

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

DECEMBER 2010

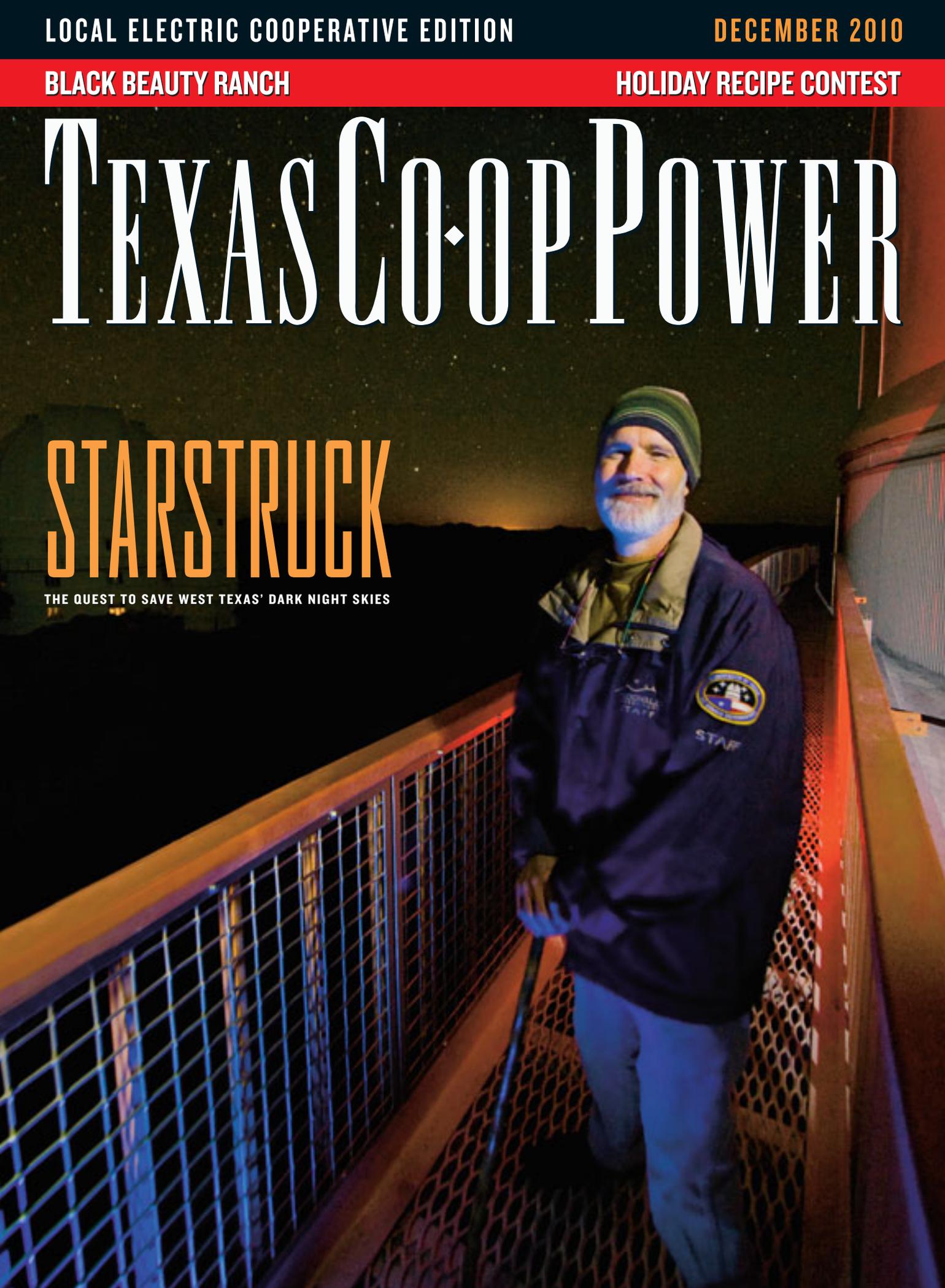
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By Camille Wheeler

Photos by Woody Welch

We Texans can thank our lucky stars: We're blessed with the pristine night skies of far West Texas. Yet even here, light pollution is creeping in. In the quest to save the night from artificial light, West Texas has assembled one of the world's brightest constellations of dark-sky advocates.

16 Black Beauty Ranch

By Staci Semrad

Photos by Joe Grisham

Abused, abandoned and neglected no more, animals of all kinds come home to rest, rejoice and dream at the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch in East Texas.

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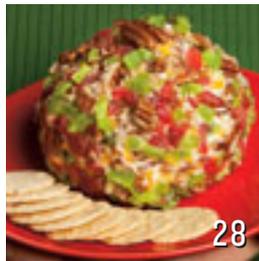
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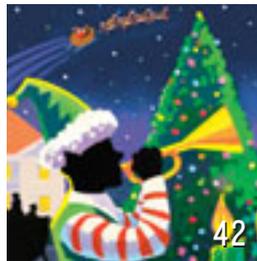
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TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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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letters

A BANDWAGON FOR BANDS

Thank you for writing such a wonderful article about marching bands ("Marching to Different Drummers," October 2010). I am a middle-school band director in Illinois who was forwarded your article from the Texas band director message board. Reading your article brought back memories of trips, contests and the family bond that marching band creates. The article was so well balanced between the big school and the small school. Thanks for putting such a positive outlook on what so many kids do.

STEVE NENDZA

Band director

*Hille, Foster and Kerkstra schools,
Oak Forest, Illinois*

My husband and I were members of the Mexia High School Black Cat Band in 1956-57. We count our band days among our fondest memories—a marching contest in Killeen in a freezing rain, playing in the stands at football games, marching in parades, riding the bus to different towns, learning new routines, getting new uniforms our senior year, band (letter) jackets (Could anything be finer?),

POWER TALK

stopping at a restaurant on special trips (and most of us weren't accustomed to eating in restaurants regularly in the '50s), trying out for regional band, practicing our cornet and French horn, and for my husband and me, the special honor of being chosen king and queen of the band. Thanks for a great article.

JANICE FISHER

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

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Band is an exceptional program that prepares high school students for the future unlike any other. My first step from a standing position is still with the left foot, counting as I walk, listening to a tune in my head. My children do not fully realize it, but they will achieve more for having

been in band. They, too, will find themselves someday starting their walk with the left foot, counting as they walk, and will likely crack a smile and say to themselves: "I am such a band nerd."

RON THROWER

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

I had a 33-year career as a public school band director and was privileged to be the junior high and assistant band director in two of the programs mentioned (Rockdale and Stephenville) and in the exact time frames mentioned, so I got to go on the Mexico City tour. One of my former students, an ex-Marine, once told me that Marine boot camp wasn't as tough as some of our summer marching rehearsals! Thank you for recognizing the fabulous kids we got to work with, their hard work, and the value of what they do.

JIM PERRY

United Cooperative Services

CAREER TRAIN-ING

I found the article about the Sunset Limited by Eileen Mattei ("Still Riding the Rails," October 2010) interesting because my dad and I worked at Southern Pacific in Houston in the 1950s. He was a hammer smith (like a blacksmith) forging locomotive driving rods, and I worked repairing locomotives. This was just after I finished high school. Once, I worked refurbishing the Sunset Limited's locomotive and helped with the transition from steam to diesel locomotives. After a few years, I went into the Army and learned a different trade—testing missiles—and then I worked in the aerospace industry, which means I've seen firsthand the transition from steam to diesel and electric locomotives to missiles, the Apollo spacecraft and the space station. What a ride.

KENNETH DAVIS

Bartlett Electric Cooperative

EXCELLENT ISSUE

I always read the magazine, but I especially enjoyed this month's edition (October, 2010). I loved the story about bands in Texas. I was in the Troup High School band from seventh grade to 12th grade (1961). Our band was all military marching style, even to the point of having inspections. It was a great experience for a young woman and has stood me well throughout my life in many circumstances.

The article about Amtrak's Sunset Limited just makes me want to take a trip, but it hasn't happened yet. Thanks for your excellent magazine. After I read it, I pass it on to my sister, who uses another power company.

FLORENCE COLLINS

Cherokee County Electric Cooperative

We want to hear from our readers. Submit letters online at www.TexasCoopPower.com, e-mail us at letters@TexasCoopPower.com, or mail to Editor, Texas Co-op Power, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. 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.

CRAZY FOR KITTY COOKIES



After seeing the chocolate cat cookie recipe (October 2010), I shared it with a friend in Thornton, Iowa, who does a lot of baking. (I don't!) She made the cookies right away for her 5-year-old son, and they were a big hit with him and all the neighborhood kids! She has already promised to make another batch for his kindergarten class for the Halloween party, along with the graveyard bone cookies. Thanks for the great recipes!

Molly Boettger

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

Find this recipe and others at www.TexasCoopPower.com

H A P P E N I N G S

All aboard for what's arguably the coolest train trip in Texas. And you don't even need a ticket: Just pack your imagination for a journey to East Texas where the **LIVINGSTON CHRISTMAS TRAIN VILLAGE**, on display on selected days through December 30, enralls visitors for free.



But the word "display" hardly does justice to this model-train extravaganza engineered by Dick Grant, a Sam Houston Electric Cooperative member.

This year's Christmas village, at 313 N. Jackson St. in Livingston, is bigger than ever, with five Lionel trains and a trolley zipping around 300 feet of track. You'll forget that the tiny components, including waiting passengers who magically disappear from a platform as a train pulls away, are plastic and electronically animated.

To keep visitors focused, Grant distributes checklists: Can they find, for example,

an abominable snowman and "Dessy" the Loch Ness duck?

For the display schedule, call the Livingston-Polk County Chamber of Commerce at (936) 327-4929.

WHO KNEW?

On March 2, 1906, former Texas Gov. James Stephen Hogg told his daughter, Ima, and his law partner that when he died he wanted a pecan tree planted at the head of his grave and a walnut tree at the foot. The next day, Hogg died peacefully in his sleep. Hogg's wish was soon carried out: Two pecan trees were planted at his head and a native black walnut at his feet when he was buried in Austin's Oakwood Cemetery. In 1919, the Texas Legislature voted the pecan as the state's official state tree.



CO-OP PEOPLE

Reece Pens Children's Book During Students' Nap Time

BY DONNIE HOGAN

One November afternoon in 2008, Debbie Reece, a teacher's aide at a preschool in Van Alstyne, finally got all of her 4- and 5-year-olds to lie down for their afternoon naps. But instead of relaxing or catching up on some work, Reece did something she had never done before: She wrote a book.

In about an hour, Reece penned *The Christmas Pumpkin*, a story about a boy's crazy idea of using an overlooked green pumpkin as a Christmas decoration.

Reece, a 43-year-old Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative (GCEC) member, said the inspiration came from her students and from Matthew, her 8-year-old son.



Debbie Reece with son, Matthew

Turns out many of her students had been pestering her to use pumpkins for their classroom's Christmas decorations, an idea Reece naturally thought was silly. Pumpkins for Christmas? But Reece also remembered how Matthew always chose a green pumpkin when they went to a pumpkin patch in nearby Celina before Halloween (a Reece family tradition), and soon enough his green pumpkin would ripen and turn orange before Halloween.

