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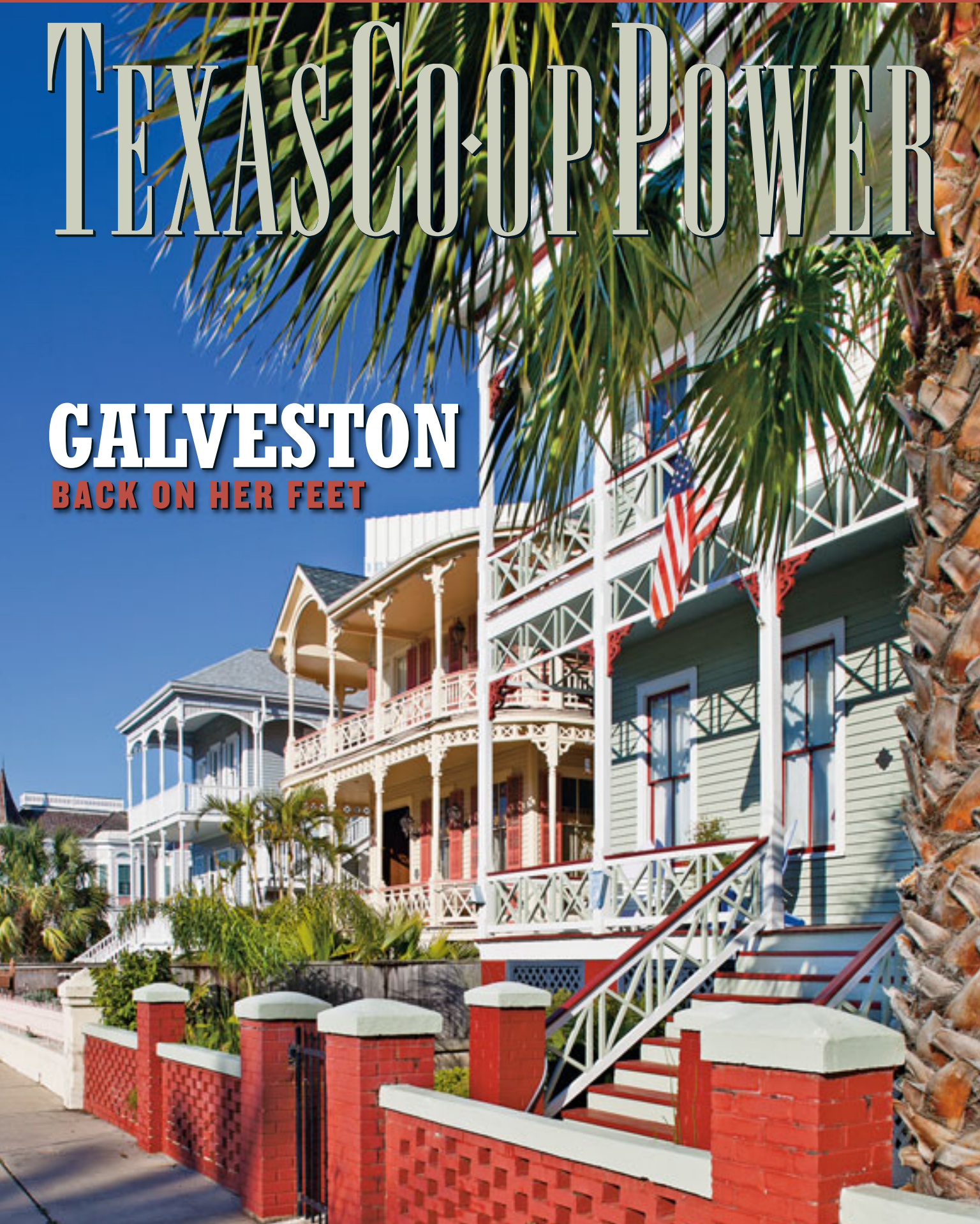
APRIL 2011

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THE CHICKENS AND THE EGGS

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GALVESTON
BACK ON HER FEET



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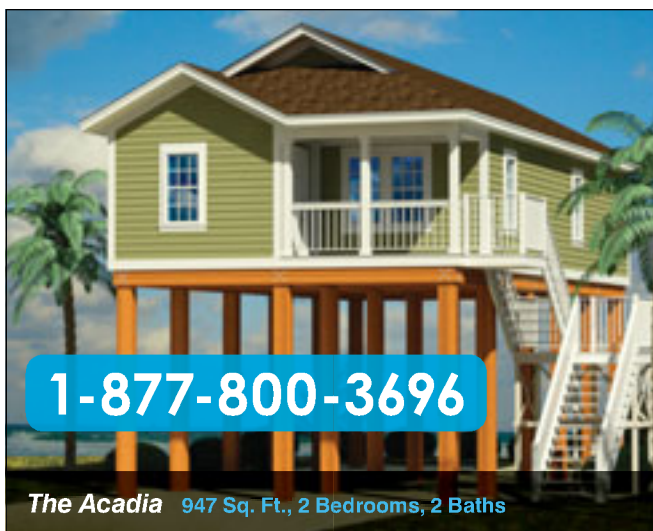
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FEATURES

10 Back on Her Feet

By Harry Shattuck

Photos by Rick Patrick

Longtime Galveston residents know well the stages of life on their beloved island: growth and prosperity; devastation and despair; determination and renewal. More than two years after Hurricane Ike, the cycle spins anew.

18 Texas-style Fiddlin'

By John Morthland

Photos by Wyatt McSpadden

Texans are fools for a fiddle, especially when it comes to the annual Fiddlers' Frolics in Hallettsville.

WEB EXTRA: Listen to old-time Texas fiddling.

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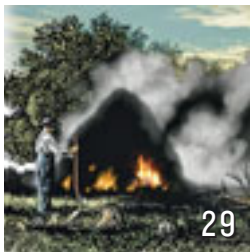
ONLINE

TexasCoopPower.com

The following April stories are available on our website.

Texas Reader by Shannon Oelrich
'As a Farm Woman Thinks'

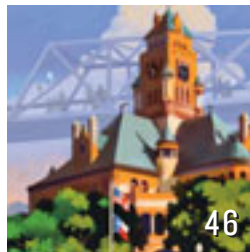
Observations by G. Elaine Acker
Herman and Me: The saga of a lovable sourdough starter



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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

GRATEFUL FOR WRITER'S SENSITIVITY

I do not have the words to thank you, Ashley Clary, for the TexasCoopPower.com article you wrote about my son Daniel (February 2011, "In Midst of Tragedy, Family Gives Life").

It is especially meaningful, and I consider it a gift from God, that the magazine came today. Saturday, January 29, marked the sixth anniversary of Daniel's accident, and February 5 is the anniversary of his death.

You captured Daniel's spirit in your article! And we are so grateful. Admittedly, this is one of our emotional times. And the article will be one we treasure as giving meaning to Daniel's life for years to come. Thank you for your time and your sensitive interpretation of what organ donation means to us.

CARMEN POLHEMUS

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

POWER TALK

THE ELOQUENT BARBARA JORDAN

Barbara Jordan. If you don't get chills hearing her name, then you never heard the lady. I'm a native Texan. My school days were back when blacks had separate entrances to

college, and we had our first experience of integration. And then came the day I first heard Ms. Jordan. For me, she was always 10 feet tall, head and shoulders over all the rest of us who meant no harm. We just didn't understand. When that lady opened her mouth, we understood.

Thank you, Kaye Northcott, for your February 2011 article about the eloquent Barbara Jordan. It is good for us to remember that lady.

OLIVE LOHRENGEL

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

Thank you, Kaye Northcott, for your very well-written article on Barbara Jordan. I was prompted to go back to her July 25, 1974, speech to

READ MORE LETTERS

See "Letters to the Editor" in the April Table of Contents at

TexasCoopPower.com

some establishments, and whites had the main entrance. Honestly, I never thought about it, because that was just the way things were. My first awareness that blacks felt left out was when I was in

the U.S. House Judiciary Committee during the Watergate hearings. Following her words and listening to her speak was once again inspiring—and awesome. I forwarded your article and Jordan's speech to my 14-year-old granddaughter, who is early in the process of developing her "voice."

Thank you for the impetus to revisit Ms. Jordan's integrity, her eloquence and the power of her presence.

STAN SPEED

Navarro County Electric Cooperative

Barbara Jordan was my friend and a classmate of mine at Phillis Wheatley High School in Houston. We shared a worktable in biology. All of us recognized that Barbara was an extraordinary person. She was voted "Most Likely to Succeed." And she did.

NILA HILL

Fayette Electric Cooperative

TIME WELL SPENT

Writer Sheryl Smith-Rodgers did an outstanding job of encapsulating who we are, what we do and how we operate ("Five-and-Dime Happy Times," February 2011). It is with the support of publications like yours and the word-of-mouth reputation you enforce that allows us to stay in business. I invite you to come take a firsthand look at one of the last remaining "dinosaurs" in the industry.

TIM DOOLEY

*Owner, Dooley's 5-10 & 25¢ store,
Fredericksburg
Central Texas Electric Cooperative*

Editor's note: The story did not appear in all print editions of Texas Co-op Power. Find it at TexasCoopPower.com.

We want to hear from our readers. Submit letters online under the Submit and Share tab at 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.

RATTLED ABOUT 'NEW' RATTLER



I've never seen one. Is this the one I should look out for? A friend of mine said he saw one on my place, so I wanted to know for sure. Thanks!

Michael Nickerson, *Coleman County Electric Cooperative*

I noticed with great interest the picture on Page 10 in the January 2011 issue in the "Emergency Call" cover article about rural veterinarians. Is this the new type of rattlesnake I've heard about? Friends have told me it's called a hybrid because it was the result of some irresponsible fool crossbreeding a rattlesnake and a water moccasin. I'm told it's yellow in color, with some markings, but

Editor's note: The above photo of the plastic rattlesnake display that appeared in the January 2011 issue of Texas Co-op Power resides in Dr. Larry Brooks' veterinary office in Junction. This fang-bearing Western Diamondback is a reminder to patients to get their dogs vaccinated against rattlesnake bites. As for any crossbreeding between a diamondback rattler and a water moccasin, that, according to Brooks, is a myth. However, he says, it's possible that the Mojave rattlesnake is migrating to far West Texas. For now, there is no evidence to support the notion that the Mojave and diamondback could someday crossbreed.

H A P P E N I N G S



Conroe is virtually surrounded by rich Lone Star State history: To the north is Huntsville, where Sam Houston died in 1863. To the west is the Washington-on-the-Brazos State Historic Site, where the Texas Declaration of Independence was signed in 1836. To the southwest is the Stephen F. Austin State Park that marks the home of Texas' first Anglo-American colony. To the southeast is the San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site, where Texans won their independence.

And now Conroe is giving itself a bigger dot on Texas' historical map with the opening of **THE LONE STAR MONUMENT AND HISTORICAL FLAG PARK**. Unveiling ceremonies are scheduled for 5:30 p.m. April 21.

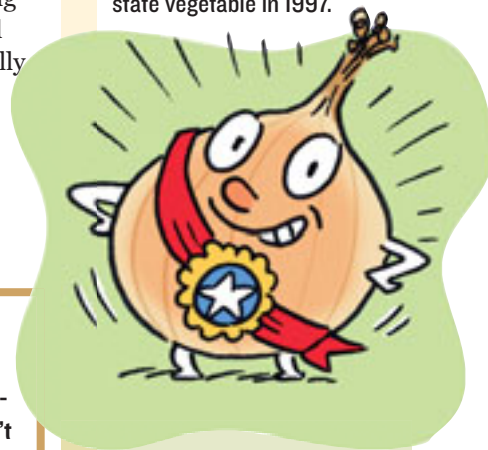
The park proudly displays 13 one-of-a-kind flags that flew over historic battles, along with descriptions of the volunteers who fought during the Texas Revolution. Of special historical interest are the sketches done by Charles B. Stewart, who in 1997 was officially recognized by the state Legislature as the Lone Star flag's designer.

