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FEBRUARY 2010

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THRIVING:**

**VIETNAMESE
IN TEXAS**



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By Ellen Sweets

Photos by Will van Overbeek

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By Sandy Sheehy

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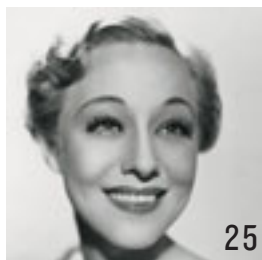
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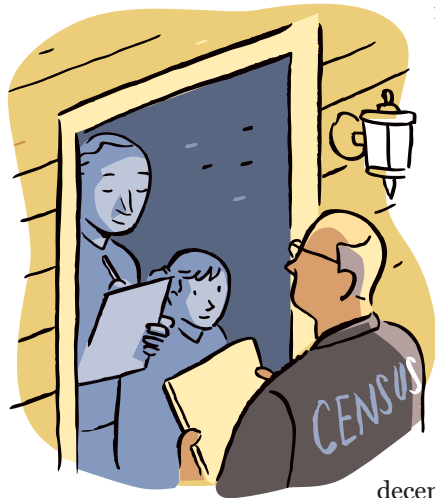
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POWER TALK

Take Census Precautions

The general rule is to never give strangers your personal information. But assisting officials in getting an accurate 2010 U.S. Census Bureau count is an important exception. More than 140,000 census workers are charged with counting every person in the United States. The first step is a survey that household residents will receive in March. If the surveys aren't returned, residents will be telephoned or visited by census workers. The goal is to gather information—such as name, age, gender and race—about each person living at each address.



It's important that each area's population is accurately recorded. More than \$435 billion in federal funds are distributed across the U.S. every year based on the population count. In addition, congressional redistricting hinges on decennial figures. All census information collected, including addresses, is confidential and protected by law.

So how can you tell if you are talking to a legitimate census worker and not a con artist? Use these guidelines from the Better Business Bureau:

If it's a U.S. census worker knocking on your door, he or she will be wearing a badge and carrying a Census Bureau canvas bag, a confidentiality notice and a computer equipped with GPS software to reduce the number of geographic coding errors created by using paper maps. Ask to see the individual's identification and badge before answering any questions.

While the Census Bureau might ask for basic financial information, such as a salary range, it will not ask for Social Security, bank account or credit card numbers. Census workers do not solicit donations.

Census workers will not contact you by e-mail, so be on the lookout for e-mail scams in which someone claims to represent the Census Bureau. Never click on a link or open any attachments in an e-mail that are supposedly from the Census Bureau.

For more information on the census and advice on avoiding identity theft and fraud, visit www.bbb.org and www.census.gov.

MONEY FLOWING TO TEXAS

ETEC Receives Renewable Bonds

East Texas Electric Cooperative's plans to construct a biomass peaking plant in Woodville and a hydroelectric plant on Lake Livingston have been bolstered by a \$65 million allocation in federal clean renewable energy bonds.

Manager Edd Hargett said the generating cooperative is seeking new sources of power because it will need to replace wholesale power contracts that expire in 2014.

Some \$40 million in bonds will go toward building the Woodville plant, which has a total budget of \$190 million. It will be capable of generating up to 50 megawatts of energy from biomass, primarily using wood chips and forest waste from within 50 miles of the plant. Construction is scheduled to be completed by 2014.

The hydroelectric plant should begin delivering power in early 2013.

The electric distribution co-ops using power from ETEC are Bowie-Cass, Cherokee County, Deep East Texas, Houston County, Jasper-Newton, Panola-Harrison, Rusk County, Sam Houston, Upshur Rural and Wood County.

Golden Spread EC and CoServ Electric To Upgrade Grids

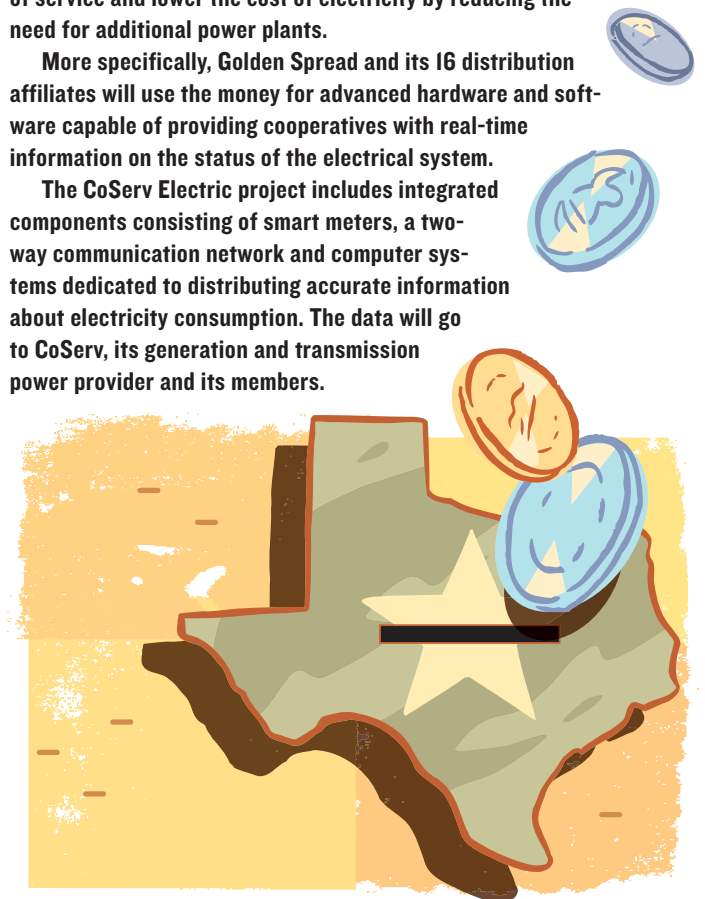
Two Texas electric cooperatives are in line to receive more than \$37 million in "smart" grid grants from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Golden Spread Electric Cooperative, a generation and transmission co-op based in Amarillo, will receive \$19.9 million; and CoServ Electric, a distribution co-op based in Corinth, will receive \$17.2 million.

The money is contingent on the co-ops complying with the DOE's timetable for making grid improvements.

Golden Spread will use its grant funds to improve its reliability of service and lower the cost of electricity by reducing the need for additional power plants.

More specifically, Golden Spread and its 16 distribution affiliates will use the money for advanced hardware and software capable of providing cooperatives with real-time information on the status of the electrical system.

The CoServ Electric project includes integrated components consisting of smart meters, a two-way communication network and computer systems dedicated to distributing accurate information about electricity consumption. The data will go to CoServ, its generation and transmission power provider and its members.



H A P P E N I N G S

Not many people can say they've seen a Whooping Crane, one of nature's most magnificent, and endangered, birds once on the brink of extinction. The world's last natural wild flock of Whooping Cranes winters on and around the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge north of Corpus Christi. Binoculars aren't always required to see North America's tallest flying birds that stand nearly 5 feet tall with a 7-foot wingspan. But if you want extra help spotting one, make plans to attend the **WHOOPING CRANE FESTIVAL**, set for February 25-28.

The festival, sponsored by the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce Tourist and Convention Bureau, offers crane-watching boat tours and additional boat and bus tours that introduce visitors to the nature-rich Gulf Coast area and an abundance of other birds.

For more information about the festival, including early registration fees, call 1-800-452-6278 or go to www.portaransas.org/cranes.html.

WHO KNEW?



Texas first participated in the U.S. census in 1850. At that time, the census counted not only people but also agricultural animals. The state had:

- 12,364 asses and mules
- 50,482 working oxen
- 75,403 horses
- 99,099 sheep
- 214,868 milk cows
- 652,174 other cattle
- 683,604 swine

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YAUPON CAN PRODUCE A BUZZ

Yaupon's hidden claim to fame, almost entirely eclipsed in the 20th century, is its potential as a tea, and not just any tea, but one containing caffeine—the dried leaves contain 0.27 percent of the stimulant. Of all the species of holly native to North America, yaupon is the only one known to contain caffeine, and it is the only wild tea in Texas with the stimulant.

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

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FUTURE TALK

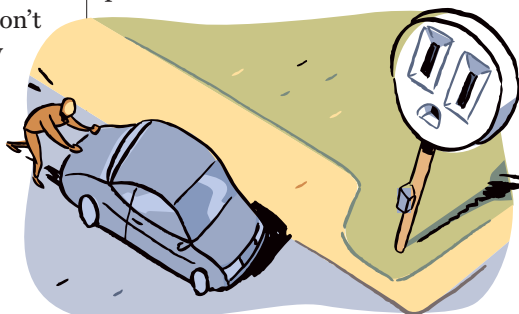
CHARGING UP YOUR CAR

The country is inundated with convenience stores where customers can gas up, buy a burrito and be on their way. But anyone who purchases one of the electric vehicles coming online in the near future may search in vain on the road for an energy boost. Public electric charging stations are virtually nonexistent.