So during her students' afternoon quiet time,

Reece simply put on paper the story rattling around in her head.

But writing a story is one thing. Getting it published can present more obstacles than the plot of a Harry Potter book. Reece's husband, Eddy, put her in touch with another GCEC member, Van Alstyne artist Ron Head. He agreed to

illustrate the book and suggested that Reece bypass the difficult chore of landing a book publishing company and instead publish it and sell it on her own. Reece agreed, contracted with Ussery Printing of Irving and created her own company, BeeBop Books. She has gone on to sell more than 2,400 copies of her 26-page book online and through local bookstores.

These days, Reece keeps busy giving public readings at schools, libraries and other educational institutions. "You're never too old to learn something new," Reece says. "Just like those students who inspired me, you never know what you might say or do that could have an impact on those around you and change their lives forever."

You can learn more about Reece and purchase her book at www.BeeBopBooks.com.

—Donnie Hogan recently served as an intern for Texas Co-op Power.

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 **Texas Electric Cooperatives**
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Big Cover-up

Using an electric blanket may uncover savings

By Charles Boisseau

As the temperatures get colder, you can count on customers coming by the Alco Discount Store in Dalhart looking for ways to keep warm.

In the often-blustery Texas Panhandle, this means stocking up on electric blankets, a top seller this time of year.

Consumers plug in electric blankets so they don't have to heat up their entire home, says Robin Ulibarri, manager of the store. "People turn down their heat at night to save money," she says.

These customers may be on to something. Electric blankets—as well as increasingly popular electric mattress pads—can help reduce energy use and save money during cold-weather months, according to several industry sources.

U.S. manufacturer Sunbeam even puts a number on the potential savings, claiming consumers can save \$131 on their winter heating bills by using an electric heating pad or blanket and

lowering their thermostat 8 degrees for 25 weeks a year.

"We ran the numbers and found that the savings might be even greater," Senior Editor Daniel DiClerico wrote in a blog for Consumer Reports. The net savings, he wrote, might be \$150 to \$175 the first year, even counting \$50 or so for the blanket. While most people likely won't keep the lower thermostat setting all day, limiting savings, using an electric blanket "makes some financial sense," he concluded.

It's unlikely the potential savings would be as much in Texas, where people wouldn't use electric blankets as much as Sunbeam estimates. But the savings could still add up.

Depending on the climate, industry experts say you can reduce your heating bills by 1 percent or more for each degree you lower the thermostat at night. So an electric blanket can pay for itself quickly, especially when you con-

sider how little electricity it uses. According to the Department of Energy (DOE), a typical full-sized electric blanket consumes 100 watts. Based on a DOE formula for calculating energy use, a Texan who uses an electric blanket for eight hours a night for four months a year would consume about \$7.28 worth of electricity, at 10 cents a kilowatt-hour.

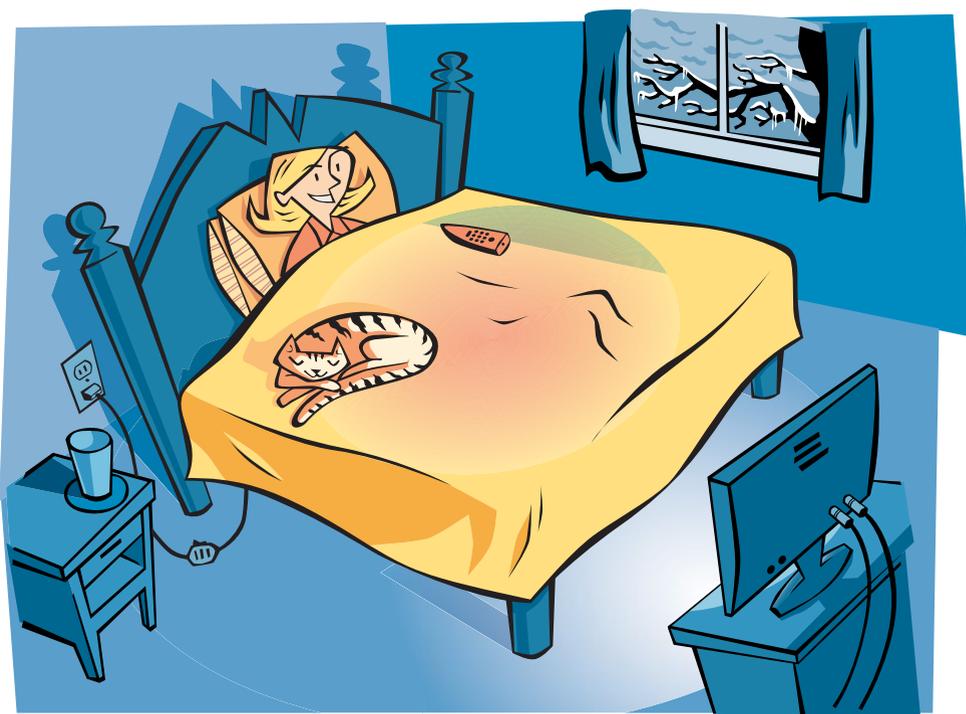
Moreover, electric blankets cycle on and off to ensure they don't overheat. "Most users are likely to have them on a low to medium setting when in use, so we would expect the average power draw to be much lower than this," said Essie Snell, a research analyst with E Source, a consulting firm for the Cooperative Research Network, the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Counterintuitively, it's not northern states like Illinois and New York but sunny Texas, California and Florida that rank among the top in sales of electric blankets and pads, according to Richard Zimmerer, an industry expert. That's because folks in these warmer states can rely more heavily on electric blankets during cold seasons and may not even bother turning on their furnace.

Nationally, sales of electric blankets often rise when the economy falters, he added, which made 2009 a banner year for manufacturers. They benefited from frigid temperatures and the economic doldrums to sell 4.5 million electric blankets and warming pads, the most in recent memory, he said.

Known to some of his friends as "The Warm Bed Guy," Zimmerer is nothing if not a die-hard advocate. In 2009, he retired from his job as electric blanket and mattress pad product manager for Perfect Fit Industries and founded the Electric Blanket Institute, an online information source he runs with a few volunteers to promote the benefits of blankets and warming pads.

At his home in Asheville, North Carolina, Zimmerer says he sleeps on a warming pad about half the year, which he says provides not only potential energy savings but some therapeutic benefits as well. The warmth helps soothe the arthritis he suffers in his hips, he says.



Charles Boisseau is associate editor of Texas Co-op Power.

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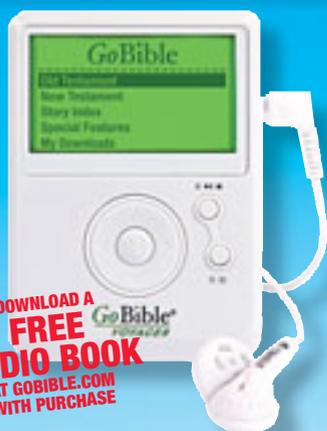
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Sad but true: Generations of children are growing up having never seen the Milky Way.

THE QUEST TO SAVE WEST TEXAS' DARK NIGHT SKIES

STARSTRUCK

BY CAMILLE WHEELER • PHOTOS BY WOODY WELCH

THE HEADLIGHTS SLICED THROUGH the cool September night. Developer Gil Bartee and two clients, an orthopedic surgeon and his wife from Mexico City, excitedly watched for wildlife as they drove toward Sierra la Rana, a dark-sky-friendly community being built just outside Alpine.

Bartee pulled the couple up to their newly purchased tract. He shut off the headlights, and the trio stepped out of Bartee's vehicle and into desert darkness. The jet-black sky burst open like a sparkler, filling their eyes with countless stars, the Big Dipper, Mars, satellites, the sliver of a moon.

The woman said she'd never witnessed such a majestic night sky in Mexico City, a metropolis ablaze with star-suffocating outdoor lights. But here in far West Texas, where advocates are fighting to preserve some of the darkest skies in the world, she was astounded at the number of celestial objects visible to her naked eye.

Yet, she was puzzled. What, the woman asked, is that cloud in the sky? That, Bartee replied, is the Milky Way.

The woman stared in disbelief before exclaiming: "*Magnifico!*"

LIGHT ONLY WHAT YOU NEED

We Texans can thank our lucky stars: We're blessed with far West Texas, where infrequent cloud cover, low humidity, limited air pollution and scant urban sprawl create an astral feast for the eyes.

Yet even in this idyllic setting, where the night skies are so pristine it's like being inside a planetarium, light pollution is creeping in. At the McDonald Observatory near Fort Davis, which boasts the darkest night skies of any astronomical research observatory in the continental U.S., visitors can see the glow of El Paso some 160 miles to the west.

In the quest to save the night from artificial light, West Texas' dark-sky movement is picking up speed like a meteor shower. But the battle against light pollution is not unique to this remote region. The world's first comprehensive outdoor lighting control ordinance was enacted in 1970 in Tucson, Arizona, home of the International

Dark-Sky Association (IDA).

The IDA's philosophy—in keeping with research indicating that light pollution is disrupting all forms of life—is simple: Light what you need, when you need it.

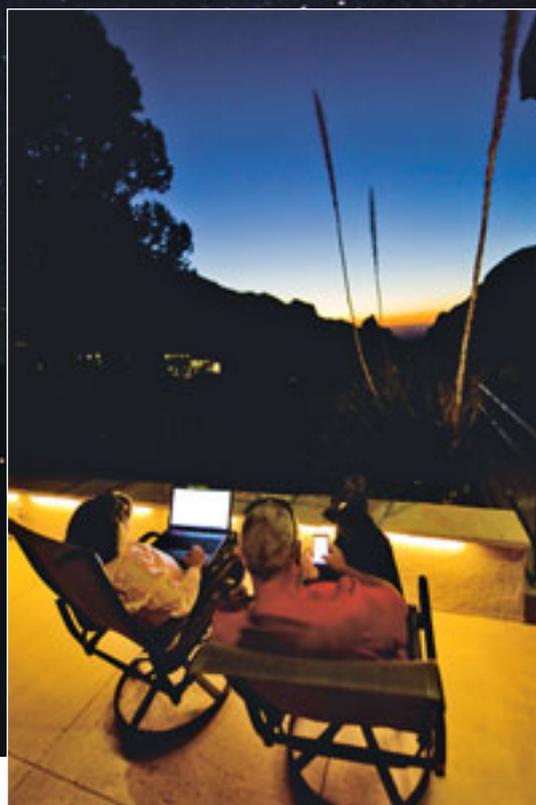
It's an idea espoused by Bill Wren, the McDonald Observatory's special assistant to the superintendent, who for 20 years now has led the dark-sky charge across Texas. The 55-year-old Wren, a man of slight build and soft voice, says he was evangelized by David Crawford, who co-founded the IDA in 1988.

Now, Wren, in turn—affectionately nicknamed the Godfather of Dark Skies—spreads the gospel of light: Less is more.

Shielded, or full cut-off, fixtures direct light downward, preventing it from spraying into the sky. Combining full cut-off fixtures with lower-wattage lighting can yield the same amount of illumination for about half the electricity cost, Wren says.

