

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

AUGUST 2011

FOOTBALL HERO FREDDIE STEINMARK

THE DEADLY CRASH AT CRUSH

# TEXAS CO-OP POWER



## HUDDLING UP in DONNA

40 Hours in a  
Football-Rabid  
Small Town





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By Charles Boisseau

Photos by Will van Overbeek

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# POWERtalk

Letters from Texas Co-op Power Readers

## WAY COOL SAVINGS

Thanks for forwarding the June 2011 Texas Co-op Power e-mail newsletter to us. It is great to see that other Texas residents will be receiving some of the energy upgrades that we did!

Even though we added 400 square feet to our home in October, we continue to see lower electric bills. In fact, recently, our A/C was out for about five hours one day. However, due to the added insulation that we received as part of our energy makeover, the temperature inside our home never went above 77 degrees! How awesome is that?

We continue to be amazed at our energy savings!

**NANCIE JIMENEZ**

*Editor's note: Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative members Richard and Nancie Jimenez were winners in the 2010 Texas Co-op Power Home Energy Makeover Contest.*

## CO-OP TO THE RESCUE

Several years ago, I made my father a flagpole for his yard out of some drilling pipe I had. The only problem is it was 30 feet long and made a very tall flagpole. My father is 85 years old and a veteran.

Last winter, we had some terrible blizzards, and the flag and rope were torn to shreds. Many people in my community of Spanish Fort, Texas, look at the flag to see which way the

wind is blowing. Several people tried to get a rope back up to the top through the ring, but to no avail.

Finally, I thought of Cooke County Electric Cooperative in Muenster. They were glad to come do it at no charge. I had several people call me that evening to ask how I got the rope up there. I told several I shimmed my 50-year-old body up the pole, but then I'd laugh and tell the truth. Thank you, Cooke County EC, for helping me honor my father.

**MARLISSA GIBBS**

*Cooke County Electric Cooperative*

## HATS OFF TO LINEMEN

I want to thank you for your article on electric linemen. It helps me to remember not to take for granted all these things we use that run on electricity. Someone, somewhere has made it possible

for me to have cold food, cool air, lights, water, machines that run, and so on and so on. Thanks, linemen.

**JO ANN MASTURZO**

*San Patricio Electric Cooperative*

## SAVORING 'TRUE GRIT'

Connie Strong: I enjoyed the article you wrote for Texas Co-op Power ("The Big Picture," June 2011) on Granger being used for the filming of "True Grit." It has been passed around among all of my cousins.

**RODGER BARNES**

*Central Texas Electric Cooperative*

## READ MORE LETTERS

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

**TexasCoopPower.com**

## IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS

Thank you to letter writer Tracy Frank of the Society for Animal Rescue and Adoption in Seguin for pointing out what many of us thought when we saw the pictures for "Catch of

the Day" (Focus on Texas, April 2011). They were offensive.

**SHARI ST. CLAIR**

*Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

## ANIMALS PROVIDE FOOD

My family came to Texas in the early 1800s. I have photos of them hunting squirrels, deer and catching fish. It was food to survive on.

That's what Texas is all about—being tough enough to do it for yourself. Fish (and yes, even the dead alligator) are not pets to rescue, they are food—and to catch this type of food, you use hooks. Do you kill flies, roaches, spiders or mice? If the answer is "yes," then you also harm "innocent" animals! Therefore, stop being a hypocrite. If the photos offend you, turn the page.

**WANDA EVANS**

*Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

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.

## KEEPING US IN THE LIGHT

This article ("Lives on the Line," June 2011) got my attention quickly as I saw a lineman in action in May. During the evening hours, I had trouble with the electricity to our home. I made a call to the Hamilton County Electric Cooperative office, and about 45 minutes later, a young lineman arrived.

I watched him climb that pole with only those steel gaffs strapped to his boots and a leather belt to keep him up there while he did his job with perfection. He had all those tools that your article showed, and he knew how to use them all. Thank you, thank you, all linemen, for coming to our aid when we are in the dark.

**Delores Whitt, Hamilton County Electric Cooperative**



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# POWERconnections

Energy and Innovation News—People, Places and Events in Texas



## More Than a Remote Chance of Big-Screen Savings

Conduct your own research and stay tuned for more energy-saving tips

By Brian Sloboda

The days of large console televisions, with their wood-grain exteriors and antenna wires or rabbit ears, are being tuned out. Today's televisions offer larger, thinner screens and, thanks to digital cable or satellite connections, provide a virtually unlimited number of channels.