That has to change, says Bill Ford Jr., executive chairman of Ford Motor Company. "Customers don't want to be panicked when they get their car about where and when they can recharge their vehicle," he said recently at a plug-in electric vehicle conference in Detroit. "We have to make it easy for them."

Several top business leaders have formed the Electrification

Coalition, a nonpartisan, nonprofit group that will advocate for policies and actions leading to the mass deployment of electric vehicles, including convenient electric charging stations. In its first act, the coalition released a document called the Electrification Roadmap that sets a lofty goal: By 2040, 75 percent of the light-duty vehicle miles traveled in the U.S. should be electrically powered.



This Yellow Bus Runs Green

All aboard for electric-powered transportation

By Eileen Mattei

Silent as a shadow, the 72-passenger Blue Bird school bus cruises at 50 mph down a rural road in the Rio Grande Valley. Propelled by two proprietary electric motors designed and built by Bob Ross and crews at New Core, Inc., and his former company, Jasper Electric Motors in Jasper, Alabama, the bus demonstrates the future of battery-powered transportation. “This works so well because of what a school bus does—driving a limited distance. It’s the perfect application for an electric-powered vehicle,” explained Ross, owner and president of New Core and a member of Magic Valley Electric Cooperative.

Traveling a fixed route of less than 30 miles, the quiet-running electric bus recharges at night during off-peak periods, when demand for electricity is lower. Instead of a diesel motor, the bus runs on 54 large batteries connected to synchronized motor drive controls that send alternating current to two 60-horsepower motors. A

propane generator supplies backup power. Turning a big yellow school bus into a cool, green machine took only a good idea—and a year.

When gasoline exceeded the \$4-per-gallon mark nationwide in 2008, Ross decided to tap the talent at the two electric-motor refurbishing companies to create a greener school bus, something cheaper to operate than the diesel-guzzling standard. With no fixed budget, the project’s prime asset was the employees’ years of expertise building industrial electric motor cores for transcontinental pipelines, coal mines and nuclear submarines.

“We can make everything but money,” Ross joked. “But this is our game. We’re motor men, electrical guys.” The Missouri native enlisted friends Don Wetzel and Greg Eschborn, both electrical engineers, to help design the motor and create the control system, respectively.

In 1992, Ross sold the electric core business he had founded 20 years ear-

lier in Jasper, Alabama, to his children and retired to Palm Valley, west of Harlingen. Retirement lasted two weeks as Ross dived into his new business, New Core. “I didn’t like to play golf all that well,” he said. Soon he was building generator parts, and New Core, just north of Harlingen in Combes, grew to 25 employees.

In August 2009, when the prototype electric bus had 700 miles on it, Ross applied for a patent on the electric motor. The two shop-built motors that turn the single drive shaft sit under the bus floor between the first seats. The original transmission was left intact but was moved closer to the rear wheels. A 12-volt air compressor powers the air brakes. A 5-horsepower electric motor runs the power steering, lights, wipers and heaters. A vertical array next to the driver shows rpm and voltage; the motors run cool at 150 degrees Fahrenheit.

A propane generator fills the space where the engine once sat. When the battery bank is nearly depleted, the bus automatically switches to propane power with a slight hum. Charles Cornwell, an electrical engineer working with Ross, said the bus on a recent 130-mile trip used 25 gallons of propane and depleted the batteries. With propane at \$1.50 per gallon and the cost of recharging at 10 cents per kilowatt-hour, the trial run cost about 22 cents per mile on battery power alone and 42 cents on hybrid power (electric and propane). The same trip diesel powered would have cost around 50 cents per mile.

Out on the road, the ride is so shockingly quiet that you wonder about your hearing ... until the vehicle’s shocks creak.

Ross and his team are still improving the vehicle’s performance and are planning to switch to lithium batteries.

Once lithium battery partners are lined up, Ross said New Core and possibly other companies will be ready to begin building electric motors to be retrofitted into school buses.

Based on the prototype’s performance, the electric bus from a tiny Texas town has the potential to dramatically change the national public transportation picture.

Eileen Mattei lives in Harlingen.



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WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Father Hanh Van Pham leads the 2,000-family congregation of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Corpus Christi. Eventually, he wants to return to Vietnam and follow the teachings of Mother Teresa.

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

VIETNAMESE NOW WOVEN INTO TEXAS' COMMUNITY FABRIC

BY ELLEN SWEETS

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Not all of the Vietnamese families with the surname "Nguyen" (pronounced "win") are related. Various explanations for the prevalence of the popular name exist, but the one most often proffered defines it as the Vietnamese equivalent of the last name "Jones" or "Smith" in English.*

It has been three decades since strife between Vietnamese immigrants and native fishermen shook placid Texas Gulf Coast fishing towns.

For some, that culture clash between newly arrived Vietnamese fishermen and the established fishing industry probably seems like yesterday. For others, it is a remote memory. The good news is that Vietnamese are now unquestionably a part of the larger community. Many coastal natives attribute this success to a cultural tradition that emphasizes family, education and hard work.

LEAVING VIETNAM

When U.S. military troops left South Vietnam in 1975, hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese who had fought with Americans against the North Vietnamese in the Vietnam War were prime candidates for reprisals. Many South Vietnamese escaped as best they could and scattered across the world. Some went to the U.S. immedi-

ately after the war. Next came waves of boat people from 1978 to 1990. This country began sponsoring an “orderly departure program” for Vietnamese who could find sponsors during the 1980s. And since 2000, Vietnamese have been able to come to the U.S. on student visas.

Vietnam is an S-shaped country with water to the south, west and east—the Gulf of Tonkin, the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand. Many Vietnam refugees seeking a familiar landscape found their way to the warm sun of the Texas coast.

Early immigrants who took up fishing were welcome, but as numbers increased, Texas shrimpers, oystermen and crabbers, already territorial, became resentful.

The Vietnamese, many of whom didn’t speak English, were unfamiliar with established fishing protocols and unwittingly violated them. Texans, bewildered by this influx and unhappy about increasing competition, squabbled with the newcomers.

Tensions finally blew in 1981 when the Ku Klux Klan descended on the coastal hamlet of Seadrift. Vietnamese families were threatened, boats were burned, and an effigy of a Vietnamese fisherman was hung from a boat.

Federal marshals came in to calm the situation at the start of the 1982 shrimping season. Relations gradually improved with the healing power of time.

A second generation of Vietnamese residents remains in towns along the coast, but fewer and fewer of them are taking to the water—due, in part, to diminishing shrimp catches, escalating fuel costs, overseas competition and increased opportunity in other career fields.

HO AND TAMMY NGUYEN’S FAMILY

Conversations with Vietnamese along the coast today invariably include the usual “firsts”: the first to attend West Point; the first to go to medical school; the first to play professional football.

The football trailblazer is Dat Nguyen, the former Rockport-Fulton High School and Texas A&M University defensive standout who starred at linebacker for the Dallas Cowboys as the first player of Vietnamese descent to compete in the NFL. Nguyen, now an assistant coach for the Cowboys, is the

youngest of six children born to Ho and Tammy Nguyen. His roots extend from the village of Ben Da half a world away from Texas.

In Nguyen’s autobiography, *Dat: Tackling Life and the NFL* (2005, Texas A&M University Press), he writes about his family’s home along a small harbor near the Mekong Delta. Summers were miserable, not unlike those in Texas. As the war wound down and communist forces drew closer, Ho Nguyen and his extended family decided to leave.

At the time, Tammy Nguyen was pregnant with the son who would become a fearsome linebacker. They walked five miles through woods and along the coast to a fishing boat that was to ferry them to a ship and, ultimately, to safety. But they missed the boat and ended up in a camp in Thailand, awaiting dispatch to a receptive country.

Eventually, they made their way to the U.S., and after a brief stay on the

West Coast, the family arrived at the Fort Chaffee military base in Arkansas in 1975. Dat Nguyen was born there that year on September 25. During the next year, the family zigzagged from Kalamazoo, Michigan, to Fort Worth, New Orleans and Biloxi, Mississippi, always in search of better weather and better lives.

They moved to Rockport in 1978 after hearing of good shrimping opportunities there. Ho and Tammy Nguyen worked before sunup and after sundown. With savings, they bought materials to build their own 47-foot trawler.

Today, Ho and Tammy Nguyen and their six children are engaged in fields far removed from the dangers and demands of shrimping. Most of the children are involved in the family’s five Hu-Dat restaurants that grew out of a small eatery near the Rockport waterfront where Tammy, the family matriarch, prepared Vietnamese meals for men who worked the boats.

Dat Nguyen, a former linebacker for the Dallas Cowboys and the first person of Vietnamese descent to play in the NFL, is now a Cowboys assistant coach.



JAMES D. SMITH



WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Lyly Nguyen, one of six siblings, manages the Hu-Dat Noodle House in Corpus Christi. Each of the siblings manages restaurants except Dat.