Wren, who never uses the emotionally charged term "light pollution," says the biggest fear he has to overcome is

At Big Bend National Park, visitors can fill up with gas under motion-sensor lights. But even under that temporary canopy of brighter light, folks can still fill their eyes with the glory of the pitch-black night. **INSET:** Plenty of light by which to read and soak up the gathering darkness: LED strip lights softly illuminate the viewing deck at Big Bend's Chisos Mountains Lodge restaurant.



that people think he wants “to chain myself to the nearest lamp post and never let them turn it on.”

Instead, after reassuring people that he really does want them to have lights, Wren cuts straight to cost and energy savings—music to the ears of any governmental body trying to balance a budget.

And he hits the public safety angle: Glare from overly bright lights can impair vision and make shadows appear darker. “You can show people something and watch the lightbulb go on over their head,” Wren says.

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

For most urban dwellers, stars are exotic creatures on the brink of extinction. People know they’re up there. They just can’t see them.

With electricity, we have the ability to turn night into day. But in doing so, dark-sky advocates warn, we’re losing our way. Explorers and sailors found their way by navigating the night sky. Prehistoric Native Americans plotted their daily lives by the movements of the stars, sun and moon. As Scripture

describes, the star of Bethlehem led the three wise men to the baby Jesus.

The National Park Service, which harbors some of the last remaining dark night skies in the U.S., estimates that two-thirds of Americans can’t see the Milky Way from their backyards. Not only are people baffled by the name—our white-banded spiral galaxy, not the candy bar, came first—they can’t see beyond their urban lights.

A November 2008 National Geographic article estimated that one-fifth of the world’s population can no longer see the Milky Way. And the National Park Service makes a dire prediction: Unless the current rate of light pollution is slowed, no dark skies will remain in the continental U.S. by 2025.

“The sky has fascinated humans for the entire history of life, and now most can’t see the dark night sky, nor are they interested in it,” says Crawford, who retired as the IDA’s executive director in 2008. “The real stars have been replaced by the dancing stars in contests on TV.”

SWALLOWED BY THE NIGHT

But that’s not true in the beautiful blackness of West Texas, where it’s easy to feel swallowed by the night. In little places like Marathon, where it’s velvety dark in the middle of town, the sky is so heavily laden with stars that it seems possible to reach up and pluck a couple down.

Still, Wren says, the atmosphere is scattering light from across the region. The resulting sky glow hinders scientists’ ability to observe distant galaxies through even the most powerful telescopes.

In 1990, when Wren attended a meeting of the fledgling IDA, only a few outdoor lighting control ordinances existed worldwide. Now, there are thousands, including more than 20 in Texas. Wren has directly shaped about half of those, including in Alpine, El Paso, Marfa, Midland and Van Horn and in Brewster, Culberson, Hudspeth, Jeff Davis and Presidio counties.

If any Texas town gets a gold star, it’s Alpine, whose lighting ordinance—considered the model for West Texas—could put the city in rare air: If the

State Street in Fort Davis: Look up, and all you see is black night. Look down, and you see well-illuminated pavement, courtesy of fixtures that direct light straight to the ground. Darker night skies benefit the nearby McDonald Observatory.



TOP: Low-wattage LEDs cast a moonlike glow outside the Chisos Mountains Lodge. **LEFT:** Full-cutoff fixtures at Big Bend force light downward. **RIGHT:** Lodge guests can easily see well enough to unlock their doors.

International Dark-Sky Association approves a beefed-up Alpine ordinance, the city would join Flagstaff, Arizona, and Borrego Springs, California, as the world's only International Dark Sky Communities. It's all part of a starry-eyed master plan from Bartee, an economic development coordinator and environmental adviser for Alpine, who wrote the ordinance revisions and envisions the Big Bend area as the epicenter of the nation's largest dark-sky region.

Bartee, dubbed the Energizer Bunny, walks fast, talks fast and sells fast as he pitches West Texas' pitch-black night skies to tourists. In his new job as vice president of sales and development for the Lajitas Golf Resort & Spa west of Big Bend National Park, Bartee has one main objective: Keep folks looking up.

That's certainly the motto at Sierra la Rana, an 11,600-acre residential development southeast of Alpine that Bartee helped shape. Featuring an Astronomy Village that hosts stargazing parties, Sierra la Rana earned the

IDA's Dark Sky Friendly Development of Distinction award in 2009.

BIG BEND: EVEN DARKER

The night skies at Big Bend National Park are rich with stars. But a couple of years ago, residents in nearby Terlingua and Study Butte started complaining about seeing glare from floodlights in the Chisos Basin.

So Big Bend took action under the leadership of Lisa Turecek, the park's chief of facility management, who secured a Best Lighting Practices grant from the National Park Foundation. Today, Big Bend is reaping the benefits of the grant partnership with Iowa-based Musco Lighting.

Through the ongoing project—the largest of its scope in the National Park Service—Big Bend has seen up to 98 percent reductions in energy consumption after retrofitting lights at its most heavily used tourist areas: the Panther Junction Visitors Center and the Chisos Basin, which includes a restaurant, lodge and store.

In 2009, when the Panther Junction

Two years ago, residents in neighboring towns were complaining about excessive outdoor lighting from Big Bend's Chisos Basin. Now, thanks to an ambitious lighting improvement program, the basin remains safely lit for visitors while providing even better views of the stars.



phase was completed, Park Superintendent Bill Wellman tested the darkness: He drove west for a couple of miles, away from the visitors center, then headed back. All he saw was black night ... until he neared the gas station and spotted the surreal glow of the soft-drink machine.

Not to be alarmed, say Turecek and Wellman: There's still plenty of light at Big Bend's tourist facilities. It's just more efficient and softer now, sort of a yellow-white moonlight color.

Still, if you fill up after hours, the gas station's sensor-activated lights will brighten for 15 minutes. If you arrive late at the visitors center, there's ample light by which to see informational materials outside the building.

Big Bend, dark-sky advocates say, is lighting an important path: the preservation of unspoiled skies. "For goodness sakes, don't hang out the barn light," says Crawford, who never turns on the outside lights at his Tucson home unless he knows somebody's coming over to play bridge. "Keep what's already dark, dark."

ELF OWLS AND GALAXIES

Dust flew behind the car as my companion and I rattled down a gravel road at Big Bend. Our destination: Dugout Wells, a long-deserted social hub. Our destiny: a date with the stars, courtesy of our guides for the night, Turecek and a Big Bend co-worker, Steve McAllister, who brought along his huge, home-made 20-inch reflecting telescope.

As we waited for darkness, we got a special treat: the flight of two Elf Owls from a cavity in a dead tree as dusk issued its magical call.

Slowly, the sky faded to silky blue, then black. Darkness wrapped around us like a blanket, and the stars seemed to emerge one by one, as though someone were turning on thousands of night-lights.

We took turns climbing the stepladder to the telescope's lens, gazing at incomprehensibly big galaxies that made me feel very, very small.

As we became voices only, losing each others' faces in the dark, we listened to the night: the humming of insects, the clanking of an old wind-

mill's blades, the chattering of the owls as they hunted supper.

"Elf owls and galaxies," Turecek joyfully said. The conversations around me grew faint. Someday, I thought, I'll learn the names of all these stars and constellations.

Right now, I just want to be. Yes, I'm lost. And so very found.

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



LOOK! UP IN THE SKY!

Even for novice stargazers, the sky's the limit. For starters, check out these

cool astronomical happenings:

- **December 13-14:** Geminids meteor shower
- **December 21:** total lunar eclipse, from roughly 12:30 a.m. to 3 a.m.
- **January 3-4:** Quadrantids meteor shower

Still feel like you're in the dark? Go to www.TexasCoopPower.com for more stargazing tips and to learn more about the negative effects of light pollution.

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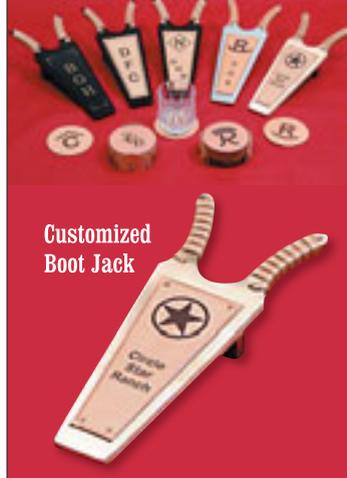
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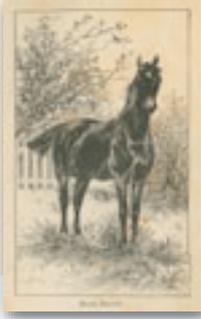
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BLACK BEAUTY RANCH

ABUSED, ABANDONED AND NEGLECTED NO MORE: ANIMALS COME HOME TO REST, REJOICE AND DREAM

BY STACI SEMRAD PHOTOS BY JOE GRISHAM

Illustration from Black Beauty circa 1900 edition

RIDING IN AN ALL-TERRAIN UTILITY VEHICLE THROUGH A ranch in East Texas, I met more genuine superstars than one would ever find in Hollywood.

One after another, I encountered them discreetly going about their business in the rolling hills of a landscape as perfect as paradise. Right there before my eyes were Babe the elephant, Omar the camel, RooRoo the kangaroo, Wilbur the hog, Friendly the burro, and many other diverse and amazing beings.

They are among the more than 1,200 domestic and exotic animals of 50 species that live here at the almost 1,300-acre Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch—the largest and most diverse sanctuary in the world for rescued, abused and neglected animals. I don't call them "superstars" because of their physical beauty or any ability they might have to perform, entertain or please—but rather for their unique life stories of suffering, their dramatic rescues and their remarkable ability to forgive.

Though some ranch residents were the victims of deliberate abuse, most of them suffered at the hands of previous owners who exploited them for profit and/or pleasure. The animals have been rescued from zoos, circuses, trophy-hunting ranches, breeding ranches, biomedical research projects, the exotic pet trade, slaughterhouses, public lands and more.

A considerable number of them were rescued in Texas. However, many of them were transported from elsewhere, as were the 84 starving and neglected wild mustangs that arrived here last year from Nebraska (14 of the mustangs remain on the ranch). This large-scale equine rescue helped inspire the new Doris Day Horse Rescue and Adoption Center, expected to open at the ranch early next year, said Diane Miller, director of the Black Beauty Ranch north of Murchison, near Athens.

"The most rewarding thing is when you see animals come in from a horrible background—for example, a cruelty case, physically and emotionally damaged—and you're able to work with them to regain their trust," Miller said. "To see them live in a protected environment where their needs are met and they're free to behave exactly as they wish, where they're able to be who they're born to be, it's the best job on earth."

IT BEGAN WITH A BOOK

ON AN AVERAGE AFTERNOON AT BLACK BEAUTY RANCH,

the animals can be found huddling under shade trees, gliding across peaceful ponds, grazing in silky grass and basking in the sun.

They might appear at first glance to have uneventful lives, but if they could talk, they would surely tell you some stories. Indeed, I only understood who these ranch dwellers were, and a bit about their incredible sagas, because I read about them in a book by the late Cleveland Amory, the famous author and animal advocate who founded Black Beauty Ranch in 1979.