However, some models require a tremendous amount of energy to operate—almost as much as a refrigerator. And the average American household owns 2.93 TVs, according to a 2010 Nielsen report.

In 2004, The Natural Resources Defense Council found that U.S. televisions use more than 46 billion kilowatt-hours per year, or about 4 percent of residential electricity use.

In response to consumer concerns, TV manufacturers are designing sets that use less energy without sacrificing screen size or resolution.

If you're in the market for a new TV, or if you want to make sure you're using your current TV efficiently, these tips will help you tune in to big-screen energy savings.

High-definition sets generally use more power because of better picture clarity.

Four main types of TVs are now available: plasma, liquid-crystal display (LCD), rear projection and cathode-ray tube (CRT). CRT televisions are the most difficult to find because they employ old technology, and screen sizes rarely top 40 inches.

Plasma screens often are cited as the largest energy user, mainly because their large 42- to 65-inch screens typically draw

between 240 and 400 watts. Most consume electricity even when turned off.

LCD TVs don't need much power to operate, about 111 watts on average.

There are two types of LCD TVs: those with cold-cathode fluorescent lamps to illuminate the screen, and backlit models employing a light-emitting diode (LED). LED units offer several benefits, notably better picture quality and thinner and lighter screens. They also use slightly less energy, at 101 watts.

Rear-projection televisions tend to be the most energy efficient and boast the largest screen sizes.

Shopping for an energy-efficient television can be difficult. Television manufacturers rarely advertise energy consumption, and it almost never appears on in-store labels, though new Energy Star requirements might change that in 2012.

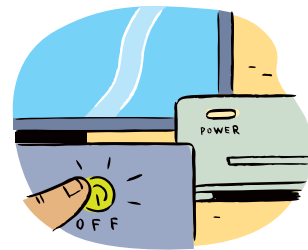
Faced with these difficulties, consumers need to conduct their own energy-use research through unbiased online sources such as [www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com), an online journal for the technology industry.

Look for specific model numbers, which you can take to the store.

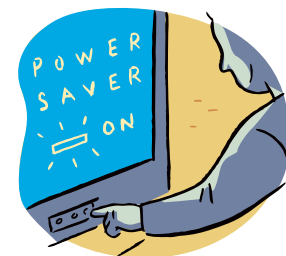
*Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). Magen Howard, assistant editor for the NRECA's Straight Talk, contributed to this article.*

## Tune in to Savings

If you're not in the market for a new TV but want to make sure your model is operating efficiently, these tips from [www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com) may help you save energy:



- Turn the TV and other connected devices off when they're not being used.



- Turn down the LCD's backlight—you'll save energy and still retain picture quality.

- Turn on the power-saver mode, which many new TVs offer.



- Control room lighting. While many energy-saving tips help reduce brightness of the screen, you can compensate by dimming lights around your TV.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The article at left, and the above list of energy-saving tips contain findings that are general in nature. Readers should exercise due diligence in applying these findings to their specific needs.

# Home Energy Makeover Contest Winners

And the drum roll, please: The three winners of the 2011 Texas Co-op Power Home Energy Makeover Contest are ... wait for it, wait for it ... **PEGGY PILLAR** of Bandera Electric Cooperative, **TYSON** and **SHERRY FEEMSTER** of Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative, and **JOE** and **BETH DESKIN** of United Cooperative Services.

Here's how hot this contest is: More than 6,000 electric co-op members from across the state entered for a shot at total home energy makeovers. But in the end, it came down to three: the Pillar, Feemster and Deskin households in Boerne, Texarkana and Granbury, respectively, that will each receive energy-efficiency improvements valued at up to \$10,000.

The improvements may include new Lennox heating and cooling systems, new Rheem Marathon water heaters, upgraded insulation and weatherization, solar screens and an energy-efficient pool pump. With these upgrades, the winners just might have the coolest—or warmest, depending on the season—homes in town.

And they should expect to see energy savings: The winning homes were selected based on their potential to reduce overall energy consumption and increase comfort inside the home.