LYLY

Lyly (pronounced “Lily”) is the oldest sibling and manages the popular Hu-Dat Noodle House in Corpus Christi.

“My aunt and mother did the cooking at the first noodle house. Area residents who weren’t Vietnamese became curious and started tasting our food,” Lyly says. “They already knew Chinese food so they thought Vietnamese food was the same. To get more local people interested in food, we started cooking with less garlic and fish sauce and lemongrass because some people considered the flavors too strong.”

The social climate has improved for Texas Vietnamese since Lyly’s childhood. “I grew up here and remember being picked on because I was Asian,” she says. “When I finished school, I moved away and lived in California for 10 years. When I came back, Corpus Christi was a different place. That was almost 20 years ago. I think people learned that we’re no different because of the color of our skin.”

The family now has restaurants in Rockport-Fulton, Ingleside and Portland as well as Corpus Christi. Each of the siblings manages restaurants except Dat.

Lyly, a diminutive, dark-haired dynamo, is in a constant state of alert as the phone starts ringing for lunchtime to-go orders on a weekday mid-morning. Making sure the phone is answered before a third ring, she catches an employee’s eye. He promptly lifts the receiver and greets the caller: “Hu-Dat Noodle House.”

Lyly greets some customers by name as she interrupts her conversation with a reporter, this time to help take orders behind the counter. The lunchtime crowd line is getting long now. Her smile is bright and genuine. Those she doesn’t know by name, she knows by what they like.

“You gonna do the pho bowl with beef today or you gonna try something different?” she asks a burly worker. “You know me too well, don’t cha?” he replies. He chooses his usual oversized

bowl of pho dac biet, rice noodles, beef and beef broth. He pauses. “And give me two of those shrimp rolls, not the fried ones, the ones ...” She knows what he means.

She nods and smiles. He nods and smiles back. She laughs. His smile broadens. She knows how to work her customers—in a good way.

The scene shifts at dinner. Workers are replaced by more families, older singles and a few young people clearly on dinner dates. Through a doorway and into the bar just off the dining room, businessmen are enjoying after-work drinks and an appetizer platter. Lyly finally relaxes at the bar with a tall glass of fruit juice.

“When we close I might have a cocktail,” she says. “Before that, too much to do. If I stop, I want to go to take a nap.”

LYNNE NGUYEN

These hardship-to-success stories repeat themselves with only minor variations: 31-year-old Lynne Nguyen and her husband, Phillip, co-manage Romantic Nails, an immaculate multi-seat manicure and pedicure salon in the La Palmera Shopping Center in Corpus Christi. Her family arrived in the United States in 1976, first living in Wisconsin, where her father rode a bicycle to his job as a janitor, even in the winter. Then the family moved to New Orleans where Lynne’s father worked as a butcher and her mother was a grocery-store bagger before landing a job at Café Du Monde. The family also lived in Michigan. Lynne remembers a time in Wisconsin when one hard-boiled egg seasoned with soy sauce and eaten with rice fed her entire family.

In 1997, the family moved to the Texas coast and eventually saved enough money to open a salon.

DR. TAYSON DELENGOCKY

Until recently, Dr. Tayson DeLengocky, an ophthalmologist who earned an undergraduate degree at the University of Texas and completed his medical training at the University of North Texas Health Science Center/Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine in Fort Worth, frequented Vietnamese restaurants in Corpus Christi. His is a compelling story. His father, who worked as a secretary in the foreign affairs department for South Vietnam,

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gained political asylum in France in 1983. “We were in the second wave of immigrants who left some eight years after the fall of Saigon,” DeLengocky says. While he has settled in the U.S., the other members of his immediate family are still in Paris—except for a sister in China.

The youngest of four children, DeLengocky came to the U.S. on an immigration visa in 1990. He completed his Texas residency in eye surgery in Corpus Christi and in 2009 joined a practice in Peoria, Illinois.

DeLengocky recounts, “People went to different countries—Japan, Africa, Israel. In France you can have citizenship, but you are French only on paper. Here in America you can merge into the mainstream if you want to. You can achieve anything you want if you work for it.”

FATHER HANH VAN PHAM

Such stories as DeLengocky’s are testimony to remarkable perseverance and

resilience. Father Hanh Van Pham, who leads the 2,000-family congregation of St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in Corpus Christi, also has such a story.

He and the rest of his family have been in the United States since 1975, and they are scattered across the Gulf Coast, in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Father Hanh plans to stay seven more years at St. Philip, marking his 25th year in the priesthood, before returning to Vietnam to follow the teachings of Mother Teresa and work among the poorest of the poor.

“The people who come to this country are survivors,” he says in his almost whisper-soft voice. “We all have big families because you didn’t know how many the war would kill off. We help one another. We help ourselves. We save. When we buy, we pay cash.”

Once outsiders, those in the Vietnamese community have woven themselves into the fabric of coastal communities, just as they have in other parts of the country. Diane Wilson, a

former shrimper who wrote *An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters and the Fight for Seadrift*, Texas, witnessed Vietnamese refugees as they became part of coastal life. At one time, she says, hers was one of only two, maybe three, fish houses that would buy from Vietnamese fishermen.

“When the Vietnamese first came here, they weren’t all crabbers or shrimpers,” she says. “Some were scientists and teachers. Some became my neighbors. They worked incredibly hard and saved their money. They had what they called the Vietnamese village. You would see all these old trailers—I mean rickety old trailers where they lived. But when they decided to buy a house, they’d come with a suitcase full of money. Now they own their own homes. They own fish houses, too.”

Ellen Sweets has been a columnist for The Dallas Morning News and the Denver Post.

Lynne Nguyen co-manages Romantic Nails in Corpus Christi. Her family lived in Wisconsin, Louisiana and Michigan before settling down in Texas.

WILL VAN OVERBEEK





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TOASTED ROSEMARY PECANS

In this easy-to-prepare snack, rosemary and cayenne add a spicy zing to the crunch of toasted pecans without piling on calories. This hard-to-resist combination is sure to be a bit with your family.

- 3 cups pecan halves
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon coarse salt
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Put pecans on a large baking pan. Toast until golden, about 10 minutes. Remove from oven. While they're still warm, toss them with rosemary, cayenne, salt and olive oil. Store in airtight container.



DID YOU KNOW?

- One ounce of pecans has about the same amount of fiber as a medium-sized apple and provides 10 percent of an adult's daily needs.
- Pecans contain an abundance of unsaturated fats, and studies have shown they can help lower cholesterol levels.
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- Pecans passed NASA's stringent standards for nutrition per weight and accompanied astronauts on the Apollo 13 and 14 moon missions.

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INTERNET DATING GOES COUNTRY



BY SANDY SHEEHY

WIDOWER WARREN COOPER NEVER WOULD have met the skydiving piano teacher in the course of his daily life. She lived 90 miles away, and they had no friends in common. In 2005, three years after losing his wife of 46 years to colon cancer, the retired petroleum geologist had relocated from Houston to the East Texas Piney Woods, on Sam Houston Electric Cooperative lines, where he built a house from plans he found on the Internet.

"I like the solitude out here," says Cooper, who is lean and fit at 72. "But sometimes there's too much solitude."

He tried the singles group in Livingston, 10 miles to the east and the closest town, and he kept his eyes open at Sunday services at the Methodist church, but none of the unattached women were his type. The piano teacher was adventuresome and cultured. As a former Army paratrooper, Cooper found the combination especially appealing. As with his house plans, he found her on the Internet, in this case on [\[.com\]\(http://www.match.com\), where one-month packages start at \\$34. Founded in 1995, the Dallas-based company employs a staff of 340 and boasts \\$350 million in annual revenue. Match.com says it has 15 million subscribers, and neck-and-neck rival eHarmony \(\[www.eharmony.com\]\(http://www.eharmony.com\)\) claims to have more than 20 million registered users. Most of these folks reside in cities and suburbs, but a growing number live in small towns or on farms and ranches. For country singles, electronic match-making is a logical choice.](http://www.match</p></div><div data-bbox=)

When a man living in the suburbs loses a spouse to divorce or death, or a woman in the city decides she's ready to give up the single life, options for finding potential partners abound: Cultural and sports events, churches and civic clubs, bars and gyms, even supermarkets and shopping malls put them in contact with dozens of potential partners. Although starting a conversation may be a challenge ("Do you come here often?" "How do you cook spaghetti squash?"), at least

the pool of candidates is deep.

But for rural singles, the pool is shallow. Residents of a town of 1,200 already know each other; so if they don't fancy the recently divorced guy behind the counter at the feed store or the widow three pews ahead in church, they're stuck. Or they were—until the advent of Internet dating. Amid photos posted of men standing next to their Porsches and women in Anne Klein cocktail suits are farmers astride state-of-the-art John Deeres and cowgirls combing prize-winning Santa Gertrudis.

The romance with the sky-diving piano teacher fizzled, but Cooper soldiers on. His goal is to meet someone every Saturday. Typically, after exchanging e-mails with a match and visiting by phone, Cooper will make a lunch date. He may drive 100 miles each way to a restaurant; and three times out of four, that first meeting is the last. Still, he finds it worth the effort.