In *Ranch of Dreams: The Heartwarming Story of America's Most Unusual Animal Sanctuary*—published in 1997, the year before Amory's death—he tells the riveting story of how his dream for the ranch, and the ranch itself, came to be. As the book explains, Amory's concern for the welfare of animals developed when he was a boy growing up in Boston and was nurtured by a beloved aunt who took in many stray dogs and cats. His aunt gave him Anna Sewell's 1877 classic children's book *Black Beauty* about a carriage horse who is passed from one owner to the next and mistreated before finding happiness in his final home. The book changed Amory's life.

"It was not long after reading *Black Beauty* for the first of many times that I had a dream that one day I would have a place which would embody everything *Black Beauty* loved about his final home," Amory wrote in *Ranch of Dreams*. That, he wrote, "would be a place where animals would do whatever they wanted to do, not what people wanted them to do, and particularly not what people wanted them to do when they were watching them. It would also be a place that the animals felt, from the day they arrived, belonged to them, and would always belong to them as long as they lived."

His impetus to realize that dream came in 1979, when Amory learned that the National Park Service planned to kill hundreds of wild burros living on public land in the Grand Canyon. Private sheep and cattle ranchers had claimed the burros were competing with their livestock for food, and the plan from federal officials was to shoot the burros from the air.

Amory and the organization he founded in 1967 to help animals, The Fund for Animals, also had a solution involving helicopters, but theirs was to airlift burros, one at a time, in a sling and deliver them to safety. Their two-year rescue of 577 burros from the Grand Canyon succeeded,



Their soft, inquisitive eyes say it all: Horses, European fallow deer, burros, ostriches and bison—along with a host of other animals that once suffered neglect and abuse—now are treated like royalty at the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch.

IT WAS NOT LONG AFTER READING BLACK BEAUTY FOR THE FIRST OF MANY TIMES THAT I HAD A DREAM THAT ONE DAY I WOULD HAVE A PLACE WHICH WOULD EMBODY EVERYTHING BLACK BEAUTY LOVED ABOUT HIS FINAL HOME. [THAT] WOULD BE A PLACE WHERE ANIMALS WOULD DO WHATEVER THEY WANTED DO TO, NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANTED THEM TO DO, AND PARTICULARLY NOT WHAT PEOPLE WANTED THEM TO DO WHEN THEY WERE WATCHING THEM. IT WOULD ALSO BE A PLACE THAT THE ANIMALS FELT, FROM THE DAY THEY ARRIVED, BELONGED TO THEM, AND WOULD ALWAYS BELONG TO THEM AS LONG AS THEY LIVED.

Cleveland Amory
RANCH OF DREAMS

necessitating a new home for the animals—hence the birth of Black Beauty Ranch in East Texas.

Since then, the ranch, served by Trinity Valley Electric Cooperative, has taken in several other types of animals, too, including chimpanzees, bison, horses, prairie dogs, iguanas, turtles, rabbits and more.

One of the ranch's most popular celebrities whom I had the privilege of meeting was Babe, an elephant and 14-year ranch resident whose recent death set off a continuum of online commemorations from hundreds of admirers. As a baby, Babe witnessed the killing of her mother in South Africa. Babe was shipped in a crate to America to work in the circus, Cleveland wrote, "and it was in the crate that, we were told, she not only banged up two of her legs so badly but also, as evidenced by her head, had tried to commit suicide."

Perhaps the most famous of the ranch's residents was the late Nim Chimpsky, known around the world as the first "talking chimpanzee." Raised by a researcher in a human family, Nim studied sign language under researchers and teachers. After several years, "Project Nim" ended, and Nim was slated for a laboratory where he and other chimpanzees would be the subjects of hepatitis vaccine research. After what Nim had done for people, Amory viewed such a move as absurdly unfair and negotiated successfully not only for Nim to come to Black Beauty Ranch, but also for a female chimp named Sally Jones to move with Nim. The pair became best friends at the ranch, and each lived there well into their senior years.

TEARS OF SADNESS AND JOY

IN 2005, THE FUND FOR ANIMALS FORMED A PARTNERSHIP with the Humane Society of the United States, which

oversees the Fund for Animals and the fund's ranch, which has 15 full-time employees.

In keeping with Amory's wishes for the ranch to be a home—not a zoo, circus or other entertainment venue—visitors are not allowed on a daily basis. However, the ranch holds open houses for the public each fall and spring.

Before you visit the ranch, I urge you to first to read Amory's *Ranch of Dreams*. Otherwise, you will not know where you are once you arrive, or who each of the creatures are that you'll have the opportunity to meet. My family and I read it together, taking a section of the book each night, and were shedding tears of sadness and tears of joy by the end of the first chapter. We'll never view any venue that exploits animals for human entertainment in the same way again.

Black Beauty Ranch is where Cleveland Amory's dream came true, and if you believe as I do that animals, too, have dreams, the ranch is a dream come true for every animal who, after years of neglect, years of abuse, years of being whipped to perform tricks or run faster, finally finds this place where they are simply free to be.

A sign at the ranch gate welcomes new residents with a quote from the last lines of Sewell's *Black Beauty*: "I have nothing to fear; and here my story ends. My troubles are all over, and I am at home ..."

The Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch is open to the public only on spring and fall open-house days and during special events. For more information, visit <http://blackbeauty ranch.org> or www.humanesociety.org/blackbeauty or call (903) 469-3811.

Staci Semrad is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Midge, a chimpanzee who was being used for medical experiments in a research laboratory before starting a new life at the ranch in 1997, gets a treat. Former staff member Tomas Alvarez brushes the shell of a shy Sulcata tortoise. Max (left) and Robby Bennison study the chimpanzees, who, undoubtedly, are giving the brothers the once-over as well.



FROM THE LAST LINES OF ANNA SEWELL'S *BLACK BEAUTY*: 'I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR; AND HERE MY STORY ENDS. MY TROUBLES ARE ALL OVER, AND I AM AT HOME ...'

Wrinkles, Under-eye Dark Circles and Bags - Does Any Cream Work?



Dear
Dorris:

DEAR DORRIS: I am a vibrant woman of 55 years old. I feel 25 years old still, but I have lately developed these wrinkles and dark

circles under my eyes along with puffy bags, that make me look older than I am.

I have tried many products that the Celebrities endorse, but they didn't work. Is there any product out there that can really get rid of these wrinkles, bags and dark circles?

Dark and Baggy, Tyler, TX

DEAR DARKNESS : There is definitely a product that really works on your three big problems of wrinkles, dark circles, and bags. The product is the industry's best kept secret, and it's called the **Dermagist Eye Revolution Gel®**. It is a light gel that you apply around the eye area, that has some serious scientific ingredients that do exactly what you're looking for.

It has the ingredient, Haloxyll, which penetrates the skin and breaks up the blood particles that cause those dark circles. Another ingredient, Eyeliss works to release the fat pockets that develop under the eye that appear as bags.

The Dermagist Eye Revolution Gel® also works on wrinkles by using Stem Cells to regenerate healthy skin cells, and reduce wrinkles. As an overall treatment for the skin around the eye area, this product is a serious choice that the other creams only aspire to compete with. Since it's priced affordably, it will not be long until the whole world is talking about it. **The Dermagist Eye Revolution Gel® is available online at Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by calling toll-free, **888-771-5355**. Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me 10% off. The code was "TXEYE2". It's worth a try to see if it still works.



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Oh, so pretty, but is it safe? Counterfeit holiday lights can be a dangerous fire hazard.

Beware of Fakes

Holiday season brings safety concerns

Amid the busy ramp-up to the holidays at year's end, the last thing many folks might even think about is the safety of the most innocent-seeming items. Yet there are unscrupulous manufacturers out there who think nothing of making a quick buck at the cost of your or your family's safety.

Those cut-rate factories churn out items such as extension cords, batteries, holiday lights and circuit breakers with cheap, inferior components that don't have the safety features included in the ones made by reputable companies.

If you are like most Americans, you might not even have been aware of this threat. Less than one-third of the people interviewed by the Gallup Organization said they knew these products were on store shelves. Yet the scope of counterfeiting in North America is estimated to be in the \$300 million to \$400 million range. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has recalled more than 1 million counterfeit electrical products in recent years.

Undetected counterfeit products—which are often sold at flea markets, bargain warehouses and deep discount stores—are more likely to be faulty and can lead to fires, shocks, explosions and electrocutions.

Here are some things to watch for and avoid when choosing holiday decorations and electrical appliances for your family this holiday season, according to the nonprofit Electrical Safety Foundation International:

- Beware of bargains that seem too good to be true. Counterfeit electrical products are usually significantly cheaper than legitimate items. But no discount is worth your safety or that of your loved ones.
- Beware of products that have labels and packaging with grammatical errors and inconsistencies in information displayed.
- Check for certification marks from nationally recognized testing laboratories such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA or ETL-SEMKO.

When it comes to your safety, a little caution—and a couple more dollars spent—are worth it.

GO GREEN Without Sacrificing COMFORT

You can be both comfortable and environmentally responsible. Here are five ways to cut your energy consumption without sacrificing comfort:

1. Buy a programmable thermostat. If you turn your heat or air conditioning off and on when you leave the house or start feeling too warm or cold, you can wind up spending more for electricity than if you let a thermostat ease the temperature up and down a bit at regular intervals. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that you can save 1 percent on your utility bill for every degree you raise or lower your thermostat for eight hours.

2. Don't "binge" on electricity. Even on a freezing day, resist the urge to crank up the heat. Try to keep your thermostat steady while you're home so you don't wind up with a big surprise on your energy bill.

3. Wait until early in the morning or after dark to run the dishwasher and wash clothes. Electricity is in greater demand during hours of the day when everybody is getting ready for work or cooking dinner, so the later you can wait to use energy-guzzling appliances, the better.

4. Upgrade your appliances by taking advantage of utility and government rebates on energy-efficient units.

5. Keep up to date with the latest energy-saving technology. Appliances, windows and other energy-efficient products might initially cost a little more to buy than inefficient models, but they save you enough on your energy bills to more than pay for themselves in the long run.

Room Humidifiers May Lower Winter Energy Bills

BY JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: I am in the market for a room humidifier, but I don't know which type is best for my home. Can using a humidifier reduce my heating bills even though evaporating water cools? Is using only one adequate for my house? —Greg S.

DEAR GREG: Most people suffer during winter from overly dry air in their homes. Since the indoor humidity level drops or increases gradually as seasons change, the variation of indoor humidity levels may not be noticed. These changes throughout the year are a function of the region of the country, so always check with local experts for specific advice.

Properly humidified indoor air is not only comfortable and healthy for your family, but it also can reduce your winter heating bills. Room humidifiers typically use less energy than a 100-watt lightbulb. Many models have built-in humidistats that automatically switch the unit on and off, so they consume even less electricity than listed on the unit's nameplate.

There is a cooling effect when the water from the humidifier evaporates, so running the humidifier will actually cool a room's air slightly. This is the same evaporation process (perspiration) of moisture from your skin that makes you feel cool as water changes state from liquid to vapor (gas). However, the heat generated from the humidifier's electricity usage offsets the slight cooling effect.

Just like sweating outdoors on a low-humidity day makes you feel cool, the same process occurs indoors in dry air. The amount of moisture evaporation from your skin is greater when

the indoor air is excessively dry, so you may actually feel chilly when the indoor air temperature is high enough for comfort. The evaporation of your skin's moisture can also dry your skin, make you itch, and irritate sinuses.

