapeños often, cooking all sides evenly.

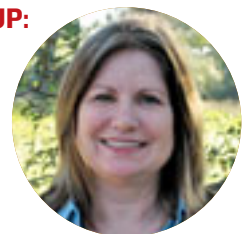
\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Lois Masters

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

Lois is a registered nurse with three grandchildren. Her husband, who loves peanut butter cookies, is a self-employed businessman in San Marcos. She says she developed the "double delight" peanut butter sandwich cookie recipe through much trial and error. "I worked with all kinds of recipes and came up with one that was soft enough," she said. "And this one has a little nutritional value in it," thanks to the wheat germ and the apple-sauce that replaces some of the fat.

Lois, who has been cooking since she was 10, said the recipe seemed like a natural when she read about the Holiday Recipe Contest. "Everyone seems to like them and always asks for the recipe," she said. And now, you have it, too.



DOUBLE DELIGHT PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH COOKIES

- 2¼ cups flour, divided
- 1 cup old-fashioned oats
- ½ cup chopped peanuts
- 1 cup shortening
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- ¼ cup applesauce
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup wheat germ
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt

- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 - ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- Peanut Butter Frosting**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine 1 cup flour, oats and chopped peanuts, set aside. Combine remaining ingredients except Peanut Butter Frosting. Mix well. Stir in reserved oat mixture. Form into walnut-sized balls and place on ungreased cookie sheets about 1 inch apart. Flatten with bottom of drinking glass dipped in sugar. Bake 12-14 minutes or until light golden brown around edges. Place on rack until completely cooled. Spread Peanut Butter Frosting

on bottom of one cookie and top with second, bottom side in.

PEANUT BUTTER FROSTING

- 2 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
 - 1 tablespoon softened butter
 - 6-8 tablespoons milk
 - 3½-4 cups powdered sugar
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Beat ingredients until creamy, adding either more milk or more sugar until achieving spreading consistency.

Servings: 24. Serving size: 1 cookie. Per serving: 318 calories, 4.7 g protein, 14.1 g fat, 43.3 g carbohydrates, 1.5 g fiber, 112 mg sodium, 15 mg cholesterol

Double Delight Peanut Butter Sandwich Cookies



\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Rebekah Stewart

San Bernard

Electric

Cooperative

Rebekah, a stay-at-home mom, loves to spend time with her children and in the kitchen at her home in Hockley. "I love to cook, any kind of food," she says.

In creating her winning recipe, she says, she was looking to combine two of her favorite foods: cheese balls and chicken satay. She hit a home run with her Chicken Satay Cheese Ball, which has a firm texture and a nice curry flavor that doesn't overwhelm the overall taste.

CHICKEN SATAY CHEESE BALL

- 16 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon creamy peanut butter
- 3 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons curry powder
- 4 cups chicken, cooked and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped peanuts

Mix all ingredients except chopped peanuts in a bowl and form into a ball. Roll in peanuts. Refrigerate until ready to eat. Serve with crackers or raw vegetables.

Servings: 32. Serving size: About 1/4 cup. Per serving: 97 calories, 6.6 g protein, 7 g fat, 1.3 g carbohydrates, 0.3 g fiber, 84 mg sodium, 30 mg cholesterol

\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Tammi Thompson

Farmers Electric

Cooperative

"The smell of these bars baking is wonderful around the holidays," said

Tammi, who lives in Campbell, about 50 miles east of Dallas, with her husband and three children. She has been making a version of the Peanuttty Caramel Apple Bars for several years and said the recipe she entered just evolved.

Thompson and her family are very involved in the 4-H program, and



Chicken Satay Cheese Ball (above), Peanuttty Caramel Apple Bars (recipe on page 32)

RECIPE CONTEST

April's recipe contest topic is **Potluck Casseroles**. Do you make a dish that prompts recipe requests when you take it to a church social or a friend's house? Share your recipes with us. The deadline is December 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, or submit online at www.texascooppower.com. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. The top winner will receive a copy of 60 Years of Home Cooking and a Texas-shaped trivet. Runners-up will also receive a prize.

although she has entered food contests at the Hunt County Fair—"I make my 4-H kids do it, and I thought I probably should, too," she said—this is her first recipe contest entry.