For more information, visit www.texasflagpark.org or call 1-877-426-6763.

WHO KNEW?

OFFICIAL VEGGIE

While there's no clear consensus on the origins of the onion—researchers differ on whether it was first grown in Central Asia or Iran and western Pakistan—there's no doubt that it's the perfect complement to many Texas native foods. The origin of Texas sweet onions dates to 1898, when Bermuda onion seed was planted near Cotulla. The Legislature designated the Texas sweet onion the official state vegetable in 1997.



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CO-OP PEOPLE

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

Many folks would cuss a dusty road. Not Scott Wade. Thanks to his quirky genius, the Pedernales Electric Cooperative member magically transforms the dirt and grunge on vehicles' rear windows into impermanent works of art.

Using his fingers, paintbrushes and other tools, Wade sculpts dust into amazing images. One masterpiece re-created Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" and Vincent van Gogh's "The Starry Night" on the same window.



Scott Wade; detail from his "Mona Lisa/The Starry Night" piece

The 52-year-old Wade has demonstrated his self-described Dirty Car Art around the globe: "When someone asks which of my pieces I like best, I steal a line from Frank Lloyd Wright and say, 'The next one!'"

*No! Not the Car Wash!
Enjoy the Moment ... and the Art*

The ideal art vehicle, Wade says, is one that's been driven on a dirt road for about a week, with its dust-crusted rear window becoming a natural canvas (although he typically won't draw on someone's vehicle unless asked).

For years, Wade and his wife, Robin Wood, lived off a caliche road near San Marcos. They now live in a paved subdivision near Wimberley. But not to worry: Whether it's drawing on the windows of their hatchbacks or on vehicles at a festival or corporate event, Wade can dirty up a window quick with a method involving a light coat of oil and the blowing of dust.

Wade has demonstrated his grimy gift of drawing on such TV shows as the History Channel's "Modern Marvels." He even starred in a music video with the Latin funk orchestra Grupo Fantasma.

There is one place where Wade's art doesn't fade: his website, www.dirtycarart.com.

"Creating art that doesn't last is a meditation on the impermanence of things," he says. "My art reminds me always to enjoy the moment."

Sheryl-Smith Rodgers is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.

Have a suggestion for a future Co-op People? Contact editor@texascoopower.com.

A Cool Roof Over Your Head

Elastomeric 'cool-roof' coatings turn down the heat in mobile homes

By Chris Dorsi

Mobile homes tend to overheat in summer because they don't have a large attic space to provide a buffer between the hot outdoors and the living space inside. In many mobile or manufactured homes, the space between the interior ceiling surface and the exterior metal roof is less than a foot. Though a thin layer of insulation is installed in this cavity, the heat of summer tends to transmit right down into your living quarters.

One of the best ways to slow this heat flow into your home is to apply a white elastomeric "cool-roof" coating that, thanks in part to its elastic, stretching qualities, forms a weather-resistant, protective membrane. With this coating in place, homeowners can expect to see lower electric bills, lower roof maintenance costs and longer lives for air-conditioning systems.

Metal mobile-home roofs are easy to recoat. In fact, many homeowners do so every few years to ensure their roof's longevity and water tightness. You can apply a cool-roof coating when your mobile home next needs to be recoated, or you could do it right away to reap

immediate benefits. Many homeowners note that their home is cooler the same day that a cool roof coating is applied.

Cool-roof coatings can be sprayed on or applied by brush or roller, just like traditional black or silver asphalt coatings. Their performance is superior to these coatings, however, because their reflectivity (ability to reflect the sun's heat) and their emissivity (ability to release the roof's heat) are far greater. In one sense, the liquid application of cool-roof coatings is like the difference between wearing a white shirt and black shirt on a blistering hot day: You'll be cooler in the white shirt because it reflects more sunlight and absorbs less heat.

Cool-roof coatings are available on numerous websites and at a variety of stores, including The Home Depot, Lowe's and Ace Hardware.

To ensure that your cool-roof coating adheres properly, the roof surface should first be washed and any loose previous coatings scraped away. Because cool-roof coatings are water-based, they should be applied when no rain is expected for at least one day.

Above all else, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Once you have a cool-roof coating on your mobile home, and you appreciate the difference in summertime comfort, you'll never go back to the old-fashioned coatings.

Author Chris Dorsi is a managing partner with Saturn Resource Management. He is a Building Performance Institute-certified building analyst, a heating professional and envelope professional, a Residential Energy Services Network certified home-energy rater, and is retired from the American Society of Home Inspectors. For more information about improving energy efficiency at home, go to www.srmi.biz.

Stop the Leaks from Manufactured Homes—and Your Wallet

If the utility bill for your manufactured or mobile home seems too high, it could be the result of leaks. Here are some tips that can stop the leaks from your home—and your wallet.

Older manufactured homes, especially those built before 1994, may have leaking ducts and inadequate insulation. Leaky ductwork can reduce the efficiency of your heating and cooling system by as much as 20 percent. A good time to check for leaks is on a windy day, when you'll be able to find drafty spots in your home.

Experts recommend going after the big leaks first. That means plugging all holes around chimneys, vents, water pipes and heating-system ductwork. Leaky ducts can be sealed with mastic sealant. Avoid the use of duct tape, which can dry out and disintegrate when used on ductwork. Adding insulation to floor, wall and ceiling cavities can improve energy efficiency, but may be a job for a professional contractor.

Once you've sealed the major leaks, look for smaller ones—around windows, doors, electrical outlets and light switches. Seal gaps around windows and doors, using caulk on nonmoving parts. And replace any worn weatherstripping. Caulk or expanding spray foam can be used where plumbing, wiring, vents and ducting penetrate through walls. Installing foam outlet gaskets in electrical outlets and light switches—especially on outside walls—can save energy, too.

And for safety's sake, make sure that all combustion appliances, such as furnaces, stoves and water heaters, are properly vented.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Cooperative Research Network



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GALVESTON BACK ON HER FEET

In the wake of another brutal hurricane, tourists detect nary a limp as Galveston regains a prosperous business stride

BY HARRY SHATTUCK • PHOTOS BY RICK PATRICK

SCANT HOURS BEFORE THE INEVITABLE—TORNADIC WINDS, TORRENTIAL RAINS, 20-FOOT-HIGH WAVES AND A DEADLY STORM SURGE—GALVESTON RESTAURATEURS LARRY AND TIKIE KRITICOS SCANNED THEIR E-MAIL INBOX.

“JIM CANTORE SAYS YOU WON’T BE THERE TOMORROW; WOULD YOU SEND ME THE RECIPE FOR YOUR CRAB CAKE?” AN E-MAIL FROM CHICAGO BEGAN, REFERENCING THE WEATHER CHANNEL STORM GURU WHO WAS REPORTING LIVE FROM THE ISLAND CITY ON SEPTEMBER 12, 2008.

As meteorologist Cantore told viewers, Hurricane Ike was advancing through the Gulf of Mexico, headed straight for Galveston early the next morning. Grand-opening plans for the Kriticos brothers’ new waterfront restaurant, three years in the planning and days from completion, were doomed, at least temporarily. The potential overall impact on the island was mind-boggling.

Still, the brothers—who had heeded mandatory evacuation orders and were monitoring developments from Dallas—forwarded the recipe.

“I hope you don’t mind that it makes 15 gallons,” Larry wrote. “You’ll need about \$1,000 worth of crab meat.”

Better yet, he could have added, “bide your time, we won’t be gone long.” After six decades on the island—growing up in restaurants operated by their Greek immigrant parents—Larry and Tiki had no doubt that those mouth-watering blue crab cakes with rémoulade sauce would again lure devotees to their Olympia Grill, a longtime favorite on Seawall Boulevard. And they weren’t about to abandon dreams for a second restaurant—Olympia The Grill at Pier 21—in the shadow of the tall ship Elissa.

Days later, the brothers returned to a demoralizing scene. The original restaurant, near the beach but protected by a 17-foot-tall seawall, “had only a wash-through,” Tiki says. But the almost-completed 5,000-square-foot harbor-side eatery was flooded by 18 inches of water. “We came home to find a shrimp boat in its main parking lot and a 30-foot sport fishing boat at the back door,” Tiki said.

Despair quickly yielded to determination. Rather than allow shrimp and other seafood to spoil, the brothers fed storm emergency responders. In the meantime, rebuilding commenced. The original restaurant re-opened within three weeks, serving a limited menu, and the new Olympia The Grill debuted in June 2009. Throughout the recovery, Larry says, “I remembered a young man who once told me, ‘No matter how bad my day is, when I drive down the seawall and think about what we’ve got here, I start smiling.’”

The Kriticoses’ story speaks volumes about the spirit of Galvestonians and their oft-tested resilience in times of adversity.

“There will always be another storm, though we hope the next one is 30 to 40 years from now,” Tiki says. “But Galveston will always come back.”

THE CYCLE SPINS ANEW

Longtime residents know well the stages of life on their beloved island: growth and prosperity; devastation and despair; determination and renewal. Two and a half years after Ike, the most destructive hurricane most modern-day Galvestonians have experienced, the cycle spins anew.

“No one would wish for a hurricane, but with hurricanes comes a cleansing—and each cleansing brings new ideas and new development,” says Jackie Hasan, chief concierge and resident historian at the Hotel Galvez, whose yearlong centennial party peaks June 10-11, the hotel’s official anniversary weekend.

“We were on life support for a time, but now the best is yet to come; we have so much to look forward to,” suggests Hasan, the third generation in her family to work at the hotel.

No other single entity reflects Galvestonians’ optimism better than the Galvez. Following a 1900 hurricane that, by various estimates, killed 6,000 to 12,000 residents—the deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history—city leaders raised \$1 million to construct this “Queen of the Gulf,” whose guest list includes U.S. presidents, celebrities and countless Texans celebrating milestone events. Through good times and bad, the Galvez, recognizable for its Spanish Colonial Revival and mission-style architecture, has stood as a symbol of pride overlooking the Gulf.

Hasan, who evacuated to her sister’s inland home in Pearland during Ike, recalls her horror watching TV images once the hurricane struck. One week later, pictures evolved into reality. “Boats, debris and mud carpeted both sides of the freeway (Interstate 45) entering the bridge to the causeway (over Galveston Bay),” she says. “As you crossed the causeway onto Broadway, all you could see was miles of debris and yachts.

“I came back onto the island and saw all the carnage, but then I walked into the Hotel Galvez and everything seemed normal,” she says. Remarkably, the hotel escaped major damage.



Open for business: Brothers Larry, left, and Tikie Kriticos, bathed in the porch lights of their newest restaurant, are Galveston natives who know a thing or two about rebuilding in the wake of hurricanes. 'There will always be another storm,' says Tikie, remembering the 2008 devastation of Hurricane Ike. 'But Galveston will always come back.'

Hasan's emotions swell as she speaks of George Mitchell, the hotel's 91-year-old owner, gathering employees in the lobby the week after Ike struck. Mitchell, a Galveston native whose family has restored many of Galveston's most treasured buildings over the past three decades, represents the never-say-die temperament so important on an island where, in Hasan's words, "It takes a certain amount of courage to live. I had tears in my eyes," Hasan says. "You're in a state of denial. You're going through trauma. But Mr. Mitchell knew we could get through this. He opened the door and said, 'We've got things to do.' He knew that if we pitied ourselves and did nothing all day, we'd be paralyzed."