Running a humidifier helps save energy by reducing the chilling effect of the evaporation of skin moisture. By properly humidifying the air, you can feel comfortable at a lower room temperature. This allows you to set the furnace thermostat lower, and you should end up saving much more energy than the humidifier uses. Depending upon your specific climate,



The fan portion of an evaporative room humidifier is removed to show the wick material that gives off moisture to the air.

you should be able to save 1 to 2 percent on your heating bills for each degree you lower your furnace or heat-pump thermostat setting.

The proper type of room humidifier depends on your family's needs and the size and room layout of your house. One or two room humidifiers are generally enough for a reasonably airtight, energy-efficient home. Older, leaky houses may need more or larger-capacity models. Humidity in the indoor air tends to naturally migrate throughout the house. Cooking, bathing and washing clothes and dishes also adds a significant amount of moisture, often adding too much in specific rooms, such as bathrooms.

For daytime use, an evaporative

type of humidifier is effective and the least expensive to buy. These humidifiers use a wick material that has one end submerged in a water reservoir. It naturally draws up water from the reservoir. There is a fan inside the humidifier that draws room air through the wick where it evaporates into the air stream.

Evaporative humidifiers are easy to keep clean, which is important to minimize mold and microbe growth in the wick. Some wicks are treated with an antimicrobial substance. Evaporative models usually have a three-speed fan. The high speed can be noisy, so this

may not be the best option for a bedroom. The low-speed setting on some models is quiet enough not to interrupt sleep.

If your children tend to get colds, a warm mist humidifier would be a good bedroom choice. These models boil water to create water vapor. The steam is mixed with room air before it comes out so it is not too hot. Germ-free models include an ultraviolet light purifier chamber to further sanitize the air flowing

through it. These include a humidistat and use about 260 watts of electricity.

Another design uses ultrasonic waves to create water vapor mist. These are the most energy efficient, using about 50 watts of electricity. A very quiet fan blows the mist into the room. I use a Vicks ultrasonic humidifier in my own bedroom at night.

The following companies offer free-standing humidifiers: **Essick Air**, 1-800-547-3888, www.essickair.com; **Holmes**, 1-800-546-5637, www.holmesproducts.com; **Hunter Fan**, 1-800-448-6837, www.hunterfan.com; **Kaz**, 1-800-477-0457, www.kaz.com; and **Lasko Products**, 1-800-233-0268, www.laskoproducts.com.

© James Dulley

SMITHVILLE

Paper-doll Patriarch

*Just ask his fans:
Artist Tom Tierney
is a cut above.*

By Mary O. Parker



Meet artist Tom Tierney: the man known around the world for elevating paper dolls to an art form.

In his Smithville loft, his merry blue eyes sparkling, Tierney proudly points to the framed originals he sketched of Marilyn Monroe for his 1979 book about the Hollywood legend and the costumes she wore in each of her films. “This was the only paper-doll book ever reviewed by *The New York Times*,” he says. Then, with raised eyebrows and a happy lilt, he adds, “It got a good review, too.”

Other Tierney original drawings hang nearby, including those that appeared in *Woman’s World* magazine of famous women in history and their costumes. “Here we have Amelia Bloomer,” Tierney says. “She created bloomers so women wouldn’t have to wear those horrible petticoats!” He shudders dramatically.

Drama comes naturally to Tierney, a Beaumont native whose multifaceted life as an artist, dancer and singer has brought about as many wardrobe changes, metaphorically speaking, as depicted in his beloved paper doll books that are coveted collector’s items. A whirlwind of a life so far—at the age of 82, he shows no signs of slowing down—has brought stories in big-league publications (*The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* magazine), nightclub gigs in storied New York City venues such as The Plaza Hotel, and friendships with movie stars, such as the late Joan Crawford.

For Tierney, who moved back to Texas three years ago after spending most of his adult life in New York City, drawing has always come first. He started his formal art education at the age of 6, graduated from The University of Texas in 1949 with a bachelor of fine arts degree and launched a career as a department-store fashion illustrator.

Then fate, as it would time and again, intervened. After serving in the U.S. Army as a recruiting artist from 1951-53, Tierney moved to New York, using money from the GI Bill to enroll at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, one of the world’s most prestigious art schools. The multitalented Tierney also studied ballet at the acclaimed Martha Graham Dance Company. Lithe and lean at 5 feet, 9 inches and 127 pounds, he glided across stages, even polishing a tap-dance routine that led to the nightclub circuit.

“Oh, that was a magic time,” Tierney says of his younger years in New York City. “But you know, my whole life has been a magic time. God doesn’t owe me a thing.”

With a casual shrug, Tierney recounts how a torn leg tendon ended his professional dancing career and helped him make a pivotal decision: He would focus on art instead of dancing and singing. “I knew that art would last longer anyway,” he says with a grin.

And indeed, it has. In collaboration with his longtime publisher, Dover Publications, Tierney has drawn art for about 400 paper doll books that feature—just to name a few subjects—brides from around the world, famous movie dance

stars, fashion designs of the Victorian era, Broadway musical stars, celebrity country singers, medieval costumes and American families from the pilgrim period through today (for more details, visit <http://tomtierney.com>).

It's all the result of what Tierney calls "a fortunate accident"—the Christmas present he gave his mother in 1975. As children, Tierney and his two younger brothers sat enthralled as their mother entertained them with a puppet show fashion using the paper doll collection she'd had since her childhood. So decades later, Tierney thrilled his mother with an extra-special gift: paper dolls he'd made of two of her favorite movie stars from the 1930s—Jean Harlow and Clark Gable.

His mother proudly showed the paper dolls to her friends—one of whom was friends with an influential literary agent. The result was Tierney's first book, *Thirty from the 30s*, which features movie stars from that decade. The book's success brought about a contract with another publisher, Dover, and set Tierney on the path to becoming America's best-loved paper doll maker.

Enthusiasts credit Tierney with resurrecting interest in paper dolls. These two-dimensional figures have been around for centuries in several countries, but in the 1960s, they were knocked off their U.S. throne by a new doll on the block—Barbie.

Tierney's 1930s movie-star book, published in 1976, put paper dolls back in the spotlight and made him a celebrity. His books, which can be found in museums worldwide, include depictions of U.S. presidents and first family members.

Tierney once received a handwritten letter from President Jimmy Carter that read, in part, "I'll be able to dress them and make them do what I want them to do." And former First Lady Nancy Reagan thanked Tierney for his book about the presidential couple.

We round a corner in the 1890s Smithville building that Tierney occupies and enter his cheery second-floor studio. Sunlight streams through tall windows and illuminates the bottles of ink on his drawing table like miniature rainbows. Sweeping his hands across the work space, he says, "This is where I do my creating, just sitting up here in my regal eagle's nest and having fun."

He shows me original drawings from his paper-doll book about the fairies in Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The vividness of a water-colored red-velvet costume is breathtaking, and Tierney explains he tries to make his drawings as historically accurate as possible through extensive research.

But sometimes, he has to rely almost exclusively on his creativity. "Imagine trying to find out what George Washington's underwear looked like before the Internet!" Tierney says, laughing.

After all these years, Tierney's creativity continues to percolate. "I'm not just a paper-doll guy," he stresses, explaining that he's seeking an agent for a children's storybook he just finished. Oh, he's also started designing 3-D paper theaters with movable parts. And he's been working on a series of Texas heroes paper dolls.

He interrupts himself with a characteristic burst of enthusiasm: "It's just that I've got so many ideas—I just can't seem to get everything done that I want to do!"

Third annual Texas Paper Doll Party: March 26-27 in Smithville, www.texaspaperdollparty.com

Mary O. Parker, a freelance writer, lives in Smithville.



Scotch Over a Tad Bit

Out yonder in the country, everybody measures up.

BY RICHARD HUSBY

R

Recently, I was talking to a friend and I mentioned that I had a stack of utility bills about yogie tall. Now my friend is a city person, and an engineer to boot. So when you add the two, you can understand why he looked at me like I walked in the kitchen without cleaning the barnyard off my boots.

For that reason, I figure it's time us country folks let everyone in on our method of measuring.

Yogie

"Yogie" is a meaningless term unless accompanied by some form of visual cue that demonstrates just how yogie something is. Example: "I have a stack of bills yogie tall." The height is illustrated by the distance between your extended index finger and thumb.

Another example would be: "That new calf is about yogie tall." This would be illustrated with an outstretched arm indicating the calf's height.

Tad

"Tad" is used when asking for something to be moved or shifted. Example: "Homer, take that come-along up a tad." Homer, knowing that a tad is more than a scoosh, tightens up the come-along just enough so that increased tension on the come-along will not break whatever is being come-alonged.

Scoosh

A "scoosh" is less than a tad. If you move something a scoosh, you are probably right at the point where you moved it too far and now have to move it back a tad. Example: "Ruben, move that timber a scoosh so's I can nail it. WHOA!!! Too far, bring 'er back a tad."

Tad Bit

Less than a tad, approaching a hair. Example: "Let off on that rope a tad bit, I don't want that calf choking to death while I mark his ear."

Hair

The term "hair" is used when a tad is way too much. Example: Farmer giving directions to a worker as they move a grain elevator into place. "Bring 'er back a scoosh ... come on back ... tad more ... WHOA!!! OK ... Back just a hair more!" And with those instructions, the worker backs the grain elevator between two grain bins, maneuvers around the broken gate, and puts the elevator right where it's

supposed to be. Simple, huh?

Couple

“Couple” is used to give some numeric value to an unknown. Example: “Carl, better plan on digging a couple of post holes west of the barn after breakfast.” Now Carl does not like to dig post holes, so he stops at two. However, when Carl’s wife asks him, “How many beers did you have at the bar last night?” Carl will answer, “Well ... couple, I guess.”

Several

“Several” is more than a couple, but again, it is used to give a numeric value to an unknown. Example: “I’ll be needin’ several of those free seed corn hats.”