"I've met all kinds of interesting



MARGARET WOLF



ADDIE BALLENTINE

ABOVE, Brian Jones, a Wyoming cattle, sheep and horse rancher, met Lisa McGregor of Shady Shores, Texas, online. **LEFT,** When they married, she wore an 1890s wedding gown and he came in his chaps and cowboy hat. 'I got my real cowboy, thanks to God and FarmersOnly.com!' she says.

people,” he says. “I’ve learned that everyone is entirely different, but I do think that what people put in their profiles is what they really want.”

His longest Internet-sparked relationship lasted several years but ended because the woman wanted to get married and he didn’t—a preference he’d made clear on his posted profile. Another decided she didn’t even want to meet him in person because she was turned off by his love of reading, especially his fondness for historical nonfiction.

More than once, Cooper has had an initially promising romance fold when his potential partner found that she didn’t like country living. He would meet a woman from Houston, Beaumont or those cities’ suburbs. They’d go out a few times, and as the rapport built, he’d invite her to spend the weekend at his place. Many times, the budding romance had wilted by Sunday afternoon. “I’ve had women come out here and not like the solitude,” Cooper explains. “If you’re used to living in the city, it can be unnerving.”

That rural-urban disconnect prompted Ohio entrepreneur Jerry Miller to launch FarmersOnly.com (www.farmersonly.com) and to promote it at agricultural trade shows with a banner declaring: “City Folks Just Don’t Get It!” Although he lives in a Cleveland suburb, Miller grew up in a rural area and owns a separate business firm catering to farmers and ranchers and the businesses seeking to reach them.

“I talked to single farmers and ranchers all over the country and discovered they all had the same problems,” Miller explains. “They already knew everybody in their immediate areas. They didn’t have time to socialize. When they did find time, they didn’t want to hang out at a bar. They wanted to find someone who understood their lifestyle.”

The Internet boasts scores of specialized dating sites. Many focus on religious preference—such as JDate (for Jewish singles, www.jdate.com), LDSRomances (for the Mormon community, www.ldsromances.com) and MuslimFriends.com (www.muslimfriends.com). Others, such as Indian Matrimonial Network (www.indianmatrimonialnetwork.com), cater to national origin. Despite the name,

FarmersOnly.com isn’t just for farmers, Miller notes. The more than 100 marriages from his site that he’s been able to confirm include one between a rancher and a small-town schoolteacher. When a match works out well, members tend to let their \$15-a-month (\$45-a-year) memberships lapse, but occasionally a couple will e-mail Miller gushing about their wedding.

“I MET BRIAN LAST SEPTEMBER 8 ON FarmersOnly,” Lisa McGregor of Shady Shores, southeast of Denton, wrote Miller. “We married January 17, 2009! Brian and I are a perfect match, and we knew it almost from the start.”



‘I talked to single farmers and ranchers all over the country and discovered they all had the same problems. They already knew everybody in their immediate areas. They didn’t have time to socialize. When they did find time, they didn’t want to hang out at a bar. They wanted to find someone who understood their lifestyle.’

JERRY MILLER
Founder of FarmersOnly.com

At 50, McGregor, an administrative assistant at a Denton hospital, had never married. She was waiting for a true soul mate, a man who shared her interests and values. She liked country people, ranchers and farmers, but she had yet to meet the right one. “You’re so limited in who you meet and who’s around you,” she said of small-town dating. Then here, on a rural Internet site, was Brian Jones, a 51-year-old third-generation cattle, sheep and horse rancher from Thermopolis, Wyoming. Faith played an important role in both of their lives. (Jones learned about FarmersOnly.com from his mother, who heard about it in church.) And he shared McGregor’s love of flea markets and Old West reenactments. He came down to Texas to meet her. A month later, they were engaged.

McGregor and Jones married in her mother’s backyard. She wore an authentic 1890s wedding gown; he wore his chaps and hat. Today they live in Shady Shores.

“I got my real cowboy, thanks to God

and FarmersOnly.com!” she said.

Four years after its launch, FarmersOnly.com has more than 100,000 members nationwide, including more than 3,300 women and more than 1,700 men in Texas.

ALTHOUGH DARICE RUSSELL, DIVORCED and 48, has yet to meet her perfect match, she’s been a happy FarmersOnly.com member for 2½ years. Russell works for AT&T in Lubbock doing computer-assisted design. She lives 19 miles away, four miles outside of Slaton, population about 6,100, and gets her power from South Plains Electric Cooperative. She raises dogs, cats, goats and a rabbit, along with six parrots.

Explaining her preference for FarmersOnly.com, Russell says: “The pictures were so much more fun than those on Match.com. You see these guys on their tractors ... and when you get to know them, they’re a lot more down to earth.” She also likes the variety, noting that she once met a man online who made his living breaking mules.

“When the guy down the road put his goats on my property, I mentioned that on my profile,” she recalls. “After that, I got all these hits from men who wanted to talk about goats.”

Russell likes the pace of rural e-dating. She says the men tend to be willing to take the time for a relationship to develop and to be more gentlemanly and romantic than their urban counterparts. Most of all, they share her lifestyle. “Everybody understands that you have chores at home, like animals to take care of,” she says. “Everybody understands what it’s like when it rains and your road washes out.”

That’s important early in a relationship when a romantic weekend away requires finding someone to slop the hogs and milk the cows. It’s even more important if a relationship gets serious and the prospective marriage partners both love their farms and have to decide which place to lease out—his or hers. For rural Texans, potentially sharing a life means embracing the challenges and joys of country living.

Sandy Sheehy is author of Connecting: The Enduring Power of Female Friendship (William Morrow, 2000).

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Need Caulking? Do It Yourself

Caulking is an easy, inexpensive way to seal drafts around your home and make it feel warmer in the winter. Beyond keeping your house more comfortable, caulking can pay for itself through energy savings in only one year. Here's the best part—it's a do-it-yourself job.

Most caulking compounds come in disposable cartridges that fit in half-barrel caulking guns. Look for a caulking gun with an automatic release for the smoothest application. Caulk forms a flexible seal and works best for cracks and gaps less than a quarter-inch wide. To make your first caulking job a breeze, follow these application tips:

- Before application, remove old caulk and paint from the area using a putty knife. Clean and dry the area to avoid sealing in moisture.
- Hold the gun at a consistent 45-degree angle along the crack. This angle will help force the caulk immediately into the crack as it is applied.
- Caulk in one straight, continuous line. Avoid starts and stops.
- Release the trigger before pulling the gun away to avoid excess caulk. An automatic release will help avoid this problem.
- Make sure the caulk sticks to both sides of the crack. If it oozes out, push it back in with a putty knife.
- If the caulk shrinks, reapply it to seal the crack completely.

Fire Extinguishers: A Little Preparation Can Go a Long Way

House fires can happen in seconds: In one instant, you could go from whipping up dinner to watching flames leap from the stovetop.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, about three-quarters of all reported structure fires occur in homes each year. In the right hands, a household fire extinguisher can save lives and protect property should a small fire start.

"Every home should have at least one fire extinguisher, and you need the right type, and you must know how and when to use it," said John Drengenberg, consumer affairs manager at Underwriters Laboratories (UL), the nonprofit agency that tests and sets minimum standards for electricity-consuming items.

Fire extinguishers should be placed in easily accessible areas of the home, close to where they might be needed (such as in a kitchen, garage or bedroom). Some basic rules to keep in mind when using household fire extinguishers:

- If the fire is not spreading and remains confined to a small area, use the appropriate type of extinguisher. Select a multipurpose extinguisher (rated A, B or C) with the UL mark that can be used on all types of fires such as wood, cloth, paper, flammable liquids (gasoline, oil, grease, oil-based paint) and energized electrical equipment including wiring, fuse boxes, circuit breakers and appliances.

- Know both your limits and those of the fire extinguisher.

- Periodically inspect your extinguishers to determine whether they need to be recharged or replaced.

Extinguishers need to be recharged or replaced after each use—even if you haven't used the entire amount of extinguishing agent inside. Check the gauge on the fire extinguisher for this information.

- When operating a fire extinguisher, stand at least 6 feet from the fire and keep your back to a door so you can escape easily, if necessary.

- Remember the acronym PASS:

PULL the pin, hold the extinguisher away from you and release the locking mechanism.

AIM low, pointing the extinguisher at the base of the fire.

SQUEEZE the lever slowly and evenly.

SWEEP the nozzle from side to side.

"Fire extinguishers for home use are not designed to fight large or spreading fires," Drengenberg stressed. If a blaze has become large, he advised, "rather than fighting the fire, your No. 1 priority should be getting out safely."

The best advice in case of a house fire is to get out, but if you choose to try to put it out, be sure to have the right fire extinguisher on hand.



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Keeping an Eye on Your Electrical Use

Learning to track how much electricity your home consumes is a great way to start managing your home's electric use.