Hasan, whose grandmother and two other family members, two aunts, had worked in the hotel's laundry, moved into the Galvez in the wake of Ike's destruction. "My apartment was damaged, and at first I couldn't enter because the pressure had sealed the door and windows," she says. "After three weeks my building was inspected and condemned, and I had five days to salvage what I could and move. At this point, the only home I had was the Hotel Galvez."

Other employees joined Hasan, living and dining at no charge until electricity was restored to their homes and city services resumed. The Galvez, operated by Wyndham Hotels

and Resorts, re-opened within a month and, from her concierge desk, Hasan helped residents find shelter and supplies. "Everyone knew the Galvez, so everyone came here," she says.

Now, a multimillion-dollar renovation—which had started before the storm—provides new luster to the hotel's public areas, guest rooms and suites. Guests can unwind at a 10,000-square-foot spa, meander through a just-completed Hall of History, or pause in an expansive lobby to ask Hasan about the 224-room hotel's legendary ghosts.

"Don't worry," says Hasan, who conducts tours that explore the paranormal. "We only have friendly ghosts here."

FLOODED WITH TOURISM

From an overall tourism perspective, Galveston is on the advance again. Moody Gardens, a 242-acre educational

BELOW, LEFT: Mosquito Cafe waitress Kay Grimes shows off the 'Far East End,' a grilled ahi tuna dish. A marker near the top of a 6-foot-tall chalkboard menu reads: 'Hurricane Ike High Water September 13, 2008.' **RIGHT:** Jackie Hasan is chief concierge and resident historian at the Hotel Galvez, which for a century now has stood as a symbol of pride overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. After Hurricane Ike hit Galveston, Hasan and other hotel employees lived and dined for free at the Galvez.



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nature park where glass pyramids house exhibits on rain forests, sea life and science, is completing a \$25 million enhancement. Schlitterbahn Galveston Island Waterpark is set to introduce a 100,000-gallon family wave pool this summer. Texas' largest cruise port expects to update its fleet with three new ships this autumn—and with up to 50,000 passengers monthly, pre- and post-cruise tourism potential is huge.

Longstanding favorites survive, including the restored 1877 tall ship *Elissa* and Texas Seaport Museum, the 19th century Moody Mansion and Bishop's Palace, and downtown's Strand Historic District where Col. Bubbie's Strand Surplus Senter coexists with the Bacchus Wine Bar and two candy factories. Nearby Postoffice Street is equally eclectic; quality restaurants are flanked by the Grand 1894 Opera House and the Witchery metaphysical book and gift shop. For those who covet a thrill more than a psychic reading, the Lone Star Flight Museum offers flights in a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber and other historic warbirds from the island's small airport.

Restaurants are revived and refurbished. Lodging options include three new oceanfront motels. The fishing is good, the surfing exhilarates and dolphin-watching mesmerizes.

And renourished beaches are again kissed by the sun, not cursed by the elements.

Galvestonians' penchant for pure fun—Is it the sea air? The remote setting?—also remains undaunted. Loyalists embrace the Poop Deck, a Seawall Boulevard biker bar “where the elite meet in bare feet.” Not that uninhibited? Check out Stewart Beach, where youngsters build sand castles and romantics stroll arm in arm. Or sleep to the serenade of the surf at Galveston Island State Park. Just don't blink your eyes; you may miss a festival.

Oh, there are reminders of Ike: vacant lots, empty buildings, barren panoramas, rampant construction, a 10 percent population decline. Sample a spicy Kahuna Tuna sandwich at the Mosquito Cafe, a gem of a restaurant, and you'll notice a marker near the top of a six-foot chalkboard that details daily specials. It reads, “Hurricane Ike High Water.” (Much of downtown absorbed an eight-foot surge.)

And the island is a work in progress: The Galveston Island Tree Conservancy vows to plant 25,000 new trees; in the interim, a self-guided driving tour showcases more than two dozen whimsical sculptures carved from the trunks of toppled trees outside elegant Victorian homes. Renowned cast-iron commercial buildings—cited among America's 11 most endangered places by the National Trust for Historic Preservation following Ike's wrath—are benefiting from \$775,000 in federal disaster relief money. A \$15 million enhancement to island beaches, due for completion in May, includes new landscaping, restrooms and historical markers.

But then, recovery is nothing new here. “It's what we do,” Larry Kriticos says.

HEALING, GROWING STRONGER

His words encourage a peek into the past—back as far as the mid-19th century when Galveston grew from a rowdy village once controlled by pirate Jean Lafitte into one of Texas' largest cities. As a center of trade and immigration, it was home to the state's first post office, grocery store, hospital, telephone, electric lights and medical college. It was

probably Texas' richest town, too, but wealth was no match for the 1900 hurricane.

Then, as today, the healing process was buoyed by a passion not just to recoup but to rebuild stronger than ever. Within two years, construction began on a 17-foot-high seawall. The initial barrier, since extended to 10.3 miles, was completed by 1910, and a year later, Gaido's Seafood Restaurant—currently celebrating its centennial, too—joined the Galvez as landmarks to be.

An emphasis on hospitality eventually brought Galveston acclaim as an entertainment and gaming capital, centered at the Balinese Room, a nightclub and (illegal) casino constructed on a pier. Frank Sinatra performed here. So did Bob Hope, Jack Benny, Duke Ellington and Peggy Lee. The boom was back, but only until the mid-1950s when the state government put a stop to gambling—and, in effect, to big-time entertainment. Then, in 1961, Hurricane Carla took its toll. While the seawall rescued Galveston from oblivion, damage was severe.

Time and again, the 1895 Hutchings-Sealy building, a majestic architectural component of Galveston's Strand Historic District, has stood up to hurricanes with its terra cotta-encased steel frame—one of the earliest examples of steel-frame construction in Texas.



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Thousands of Galveston's trees, left, succumbed to Hurricane Ike's storm surge. Contractors cut down the dead trees, but artists, such as Jim Phillips of Clear Lake, above, cranked up their chain saws and carved statues from the stumps, such as this angel that resurrects, in spirit, a century-old sycamore. At top right, another artist's Great Dane statue stands guard over a residence.



Three decades of stagnation followed until the Mitchell family initiated yet another renaissance, restoring the Galvez and downtown's Tremont House hotel. The philanthropic Moody Foundation and entrepreneur Tilman Fertitta—another native whose Galveston investments include the San Luis Resort and an adjacent convention center and several prominent restaurants and whose grandfather ran the Balinese room in its heyday—also have played key roles in shaping the Galveston that attracts up to 5 million visitors annually.

Still, after so much prior misfortune, it would have been easy to give in to Ike. Why bother?

A prime motivation is economics. Though most residents cherish a relaxed pace—and the sea—some 33 percent of the island's jobs are tourism-related, and shuttered shops, restaurants and lodgings equate to lost income.

But that doesn't explain the welcome from a young man

named Kevin at a beachfront Holiday Inn: "Please see me if you have any questions; I love this island so much I have a Galveston tattoo."

Or the determination of Tikie Kriticos: "I had 5 feet of water in my home. I'm still rebuilding. Friends tell me I should move to Dallas. But I'll never leave Galveston."

Hasan expresses the appeal: "When people come across that causeway, you feel a healing, a release to your body. I left in 1968 and came back 25 years ago. I couldn't stay away. Something kept pulling me back. It's the perfect place."

No matter the burdens, Galvestonians refuse to give up their "perfect place."

"I think about our ancestors from the 1900 storm," Hasan says. "Those of us who live here now are very blessed compared to what they went through."

The cycle spins anew.

Harry Shattuck recently retired as the Houston Chronicle's travel editor after 39 years at the newspaper. He received the Lowell Thomas Grand Award as North American travel journalist of the year in 2001. His father was longtime manager of Coast Electric Power Association, a Mississippi cooperative.

On TexasCoopPower.com

Check out a list of Galveston's achievements, many of which—including the opening of a post office—were the first in Texas.

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Texas-style

Famed Hallettsville contest showcases a hallowed craft that's passed from ear to ear, year after year



Nimble-fingered Benny Bennet, 74, plays his way to the seniors' title during the 2010 Fiddlers' Frolics in Hallettsville. The Magnolia fiddler exemplifies the spirit of the famed competition: Age and experience, the latter born of listening to tunes passed down through the decades, often make for the sweetest sounds.

Texans are fools for a fiddle. If you don't believe it, take a stroll through the grounds of the annual Fiddlers' Frolics in Hallettsville. There, amid curls of smoke from a simultaneous barbecue cook-off, the best contest fiddlers in Texas go *mano a mano* for the state championship.

Texas fiddlers can trace their roots prior to the Civil War, and fiddling contests are a Texas institution dating back to at least the 19th century. The tradition holds today, with numerous contests filling the calendar from March through September—and increasingly, women are joining men onstage. Two of the most popular competitions are the Texas Old Time Fiddlers Association World Championship Fiddlers Contest in Crockett (set for June 11) and the Athens Old Fiddlers Contest & Reunion (set for May 26-27).

But Hallettsville remains the undisputed big 'un, and only the National Oldtime Fiddlers' Contest in Weiser, Idaho, and the Grand Master Fiddler Championship in Nashville come close to its national stature.

Slated for April 14-17 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Hallettsville, the Texas State Championship Fiddlers' Frolics is expected to draw some 15,000 fans from around the country. In addition to the state championship, other fiddling-related contests include: the Senior Division (ages 65 and older); the Forrest Craig Division (ages 15 and younger); the Gone To Texas showdown for out-of-state fiddlers; two guitar accompanist battles; and an Anything Goes spectacle for trick fiddlers.

Visitors can check out the Fiddlers' Frolics Hall of Fame in the Knights of Columbus Hall and drop in on jam sessions all over the grounds. There are also dances and concerts featuring Cajun, zydeco and country bands, a midway, a crafts fair, seven barbecue cook-off categories, and the Texas Songwriters Serenade contest.

Fiddlin'

BY JOHN MORTHLAND • PHOTOS BY WYATT McSPADDEN

It's all a far cry from the maiden Fiddlers' Frolics of 1971, an afternoon affair held at Weid Hall, 10 miles west of Hallettsville. Kenneth Henneke remembers the day well, for he and Frank Zaruba were organizers; four decades later, they still are.

"We didn't know what to expect then," Henneke laughs. "We hoped for 300 people and got 1,200; the high point of the day was a seven-car wreck on the highway." But local farmer Dan Jasek, a 79-year-old Moulton native who is the only fiddler to have competed every single year, remembers a different highlight. "It was so intriguing that first year to hear all the different types of fiddlers," he says. "It still is today."

That's important. Though contest fiddlers do make CDs, this is primarily a folk form passed from ear to ear. Older fiddlers, generally speaking, have never taken a lesson or seen an instructional video in their lives; they learned their craft by listening to other fiddlers and copying them, adding their own touches as they improved. Several of the best young players come from families of contest fiddlers who go back several generations.

Texas fiddling continues a surge on the strength of newcomers like 17-year-old Mia Orosco of Lorena, who had eight years of classical violin training before discovering fiddling contests five years ago. She now plays both as often as she can. It's not just her age that gives fiddling a shot in the arm, either. Orosco represents the growing number of females following in the wake of Valerie Ryals O'Brien, who's seemingly won nearly every fiddling award there is and in 2009 became the first woman fiddler inducted into the Fiddlers' Frolics Hall of Fame.

Five women finished in the top 20 of the Fiddlers' Frolics state championship in 2010, including Orosco in fourth place—her first try after winning the 15-and-younger title the year before.

Despite such advances, contest fiddling remains a throwback, the last vehicle that traditionalists have for showing their stuff. Their repertoire consists of ancient tunes like "Sally Goodin," "Sally Johnson" and "Tom and Jerry." Unlike fiddlers who play with country bands, the aim of contest fiddlers is not to impress the audience by helping get couples out on the dance floor or by winning concert encores; it's to impress judges with their knowledge and flair for the eternal verities, which can be so nuanced that to the untrained ear the music might all sound the same.