A Piece

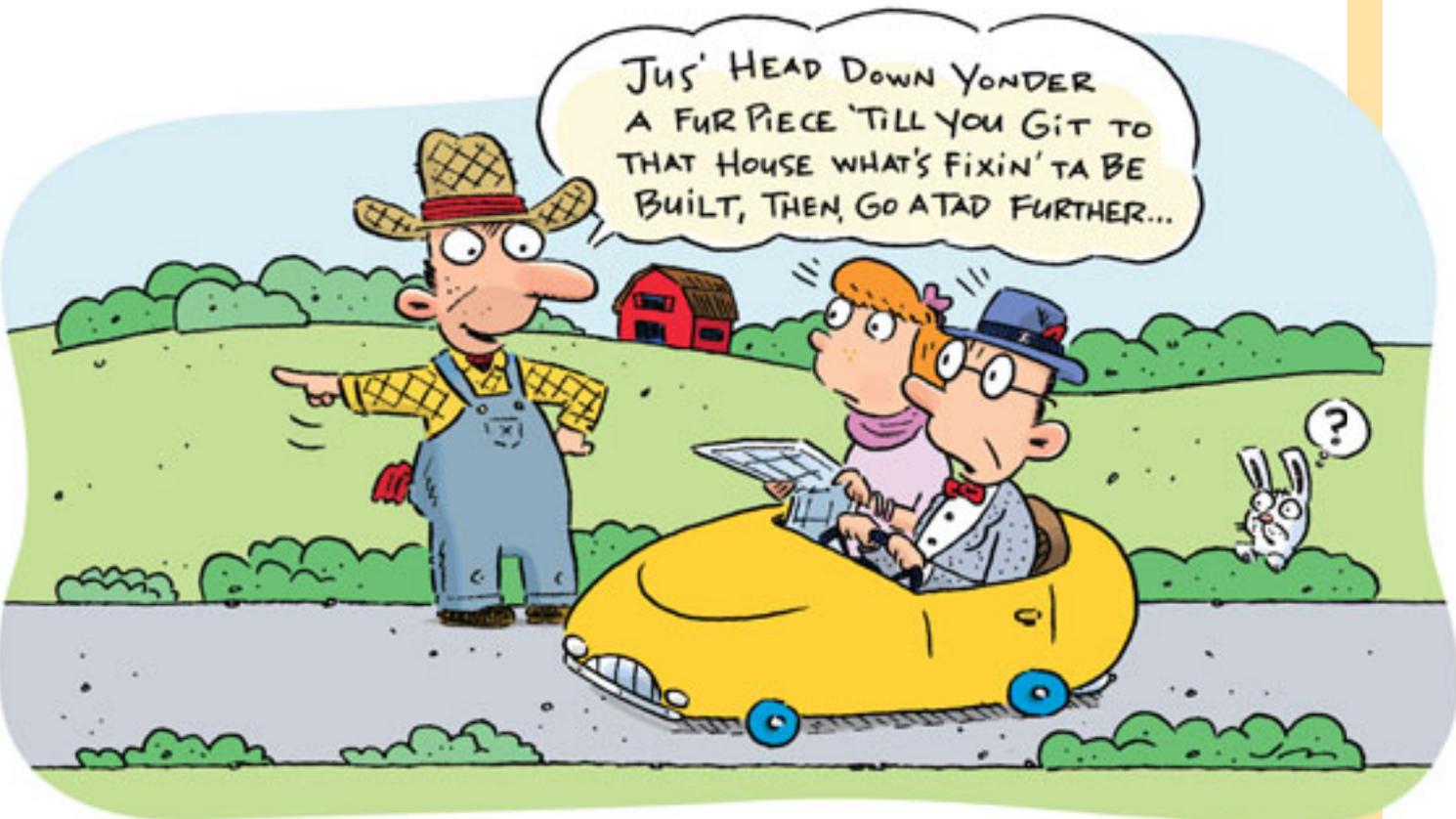
The term “a piece” is used to confuse city folks asking for directions. Example: Tourist asking farmer how to get to Aunt Martha’s Bed and Breakfast. “Well, you need to go down this road a piece ’til you get to the Old Hermann Place. Take a right where his mailbox used to be, then go down that road a piece ’til you see Gib Wankle’s place. Gib sold out a few years ago, so you will need to watch for that. Take a left at Gib’s barn, well, what used to be his barn, and then you need to stay on that road a piece ’til you hit Martha’s. By the way, when you get there, tell Martha I said howdy!”

Yonder

“Yonder” is used in the same way as “a piece” but can be even more confusing when giving directions. The reason is that there is a required preface to yonder: There is up yonder, down yonder and over yonder. Example: Same tourist as before, only now he is five miles farther from Aunt Martha’s.

“Let’s see ... Go up yonder a piece ’til you see where I usually park my hay wagon, then go over yonder a couple miles ’til you see where we put my oldest boy on a deer stand. Then go down yonder ’til you see Gib Wankle’s barn. Gib sold out a few years back, so you need to watch for that. Take a left at Gib’s barn, well, what used to be his barn, and go down yonder ’til you hit Martha’s. By the way, when you get there, tell Martha I said howdy!”

Richard Husby, a freelance writer, lives a tad bit from Aubrey and a scoosh down the road from Krugerville, north of Dallas.



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A Journey Through Texas, 1853

BY ELAINE ROBBINS

In 1853, five years before Frederick Law Olmsted became famous as the landscape architect who designed New York City's Central Park, he created another reason to be remembered.

Traveling through Texas on assignment for The New York Daily Times, the Connecticut Yankee set off with his brother John, a mare named Fanny, "a gay little roan creole pony," and a pleasant pack mule named Mr. Brown. For six months, they rode down rough dirt roads, camped or slept in log cabins or guest inns, and talked to the people they met along the way. The resulting travel narrative, which Frederick wrote as a series of articles and John edited into the book *A Journey through Texas*, is a highly enjoyable romp through Texas in the early settlement days before the Civil War.

In his few short months in Texas, Olmsted left us with a timeless legacy: a snapshot of a people and a place before the Civil War changed everything. Anglos were pouring in to pursue the promise of cheap land. The mostly Southern immigrants brought their culture with them, and slavery was soaring. A large segment of the population—including Olmsted—packed Colt Navy revolvers.

Olmsted began his journey in East Texas, where he spent the night in settlers' drafty cabins and complained about the lack of basic provisions and the unvarying diet of pork and corncakes. Traveling along the Old San Antonio Road, he met wagon trains of immigrants arriving from the Southern states to make a new start in Texas:

"Before you come upon them you hear ringing through the woods the fierce cries and blows with which they urge on their jagged cattle. Then the stragglers appear, lean dogs or fainting negroes, ragged and spiritless. An old granny hauling on by the hand a weak boy—too old to ride and too young to keep up. An old man, heavily loaded with rifle. Then the white covers of the wagons jerking up and down as they mount over a root or plunge into a rut, disappearing one after another where the road descends."

Visiting the German settlements in the Hill Country, he was impressed by the social organizations and schools he found there. Olmsted was fervently against slavery, and he cites the Germans' productive farms and civilized society as proof that voluntary labor was both morally and economically superior to slavery. "That such a community—generally industrious, active-minded, and progressively intelligent—can never exist in intimate connection with enslaved labor, I am well-convinced," he wrote in a newspaper article.

The book, meanwhile, is enlivened by Olmsted's conversations with ordinary people—cotton farmers and innkeepers,

runaway slaves and new immigrants, Anglos and Mexicans—which he transcribed with dialect intact. He met a runaway slave working as a mechanic in Mexico, who told Olmsted that in the past three months, he'd counted 40 slaves escaping Texas into Mexico. Near Gonzales, he passed Tejano cart drivers, and outside San Antonio he visited an encampment of resettled Lipan. Upon meeting the Lipan chief Castro, Olmsted broke a tense silence by telling the chief about the Indians he'd seen in San Fernando, Mexico.

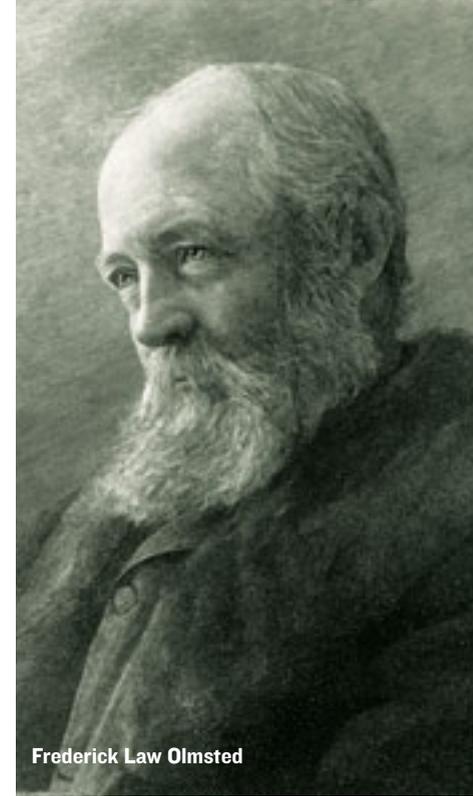
"What kind?" asked the chief.

"Lipans, Mescaleros, Kickapoos, Comanches, Tonkaways, Seminoles.—All drunk.—All fools."

Olmsted continues, writing, "This seems to excite a great hilarity in the chief. He wished me to say it again and again, repeating, 'so they were all drunk, were they,' and making his friends enjoy it with a sort of sparkling chuckle."

Infused with Mark Twain-like humor, the book is filled with Olmsted's excellent descriptions of the natural landscape. Of the wildflowers on the coastal prairies, he writes, "The beauty of the spring-prairies has never been and never will be expressed. It is inexpressible." He remarks on a gorgeous night sky in which "the sky seems nearer in Texas."

And his description of San Antonio's San Pedro Springs will ring familiar to anyone who has been dazzled by a Texas spring: "The whole river gushes up in one sparkling burst from the earth. It has all the beautiful accompaniments of a smaller spring, moss, pebbles, seclusion, sparkling sunbeams, and dense overhanging luxuriant foliage. The effect is overpowering. It is beyond your possible conceptions of a spring. You cannot believe your eyes, and almost shrink from sudden metamorphosis by invaded nymphdom."



Frederick Law Olmsted

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Elaine Robbins is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.

Holiday Recipe Contest

SPONSORED BY TEXAS PECAN BOARD



Sharon Fabianke with her Better than a Fruitcake Cheeseball

BY KEVIN HARGIS We've written paeans to pecans in the pages of this magazine before. And with good reason, we think. Pecans are nutritious, delicious and oh, so versatile. Our favorites are the ones grown right here in Texas.

So when the Texas Pecan Board agreed to sponsor our annual Holiday Recipe Contest, we were excited. And, apparently, so were you. More than 2,000 entries flooded our mailbox and inbox—as well as our website, www.TexasCoopPower.com—making the narrowing down of the recipes a very tough job.

The entries covered a wide range: Many desserts, plus entrées, appetizers, breads, veggie dishes and those that defied categorization.

Of all those entries, this simple, colorful, tantalizing combination of nuts, fruit and cheese tickled the taste buds of our taste testers the most. Here are some of their comments:

"It's dense and seems perfectly mixed."

"Candied fruit and cheese is a surprise twist. Pecans add another layer of taste. Yum!"

For a list of Texas pecan growers visit www.TexasCoopPower.com.

\$3,000 GRAND PRIZEWINNER:

Sharon Fabianke

Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative
Christmas colors inspired Sharon Fabianke's winning creation. "I like cheese balls, and I knew the contest was about Christmas," she said. "I saw the fruit in H-E-B, and thought it would look good; I liked the red and green combination."

After putting it together, she took her easy-to-make recipe to several parties, she said, "and people really liked it. I thought, 'This is better than fruitcake.'" Hence, the recipe had a name.

Fabianke, a retired teacher, and her husband, Lloyd, who have three grown children and four grandchildren, moved to Temple three years ago from San Antonio. "I came from the big city to a small town, and I love it," she said. Besides creating in the kitchen, she stays busy substitute teaching, offering a Bible study at a local rehabilitation center and counseling at Hope Pregnancy Center.

This is her first entry in a recipe contest. She suggests serving the cheese ball with a salty cracker to give a nice contrast of flavors.