You can purchase devices at stores that provide a constant, digital reading of how much electricity your home—or an individual appliance—is using. One type of device, such as the Kill-A-Watt, fits between an electrical outlet and an appliance to give you an instant reading of how much electricity an appliance draws.

Another type connects to your electricity meter and wirelessly relays information on use to a small screen inside. Called an in-home display, the device looks similar to a wireless weather monitor and can help make consumers more aware of energy being used day to day. Research conducted by the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, shows that most consumers who have an in-home display use less energy than those without one. And even after homeowners stop paying attention to the devices, most still use 1 to 3 percent less energy than before.

“The question of whether in-home displays catch on and become permanent fixtures in the American home is still open,” said Brian Sloboda, program manager with CRN. “However, for anyone wanting to take a proactive approach to understanding electric consumption, the in-home display may be worth exploring. You could use the knowledge that an in-house display provides to change the way you use electricity in your home and save some money.”

There's also the old-fashioned way of tracking electricity use: reading your meter. As your home draws current from power lines, your electricity meter keeps a steady record of every watt being used. Many meters today are digital, replacing the older design that uses spinning discs and dials.

Digital versions make tracking



Devices such as the Kill-A-Watt give instant electricity readings.

energy use a breeze: Jot down the number you see and check it again in a month. The difference between the two represents the amount of electricity that has been used for that month or a typical billing period. Check it more frequently to get an idea of how you use electricity in a given week, or even day by day.

To read an older model meter (with spinning dials), write down the numbers as shown on the small dials from left to right. Some of the dials spin clockwise, some counterclockwise,

but record each number closest to the dial hand. Once you have the full reading it can be compared to later readings, as described above.

If you have any questions about reading your meter or learning more about how much electricity your home uses, please contact your electric cooperative.

Your Home's Outlets Aren't All-Powerful

Are your electrical outlets overstuffed with power strips, extension cords and outlet splitters? That's not just an unsightly tripping hazard, it's a fire hazard.

Plugging more appliances, lights and electronics into a single outlet than its circuit is meant to handle causes the receptacle or cords to overheat and can potentially start an electrical fire. The Consumer Product Safety Commission attributes 3,500 fires each year to outlet issues.

How do you know if you're pushing your outlet to the brink? Check for these

common indicators of potential electrical hazards:

HOT OUTLETS: If you can't touch a cord, plug or faceplate for more than five seconds without saying "Ouch!" the outlet is overloaded.

SHOCKS: Small shocks when touching appliances or outlets could point to danger.

BLOWN FUSES: If fuses continue to blow after you replace them, or circuit breakers constantly trip, the wiring cannot handle the outlet's load.

FLICKERING LIGHTS: Flickering or dimming lights could indicate an over-

loaded outlet.

WAVERING SCREENS: Similarly, if your computer or TV screen wavers when a large appliance is plugged in, it could mean the outlet is overstressed.

Also, never plug a high-wattage appliance, such as a refrigerator or dryer, into an extension cord.

Any of these symptoms could mean your home's wiring can't keep up with the increasing energy demands of your large appliances and electronics. Call a licensed electrician to give you an estimate for wiring repairs or upgrades.

Love, Legends and Lore

*From vinegar
and vice and back
to nice, valentines
are perfect for
hopeful hearts*

BY JUDDI MORRIS

W

ho can resist a valentine? You'll find 50-year-old valentines stuck in Bibles, yellowing in keepsake boxes and moldering away in desk and dresser drawers. Throwing away a valentine is hard to do.

Featuring cherubs and nesting birds, red hearts pierced by Cupid's arrows, rhyming words like moon and June and that sweet old question, "Will you be mine?" valentines are the perfect greeting to perk up the last dreary month of winter.

Valentine's Day is different from most other holidays—it's neither governmental nor religious; schools, banks and stores remain open, but still we celebrate it. And we feel forlorn without the attention. Don't ever fool yourself—men love receiving valentines. I've never known a man who wasn't happy—sometimes maybe sheepishly so—when he opened one. And if you want to really intrigue the man in your life, go ahead and send him a beautiful valentine signed with your name, of course, and then send him one mysteriously signed "a secret admirer." Catnip!

Many interesting legends about this lovable day have come down to us from the past. It was thought that the first eligible young man that a young woman saw on Valentine's Day would be her valentine. (My grandmother teased her daughters and granddaughters about this. She told us all to "dress up" and look beautiful when we went out on Valentine's Day.)

To be awakened by a kiss on Valentine's Day was supposed to bring good luck all year long. Other people believed that you would see your lover's face in a dream on Valentine's eve if you slept with bay leaves sprinkled with rose water under your pillow.

The heart, the shape of the valentine, is an ancient symbol of love. We often think of the heart as the center of feelings. Thanks to modern science we know better, but we still speak of being "brokenhearted." Those who are quick to reveal their emotions are said to "wear their hearts on their sleeves." And when we part with the one we love, we sometimes say, "I'll hold you in my heart."

The heart is also associated with Cupid. In Roman mythology, this curly-haired, winged boy flew around zinging arrows into people's hearts. The arrows did not kill, but made the victim fall in love with whomever was nearest. The mischievous Cupid shot his arrows with careless abandon, and the most unlikely folks would fall in love. (Still do, don't they?)

But in a surprising twist, during the late 1800s, according to some sources, valentines turned mean and nasty. They made fun of fat people, thin people, old and wrinkled people, little kids and almost everyone else. These cards made peo-

ple so unhappy that Valentine's Day was not popular for a while. One of these poisonous missives meant for a postman went:

*Haste thee with this valentine, thou silly man of letters,
And try to do the best you can to serve and please your betters,
For I'd sooner live an old maid or else give up the ghost,
Than wed a grinning postman as stupid as a post.*

Another that could ruin your day featured the message: "Do I want you to be my valentine?"

And on the inside: "Nope."

These spiteful cards were called "vinegar valentines." Naturally, they were usually unsigned.

According to some sources, they remained popular through the first quarter of the 20th century, when, fortunately, such ugliness fell out of favor and cards became sweet again:

*Distance between two hearts is not an obstacle ...
Rather a beautiful reminder of just how strong true love can be.*

Today, greeting card manufacturers make valentines to send to nearly everyone—from your aunt's husband's stepson, foster child's birth mother, to your very own sweetheart. In fact, aside from Christmas, more cards are bought for Valentine's Day than any other. But that's a good thing—February 14 is a fine day to tell people how much we care for them and spread some love around.

So make your family happy by sending them valentines. As a project, sit down with your kids or grandkids and send a valentine to at least one person who might not receive a card. Sign the cards "guess who" or "your secret admirer." Go on, do it. A little love is easy to spread around. Talk about your random acts of kindness!

Juddi Morris, a transplanted Texan who's taken root in Paso Robles, California, never throws away a valentine, such as the one representing an eighth-grade crush she uses for a bookmark. Although tattered by time, she calls it "lacy."



Valentine messages go through phases. Fortunately, insulting ones are currently out of style.

JOHNSON CITY

Water from Stone

*'Conservation is
for everybody.'*

J. DAVID BAMBERGER,
SELAH BAMBERGER RANCH
PRESERVE

By Kaye Northcott



J. David Bamberger begins his spiel for visitors at Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve near Johnson City on a sobering note. He stands just outside a low cemetery wall enclosing what's called the "tomb for mankind," a solitary gravestone with an epitaph that warns of the Earth's destruction if man doesn't clean up his wastes and poisons.

You'd think you had fallen into the clutches of a doomsday tree hugger if it weren't for the twinkle in the rancher's eye. But Bamberger quickly points out that he sincerely hopes the world won't end with a whimper in wastes and poisons. He's spent the latter half of his life assuring that his own 5,500 acres of once arid, overgrazed Hill Country does not meet such a fate.

At 81, he is as robust and charged up about his projects as the Energizer bunny. In 1969, Bamberger purchased the ranch because he wanted to see if he could make the creeks flow and the native grasses grow once more. He has spent more energy than most mortals can muster in trying to set an example of how to set mankind on a less wasteful trajectory.

One of Bamberger's key points is that fellow landowners can follow his relatively cheap formula for reclaiming damaged ranch land. It involves eradicating invasive cedar (Ashe juniper) and sowing native grass seed. "Don't tell me conservation is just for the rich," he says. "Conservation is for everybody. Anybody can get grass (to grow) on the ground."

Of course, Bamberger has means. He first made a bundle in real estate and as a distributor for Kirby vacuum cleaners in San Antonio. Then he became even wealthier as one of the original franchisers of Church's Fried Chicken. But his interests shifted toward the natural world when he no longer had to concern himself about money. His compelling story is told in the book *Water From Stone: The Story of Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve* written by Jeffrey Greene (Texas A&M University Press, 2007). Selah is a biblical term inviting pause and reflection.