But Texas fiddlers—being Texans, after all—take it further, using the full length of the bow (as opposed to fiddlers elsewhere who use just part of it). They have developed a sophisticated style that features intricate, well-coordinated wrist and forearm motions and "fancy fingering." The so-called longbow style, which probably first surfaced here in the 1920s, reached its highest fruition around 1960 via the music of Benny Thomasson, an Arlington auto-body-shop worker, and results in an unusually rich and busy sound filled with slurs, slides, overtones and octave shifts.

And Texas fiddlers are improvisers; though most traditional tunes have just two parts (variations on the melody), Texans, without ever straying too far from the original tune, have worked many of them over until they now have five or six. As traditional musicians from Appalachia and elsewhere have struggled to keep up, "Texas style" has become virtually synonymous with "contest fiddling."

"This kind of fiddling is much harder than even Western swing," declares defending Fiddlers' Frolics' state champion Wes Westmoreland III, 48, of Temple. He comes from a contest-fiddling family but has also backed



TOP: Seventeen-year-old Mia Orosco of Lorena represents a growing number of women who excel in old-fashioned fiddling contests. Orosco, who also plays classical violin, finished fourth in the 2010 Fiddlers' Frolics state championship. **BOTTOM:** It sounds good to Jason Andrew of Whitewright ... and to the judges, who score him seventh in the state contest.



LEFT: Music to tickle the ears and food that'll stick to your ribs: Kadin Munson of Hallettsville digs into an ample hunk of meat. **RIGHT:** There's plenty of other frolicking to be done, as these youngsters illustrate on a midway ride.

commercial music stars like Mel Tillis and the late Boxcar Willie. "Playing this music is almost an aerobic experience—it'll make you sweat," says Westmoreland, a seven-time winner in Hallettsville who's known for his expansive bow work.

Last year's win—which netted Westmoreland \$1,500, a Texas-size belt buckle, a fiddle stand and a plaque—was especially dramatic. In the first round of the championships, some 27 entries took turns playing a breakdown (a particular, repetitive kind of fiddle tune) and a "tune of choice" (any type except another breakdown).

The field was then narrowed down to 10 semifinalists and the process repeated, with Westmoreland, Dennis Ludiker and Bubba Hopkins announced as the finalists. The now-27-year-old Ludiker, who won the Frolics overall title in 2008 and '09, hails from a Spokane, Washington, family of champion fiddlers, and moved to Austin in 2002. Hopkins, of Burleson, snared the Gone To Texas title in 2009 when he was 19 and finishing up college in his native Oklahoma. But this was his first try at

the Texas state crown.

It was youth vs. experience as the three men squared off for a round-robin championship. And that's where things got real interesting.

Each man had to play his choice of a hornpipe—probably the most complex type of fiddle tune—then each chose a breakdown; the pattern was repeated for a rag, a swing tune and a polka. If a competitor was really feeling his oats, he'd go with something his predecessor had played, the idea being to sway the judges by whupping a foe at his own specialty.

Hopkins, wearing a red checkered shirt and faded, frayed blue jeans, played a showy version of "Dusty Miller" for his breakdown, whooping as he bore down on his bow. Then Westmoreland, in a Hawaiian shirt and white cowboy hat, came back with a more rhythmic arrangement of the same, and even from the back of the room you could hear his foot tapping on the stage; the difference in styles was clear. He also answered Ludiker's speedy "Lady Be Good" with his own, more delicate, version. But the contest wasn't over yet.

In an unprecedented situation for the Fiddlers' Frolics, Ludiker and

Hopkins were tied and had to play one more tune. Were they competing for first and second? Second and third? They and the audience did not know. Ludiker led with a calmly confident version of "Honey Boy," an original composition by Texas fiddle legend Louis Franklin. Hopkins whooped his way through a flashier rendition that was clearly the audience favorite. As it turned out, the judges agreed, awarding Hopkins second place and Ludiker third behind Westmoreland.

In the battle of youth vs. experience, experience won. For an old-time fiddling contest like the Frolics, that seemed only appropriate.

John Morthland is a freelance writer based in Austin who has worked for Rolling Stone, Creem and Country Music magazines and numerous other music publications.

On TexasCoopPower.com

Listen to 2010 Fiddlers' Frolics first-place winner Wes Westmoreland give his bow a workout.

AT RIGHT: Veteran fiddler Dan Jasek





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It won't be too long until you can regularly open the windows and enjoy fresh air and warm weather. Is your house ready?

Here are five items to add to your springtime to-do list that might help your home feel more comfortable and cared for before it gets hot:

1. Call a qualified service technician to inspect and maintain your air-conditioning system. Paying \$100 or so now could prevent a huge expense this summer if your system breaks down on a hot day, and you have to have it repaired or replaced in a hurry. Maintenance goes a long way toward preventing emergencies and can prolong the life of your equipment.
2. While you're outdoors planting and pruning, trim all of the bushes and pull all of the weeds near your air conditioner's outside condenser unit. Remove any fallen tree limbs that landed on it, brush off leaves that have collected on or around it, and pick up trash that has found its way there as it sat unused all winter. Anything that touches the unit and prevents air from circulating around it will make it perform inefficiently.
3. While you've got your shovel and spade out, consider planting some shade trees on the sunny side of your house. As they grow, they will filter the sun's rays that can beat so fiercely on your windows in the summer and make your air conditioner work harder.
4. Speaking of windows, if your house still has single-pane versions, this is a good time to replace them with double-pane models. Single-pane windows are energy inefficient and can drive your air-conditioning bills through the roof. You could save several hundred dollars on cooling and heating bills every year if you replace your drafty, old windows.
5. Clean your windows, inside and out. Newer models are simple to clean because you can tilt them toward the inside of the house so you can reach both sides. Clean windows let more sunlight into your house, which means you won't have to turn on as many lights.

DRYERS

Need Cleaning Beyond Lint Traps

You probably peel the lint out of your clothes dryer's lint trap after every load of laundry. But that's not enough to keep the appliance from posing a fire hazard to your home.

Add a few more maintenance checks to your laundry-day routine, including:

- Notice how long it takes the dryer to dry your clothes. If they're still damp at the end of a typical drying cycle, or if it's starting to take longer to dry clothes, your lint screen or exhaust duct is probably blocked.

- Clean the dryer vent and exhaust duct at least once a year.

The duct is the coil that sends the hot dryer air to the outdoors. The vent is the hole where the hot air leaves the house. Both can get clogged with lint and overheat, send dirty, moist air back into your home, or even catch on fire. You might have to disconnect the exhaust duct from the dryer and vent to remove a blockage.

- Clean the back of the dryer and sweep behind and underneath it regularly to remove accumulated lint.

- If your exhaust duct is plastic or foil, replace it with a rigid or corrugated, semirigid metal duct. Plastic and foil are too flexible and trap lint easily.

- Avoid throwing gasoline-, oil- or chemical-soiled clothes and towels into the dryer. Instead, wash them several times and line dry them. If you have to use the dryer for them, choose the lowest setting and remove them the minute the cycle is finished. Even washed-and-dried clothes that have come into contact with volatile chemicals can ignite. Best bet: Consider the clothes ruined and safely dispose of them.



Electric Yard Tools Save Money

BY JAMES DULLEY

DEAR JIM: I want to use cordless and electric tools, especially yard tools and a lawn mower, instead of gasoline ones. Will using them increase my electric bills much, and which rechargeable batteries are best? —*Kelli F.*

DEAR KELLI: Using electric or cordless tools makes more sense than using gasoline-powered ones for many reasons. Obviously, the United States has to import huge amounts of oil to make gasoline. Anything a homeowner can do to use less gasoline is good. If you have access to an electric outlet, plug-in tools offer lighter weight and more power than cordless ones.

Electric or cordless tools also cost much less to use than gasoline tools. For example, a cordless lawn mower can cut a one-third-acre lot for about 10 cents' worth of electricity to charge the battery—usually an overnight charge at a rate of 45 to 90 watts depending upon the battery's voltage.

There are differences in the life, weight, cost and effectiveness of various types of rechargeable batteries for cordless tools. The four basic types of batteries used are lead-acid, nickel-cadmium, nickel metal-hydride and lithium-ion.

Lead-acid batteries are used in cordless lawn mowers because they can store the most charge. Lead-acid batteries are also relatively inexpensive for the amount of power they can store. Their drawback is their heavy weight. In a tool such as a lawn mower that rests on wheels, this is not a major problem. For handheld yard tools, having a lead-acid battery hanging on the handle could wear out your arm quickly.

Ni-Cd (nickel-cadmium) batteries were used on the earliest cordless tools, and most tools still use them. They are relatively inexpensive, and they maintain their performance at cooler temperatures—

an important feature for tools used outdoors. Ni-Cd batteries are relatively heavy, so they are not often used on the highest-voltage cordless tools.

Ni-Mh (nickel metal-hydride) was the next generation of rechargeable batteries. These batteries can store more electricity for their weight. They are more expensive to make than Ni-Cds, so they are used on fewer cordless tools. They are ideal for indoor use but tend to lose run time in colder, outdoor temperatures. Also, their life (run/recharge cycle) is less than the life of Ni-Cd batteries.

Li-ion (lithium-ion) batteries are the newest type. These are the most expensive but also are the lightest for the power they can store. Li-ion batteries operate very well at cold temperatures, so they are effective for outdoor use. Some take longer to charge than Ni-Cd or Ni-Mh batteries, so they may not be the best choice if you are constantly running them down and trying to recharge them quickly. Having a second battery pack on the charger is a good idea.

Don't necessarily look for the highest-voltage tool with the most power. No matter what type of battery a tool uses, higher voltage means more battery weight. If you primarily do light shrub trimming or drill small holes in soft wood, lower voltage is your best choice.

Of your outdoor power tools, you'll probably use a lawn mower most often. Most of the newer rechargeable cordless lawn mowers are designed to have enough electric charge to cut the typical one-third-acre lot. This is assuming a medium-length grass—perhaps one-week growth maximum. Cordless mowers are very easy and quick to use. The only drawback is they are somewhat heavier than gasoline-powered mowers.

I have used a 24-volt cordless mower for many years and still do sometimes. The 36-volt models provide additional power to cut a wider path, which reduces cutting time. For convenience, select a model with a removable battery so the mower can be stored in a shed while keeping the battery in the garage for charging and wintertime storage.

Black & Decker recently introduced a self-propelled, 36-volt cordless mower. It has a variable-speed motor to drive the wheels so you can set a comfortable walking pace. The electric motor that drives the wheels is a soft-start design, so it will not jerk the mower each time you start.

Another new handy cordless tool is a 12-volt pruning saw with a Li-ion battery to reduce weight, which is important because a pruning saw is often used overhead and can tire shoulder muscles quickly. This Li-ion battery also

holds its charge longer when not in use, an advantage for tools like this that are not frequently used.

© James Dulley



'As a Farm Woman Thinks'

*Pioneer's lyrical
writings take us on a
High Plains adventure
that started in an
ox-pulled wagon.*

By Shannon Oelrich



Nellie Witt left Weatherford on her fourth birthday, May 4, 1892, in an ox-pulled wagon packed with her family and all their belongings. They were headed west from their home in North-Central Texas to the edge of the Llano Estacado to settle on a small farm. Nellie didn't know it, but she was part of an historical movement, the conversion of large Texas ranches to smaller family farms.

In fact, her life (1888-1977) would span a time of significant change, progress and upheaval in the United States. But what makes her different from other farm women of the same era is that she recorded her life in a series of more than 900 newspaper columns titled "As a Farm Woman Thinks."