BETTER THAN A FRUITCAKE CHEESE BALL

- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 2 teaspoons mayonnaise
- ³/₄ cup chopped pecans, divided
- ¹/₂ cup chopped candied kiwi fruit, divided
- ¹/₂ cup chopped candied strawberries, divided

Cream together Cheddar cheese, cream cheese and mayonnaise. Add ¹/₂ cup pecans, ¹/₄ cup kiwi fruit and ¹/₄ cup strawberries. Mix remaining pecans, kiwi and strawberries. Press coating mixture into cheese ball to make it stick. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate 2 to 3 hours. Bring

to room temperature before serving.

Servings: 16. Serving size: 1/4 cup. Per serving: 161 calories, 3.4 g protein, 10.6 g fat, 13.2 g carbohydrates, 0.7 g dietary fiber, 104 mg sodium, 11.9 g sugars, 23 mg cholesterol

COOK'S TIP: If you can't find the candied fruits at the store, look for them online.

\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Ella Machac

Sam Houston

Electric Cooperative

When the holidays roll around, Ella Machac, 81, says she pulls out her festive recipe for Pecan Pie Shots. Machac, who cooks often and loves to try new recipes, is married to Joe, and they have two grown children, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. They've lived in Point Blank, outside Huntsville, since 1994 in a three-story A-frame house they built themselves.



PECAN PIE SHOTS

- 1/4 pound bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 3/4 cup heavy cream, divided
- 3/4 cup finely chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup light corn syrup
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Pinch salt
- 2 tablespoons whiskey
- 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 12 pecan halves

Set out 12 mini martini glasses (2- to 3-ounce size). Place chocolate in medium bowl. Bring 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons cream to boil in small pan, immediately pour over chocolate and allow to sit for a minute. Stir slowly with whisk until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Fill each glass with 2 teaspoons of chocolate mixture. Tap glasses lightly on counter to allow chocolate to "sink." Set remaining mixture in warm place until ready to use. Place glasses in freezer for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring chopped pecans, corn syrup, sugar, butter, salt and 2 tablespoons cream to boil in medium pan over medium heat. Remove from

heat and stir in whiskey and vanilla. Allow to cool slightly before spooning 2 teaspoons of pecan mixture into chilled glasses, followed by 1 teaspoon of remaining chocolate mixture. Chill in refrigerator until set (about 1 hour). Top each with pecan half before serving. Serve with demitasse spoons. Can be stored in refrigerator for up to three days.

Servings: 12. Serving size: About 1/2 cup. Per serving: 220 calories, 2.4 g protein, 18 g fat, 14.1 g carbohydrates, 2.4 g dietary fiber, 25 mg sodium, 6.5 g sugars, 25 mg cholesterol

\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Mark and Kristi Vittek

CoServ Electric

Mark says he and his wife, Kristi, 10-year members of CoServ, have a love of macaroni and cheese and smoky spices and teamed up to develop this recipe. They have a freezer full of pecans, he says, and keep a steady supply



of roasted ones around. Their neighbors in McKinney helped them come up with the final version of this rich, creamy dish.

SMOKIN' PECAN MAC 'N' CHEESE

- 1 cup pecans
- 12 ounces elbow pasta
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons shallots, minced
- 5 ounces hickory-smoked bacon
- 1 1/2 tablespoons garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 2 1/2 cups sharp white Cheddar, shredded
- 2 cups Gouda, shredded
- 1 1/2 cups shredded smoked Cheddar
- 1/4 cup chives, chopped (optional)

Toast pecans in 400-degree oven for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Watch carefully and remove if nuts begin to scorch. Remove to plate and let cool. Finely chop 3 tablespoons of pecans. Coarsely chop remaining pecans. Bring 4 quarts of water to a boil and add pasta and pinch of salt. Cook for 7 to 10 minutes. Drain and set aside. Pasta should be slightly firmer than

Pecan Pie Shots





Smokin' Pecan Mac 'N' Cheese

al dente. Add olive oil, shallots, bacon and garlic to heavy pot and sauté for 5 minutes on low heat. Stir in flour and cook for 2 minutes on medium heat, stirring constantly. Slowly stir in heavy cream and bring to boil. Simmer for 10 minutes over low heat, stirring constantly. Add finely chopped pecans, thyme, white pepper, kosher salt and paprika. Stir in white Cheddar and Gouda in four batches, using figure-eight motion, until smooth. Toss in pasta and thoroughly mix. Pour into 8-x-8-inch baking dish. Top with smoked Cheddar cheese and coarsely chopped pecans. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes or until bubbly. Garnish with chives if desired.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 728 calories, 30 g protein, 50.7 g fat, 32.8 g carbohydrates 2 g dietary fiber, 1,390 mg sodium, 5.6 g sugars, 150 mg cholesterol

\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Kay Batchelder

CoServ Electric

Kay, who lives in Lakewood Village with husband David, daughter Bryce and son Ford, says she experimented with several variations of her cheese-

cake recipe before hitting on the winning blend.

Ford, 11, and his friends became part of the development process, testing several versions of the recipe. "They would come over every afternoon, asking when I was making another," she laughed.



PUMPKIN SWIRL CHEESECAKE WITH TIPSYP ECAN CARAMEL SAUCE

- 1 1/2 cups ground gingersnap cookies (ground graham crackers can be substituted)
- 1 1/2 cups toasted pecans
- 1/4 plus 2/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar, divided
- 3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 stick unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped crystallized ginger
- 4 packages (8 ounces each) cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 1/2 cups of canned solid pack pumpkin

- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup, plus 5 tablespoons whipping cream, divided
- 2 teaspoons of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 large eggs

Tipsy Pecan Caramel Sauce

Place cookies, pecans, 1/4 cup brown sugar and ginger in processor and pulse until finely ground. Add melted butter and crystallized ginger and blend until well combined. Press crust mixture onto the bottom and up the sides of a 10-inch diameter springform pan with 2 3/4-inch-high sides.

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. In large bowl, beat cream cheese and sugar with mixer until light and fluffy. Put about 3/4 of a cup of mixture in small bowl, cover and refrigerate. Pat pumpkin with paper towels to remove moisture, then add to cream cheese mixture with flour, 1/3 cup of whipping cream, spices, salt and vanilla to cream cheese mixture and mix until well combined. Add eggs one at a time, beating until just combined. Pour filling into crust.

Place a large sheet cake pan on lower rack of oven and fill halfway with water (this will help prevent cheesecake from cracking). Place cheesecake on center rack of oven and bake about 90 minutes, or until cheesecake puffs, top browns and center moves only slightly when pan is shaken. (If top begins to brown too quickly, cover loosely with foil.) Turn off oven and allow cheesecake to sit in oven with door propped open for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to sit until completely cooled. Wrap and refrigerate several hours or overnight.

One hour before serving, take reserved cream cheese mixture out of the refrigerator and allow to come to room temperature. Add 5 tablespoons of whipping cream and stir to combine. Carefully spread over the top of the cheesecake. Drizzle Tipsy Pecan Caramel Sauce over cake and swirl caramel into cream cheese mixture. Run knife around cheesecake to loosen and remove pan sides. Serve with extra sauce on side.

Servings: 16 (without sauce). Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 534 calories, 8.7 g protein, 33.3 g fat, 49 g carbohydrates, 2.4 g dietary fiber, 372 mg sodium, 31.2 g sugars, 129 mg cholesterol

TIPSY PECAN CARAMEL SAUCE

- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1½ cups brown sugar
- 1 pound pecans, toasted and chopped
- ¼ cup bourbon

Melt butter in heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add heavy cream and brown sugar. Bring to boil, whisking constantly. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring often. Stir in pecans and bourbon and cook another 2 minutes. Let cool. Caramel will thicken upon standing.

Servings: 24. Serving size: 2 tablespoons. Per serving: 259 calories, 2.1 g protein, 20.4 g fat, 16.3 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g dietary fiber, 8 mg sodium, 14.1 g sugars, 23 mg cholesterol

\$500 RUNNER-UP:

Terry Weaver

Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative

“I took three of my all-time favorites—sand tarts, pecan pie and brownies—and found a way to combine all three into one delicious, decadent dessert,” wrote Terry, a school speech therapist from Sonora who has been a member of Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative for about 30 years.

She and her husband, Carl, have four grown daughters and eight grandchildren who helped her taste test the treats.



TRIPLE THREAT TREATS

- ⅔ cup plus 1½ to 2 cups pecans
- 1 cup butter, softened
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 6 teaspoons vanilla, divided
- 3¾ cups flour, divided
- 4 cups sugar, divided
- 2 cups plus 3 tablespoons light corn syrup, divided
- 9 eggs
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 2 teaspoons vinegar
- 1 teaspoon plus dash salt
- ½ cup cocoa

- 1 cup oil
- ½ cup chocolate chips
- ½ cup coconut, optional

Chocolate Topping

Finely chop ⅔ cup pecans. Cream softened butter and powdered sugar. Add 2 teaspoons vanilla and 1 tablespoon water. Thoroughly mix in 2 cups flour, then finely chopped pecans. Press into bottom of 13-x-9-inch pan and bake at 325 degrees for 15 minutes. As bottom layer is baking, mix together ¼ cup flour, 2 cups sugar, 2 cups light corn syrup, 5 eggs, melted butter, 2 teaspoons vanilla, vinegar and dash salt in medium bowl. Stir in 1½ cups pecan pieces. When bottom layer has baked 15 minutes, remove from oven and pour pecan mixture over top. Return immediately to oven to bake an additional 30 minutes. Meanwhile, in small bowl, mix together 1½ cups flour, 2 cups sugar, ½ cup cocoa and 1 teaspoon salt. Set aside. In medium bowl, combine oil, 4 eggs, 2 teaspoons vanilla

and 3 tablespoons corn syrup. Mix cocoa mixture into bowl. Stir in chocolate chips and, if desired, an additional ½ cup pecans and/or ½ cup coconut. When pecan pie layer has baked 30 minutes (it will not be set), remove from oven and pour brownie batter on top while hot. Immediately return to oven. Bake at least 1 hour, or until middle is set and fairly firm. Allow to cool completely before cutting into bars. Garnish with Chocolate Topping and serve.

CHOCOLATE TOPPING

- ½ cup whipping cream
- ¼ cup powdered sugar
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- ½ teaspoon vanilla

Combine ingredients in chilled bowl and whip until peaks form.

Servings: 24. Serving size: 1 bar with 1 tablespoon topping. Per serving: 607 calories, 6 g protein, 29.6 g fat, 80.9 g carbohydrates, 2.6 g dietary fiber, 143 mg sodium, 47.5 g sugars, 98 mg cholesterol

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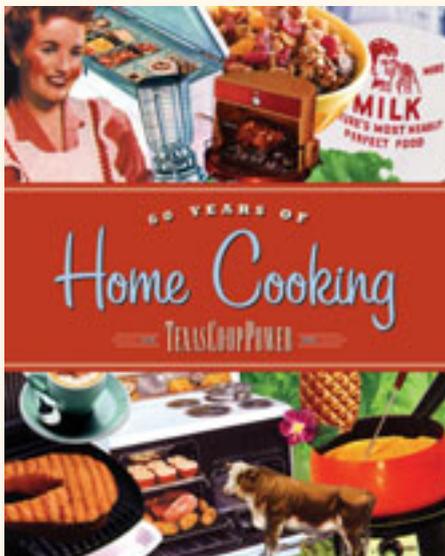
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▲ Did you see that? Something sure captured the attention of **Jesse Whitley** and his cat Marble. Jesse's grandmother **Trish Fulty**, a Farmers Electric Cooperative member, says that a man's best friend may be a dog, but this boy's best friend is his cat.