Case studies of the winning homes, including energy savings, will be featured in the October issue of Texas Co-op Power and posted online at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com). There, you can also read about the contest's 2010 winners, who saw substantial savings on their monthly energy bills. (Read a letter from one of last year's contest winners on Page 5.)

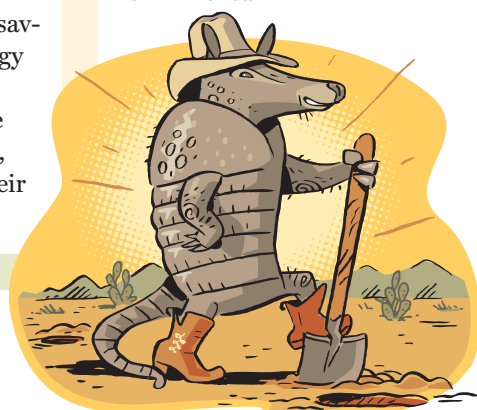


Texarkana's Feemster family is one of three winners of our Home Energy Makeover Contest.

## WHO KNEW?

### OFFICIAL SMALL MAMMAL

The armadillo, designated as Texas' official state small mammal by the Legislature in 1995, resembles an anteater. Otherwise known as the nine-banded armadillo, the cat-sized, insect-eating mammal is armored, with a bony, scaly shell. A prolific digger, the armadillo excavates burrows and hunts for grubs and cannot survive in areas where the soil is too hard to dig. The nine-banded armadillo is the only armadillo species found in North America.



## CO-OP PEOPLE

### Co-op CASAs Stand Up for Children

BY ASHLEY CLARY

Electric co-op members across the state are among more than 6,000 special volunteers fighting for Texas' abused and neglected children. As CASAs—Court Appointed Special Advocates—they advocate for children in the foster-care system and work to move them into safe, permanent homes. CASAs are not lawyers or social workers. They're just regular folks contributing their time.

"The CASA is oftentimes the one consistent person these children have," says Texas CASA Board President Debbie Ferguson, a Rita Blanca Electric Cooperative member and CASA for 15 years. "The children learn to trust that they have a voice in the courtroom and elsewhere."

According to Texas CASA officials, CASAs help shorten the time a child spends in foster care. And children with a CASA are less likely to re-enter the child welfare system once their case is closed.

Cheryl Reed, a Nueces Electric Cooperative member who became a CASA five years ago, says the statewide, nonprofit organization is a win-win for Texas: By using trained, court-appointed volunteers,



Joan Carabin, a volunteer with Child Advocates San Antonio, observes a display during CASA Day at the state Capitol on February 1.

CASA is a cost-effective program. "And at the same time," Reed says, "it better cares for the most vulnerable of our population."

Most CASAs are Caucasian females, and there is a need for male and Hispanic and African-American volunteers.

"Children need the opportunity to identify with someone [like them], but ... it is more important to have a CASA volunteer of any sex or race than not to have one at all," says Sam Houston Electric Cooperative member Bill Townley, a CASA since 2006 and the co-op's construction manager.

Bartlett Electric Cooperative member

Katherine Kerr, Texas CASA's communications and public relations manager, says less than half of the almost 43,000 children in Texas' foster-care system have CASAs. "We have such amazing folks speaking up for kids," she says. "When volunteers do it because they want to and not because they're paid, that means a great deal to kids."

Ashley Clary, field editor

For more information, go to [www.becomeacasa.org](http://www.becomeacasa.org) or call 1-877-894-2272. To read a longer version of this story, go to [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).





# Huddling Up in Donna

*40 Hours in a Football-Rabid Small Town*

Many Texans swear this is the best time of the year. This has nothing to do with the promise of cooler days, back to school and harvest time on the farm. It's about the autumnal return of an institution that many believe more than any other—more than barbecue, baptisms and boot-scootin' dance halls—helps bond the citizens of small-town Texas: high school football.

We could have gone to many places where football is king, from Allen (which broke ground in 2010 on a \$60 million, 18,000-seat high school football stadium) to Zephyr (one of many towns only big enough to field a six-man team). We chose Donna, a largely overlooked place of about 17,000 residents in the lower Rio Grande Valley that cherishes its beloved Redskins. A working-class city and once-vibrant citrus center, Donna's people remain loyal and proud of its winning tradition and the state title its stars brought home in 1961—50 years ago—still the only state football title ever won by a Valley team.