The collected columns now appear in the book by the same name—*As a Farm Woman Thinks: Life and Land on the Texas High Plains, 1890-1960*—edited by Geoff Cunfer (Texas Tech University Press, 2010). Nellie's record of daily life and her insightful commentary during more than two decades give us a detailed, rich experience of times gone by.

Nellie settled with her family in Emma (the once-thriving county seat) in Crosby County. At 18, she moved to a farm near the Cone community with her husband, Jeff Spikes, where they raised wheat, cotton and other crops for 43 years.

Nellie Witt Spikes wrote her first column in 1934, then began writing regularly in 1937, under the title "As a Farm Woman Thinks," when she was 49. She wrote columns for more than 20 years, the last one appearing in 1960. The columns appeared mainly in four weekly newspapers: the Ralls Banner, the Lorenzo Tribune, the Floyd County Hesperian and the Crosbyton Review.

Her writing, often lyrical and even poetic, expresses her love for home, family, community and land from a woman's perspective, so often overlooked in history. From September 1940: "Every fruit jar I can find is being filled with something to eat. The pantry shelves begin to take on rainbow colors. Orange of pumpkin, yellow of plums, green of beans and pickles, purple of grapes. Jellies make the pinks, the reds and purplish blues. Moving the garden from its place in the sun to a dark place in the cellar gives pleasure to many women. And in the winter to the whole family."

She wrote about the many lessons learned on the farm, not the least of which is patience. From May 1941: "The farmer lives dangerously near to losing everything he has worked for most all of the time. Drought may cut the growing crop short, hail and wind ruin it in a few minutes, insects may blight, devour, rust and smut. But the farmer always has another year."

Nellie chronicles her participation not only in the settling of the West, but also in the home front of three wars, the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. From January 1942: "The other day when the Home Demonstration Club met, every member planned to do extra work on the farm as well as Red Cross sewing and knitting. The women in the towns around have the same determination, and as needles fly

over the hanks of khaki yarn and make stitches where stitches were never made before, they will say, knit one, purl, knit two, Pearl Harbor. ...”

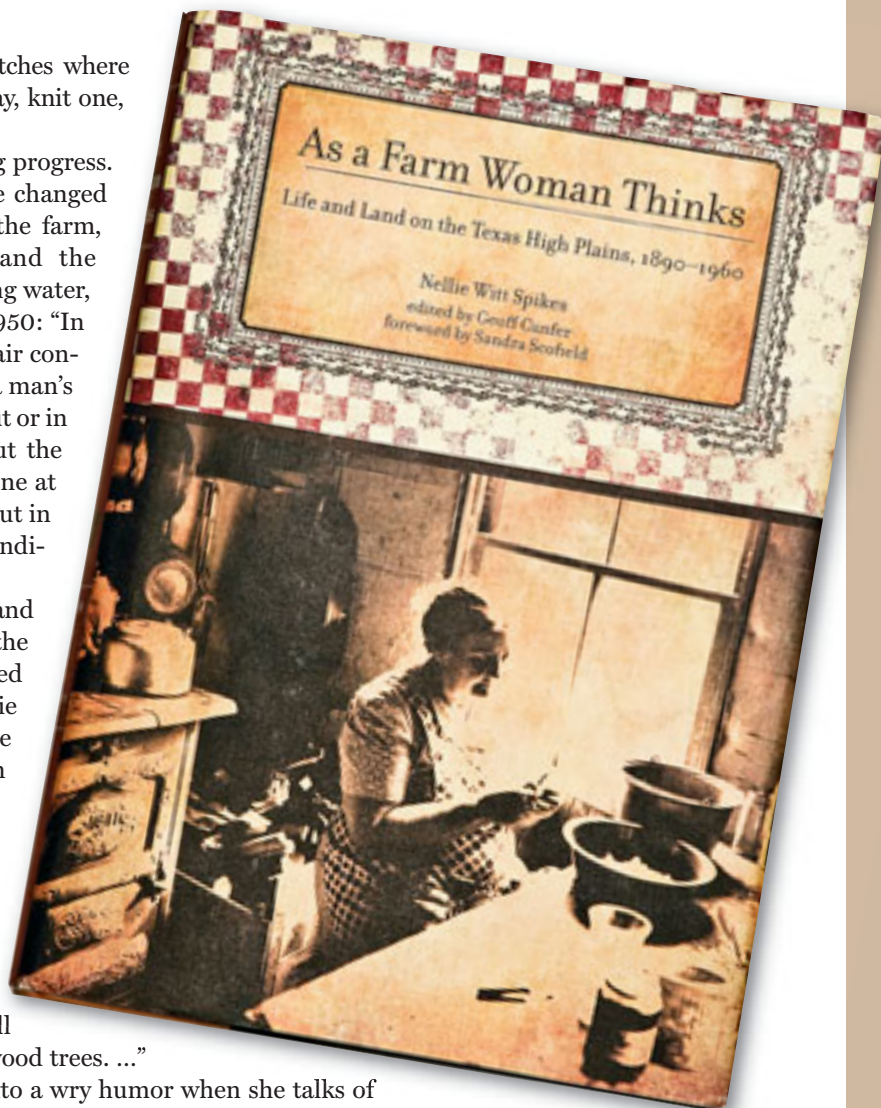
She lived during a time of mind-boggling progress. In her columns, she shows the way her life changed over the years through mechanization of the farm, widespread irrigation, farm subsidies, and the advent of the car, paved roads, radio, running water, butane cooking and electricity. From July 1950: “In the days when a palmetto fan was the only air conditioner on the market, when you drove to a man’s house in the summer and the doors were shut or in the winter when no smoke was coming out the stovepipe, you knew at once there was no one at home. Not so these days. No smoke comes out in winter and the doors are shut so the air conditioner will cool the house [in summer].”

She also saw changes in the landscape and environment, from the natural beauty of the prairie she came to as a child to the farmed landscape of which she was so proud. Nellie goes into flights of flowery prose when she describes her home on the plains. From March 1939: “Spring is coming to the prairie country. Not with a breathtaking parade of beauty as she does in the timbered country, but shy as the antelope and the blue quail. She spreads a cover of pale green on the pasture and starts the wildflower; gives the haze on the canyon hills a deeper blue; entices the killdeer back to call ‘dee dee dee’; swells the buds of the cottonwood trees. ...”

Her writing, often sentimental, moves into a wry humor when she talks of the scourge of West Texas, the dust storm. From April 1942: “Every day I see new evidence of spring in the air,” the young lady trilled over the radio. A sandstorm was on. I looked outside. I, too, saw evidences of spring in the air. The tender willow leaves, whipped from the tree, bits of crushed pink silk of peach blossoms flying like wounded butterflies from the tree, tiny rosettes whirled from the spirea, sand-covered lilac leaves fluttered and sailed away. Yes, spring was in the air and moving swiftly past the house.”

Nellie Witt Spikes comes out of the past in her writing, offering an invitation to her reader to experience what she has, from profound historical events to everyday chores like fixing dinner.

This passage from July 1942 puts the reader at her elbow: “Well I must get dinner ready for the men in the field. Would you like to put on this bonnet and go with me? First we will get the chicken. Look how wary that young rooster is of crumbled bread and the wire hidden behind my back. Just a jiffy and he will be dressed and cooling. It will not take long to pick some string beans; better get a few cucumbers and onions, and three or four beets, we like them buttered. After the beans are strung and on cooking, we will go to the smokehouse for a hunk of bacon to boil with the beans. Next, to the potato patch, where some small potatoes can be gotten. They are pretty easy to scrape while the skin is so tender. You may beat this bowl of cream for butter; I will make a peach cobbler. Syrup sweetens peaches now as well as it did for our grandmothers. It is so nice to have milk and butter in the refrigerator instead of the well. Yes, we have walked a good piece, several blocks if we were in town. Meals are so scattered this time of the year, but how nice it is to pick your own.”



Shannon Oelrich, former food editor for Texas Co-op Power, is a freelance writer who lives in Pflugerville.

Herman and Me

*How a lovable
sourdough starter
proved to be the
recipe for a lasting
friendship.*

BY G. ELAINE ACKER

The first time I scribbled Herman's name atop a blank piece of notebook paper, I was a sophomore in college. My roommate, Sharon, introduced us, and for a while, Herman became my obsession. He was bubbly, sweet, and he made me ... happy.

Today, that same piece of paper is stained and worn from the dozens of times I've looked at it and again tucked it safely away. The memory of Herman is always fond, warm and makes me think of ... pancakes.

I gave Sharon a call, and she answered on the first ring. "Remember Herman?" I asked, skipping the pleasantries, even though it'd been a few months since we'd last spoken.

"Of course," she said, laughing. "He lived in the fridge like a pet for at least a couple of years."

During our college years, Sharon did what my mother, despite her best efforts, had never been able to do: convince me that cooking was a fun adventure. For the first time, I'd willingly roamed the grocery store aisles, planned menus and, despite my Piney Woods instincts to the contrary, tried new things.

When Sharon introduced me to Herman—our "pet" sourdough starter—baking became my favorite pastime. I called my mother regularly, asking for the tasty recipes I'd loved growing up.

While Sharon and I talked, I leafed through the yellowed note cards that held our recipes for everything from simple breads to coffee cake to fluffy pancakes. "We called him 'Herman,'" Sharon said. "But lots of people call it Amish Friendship Bread. Somebody bakes something yummy, takes it to the office and brings a cup of starter to share."

As Sharon and I talked, I realized that Herman was much more than a bubbling crock of yeast. In that little apartment kitchen, Sharon and I had baked a lasting friendship.

After we hung up, I remembered that Texas cowboys had a lasting affection for their chuck-wagon cooks. Sourdough was a camp cook's prized possession, and on chilly, winter nights, the cook could usually be found curled up with his crock of sourdough tucked in next to him, keeping it warm. Freezing temperatures wouldn't kill the sourdough, but unless the mixture was warm and bubbly, the cook wouldn't be making bread, either. A batch of starter could be kept going—literally—for years

on end, and every morning, when hungry cowboys craved fresh biscuits, the cook was a hero.

While there are many variations in creating a new starter, today's packaged yeast makes it easier than it was in the 1800s.

Here's the basic Herman recipe.

Combine:

2 cups flour (all-purpose or organic)

2 cups warm (not boiling) water

1 package active, dry yeast

Mix these ingredients thoroughly in a crock, glass jar, stainless steel or plastic bowl that gives the starter room to grow. Do not use a reactive metal container. Cover the mixture loosely with a cloth, and put it in a warm place overnight. The next morning, your new friend Herman should be waiting to greet you, active and bubbly. He will also be hungry and ready to move into your fridge.

On the first and fifth days, feed Herman:

1 cup water or milk

1 cup flour

1/2 cup sugar

Stir gently.

It's a good idea to keep Herman covered in the fridge and give him a gentle stir each day. On the 10th day, you're ready to start baking. Remove one cup of starter for your favorite recipe, and remove one cup to share with a friend. Then, feed Herman as before, stir and return him to the fridge.

Herman is resilient. I often forget to stir him daily; and instead of feeding him every five days, I only feed him about once a week using half the amount of milk, flour and sugar. He remains healthy and bubbly.

Despite the fact that Herman and I don't spend as much time together as we did in our college days, he still holds a special place in my heart. Because of Herman, I discovered the adventure of cooking; I learned that warm bread can hold memories like fresh butter; and I found that the joy of friendship forged in even the tiniest college kitchen lasts a lifetime.

G. Elaine Acker is an award-winning writer who grew up in the Piney Woods. She divides her time between Austin and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and between Herman and her cinnamon-roll-crazy husband, Bill.