◀ When Negrito boarded with Magic Valley Electric Cooperative member **Teresa Cavazos** for a couple of weeks, one of his favorite activities was spying on the birds outside.



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Fayette Electric Cooperative member **Jennifer Prihoda** captured Mugsy's perplexity over his first encounter with a turtle. ▼



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Apr	Catch of the Day	Feb 10
May	Unlikely Duos	Mar 10
June	Murals	Apr 10
July	Those Were the Days	May 10

HEROES is the topic for our **FEBRUARY 2011** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to **Heroes, 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. If you use a digital camera, submit your highest resolution images on our website at www.TexasCoopPower.com. 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.

▲ Pepper the cat can undeniably say "I'm a Pepper" after Mommy and Bartlett Electric Cooperative member **Pamela Peck** caught him scoping out the soda carton.

"Hey, anybody in there?" asks Central Texas Electric Cooperative member **Charles Taylor**'s cat, who obviously has no qualms with heights. ▶



AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

This is just a sampling of the events and festivals around and about Texas. For the complete listing, please visit www.TexasCoopPower.com.

PICK OF THE MONTH

DECEMBER 11-12 INGLESIDE

Renaissance Faire
(361) 776-2906,
www.inglesidetxchamber.org



RENAISSANCE: 2010 © FABIO ALCINI. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. ACCORDION: 2010 © SUE ASHE. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. HOT CHOCOLATE: 2010 © WILLIAM BERRY. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

DECEMBER

02 ANDREWS [2-5]
Holly Jolly Weekend,
(432) 523-2695,
www.andrewstx.com

03 BRENHAM
Christmas Stroll & Lighted
Parade, 1-888-273-6426,
www.downtownbrenham.com

ALPINE [3-4]
Mountain Country
Christmas Bazaar,
(432) 837-2326

UVALDE [3-4]
Hill Country Rivers
Classic Stock Show,
1-800-210-0380,
www.hillcountryrivers.com

GONZALES [3-5]
Winterfest,
(830) 672-6532,
www.gonzalestexas.com



5

ELLINGER
Polka Fest

04 BRONTE
Christmas in Bronte,
(325) 473-3501,
www.brontetexas.org

FREDERICKSBURG
Tannenbaum Ball,
(830) 997-2835,
www.pioneermuseum.net

PALACIOS
Seaside Holiday,
(361) 972-2615,
www.palacioschamber.com

04 PIPE CREEK
American Legion
Christmas Bazaar,
(830) 612-3894

ZUEHL
Night in Old Bethlehem,
(830) 914-2168,
www.redeemerucc.com

BUDA [4-5]
Budafest, (512) 694-3413,
www.budafest.org

10

LULING
Cocoa & Carols



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5 tablespoons crunchy peanut butter

2 ½ cups corn flakes cereal

¾ cups raisins



Using a blender or a small food processor, puree the raisins to make approximately 4 tablespoons of raisin puree. In a large bowl, mix and blend all ingredients well with hands, smashing the corn flakes. Shape mixture into ten one inch balls. Put them on a plate, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve.

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AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

05 ALTAIR
Columbus Community
Choir Christmas Cantatas,
(979) 732-8385

CARMINE
Christmas Fest,
(979) 278-3965,
www.carminetx.com

ELLINGER
Polka Fest,
(979) 378-2311

08 MCDADE [8-11, 17, 26]
Star Ranch Christmas
Light Show,
(512) 809-0352

09 CANYON
Christmas Open House
at the Chamber,
(806) 655-7815

10 LULING
Cocoa & Carols,
(830) 875-3214,
www.lulingcc.org

11 COLDSRING
Christmas on the Square:
A Vintage Christmas,
(936) 653-2184

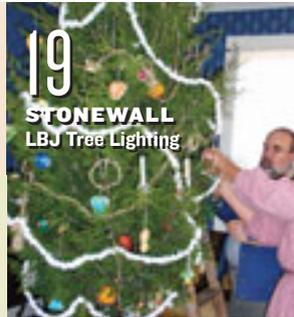
VERNON
Lighted Christmas
Parade & Booths on the
Square, (940) 553-3766

16 ANSON [16-18]
Texas Cowboys'
Christmas Ball,
(325) 537-2589

17 GOREE
Western Swing
Christmas Ball,
(940) 839-7870

18 LOVELADY
Cowboy Xmas Ball
with Jody Nix &
Texas Cowboys,
(936) 545-6680,
www.loveladyoldgym.com

SNYDER
Big Country Christmas
Ball, (325) 660-8338



19 STONEWALL
LBJ Tree Lighting

STONEWALL
LBJ Tree Lighting,
(830) 644-2252

ANUARY

BRENHAM
Winter Antiques Show,
(979) 865-5618,
www.ruraltexasantiques.com

SURFSIDE BEACH
Surfside Shuffle,
(979) 285-2501,
www.surfsideshuffle.com

READY TO GO? GO ONLINE FIRST.

Before you hit the road, stop at the new and improved www.TexasCoopPower.com to search for events by date, region, type and keyword. You can also find the easy-to-navigate Travel section with all our popular Hit the Road and travel features.

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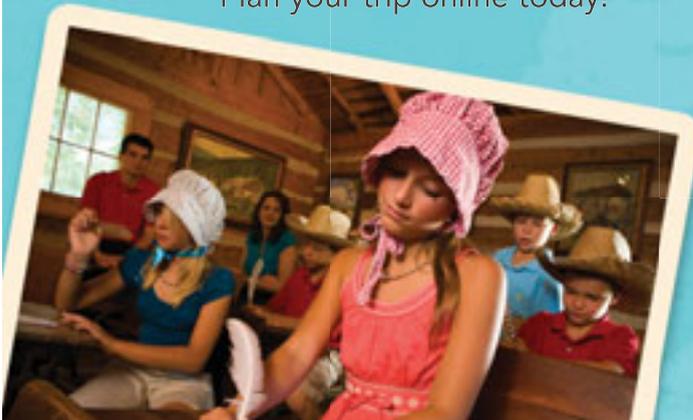
Get a move on at www.TexasCoopPower.com.

Event information can be submitted on our website at www.TexasCoopPower.com, mailed to Around Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, or faxed to (512) 763-3407. **Please Note:** We are no longer accepting e-mailed submissions. Please submit events for February by December 10.

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I arrived in Salado stressed out. I was in the midst of a flurry of travel, having driven 700 miles in the few days before I arrived, shuttling every which way across Texas for a mix of business and pleasure.

But after a restful night of sleep and a day of meandering about the shops and galleries of this two-exit Central Texas town off Interstate 35 north of Austin, my frazzled state of mind seemed a lifetime away.

I'm certainly not the first to notice that Salado, founded in 1859, has something special. "Ninety percent of people choose to move here—we could've gone anywhere, but we chose to come here," says Charlotte Douglass, the former—and first—mayor of Salado, which was incorporated in 2000. And although it's lovely year-round, unarguably the best time to visit for a real taste of what the village has to offer is Christmastime.

It all kicks off with the **CHRISTMAS PARADE**, a hometown favorite that's been growing in popularity with each passing year (this time around, it's on December 2). That ushers in the crown jewel event, the **CHRISTMAS STROLL**. For the first two weekends in December, many businesses in the historic part of town stay open until at least 9 p.m. Horse-drawn carriages with jingle bells attached cart visitors to and fro, carolers dress up and sing holiday tunes, and shops offer treats like hot apple cider. Candle-lit luminaries provide the light, adding to the old-fashioned allure of it all.

"Because Salado doesn't have very many streetlights or big buildings, you can really see the stars here," says Douglass, the coordinator of this year's Christmas Stroll and owner of home décor store **CHARLOTTE'S OF SALADO**. "People enjoy strolling around and enjoying the crisp winter air and being together."

The visually driven will like the **SALADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S CHRISTMAS HOMES TOUR**, which takes tourists through artfully dressed-up homes old

WINTER WONDERLAND

Unwrap and unwind: Recapturing the Christmas spirit in Salado.

BY HALEY SHAPLEY



and new, including, for the first time, the historic **ROBERTSON PLANTATION**. Art galleries abound as well; stop in the **PRELLOP FINE ART GALLERY** for Western works, landscapes and sculptures and a pianist playing Christmas carols. "I just want to call it a magical time in a small community like ours," says gallery owner Larry Prellop. "It's what always attracted me to Salado."

On the shopping front, you should be able to get something for everyone on your list. For the finest in jewelry and artistic accents, **GREGORY'S** is the go-to place, while **HORSEFEATHERS** carries all the reasonably priced home décor you didn't know you needed until you set eyes on it (after which point it becomes a must-have). **MUD PIES POTTERY** does handmade well—both Texas pottery and fudge—and book lovers can't miss **FLETCHER'S BOOKS & ANTIQUES**, a treasure trove of old tomes. Antiquing is legendary here, too, and

when you need a break, former Army helicopter pilot June Ritterbusch at **SALADO WINE SELLER** can set you up with a glass or bottle of the best Texas wineries have to offer, including that from its own vineyard, which is on Bartlett Electric Cooperative lines.

You'll need sustenance for all that shopping, so indulge in a nice dinner at **THE RANGE**, where chef Dave Hermann creates Mediterranean-inspired dishes

sure to please the palate. I recommend the three-cheese tortellini, but meat lovers have plenty from which to choose, including pork tenderloin, crawfish-stuffed quail and grilled Tuscan ribeye. For a daytime treat, schedule an afternoon tea session at Adelea's on Main, where you can enjoy a spot of tea and a sweet in a quaint atmosphere.

If it's entertainment you're after, the **TABLE ROCK FESTIVAL OF SALADO** presents "A Christmas Carol" for the 18th year in a row at its outdoor amphitheater the first two weekends of December. Just down the road, **SALADO SILVER SPUR THEATER**, an old converted grainery, presents "Boughs of Folly," a comedic play suitable for the entire family.

After a wonderful night out, there are plenty of options for accommodations in Salado, but they fill up fast this time of year. **INN ON THE CREEK**, a 14-room Victorian bed-and-breakfast, hosted Jenna Bush's bridal luncheon and will treat you like a VIP, too. Don't miss the on-site **ALEXANDER'S DISTILLERY**, an amazingly sleek, high-tech bar more befitting of a big city but still charming.

Whatever you do, you're sure to leave Salado a little more relaxed than when you arrived. "It's a perfect getaway from the hectic pace that we all feel at Christmas," Douglass says. "Going to the malls and chain stores, you lose your Christmas spirit in there. People always tell me they get that back here."

Salado Chamber of Commerce, (254) 947-5040, www.salado.com

Haley Shapley, formerly of Coppell, now lives in the Seattle area and hopes to visit Salado this Christmas.



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