Bamberger always wanted to make a difference with his life. He expresses the belief that each individual should start something that will continue after his or her death. Even though he had no academic or agricultural credentials, he had ideas about land stewardship and improvements he wanted to explore. It took him decades to move beyond a reputation as an environmental lobbyist, but his achievements today are undisputed, and he's taken seriously in the fields of agriculture, land conservation and even care of endangered species such as the scimitar-horned oryx bred on the ranch.

Bamberger never seems to tire of telling the story of his working ranch, whether it is to schoolchildren who are invited to spend a week there or to visiting agriculture, conservation or zoo officials. If he is accompanying a tour being led by one of his hands, he'll usually take over the presentation. Bamberger's enthusiasm is so catching that it's easy to imagine his effectiveness as a vacuum cleaner salesman.

Today, his lesson for visiting journalists is simply about getting grass on the

ground. He leads us over ranch land that used to regularly lose topsoil to flash floods. The land is now covered with native grasses that hold the soil in place with rainwater left over to percolate down into porous rock aquifers that replenish the creeks. (Hence the book's poetic title *Water From Stone*.)

Bamberger uses a simple prop, what he calls the “rain machine,” to provide an aha moment for guests. The apparatus sits on the shore of Madrone Lake. Attached to a wire frame are a tray of little bluestem grass and a tray of equal size holding bare soil and a cedar sapling. Above them are separate drip containers that evenly distribute small showers to each slightly tilted tray. Under the trays are plastic containers for runoff water. In addition, in the soil of each tray are PVC pipes leading to plastic bottles that simulate groundwater.

When Bamberger starts the shower, water runs so quickly through the thin branches of the cedar sapling and its soil that the tray tips most of the moisture into the runoff container. That's what happens when a steady rain pounds eroded, cedar-covered ranch land, causing dry creek beds to quickly rise and move the water downstream. There's not enough root structure to retain the water on-site.

Below the other tray, however, the water is slowly absorbed by the little bluestem grass and its fibrous root system, leaving little to rush into the runoff jar. Instead, the excess moisture trickles into the groundwater jar, representing a replenishment of the water table. If there were thermometers in the two trays, Bamberger says, the tray of grass would be significantly cooler than the tray of juniper.

But the demonstration is not over. Bamberger next cradles a bundle of twined roots, holding it close to his cheek as if it were a precious infant. With a sly grin, he looks like he's ready for his close-up. The roots are comparable to those bunched up in the little bluestem tray, he says. Spread out, the roots would cover considerable ground. That's why the roots hold the soil so well and transfer excess moisture to the porous underground rock formations that store rainwater.

Bamberger concedes that it sometimes has been difficult to get enough native grass seed to sow on his rehabilitated property. One year he spent \$20,000 purchasing most of the seed available in the state.

So maybe ordinary ranchers can't do everything he has done. But with greater demand will come greater supply, he says. And there are workshops to help people get started reclaiming their land, including some at the Bamberger Ranch Preserve.

There's no time on this tour for journalists to visit the countless springs on Bamberger's reclaimed land or to look for the 178 species of birds that now inhabit the area, depending on season and migration. But both the springs and the birds have a strong chance of enduring for a long time to come.

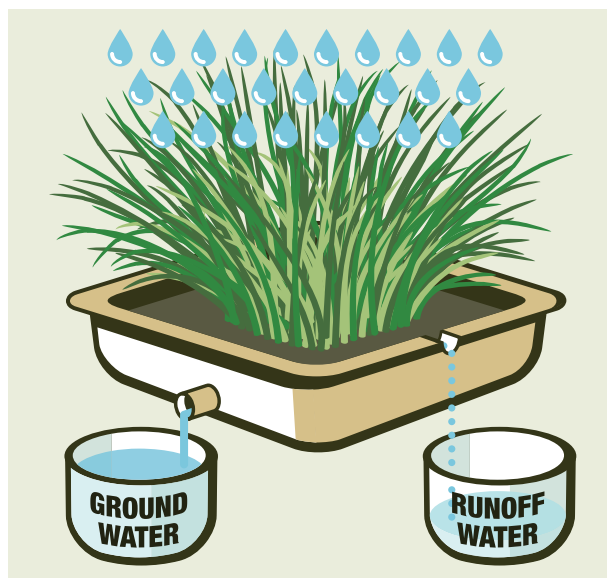
Long may J. David Bamberger keep going and going and going.

For more information about tours and land stewardship workshops, go to www.bambergerranch.org or call (830) 868-2630. Bamberger is a private ranch, and visitation is strictly by reservation. The ranch is held in perpetuity by a nonprofit foundation.

Kaye Northcott is editor of Texas Co-op Power.



On eroded, cedar-covered land that lacks adequate root structure, most rainwater runs off instead of being absorbed into the ground.



On grass-covered land, a fibrous root system absorbs rainwater while allowing surplus to percolate into porous rock aquifers.



J. David Bamberger and a trusted friend enjoy life on the replenished Selah Bamberger Ranch Preserve. 'Conservation is for everybody,' Bamberger says.

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Sally Rand: Barely There

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

News that Sally Rand would come to Texas for the Fort Worth Frontier Centennial Exposition in 1936 was met with outrage by some and curiosity by many. Her reputation, gained at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, preceded her.

Rand was a burlesque dancer who didn't like to be called a stripper. In Chicago, she was arrested four times in a single day because of a Lady Godiva act she performed on horseback on the streets to bring attention to the Sally Rand Nude Ranch at the fair. The charges were dropped because authorities could not actually prove that she was nude, and she insisted she was not. Perhaps coincidentally, and perhaps not, the Chicago World's Fair was one of the few that actually showed a profit during that time.

Though she had no way of knowing it, Rand became part of the not-always-friendly rivalry between Fort Worth and its neighbor, Dallas, which was staging an edifying affair for its own centennial of the birth of the Texas Republic. Amon Carter, the Fort Worth newspaper publisher and city booster, decided to go another route with his city's celebration. "Go Elsewhere For Education, Come to Fort Worth For Entertainment" read the billboards, thousands of them, spread over several states.

Aside from the slogan, the billboards showed scantily clad young women cavorting about in a Western setting. Among the people so intrigued by the billboards to change a road trip itinerary was Ernest Hemingway, who reportedly was driving from Wyoming to Memphis, Tennessee, when he saw them and headed for Fort Worth instead.

The centerpiece of the Fort Worth Exposition was the musical revue *Casa Mañana*, (House of Tomorrow) which was directed by Broadway's Billy Rose at a time when he was most famous for being married to Ziegfeld Follies comedy and music star Fanny Brice.

The idea of bringing Rand to Fort Worth began with Rose denouncing her during an impromptu press conference announcing his involvement in *Casa Mañana*. Rose promised that his show would have "neither nudity or smut" and added, "we don't need any fans or bubble dances at the Texas Frontier Celebration."



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Later, Carter asked Rose what he was talking about and Rose told him about Rand's fan dance and bubble dance, which she had performed at the Chicago World's Fair. Carter asked if the show drew a lot of people, and Rose assured him that it did. That's when Carter decided that Texas needed Rand to help celebrate its heritage.

Born Harriet Helen Gould Beck in Missouri in 1904, the girl who grew up to be Sally Rand was one of those kids who dreams of running away to join the circus and actually did so. For a time she went under the name Billie Beck, but Cecil B. DeMille, reportedly inspired by a Rand McNally atlas, had her change

it to Sally Rand.

In the book *Amon: The Texan Who Played Cowboy For America*, author Jerry Flemmons describes the scene at Sally Rand's Nude Ranch this way: "Each girl wore boots and hat, a green bandana, skirtlet, tights, and the brand 'SR' rubber-stamped on each fleshy thigh. The 'show' consisted of girls lounging on swings and beach chairs. Some played with a beach ball. Others shot bows and arrows. One or two sat on horses."

Sally performed a "Ballet Divertissement" in *Casa Mañana*, alternating between balloons and fans for a certain amount of discretion. She always said, "The Rand is quicker than the eye" in explaining how she managed to keep audiences from seeing anything she didn't want seen.

Reviews of *Casa Mañana* in the national press sometimes bordered on the ecstatic. Flemmons' book includes this syndicated newspaper column excerpt from journalist Damon Runyon: "Broadway and the Wild West are jointly producing what probably is the biggest and most original show ever seen in the United States. If you took the Polo Grounds and converted it into a café and then added the best Ziegfeld scenic effects, you might get something approximating *Casa Mañana*."

Three years later, Runyon still seemed to be pining for the Fort Worth extravaganza. He summed up the 1939 New York World's Fair with, "No runs, no hits, no Carters."

No Sally Rands, either.

Clay Coppedge is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power's Footnotes in Texas History.

There's No Knead To Fear

BY KEVIN HARGIS Some cooks find the idea of creating a loaf of bread, especially a yeast bread, from scratch intimidating. But with a little know-how, any baker can rise to the occasion.

"Yeast baking causes a lot of anxiety," said Robyn Sargent, part of a contingent from the Vermont-based King Arthur Flour company who recently demonstrated baking methods at classes in San Antonio and Austin.