On TexasCoopPower.com: Try out the easy-to-make Herman Cinnamon Rolls recipe.





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The purpose of these coins was to give people the opportunity to own physical silver and gold in a form certified for weight and purity by the U.S. Mint. While the bullion coin program was a signal success, nobody took into account the profound effect it would have on the collector market.

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For the same reason, many collectors today see the Silver Eagle series as a literal "ground floor" opportunity to acquire the top-grade coins as they are released. They started submitting Silver Eagles to the leading independent coin grading services, Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS) and Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC), praying that the coins would come back with the highest possible grade: MS70 (all Uncirculated coins are graded on a point system from a low of 60 to a high of 70, with 70 representing flawless perfection). Of all the Silver Eagles produced by the U.S. Mint in 2010, less than one out of every 681 earned the NGC MS70 grade!

MS70 = \$\$\$\$\$!

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Charcoal City: Turning Cedar into Cash

BY CLAY COPPEDGE

The tree that nearly everybody calls cedar is really Ashe juniper, except when it's another kind of juniper or cedar. Nearly everybody knows this, but the tree is still—and will most likely always be—referred to as cedar, as will be the case here. In the Lone Star State, the cedar is native to the Hill Country and Central Texas, but it hasn't always been as native as it is now. That is to say there is a lot more of it than there used to be, and sufferers of cedar fever will say there's way too much of it. Landowners and scientists blame it for crowding out native hardwood species and lowering water tables. When it comes to cedar, familiarity has bred contempt.

At a time when most people living in Texas made their living from the land in one form or another, the cedar brakes were always there to be exploited. One of the earliest uses of cedar was the burning of it to make charcoal, which heated stoves and flatirons of the day. A hotbed of this kind of activity was along the banks of the Guadalupe River from about New Braunfels to Sisterdale, an area that came to be known as Charcoal City. German settlers first discovered the market for charcoal and took to burning it between planting and harvest. By the 1880s, charcoal burners from Georgia, Indiana, New York, Tennessee, and even Ireland and England had made their way into the Guadalupe River Valley and were turning cedar into cash.

The cedars were cut while they were still green to ensure a slow burn and then chopped into poles and the bark peeled away. Two or three cords of wood were arranged in a pyramid in a kiln or pit, then covered with dirt. A hole was left in the top of the stack, tepee style, so smoke could escape. A hole at the bottom was closed after the fire was lit. After that, the charcoal burner had to "hurry up and wait" for the fire to do its work, which usually took a few days. The Guadalupe Valley became sort of the Smoky Mountains of Texas as a haze of smoke, redolent of cedar, hung over the valley for much of the year.

The whole process could go up in smoke if air got into the kiln and flames broke out. Flare-ups had to be extinguished quickly with dirt or water, or else the cedar would burn into ash rather than smolder into charcoal. When the cedar was charred to perfection, the fire was put out and the charcoal raked into sacks, put on wagons and hauled into town.

The best markets for Hill Country charcoal were San Antonio and Austin, so most of the burners loaded their wagons with charcoal and hauled them to those towns. Author J. Frank Dobie recalled hearing the burners call out, "Char-rr-coal" as they drove their wagons through Austin in 1914. A wagonload could bring from \$8 to \$24, depending on supply and how many burners might be cut off from the market by



high waters at a time when there weren't a lot of bridges and Hill Country rivers ran undammed and untamed. Still, charcoal was money in the pocket any time of the year and could be counted on when corn and cotton failed.

Opportunities for the charcoal burner diminished quickly after World War I. Railroads and Model T trucks made it easy to haul cedar posts to market without going to all the trouble of turning them into charcoal first. Use of charcoal-heated flatirons had decreased, too, and the development of barbed-wire fences created a great demand for cedar posts.

Many of the descendants of those early charcoal burners changed with the times and became what were called, sometimes derisively, cedar choppers, who made many of the cedar fence posts you see in the Hill Country today. There was plenty of cedar for the choppers to chop.

Overgrazing played into the cedar's hand, as did the practice of burning the prairies and clearing of cedar to allow shorter and more nourishing grasses to grow in their place. As the number of trees declined, excess runoff made the soils too shallow to support very much grass, which cleared the way for cedar and brush to take over the landscape. The cedar was back to stay.

Like their charcoal-burning ancestors, cedar choppers were noted for their independence and a lifestyle unencumbered by a lot of modern complications. Also like their ancestors, they have all but disappeared from the scene. The cedar, though, is still very much with us.

Clay Coppedge is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power and is the author of Hill Country Chronicles, available from History Press.

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The Chickens and the Eggs

BY KEVIN HARGIS The answer to an eternal rhetorical question, at least for my wife, Lisa, and me, is easy: The chickens—six hens, to be exact—came first. The eggs, hundreds of them, came later.

When Lisa brought up the idea last spring of acquiring chickens, I expressed doubts about how they'd fare in our suburban backyard. The only experience I'd had with the fine, feathered fowl was buying them butchered, plucked and wrapped in plastic at the grocery store.

After some research, Lisa decided upon red sex-links, which are a crossbred hybrid known for being hardy, heat tolerant and consistent egg-layers. She picked out six of the nicest-looking pullets (young chickens) at a local feed store. After some adjustment, "The Ladies," as we've come to call our flock, became a familiar presence, and I soon enthusiastically embraced the role of chicken farmer, sharing the duties of feeding them, cleaning the coop and collecting eggs.



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The Ladies roam our half-acre backyard during the day, eating bugs and grass and kitchen scraps. At night, they are shut securely in the coop. We've sacrificed our compost pile and a flower bed to their digging for bugs, but they do give us fertilizer—in abundance.

We also get, on average, about six eggs a week from each chicken—close to 150 eggs a month. Needless to say, we've been eating a lot of omelets!

But the eggs are exceedingly nutritious, especially these fresh, pastured eggs. A study by Mother Earth News showed that backyard eggs have less cholesterol and saturated fat than their commercially raised counterparts. They are also richer in vitamins A, D and E, omega-3 fatty acids, and beta-carotene.

I think our eggs taste better than store-bought ones, but that's a subjective opinion. It is also nice to always have eggs on hand and to know what exactly went into the chickens' diets. As much as we enjoy our eggs, our supply is greater than our demand. Thus, our friends, family and neighbors have all been recipients of cartons of eggs.

We figure that we've long since broken even on our initial costs for building the coop and the modest feed bills, considering that free-range eggs sell for as much as \$4 a dozen at the farmers market.

In addition to frying, scrambling or boiling our eggs, I also like to cook with them. I recently learned a simple method to make pots de crème (see recipe on Page 32), a rich egg custard that uses half a dozen separated eggs. I use the yolks in the custard and save the whites for omelets or meringue.

SOME ANSWERS ABOUT BACKYARD EGGS

Q: Do I need a rooster or just hens?

A: That depends on what you are trying to do. If you just want eggs, a rooster is unnecessary. If you are starting a breeding operation or raising chickens for meat, then you'll want one. A rooster does help protect a flock from some predators, so if your chickens are going to run free, it might be an asset.

Q: Should I wash eggs before I eat them?

A: Egg shells, which contain microscopic pores, have a natural protective layer over the shell that is wiped away when washed. This

decreases their storage time. Commercial farms wash eggs, then replace the natural antibacterial layer by oiling them. If you do wash them, use water that is 20 degrees warmer than the egg, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). That will prevent the pores from “shrinking” and pulling in contaminants from outside the shell.

Q: How long do eggs last?

A: Fresh eggs keep at least six weeks in the refrigerator. The USDA recommends refrigerating eggs and using them by the “use by” date on the carton. That date is set no more than 30 days from the date of packing.

Q: Why are my hard-boiled eggs hard to peel?

A: The fresher the egg that is boiled, the harder it will be to peel. As eggs get older, the air pocket inside grows, pulling the white’s membrane away from the shell.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BACKYARD CHICKEN FARMER

Raising your own egg-laying chickens can be easy. First, make sure that there are no ordinances prohibiting you from having your own flock. And you’ll need space for a coop large enough to allow the chickens to roost and take dust baths.

If you’re handy at all, you can easily knock a coop together. You can find books that include detailed plans for coops, including “chicken tractors,” mobile coops that keep birds enclosed and protected while allowing them the ability to forage in different areas of your yard. The Internet has several sites dedicated to backyard chicken raising.

Having chickens is a responsibility comparable to owning pets. They depend on you for shelter, food and fresh water (you can make a homemade chicken waterer with a large pan and a 5-gallon bucket). They also need your protection from predators, whether hawks, raccoons or the neighborhood cats.

If you let your chickens roam free in the yard, there is little, short of a fence, that will keep them away from gardens and other spots you don’t want them to be. Potted plants and flower beds may soon turn into dust wallows and feeding grounds, and when walking anywhere they’ve roamed, you’ll have to watch your step, as they leave droppings indiscriminately.

If you are going to let them roam, make sure to find any holes in your fence they might escape through. You might also have to trim their wing feathers to limit their flying ability. Unclipped chickens can easily fly to the top of a 6-foot fence.



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CHOCOLATE POTS DE CRÈME

- 6 egg yolks
- 6 ounces 60 percent (at least) dark chocolate chips or shaved bar
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 cups heavy cream

Combine yolks, chocolate and sugar in blender jar and pulse a few times. Heat cream to simmering, pour over top of chocolate mixture and blend immediately on high for 1 to 2 minutes, until chocolate has melted. Pour into individual serving dishes or one large dish and cover with plastic wrap placed directly on surface of custard. This will prevent a skin from forming on top. Chill at least one hour in refrigerator.

Optional: Add about 1 teaspoon grated orange zest and ¼ cup orange juice to blender before adding hot cream. Sprinkle dash of sea salt on top before covering.

Servings: 12. Serving size: ¼ cup. Per serving: 246 calories, 4 g protein, 23.2 g fat, 8.8 g carbohydrates, 2.4 g dietary fiber, 22 mg sodium, 3.3 g sugars, 159 mg cholesterol

One of the first recipes I figured out how to make after having eaten the dish at a restaurant was for migas, the Mexican breakfast fare combining eggs

and tortilla chips. It’s a great Sunday morning brunch centerpiece and can be easily expanded to accommodate any number of diners. It’s best made with stale tortilla chips, which hold up better to being soaked in egg.

MIGAS

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 eggs
- ¼ cup milk
- ¼ cup salsa (jarred or homemade)
- 1 cup stale tortilla chips, crushed
- ½ cup minced cilantro
- 2 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1 to 3 jalapeño or serrano peppers, chopped
- ½ cup shredded Colby jack cheese
- 2 cloves garlic, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in large skillet and add onion. As onion is cooking, beat eggs, milk and salsa in large bowl, then mix in tortilla chips. Stir in cilantro, tomatoes, peppers and cheese. Season with salt and pepper. When onion becomes translucent, add garlic to skillet and cook a minute longer, then pour eggs over top and cook on medium-low heat until eggs have set and liquid has mostly evaporated. Garnish with sliced avocado, if desired, and serve with warm tortillas.

Servings: 4. Serving size: ¼ of dish. Per serving: 483 calories, 16 g protein, 21.3 g fat, 46.9 g carbohydrates, 5.3 g dietary fiber, 729 mg sodium, 6.3 g sugars, 227 mg cholesterol

ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

Find a list of online chicken resources and see a short video tour of the backyard chicken operation.

\$100 RECIPE CONTEST

August’s recipe contest topic is Asian Tonight. Send us your favorite dishes from India and Southeast Asia (think beyond stir fry). The deadline is April 10.

Submit recipes online under the Contests tab at TexasCoopPower.com. Or mail them to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may also e-mail them to recipes@TexasCoopPower.com or fax them to (512) 763-3408. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. Also, let us know where you found the recipe or whether it’s one you developed yourself. The top winner will receive \$100, a copy of 60 Years of Home Cooking and a Texas-shaped trivet. Runners-up will also receive a prize.