PEANUTTY CARAMEL APPLE BARS

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, softened
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups brown sugar, divided
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cinnamon, divided
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup ground dry-roasted peanuts
- 2 cups rolled oats
- $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups apples, peeled, cored and sliced
- 1 bag (10 ounces) caramels, unwrapped
- 1 tablespoon milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped peanuts

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line 13x9-inch pan with foil and lightly spray with cooking spray. In medium bowl, mix butter, 1 cup brown sugar, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt and baking soda until thoroughly combined. Mix in flour, ground peanuts and oats until crumbly. Reserve 1 cup of mixture and press remainder firmly into prepared pan. Toss apples with remaining brown sugar, cinnamon and salt. Arrange over crust.

Combine caramels and milk in microwave-safe bowl or measuring cup. Microwave in 30-second intervals until melted and pour 1 cup of resulting sauce over apples. Sprinkle with reserved crust mixture. Bake 35-40 minutes until bubbly and apples are just tender. Remove and let cool until just warm to the touch. Garnish with chopped peanuts. Cut into squares. Before serving, allow to cool until caramel is set.

Use leftover caramel sauce as ice cream topping.

Servings: 24. Serving size: 1 bar. Per serving: 226 calories, 4 g protein, 10.4 g fat, 29.8 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g fiber, 140 mg sodium, 15 mg cholesterol

COOK'S TIP Grind peanuts in a food processor, or in batches in a blender, until they resemble coarse cornmeal.

Past recipes are available in the Recipes Archive at www.texascooppower.com.



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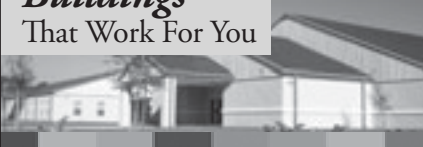
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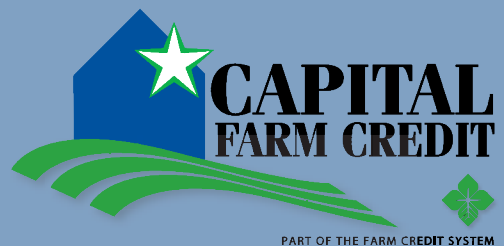
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T E X A S ' L A R G E S T R U R A L L E N D E R



▲ Tri-County Electric Cooperative member **Brenda Murphy** sent us this charming photo of her daughter **Michele** taking a break in their ranch's country-style swimming pool.



▲ **Justin**, left, and **Marshall Roebuck** “thought outside the box” when Dad forgot the camping chairs on a trip to McKinney Falls State Park. Or rather, they thought “in” it. These two are sons of Pedernales Electric Cooperative members **Jeanette** and **David Roebuck**.

ROUGHIN' IT

It can be very rewarding, inspiring and sometimes difficult to pack up some staples and say sayonara to the modern world. It's just you and your provisions and how you make it all work. For some it is everything, and others just call room service. No electricity, no running water, no civilization, no problem, right? Maybe ...

—ASHLEY CLARY



▲ **Russell J. Wittrup**, a Pedernales Electric Cooperative member, says he really enjoys his escapes to his property in one of the most remote locations in Texas, the Big Bend area.

▼ As charming as an expedition to the Sam Houston National Forest may seem, it was a little too steamy for Hamilton County Electric Cooperative members **Paul** and **Charlene Tiner** (but not for dog Suzy, pictured). “It was too hot to sleep in the tent. We lost our appetites and gave the dogs all our food,” says Charlene.

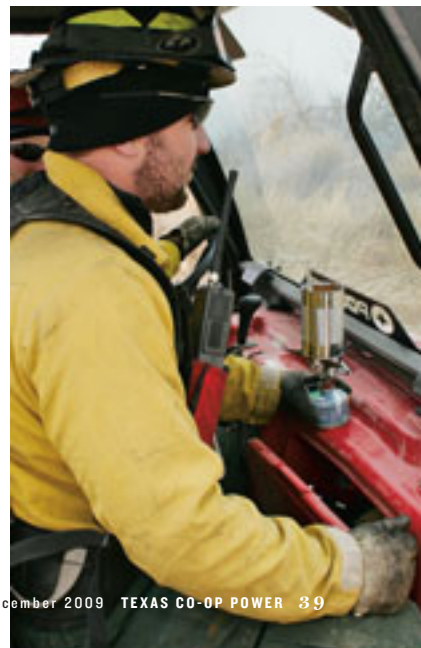
Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Feb	Firsts	Dec 10
Mar	Backyard Gardens	Jan 10
Apr	Barnyard Babies	Feb 10
May	Farmers Bounty	Mar 10
Jun	Only in Texas	Apr 10
Jul	Beat the Heat	May 10

FIRSTS is the topic for our **FEBRUARY 2010** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Firsts, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701** before **December 10**. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). **Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate.** We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline. Please note that we cannot provide individual critiques of submitted photos. If you use a digital camera, e-mail your highest-resolution images to focus@texas-ec.org, or submit them on our website at www.texascooppower.com.



► Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative member **Jan Amen** snapped this shot of a firefighter on the Pecos River near Mentone last January. “He pulled out a little camp heater and a can of soup for a much-deserved meal. Pretty clever!” she says.



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When I was 7, they wouldn't let me drive the glass-bottom boat at San Marcos' Aquarena Springs. But when I returned some 40 years later to what is now called the **AQUARENA CENTER**, I was the captain of my own vessel: a glass-bottom kayak that gracefully sliced through the cool, clear water of Spring Lake.

AQUARENA SPRINGS, the wildly popular theme park that entertained millions of visitors from 1950 through 1996, no longer exists. Gone is Ralph the swimming pig and his elegant swine dive. Gone are the beautiful Aqua Maids and their breathtaking, underwater shows.

But the ghosts of Aquarena Springs are everywhere: Look up, and you'll see a single cable, wheels still attached, strung between the steel poles that once supported sky ride gondolas. The 200-foot-tall tower that carried a doughnut-shaped car to the top, giving its riders a 360-degree-rotating view, still looms over the lake. Even the bones of the two old submarine theaters—one sunken, the other partially sitting above water with a chain blocking its steel entrance ramp—are preserved here.

When the wind moans through the top of the old tower, this place can really feel haunted. But it's far from dead. There is life here—precious, fragile life as monitored by the Aquarena Center, a nonprofit environmental education center operated by Texas State University (TSU), which bought the 90-acre Aquarena Springs property in 1994.

Clearly, as seen through the bottom of a **GLASS-BOTTOM KAYAK**—or the timeless **GLASS-BOTTOM BOATS** that still cruise the lake—the focus is on the San Marcos springs that bubble up out of the Edwards Aquifer, forming Spring Lake and the headwaters of the San Marcos River in this beautiful city south of Austin.

A federally declared critical habitat, the San Marcos springs ecosystem is home to eight federally listed endangered or threatened species, including the San Marcos salamander, a Spring Lake inhabitant found nowhere else in the world, and Texas wild rice, found only in a short stretch of the San Marcos River.

You won't see tiny critters such as the

I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW.

San Marcos' glass-bottom kayak tours put focus on nature.

BY CAMILLE WHEELER



salamander on a guided kayak tour. But, as you paddle your own kayak, you will see birds, fish, turtles and aquatic plants. And, because recreational activity is restricted in **SPRING LAKE**, a protected archaeological site under state law, you'll practically have the place to yourself.

Sure, tubing the **SAN MARCOS RIVER** is great fun. But you have to wait for warm weather. On Spring Lake, you can paddle year-round. Tours, including full-moon (12 and older) and children's scavenger-hunt outings, cost \$20 or \$40 per person with options to tour the aquarium and endangered species exhibit, the indoor archaeological exhibit and the floating wetlands boardwalk.

On an overcast afternoon in late April, I clumsily climbed into a sleek,

12-foot-long glass-bottom kayak at Spring Lake. My companion and I digested the good news from Justin Payne, our lead guide and environmental interpreter: We'd be safe in the sit-on-top kayaks.

"If we tip over, we'll just roll out," he said.

Payne and fellow environmental interpreter Cordelia Keith-Verfaillia pushed us off, launched their kayaks and paddled up beside us. I grinned. I, the woman who can't steer a canoe to save her life, was almost paddling like a pro.

With each dip of the paddle blades, I felt myself relax. My shoulders dropped, my brow smoothed.

Colors collided in my head: the turquoise water, the gray-blue sky, the green trees and plants, our blue life jackets, the orange kayaks.

Soon, we were all striking the glass-bottom kayak pose: paddle laid across thighs, chin tucked, head down, eyes glued to the bottom of the lake where we saw high-pressure springs that looked like boiling oatmeal. We studied underwater plants, including the white-blooming cacomba—think toilet-bowl cleaner bristles—and arrowhead, which resembles French fries. I whooped upon spotting the yellow on the head of a Texas River Cooter turtle.

We paddled over the original submarine theater, constructed in 1950, and an underwater archaeological site where roughly 12,000-year-old mastodon bones have been found.

As dusk descended, we explored the lily-padded wetlands. Cormorants and night herons hunkered down on scraggly branches. Egrets flew home for the night, so many that they looked like cotton covering the branches of a bald cypress.

Sadness fell over me. The two-plus-hour tour was over. The wind moaned through the hollow tower, and we headed for the shore.

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



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