Good bread starts with the correct amount of flour. One mistake many bakers make, she said, is in the way they measure flour.

Don't just scoop it straight from the bag with your measuring cup, Sargent said. Flour settles in storage or transit, so before you measure out a cup, stir it in the container to "fluff" it up. Use a scoop to sprinkle it into the cup and a straight edge, such as the back of a knife or a pastry scraper, to level off the top.

A cup scooped directly from a bag or canister could contain as much as 25 percent too much. In a recipe that calls for four cups of flour, that would mean putting an extra cup in the recipe.

Add flour a cup at a time and check the consistency as you stir. If the dough starts "following" your spoon or mixer dough hook around the bowl, it probably has enough flour. Weather conditions on the day you are baking, especially humidity, will affect the amount of flour dough will absorb.

In addition to flour, salt is an essential ingredient, Sargent said. Besides imparting flavor, salt acts on the gluten in the bread, giving it a tighter structure, which will help it rise. In addition, salt tempers the fermentation of the yeast.

Once your dough is mixed, it's time for kneading. There's no need to pound a dough into submission, and in fact, kneading it too vigorously or aggressively can spoil the loaf. To see whether you've kneaded enough, push into the dough

with your finger. It should resist the pressure, and the indentation you make should spring back quickly.

Next comes the rise. Put kneaded dough in a bowl and cover it. If you use a towel, make sure it has a smooth surface (dough is hard to remove from terry cloth) and a tight weave. Plastic wrap placed directly on the dough's surface is another option, although you should oil the top of the dough to make sure the plastic doesn't stick.

Here's a recipe from King Arthur Flour's well-tested collection that may help skittish bakers overcome their anxiety. The 100 per-

cent employee-owned company, which is the oldest flour mill in the United States, features many more recipes on its website, www.kingarthurfLOUR.com.

HONEY OATMEAL BREAD

- 1½ cups quick rolled oats
- 2 packets (4½ teaspoons) "highly active," or 1 tablespoon active dry, or 2¾ teaspoons instant yeast
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 6 tablespoons butter, softened
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ½ cup instant mashed potato flakes
- 2¼ cups flour

Combine oats with ¾ cup lukewarm water and let rest for 20 minutes. If you're using active or "highly active" dry yeast, dissolve it in 2 tablespoons of warm water with a pinch of sugar in a separate container. It should start to bubble as the oats mixture rests.

Add remaining ingredients (including the yeast/water/sugar mixture, if you're using active dry yeast) and mix and knead until the dough feels springy. Dough will be stiff. Place dough in a lightly greased bowl and allow to rise, covered, until doubled, about 2 hours. Gently deflate dough and shape it into an 8-inch log. Place it in a lightly greased 8½x4½-inch loaf pan. Cover pan loosely with lightly greased plastic wrap. Allow the dough to rise at room temperature until it crowns about 1½ inches over pan's rim, about 1 hour, 45 minutes. Toward end of rising time, pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.

If desired, brush top of loaf with milk and sprinkle with 2 additional tablespoons oats. Bake for 20 minutes, then tent aluminum foil loosely over top and bake for another 25 to 30 minutes. When the bread is done, it'll be golden brown, and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center will register 190 degrees. Remove bread from the oven, wait 5 minutes, then turn out of pan onto cooling rack. Cool completely before slicing. Wrap well and store at room temperature.

Servings: 16. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 155 calories, 3.4 g protein, 4.6 g fat, 24.7 g carbohydrates, 1.6 g fiber, 221 mg sodium, 11 mg cholesterol





BELINDA ANDERSON, *Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Belinda's One and Only Beer Bread**

Bread comes in many forms and flavors. At its most basic, it is a mixture of flour, liquid and a leavening agent that is transformed into crusty, fluffy goodness in the oven. But these aren't your basic bread recipes—especially this beer bread, which yields a golden loaf of bread or batch of mini muffins suitable for breakfast or dessert.

BELINDA'S ONE AND ONLY BEER BREAD

- 3 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup white chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup chopped cranberries
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 12 ounces beer (a wheat beer like hefeweizen works best)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Stir together flour, baking powder, salt and sugar. Stir in chocolate chips, cranberries and pecans. Pour beer slowly over mixture. Mix thoroughly. Spoon into lightly greased 8 1/2 x 4 1/2-inch loaf pan or 48 mini-muffin cups. Bake loaf for 50 to 55 minutes or until golden brown. Bake mini muffins for 18 minutes. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 slice or 4 mini muffins. Per serving: 357 calories, 5.4 g protein, 13.6 g fat, 52.2 g carbohydrates, 2.7 g fiber, 181 mg sodium, 2 mg cholesterol

COOK'S TIP: You might want to limit any bowl licking to adults because of the alcohol content in the batter. But when the bread is baked, the alcohol is almost entirely cooked off.

FLAXSEED WHEAT BREAD

- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 2 packets (4 1/2 teaspoons) active dry yeast
- 4 tablespoons white sugar
- 2 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 4 tablespoons ground flaxseed meal
- 4 tablespoons unprocessed wheat bran
- 1 stick butter, melted
- 1 cup plus 3 tablespoons warm milk
- 2 tablespoons canola oil

Combine flours, yeast, sugar, salt, flaxseed meal and wheat bran in a large bowl and make a well in the center. Combine butter, milk and 1 cup warm water and pour into well. Mix with spat-

ula until dough comes together. Oil work surface with 2 tablespoons of canola oil, turn dough out and knead for 10 minutes. Use pastry scraper at first until dough holds together. Add more oil as needed to keep dough from sticking. Place kneaded dough in oiled bowl, cover with oiled plastic wrap and let rise for 1 hour. After dough has risen, turn out onto work surface and cut in half. To form loaves, roll dough with rolling pin to form long strips. Roll the "strip" up from the end and pinch the seam closed with your fingers. Place loaves seam-side down in oiled loaf pans, cover with oiled plastic wrap and let rise for 1 hour.

Carefully remove plastic wrap and bake in preheated oven at 350 degrees for 35 minutes. Bread is done when browned and sounds hollow when thumped. After cooling for 5 minutes, rub loaves with 2 tablespoons of room-temperature butter and salt the tops, if desired. Let cool completely before storing.

Servings: 20. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 216 calories, 5.2 g protein, 7.0 g fat, 32.5 g carbohydrates, 2.4 g fiber, 298 mg sodium, 13 mg cholesterol

TRACY BAKER

San Bernard Electric Cooperative

BLACK PEPPER BREAD

- 1 packet (2 1/4 teaspoons) active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup milk
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 egg
- 4 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon softened butter

In large bowl, stir yeast with 1/2 cup warm water and let stand 5 minutes. In saucepan, combine butter, milk, sugar and salt. Heat to 100 degrees and add to bowl with yeast mixture. Add pepper,

nutmeg, egg and 2 cups of flour. Mix until all flour is absorbed. Add remainder of flour and turn onto flour-dusted work surface. Knead until smooth and elastic. Place dough in greased bowl, turning to grease top, and cover with plastic wrap. Let rise in warm place until double, about 1 1/2 hours.

Use softened butter to coat bottom and sides of small (3-quart) straight-sided Dutch oven. Punch dough down and knead on floured board to remove air. Shape into smooth ball and place in prepared pan and cover with plastic wrap. Allow to rise in warm place until doubled, about 1 hour. With a few minutes left in rise time, preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake bread 30 to 35 minutes or until it sounds hollow when tapped. Cool in pan for about 10 minutes, then remove to cooling rack. To serve, cut bread in quarters and cut each quarter into thin slices. Serve with Orange Butter.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 2 slices. Per serving: 272 calories, 6.6 g protein, 9.6 g fat, 37.7 g carbohydrates, 1.6 g fiber, 212 mg sodium, 43 mg cholesterol

ORANGE BUTTER

- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
 - 1/2 cup orange marmalade
- Cream butter and add marmalade. Blend well.

BARBARA MCMULLIN

Wise Electric Cooperative

DILLY CASSEROLE BREAD

- 1 packet (2 1/4 teaspoons) active dry yeast or 1 cake yeast
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 1 cup creamed cottage cheese, heated to lukewarm
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon instant minced onion
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2 teaspoons dill seed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 unbeaten egg

2 1/4 to 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
Soften yeast in water. Combine in mixing bowl: cottage cheese, sugar, onion, butter, dill seed, salt, soda, egg and softened yeast. Add flour gradually to form stiff dough, beating well after each addition. Cover and let rise in warm place until

light and doubled in size, about 1 hour. Stir down dough. Turn into a well-greased, 8-inch round 1½- or 2-quart casserole dish.

Let rise in warm place until light, about 30 to 40 minutes. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 to 50 minutes or until golden brown. Brush top with soft butter.

Remove from casserole dish (when slightly cooled) and place topside up on a plate.