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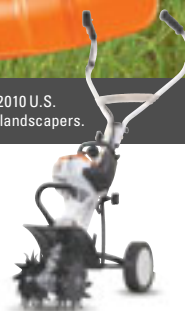


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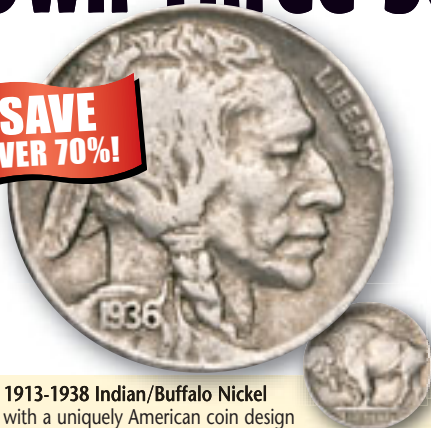
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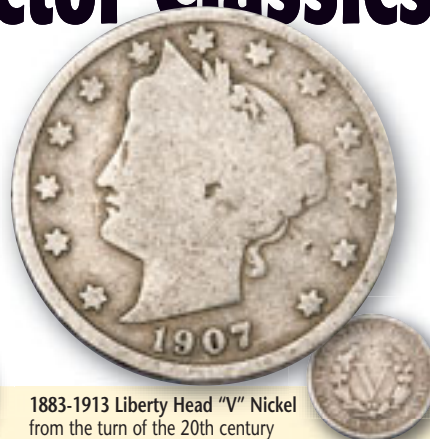
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SUPER COUPON!

FREE!

WITH ANY PURCHASE
3-1/2" SUPER BRIGHT
NINE LED ALUMINUM
FLASHLIGHT



ITEM 65020
REG. PRICE \$7.99

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 1 Free item only available with qualifying minimum purchase (excluding price of free gift item). Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. Coupon not valid on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase date with original receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Shipping & Handling charges may apply if free item not picked up in-store. Coupon cannot be bought, sold or transferred. Original coupon must be presented in-store, or with your order form, or entered online in order to receive the offer. Valid through 7/28/11. Limit one coupon per customer and one coupon per day.



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ANY SINGLE ITEM!

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 1 Use this coupon to save 20% on any one single item purchased when you shop at a Harbor Freight Tools store. *Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. Coupon not valid on any of the following: gift cards, Inside Track Club membership, extended service plans, Compressors, Generators, Tool Cabinets, Welders, Floor Jacks, Campbell Hausfeld products, open box items, Parking Lot Sale items, Blowout Sale items, Day After Thanksgiving Sale items, Tent Sale items, 800 number orders, or online orders. Coupon not valid on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase date with original receipt. Coupon cannot be bought, sold, or transferred. Original coupon must be presented in-store in order to receive the offer. Valid through 7/28/11. Limit one coupon per customer and one coupon per day.



SUPER COUPON!

SAVE 50%

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS
OSCILLATING MULTIFUNCTION POWER TOOL

17 DIFFERENT ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE IN OUR STORES!



LOT NO. 67256

\$24.99 REG. PRICE \$59.99

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SUPER COUPON!

CHICAGO WELDING
90 AMP FLUX WIRE WELDER

SAVE \$60



NO GAS REQUIRED!

\$89.99 REG. PRICE \$149.99

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SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE
RAPID PUMP® 1.5 TON ALUMINUM RACING JACK

SAVE \$50 NEW!

3-1/2 PUMPS LIFTS MOST VEHICLES!



LOT NO. 68053

\$69.99 REG. PRICE \$119.99

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SUPER COUPON!

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC
2 HP, 8 GALLON, 125 PSI PORTABLE AIR COMPRESSOR

SAVE \$40

Item 67501 shown



\$99.99

REG. PRICE \$139.99

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SUPER COUPON!

ADJUSTABLE SHADE AUTO-DARKENING WELDING HELMET

SAVE 50%

CHICAGO WELDING

LOT NO. 46092



\$34.99 REG. PRICE \$69.99

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11 DRAWER ROLLER CABINET

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• 6 Drawer Top Chest
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SAVE \$160

LOT NO. 67421



\$139.99 REG. PRICE \$299.99

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SUPER COUPON!

80 PIECE ROTARY TOOL SET
drillmaster

SAVE 65%



\$6.99

REG. PRICE \$19.99

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SUPER COUPON!

2000 LB. ELECTRIC ATV/UTV WINCH WITH AUTOMATIC LOAD-HOLDING BRAKE

BADLAND WINCHES

SAVE \$50

\$69.99 REG. PRICE \$119.99



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SUPER COUPON!

RECIPROCATING SAW WITH ROTATING HANDLE
CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS

LOT NO. 65570



\$19.99 REG. PRICE \$39.99

SAVE 50%

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SUPER COUPON!

45 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT
LOT NO. 90599

SAVE \$100

\$149⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$249.99



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SUPER COUPON!

13 HP, 5500 RATED WATTS/ 6500 MAX WATTS GENERATOR WITH ELECTRIC START
Item 98838 shown
LOT NO. 98838/98839

SAVE \$150

\$449⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$599.99



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SUPER COUPON!

TOWABLE RIDE-ON TRENCHER
LOT NO. 65162

SAVE \$900

\$2599⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$3499.99



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SUPER COUPON!

6 FT. x 8 FT. ALUMINUM GREENHOUSE
LOT NO. 47712

SAVE \$90

\$299⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$389.99



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SUPER COUPON!

AUTOMATIC WRIST BLOOD PRESSURE MONITOR
LOT NO. 67212

SAVE 50%

\$14⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$29.99

Requires 2 AAA batteries (sold separately).



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 7
This valuable coupon is good anywhere you shop Harbor Freight Tools (retail stores, online, or 800 number). Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. Coupon not valid on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase date with receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Coupon cannot be bought, sold, or transferred. Original coupon must be presented in-store, or with your order form, or entered online in order to receive the coupon discount. Valid through 7/28/11. Limit one coupon per customer and one coupon per day.

SUPER COUPON!

10/2/55 AMP, 6/12 VOLT BATTERY CHARGER/ ENGINE STARTER
LOT NO. 66783

SAVE 62%

\$25⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$69.99



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 5
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SUPER COUPON!

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER
drillmaster
LOT NO. 95578

SAVE 44%

\$9⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$17.99

Grinding wheel sold separately.



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 9
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SUPER COUPON!

PITTSBURGH 6 PIECE PLIERS SET
LOT NO. 38082/46005
Item 38082 shown

SAVE 33%

\$9⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$14.99



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 8
This valuable coupon is good anywhere you shop Harbor Freight Tools (retail stores, online, or 800 number). Cannot be used with any other discount or coupon. Coupon not valid on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase date with receipt. Offer good while supplies last. Coupon cannot be bought, sold, or transferred. Original coupon must be presented in-store, or with your order form, or entered online in order to receive the coupon discount. Valid through 7/28/11. Limit one coupon per customer and one coupon per day.

SUPER COUPON!

2000 WATT CONTINUOUS/ 4000 WATT PEAK POWER INVERTER
LOT NO. 95596

SAVE \$80

\$119⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$199.99

Not for marine use.



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 4
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SUPER COUPON!

12 VOLT 3/8" LITHIUM ION PRO CORDLESS DRILL/DRIVER
PROFESSIONAL CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS
12V battery and charger included.
LOT NO. 68126

SAVE 41%

\$34⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$59.99



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SUPER COUPON!

8 FT. 8" x 11 FT. 6" FARM QUALITY TARP
LOT NO. 2707

SAVE 45%

\$5⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$10.99



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SUPER COUPON!

ELECTRIC CHAIN SAW SHARPENER
CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS
4-1/4" GRINDING WHEEL INCLUDED
LOT NO. 93213

SAVE 40%

\$29⁹⁹

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SUPER COUPON!

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC HIGH SPEED METAL SAW
LOT NO. 91753/113

SAVE 63%

\$10⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$29.99

Item 113 shown



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 7
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SUPER COUPON!

HAUL-MASTER 12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT
LOT NO. 96933/67455

SAVE 66%

\$9⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$29.99

Item 96933 shown



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 8
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SUPER COUPON!

6" DIGITAL CALIPER
CENTECH
LOT NO. 47257

SAVE 66%

\$9⁹⁹

REG. PRICE \$29.99

Includes two 1.5V button cell batteries.



HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS - LIMIT 9
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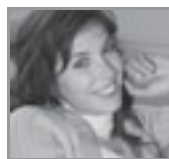
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Crows feet, Frown Lines and Wrinkles - Does Any Cream Work?



Dear Dorris:

DEAR DORRIS: I am a young 65 years old, and have recently entered retirement. However, I haven't been able to relax

and enjoy, because I'm so upset about these wrinkles and lines I have developed around my eyes and mouth. I tried 6 different creams that Celebrities endorsed, and NONE of them worked. I am desperate here, to rid myself of these wrinkles, but I'm afraid to keep spending money on creams that don't work.

Is there any product out there that really and truly reduces the wrinkles and lines of the face, even the deep, entrenched ones?

Feeling Shriveled, Austin, TX

DEAR SHRIVELED: As a faithful reader of my column, you probably know that I was a long time sufferer of wrinkles and frown lines too. You'll be glad to know that I **DID** find a product line that gets rid of wrinkles and lines, and was especially helpful on those deep wrinkles that seem like they're never going away.

The Dermagist Original Wrinkle Smoothing Cream® is a rich, luxurious cream that is scientifically infused with the peptide, Matrixyl. In case you haven't heard of Matrixyl, it actually stimulates the DNA of the skin to produce new healthy skin cells and encourages your skin to produce Collagen. While there are several creams on the market that contain collagen, Matrixyl gets your skin to produce your **OWN** Collagen, which is much more effective. As if the Matrixyl wasn't enough, **The Dermagist Original Wrinkle Smoothing Cream®** has other proprietary ingredients that dramatically smooth and soften the skin, while lifting and plumping loose and saggy areas.

Affordable and incredibly effective, dermatologists are referring a lot of business to this company. I highly recommend that you try it for the wrinkles that your skin has. The Dermajuv products are **available online at www.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 "TXW2". It's worth a try to see if it still works.



SPECIAL MARKET OPPORTUNITY

Your Expert Guide to the World's Finest Coins

Nicholas J. Bruyer, CEO, First Federal Coin Corp.
ANA Life Member Since 1974

Sold out in less than 5 days!

Our supply of 2010 Silver Pandas disappeared in a heartbeat.
How long this year's supply will last is anyone's guess.
Do you really want to wait to find out?

We've been offering China's Silver Panda coins for years. Every year the design changes, which makes them more popular.

Last year, we asked the China Mint for all its First Strike coins. These are the first coins struck from new dies, and Panda buyers go wild for them.

In fact, they're so popular our supply of 2010 China Silver Panda MS70 First Strike coins sold out in less than a week.

That's why the China Mint awarded us *exclusive distribution rights* for the 2011 Silver Panda First Strikes.

With These 2011 First Strike® Silver Pandas We Hit The Jackpot!

The China Mint is limiting its production of 2011 One-Ounce Silver Pandas to 3 million coins.

Compare that to Silver Eagles (the American equivalent to the Silver Panda) struck by the U.S. Mint—they made 30+ million in 2010!

But, only 2% of the 2011 mintage of China Silver Pandas will receive the China Mint's official First Strike certification. And *we have them all!*

These First Strike Silver Pandas Are The Best of The Best!

As the very first coins struck, each of these spanking new Silver Pandas is the very finest of the entire mintage for 2011—and always among the most sought-after of all coin issues by buyers worldwide.