Makes 1 round loaf.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 131 calories, 5.6 g protein, 2.3 g fat, 21.4 g carbohydrates, 0.9 g fiber, 302 mg sodium, 22 mg cholesterol

VICTORIA SOK

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

APPLE-CHEDDAR BREAD

- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¾ cup milk
- ⅓ cup butter or margarine, melted
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1½ cups peeled, chopped cooking apples
- ¾ cup chopped pecans or walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine flour, baking powder, salt, sugar and cinnamon in a medium bowl and stir well. In separate bowl, combine milk, butter and eggs; stir well. Add to dry ingredients, stirring until blended. Stir in cheese, apples and nuts. Pour batter into a greased and floured 9x5x3-inch loaf pan and bake for 1 hour or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Let cool in pan 5 minutes, then remove from pan and let cool completely on a wire rack.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 339 calories, 9.6 g protein, 16.7 g fat, 36.4 g carbohydrates, 1.6 g fiber, 313 mg sodium, 70 mg cholesterol

PATSY COPELAND HENDERSON

Central Texas Electric Cooperative

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

RECIPE CONTEST

June's recipe contest topic is **Keeping Your Cool**. One of the best ways to use less energy in the kitchen in summer is to avoid the stove, thus reducing stress on the air conditioner. Do you have a recipe for a no-cook main dish that will fill your belly while keeping the kitchen cool? The deadline is February 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.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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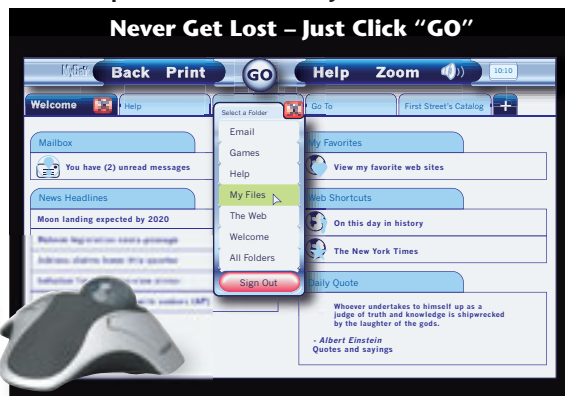
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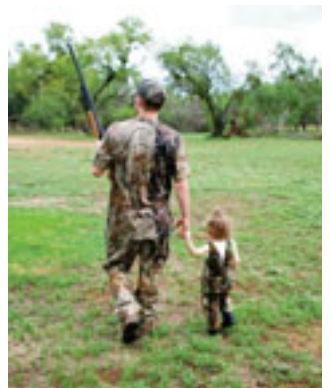


FIRSTS

There's a first time for everything, or so the saying goes. It's a great big world when you're young—full of opportunities and plenty to experience. We enjoyed paying witness to these little ones from co-op country making their first big memories. —ASHLEY CLARY

◀ Bryan Texas Utilities member **Clarissa Mobley** shared a very special moment with us: This photo shows her 2-week-old grandson **Zaidan Meyers** meeting his dad, Staff Sgt. **Scott Meyers**, for the first time when Scott came home for his R&R during a 15-month deployment to Iraq.

▶ Two-year-old **Klayre Cook** holds her daddy's hand as he takes her on her first dove hunt. Klayre is the daughter of **Alicia** and **Scott Cook** and the granddaughter of Pedernales Electric Cooperative members **Phillip** and **Cheryle New**.



Jake Sanders really enjoyed his first birthday on December 6, 2008. (Or maybe it was the cake that sealed the deal.) Parents and Pedernales Electric Cooperative members **Kelly** and **Gretchen Sanders** sent us this shot of little Jake's milestone. ▶



▼ The severe drought in South Texas kept 21-month-old **Aeron Moses** from ever experiencing rain—until September 9, 2009. “We had purchased the size-7 irrigation boots in hopes he would get to use them before he grew out of them. He did and we, along with the rest of the area, celebrated!” said his mom and Bandera Electric Cooperative member **Annie Moses**.

▼ Fourteen-month-old **Korbin** seemed a little indifferent at his first Texas Rangers baseball game on May 16, 2009. His parents, **Kristy** and **Donnie Gregory**, are CoServ Electric members.



Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Apr	Barnyard Babies	Feb 10
May	Farmer's Bounty	Mar 10
June	Only in Texas	Apr 10
Jul	Beat the Heat	May 10
Aug	Birds	June 10
Sept	At the Fair	July 10

BARNYARD BABIES is the topic for our APRIL 2010 issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Barnyard Babies, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before FEBRUARY 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.

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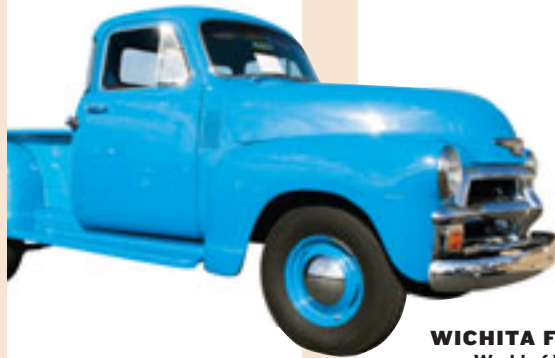
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When looking for a place to hole up in the fast-growing West Texas city of San Angelo, headquarters of Concho Valley Electric Cooperative, I skipped the chain hotels and journeyed to the west side of town to the **CHICKEN FARM ART CENTER**. A charming blend of bed-and-breakfast accommodations, artist studios and galleries and a restaurant has evolved here. I wisely chose the Artist's Loft as my quarters—a grain-silo-turned-apartment—and was immediately enthralled with the oddly shaped interior and architecture and the elaborate mural painted over my bed.

It's easy to spend a whole day at the art center, essentially a little community: The two galleries and 15 artist studios leave plenty of pleasing art—every medium you can think of—to purchase or simply peruse. Since it was an unusually cool morning for mid-July, I ate my breakfast accompanied by curious resident kitties in the courtyard surrounded by metal and stone statues. Afterward, I checked out pottery, jewelry, paintings and blown-glass beads.

The center was founded in 1971 by Roger Allen, Richard Ramirez and Bill Rich and was originally just a place for artists to live and work. Over the years, the center's reputation has spread by word of mouth, and it now is a premier West Texas attraction in this city southwest of Abilene. On the first Saturday of each month, all of the studios are open to the public and an additional 20 to 25 artists, including painters, potters and stone and wood carvers, set up booths to display their work. Space is also provided for kids to create their own works of art out of paint and clay.

THE CHICKEN PICKERS, a group of acoustic musicians, are usually on hand providing additional entertainment, and they're rarely alone. Other local musicians frequently show up to play their favorite songs, and visitors are encouraged to bring their own instruments and join in the music circle. After listening to the music, I ate a lovely dinner at the Silo House

ARTSY SAN ANGELO

*Pack your wagons and head out west.
Business is booming, especially where
the arts are concerned.*

BY ASHLEY CLARY



Restaurant, which sits directly beneath my circular abode.

I had heard of the new and impressive **SAN ANGELO CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU** and eagerly made the short drive over in the morning. Nestled on the banks of the Concho River, the building complex, which is also home to the city's chamber of commerce and the San Angelo Health Foundation, was featured in the November/December 2006 issue of *Texas Architect* magazine. The curving roof was designed to emulate the flow of the river, and the outside paths curve around small, cascading waterfalls, mesquite benches and the Angela Sculpture, created by John Noelke.

The nearby **SAN ANGELO MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS**, which also overlooks the river, is famous for its ceramic exhibits

and National Ceramic Competition, but even the building is something in and of itself for visitors. Dedicated to Texas heritage, the architecture features local limestone and mesquite, as well as the Big Country's rich, red clay.

The museum includes three galleries, a research library and a rooftop terrace. The museum also has purchased an entire block of old buildings and is in the process of restoring them, with a community gallery already in place. The end vision for the project includes a studio and apartment for visiting artists.

Not yet ready to call it quits, I drove around town to look at the historic murals that help tell the tale of San Angelo's rich history—from the Santa Fe Depot to the Iron Horse, one of the first trains to stop at the depot. My companion and I also made it a game to see who could spot the most colorfully decorated fiberglass sheep that dot the local landscape. The charming ovines are courtesy of the annual **SHEEP SPECTACULAR** that features a parade and sheep games as part of Art-Ober-Fest in October. Instead of two-legged contestants, the sheep themselves competed for the crown. Interesting, don't ewe think?

I just may journey back to San Angelo in late August or early September to again visit the **INTERNATIONAL WATERLILY COLLECTION** in Civic League Park. The plants are at their prime during that time of year, and they were just beginning to show their fragrant faces when I was there in mid-July. Free to the public, the garden features eight large pools of the floating flowers and pads. The town also hosts the annual Lily Fest, which is next scheduled for September 18.

Chicken Farm Art Center, (325) 659-3836, www.chickenfarmartcenter.com

San Angelo Convention and Visitors Bureau, (325) 653-1206, www.visitsanangelo.org

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



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