And they're even more popular when they're graded by Professional Coin Grading Service (PCGS) in perfect MS70 condition.

We're Sitting On An Incredible Opportunity For You!

To put this in perspective for you, let's compare an ungraded Silver Panda to a graded Silver Panda, both from the year 2000.

If you could even find an ungraded 2000 Silver Panda—and they're not easy to locate—you'd pay around \$150.

If you think it's hard to find an *ungraded* Silver Panda, just try to get your hands on a 2000 Silver Panda MS70, which is the highest grade possible and represents absolute perfection. That coin today is valued at as much as \$795! And that's *without* a First Strike designation. *It's an increase of 530%!*

Now you see what grading can do to the value of a coin.

Of course, there are only a handful of 2000 Silver Panda MS70s in existence.

And past performance is no guarantee of what can happen in the future.

Act Now To Own An Extraordinary 2011 Silver Panda MS70 First Strike For As Little As \$129!

There's no telling what these elusive 2011 Silver Pandas will be selling for five or ten years from now. But today, I'm releasing our *entire*



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\$139 per coin for 10 – 19 coins
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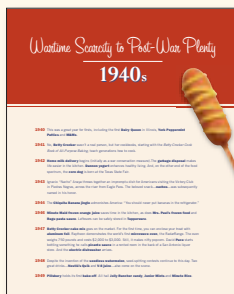
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CATCH OF THE DAY

When it comes to what Co-op Country folks are hauling in from Texas' abundance of rivers, lakes and 367 miles of coastline, there are no tall tales (but plenty of long tails). We received more than 100 photos of many a proud angler, and while we'd like to include them all (and fry up their catch), we decided to share what made our jaws drop—and hearts melt.

—ASHLEY CLARY

◀ Just before releasing it, Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Leon Schmidt** stopped to pose with this small fry he caught. Leon's daughter **Toni Schmidt** sent us the photo.



▲ **Nolan Bayer** checked the lines his family was running on the Red River and pulled in this 47-pound catfish. Nolan, 9, is the son of Cooke County Electric Cooperative members **Deano** and **Jeannene Bayer**.

Travis Salinas and his wife, **Kimberly**, needed more than a hook to snag this 13-foot alligator on the Frio River near Tilden. Kimberly is the daughter of Karnes Electric Cooperative members **Tim** and **Dinah Gallagher**. ▶



◀ Eleven-year-old **Clayton Richardson** caught this 29-pound blue catfish all by himself. Clayton is the grandson of **Bo** and **Debbie Harris**, members of Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative.

Brian Edwards sent us this photo of his daughter **Katie Edwards**, who nabbed her first redfish at Goose Island State Park. Brian is a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative. ▶



Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Jun	Murals	Apr 10
Jul	Those Were the Days	May 10
Aug	Milestones	Jun 10
Sep	State Parks	Jul 10
Oct	Cemeteries	Aug 10
Nov	Baby, It's Cold Outside	Sep 10

MURALS is the topic for our **JUNE 2011** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Murals, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before **APRIL 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 online under the Contests tab at 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.

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

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

PICK OF THE MONTH

APRIL 30-MAY 1 LAMESA

Chicken Fried Steak Festival,
(806) 872-4322, www.ci.lamesa.tx.us



CHICKEN FRIED STEAK: 2011 © LORI MARTIN. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. STAR CHARTS: 2011 © PERE SANZ. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. PRAIRIE CHICKEN: 2011 © DIANE SHEA. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

APRIL

01 LLANO (1-3)
Llano Fiddle Fest
Weekend, (325) 247-5354,
www.llanochamber.org

02 LULING
Roughneck Chili and BBQ
Cook-Off, (830) 875-3214,
www.oilmuseum.org

BRAZORIA
Battle On The Bernard,
(979) 236-3494

BURTON
Camp For All Hilltop Bike
Ride, (713) 686-5666,
www.campforall.org

LEVELLAND
Taste of Texas
BBQ Cook-Off,
(806) 894-3157,
www.levelland.com



02 NACOGDOCHES
Farmer's Market Spring
Fling, (936) 564-7351,
www.nacogdochesazaleas.com

SAN ANGELO
San Angelo State Park
Weiner Dog Races,
(325) 942-8096

07 RIO VISTA (7-10)
Carnival & Craft Fair,
(817) 373-2588

08 BURNET (8-10)
Bluebonnet Festival,
(512) 756-4297,
www.burnetchamber.org

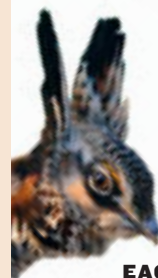
09 CAMERON
Milam County Nature
Festival, (254) 697-7045

09 ROCKPORT
Herb Festival,
(361) 729-6037,
www.rockportherbs.org

MCQUEENEY
Free Crochet Classes,
(830) 303-5154

FLORENCE (9-10)
Old World Stone Carving
& Art Show, (254) 793-
3363, www.thevineyardatflorence.com

FREDERICKSBURG
First Annual
Fredericksburg Star Party,
(830) 992-0740



9 EAGLE LAKE
Attwater's Prairie
Chicken Festival

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TOM MALONE,
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Saturday, April 30
THE QUEBE SISTERS
TEXAS TORNADOS

Sunday, May 1
BRAVE COMBO

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EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

The doctor is definitely in at Waco's Dr Pepper Museum, where you can enjoy an ice-cold, hand-pulled Dr Pepper float. Put on your boots and scoot on over to the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum, where you can see the story of the legendary Rangers come to life. And be sure to make time for the Waco Mammoth Site and learn about the natural history of Central Texas at the Mayborn Museum Complex. To discover more of Waco's unexpected treasures visit www.wacocvb.com.

WACO TEXAS

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS



16 MIDLAND (16-17)
Silver Spur Gun & Blade Show, (806) 253-1322, www.silverspurgunshows.com

18 CANYON (18-21)
Week of the Young Child, (806) 651-2244, www.panhandleplains.org

23 COMANCHE
Outlaw Run, (325) 356-2032, www.comanchecelebrates.org

WYLIE
Easter Egg Hunt with Exotic Cats at In-Sync, (972) 442-6888, www.insyncexotics.com



09 EAGLE LAKE (9-10)
Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival, (979) 234-3021, www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/attwater/index.html

15 CARTHAGE (15-16)
Piney Woods Quilt Festival, (903) 693-4403

PORT ARANSAS (15-17)
Texas Sand Fest, 1-800-452-6278, www.portaransas.org

16 SMITHVILLE
Empty Bowl Project, (512) 360-7397, <http://smithvilleemptybowl.com>

29 D'HANIS (29-30)
D'Hanis Lions Club BBQ Cook-Off, (830) 363-6138, <http://dhanislionsclub.org>

CAMERON (29-30)
Dewberry Festival & BBQ Cook-Off, (254) 697-4979, www.cameron.tx.com

30 GRAPELAND
Folk Festival, (936) 687-2394

MAY

01 CEDAR PARK
Swimming Kids Triathlon, (512) 733-2490, www.leaguelineup.com/cptri

BULVERDE
Spring Chicken Festival, (210) 535-8650, www.bulverdecommunitycenter.com

READY TO GO? GO ONLINE FIRST.

Before you hit the road, stop at the new and improved 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.

So no matter if you're fixin' to get away to the Piney Woods or the Panhandle Plains (and all points between), your get-away just got easier. Get a move on at TexasCoopPower.com.

Event information can be submitted online under the Events tab at 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 June by April 10.

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When I was a girl, my family took a lot of trips—long and short—and the memory of a town with wonderful houses was always a standout. So recently, when I felt the need for a road trip, I decided to revisit Waxahachie and see if it was what I remembered.

Well, it wasn't exactly, but what I found was a wonderful real-life course in architecture. Waxahachie, about 30 miles south of Dallas, is proud of its history and shows it off to visitors.

Its hub is an attractive town square featuring the **ELLIS COUNTY COURTHOUSE**, a massive red sandstone landmark. The courthouse was designed by architect J. Riely Gordon, who incorporated the Richardsonian Romanesque style created by architect H.H. Richardson. The building once sported Gordon's patented cooling system in which the clock tower, open at the top, and double-hung windows helped provide "air conditioning."

Gordon also was known for working ornamental faces into his architecture. The carvings on the Ellis County building are the stuff of a fun and popular fable that goes something like this: The Italian stonemason hired to create the faces made them beautiful while his relationship with a landlady's daughter was going well—and the faces' expressions turned grotesque as the relationship soured.

The downtown square also offers an assortment of shops and restaurants that make for outstanding browsing. **THE DOVE'S NEST** is worth a good long study, filled with trendy, "shabby chic" items, rugs and antiques. The shop also includes a restaurant of the same name, serving sandwiches, salads, soups and more hearty fare.

OLD TOWN VILLAGE ANTIQUES & UNIQUES is housed in an old JCPenney building and has three floors of antiques. Just down the street is the **ROGERS HOTEL**. Built around 1912, the hotel is full of stories of hauntings and supposedly once hosted Bonnie and Clyde. It has a few guest rooms but now mainly houses offices and the **AFTER HOURS IMPROV**

WAXAHACHIE

Stunning architecture helps build this historic city's reputation.

BY JAN ADAMSON



THEATER, including a comedy show and a murder-mystery dinner theater.

For serious Texas-style dining, try the **COLLEGE STREET RESTAURANT AND PUB**, noted for the mouth-watering Joe's Famous French Burger; and **OMA'S JIFFY BURGER**, a self-described hole-in-the-wall burger house that has become a city tradition.

Just a few blocks from downtown is the **ROGERS STREET BRIDGE**, manufactured by the Wrought Iron Bridge Company in Ohio and shipped by rail to Waxahachie. Assembled on site, it has become an important part of the town's hiking and biking trails.

Items of historical importance are collected in one of the town's charming older buildings on the square. The **ELLIS COUNTY MUSEUM** has a wide assortment of artifacts—old signs, a collection of fans, dolls, stereopticons and more—something for just about everyone.

I may have most enjoyed Waxahachie's self-guided historical trail, which is marked by signs to help you find your way past some of the most

impressive and varied architectural renovations around. There are stylish Victorian "Painted Lady" homes and prairie-style and old Southern shotgun houses—named supposedly because you could fire a shotgun from the front door and the shot would sail out the backdoor without touching anything in the house.

The historical trail begins in **GETZENDANER PARK**, 33 acres of beauty along Waxahachie Creek with large, mature trees overhanging areas for walking, biking and picnicking. The park is also home to the city's **CHAUTAUQUA AUDITORIUM**, a facility in the circus-tent shape and style typical of other Chautauqua buildings. The windows' wooden shutters are thrown open when the building is in use. The Chautauqua movement began at Lake Chautauqua, New York, in 1874 as a summer retreat for the training of Sunday school teachers. By 1880, the Chautauqua platform had become a national forum for open discussion of

public issues, international relations, literature and science.

Each spring, Waxahachie hosts the **SCARBOROUGH RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL**. For summer enjoyment, there's the annual **GINGERBREAD TRAIL HISTORIC HOME TOUR AND ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOW** and fun and excitement at two nearby attractions: **LAKE WAXAHACHIE** and the **TEXAS MOTORPLEX**, which offers professional drag-racing events.

In the fall, you can get scared silly at the **SCREAMS HALLOWEEN THEME PARK**. And the holiday season features a **CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS HOME TOUR** and **BETHEHEM REVISITED**, a life-size reconstruction of the biblical village spread over almost an entire city block. Evening performances include village shops, residents and livestock.

My childhood memories of Waxahachie may not have been spot-on, but now I've made a whole new assortment of memories.

Jan Adamson is a freelance writer based in Grand Saline.



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