We visited Donna during the 2010 football season.

**Thursday, November 4, between 3:45 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.:**

Photographer Will van Overbeek and I arrive in town in the late afternoon to the beat of drums. The marching bands (high school and middle school) and the school mariachi band, with the musicians' instruments flashing in the sunlight, line up near the H-E-B grocery store, fronting the down-on-its-heels town square, framed by a smattering of palm trees and whipped by a mighty wind.

It's Donna High School's annual homecoming parade, and you wouldn't have guessed the Redskins have had a disappointing 4-5 season so far. Swells of people gather along U.S. Highway 83/Hooks Avenue, two and three deep in

places, to cheer the team and the twirlers, the banner holders and pep squad members, the cheerleaders and flag bearers, and assorted students, parents and teachers who march, walk and ride alongside the horn-blowing, drum-beating, maroon-and-gold-clad band members and the hodgepodge of homemade floats.

The football players, wearing their game jerseys, are smiling down from high up in the backs of open-bed trucks.

In a matter of minutes, I'm invited to ride shotgun in a golf cart driven by Dr. Mike Flores, a Donna alum, local internist and member of the Donna Independent School District board. My task: throw fistfuls of Tootsie Pops, Jolly Ranchers and other goodies to the kids and grownups along the 1 1/2-mile parade route to the high school, where the bonfire is scheduled.

Somewhere along the way, the realization sinks in: This isn't just a high school football game. This is a coming-out party for this community.

In a little more than 24 hours, Donna will face the Mission Eagles and, despite the Redskins' lackluster record, Donna pride remains strong as the team gears up for its last game of the year. "Regardless of how bad the team is ... it pulls people together," Donna Mayor David Simmons says. "People might have disagreements, but this is one time when they put everything aside. They unite and support the team on Friday nights."

**Around 6 p.m.:** Because of the high winds, fire department officials won't allow the annual bonfire, so the crowd in the shadows of the stadium must be satisfied with cheers and rousing words from players and cheerleaders. Among them:





**OPPOSITE PAGE:** As excitement builds, the Donna Redskins have one thing on their minds: winning their homecoming game in less than 24 hours. **LEFT:** Parade stopper: Nallely Reyna, with the dashing Juan Ruiz on her arm, seems to float down Hooks Avenue in her beautiful folklorico dress. **CENTER:** Band members proudly play beneath the water tower that commemorates Donna's come-from-behind win in the 1961 Class 2A state championship game. **RIGHT:** As teacher Juan Manuel Garcia shows, Donna's football traditions are unmatched elsewhere in the Rio Grande Valley.

Clarissa Gonzales, this year's Indian Sweetheart and the closest thing to royalty in the Donna student body. The Donna Indian Sweetheart is the oldest student-elected position, dating to 1934. Each year, the female student who wins the honor is expected to spare no expense on her elaborate costume, collecting donations from family, friends and local businesses.

Gonzales says her costume cost about \$2,000, including an authentic headdress made by a Navajo artist and a nearly 10-pound overlay handcrafted by a local seamstress using an estimated 250,000 beads.

**Sometime after 8 p.m.:** An enticing aroma—homemade enchiladas—greet us as we enter the home of Andrew Salinas, a senior offensive lineman who invited us for supper. Andrew's mother, Dolores, just pulled a large tray from the oven. Andrew's father, Rudy, offers refreshments while he and Andrew keep an eye on a college football game on the flat-screen TV. Rudy grew up in Donna and played on the Donna football team in the 1980s. He works as a marketer for Sysco, a food-service firm. Dolores, who grew up in Harlingen, has also built a successful career, serving as president of the regional Better Business Bureau. "We don't have college degrees, but we want that for our children," Dolores says.

Andrew, who wears the same No. 75 jersey his dad wore, plans to attend Texas State University or The University of Iowa and major in history or kinesiology. He eventually wants to become a teacher and football coach—here in Donna. "That's what is most important to me—coming back," he says.

**Around midnight:** I explore the largely empty streets of inner-city Donna and notice a buzz of activity on the outdoor patio of Cedar House Bar & Grill. It's filled with about 100

Donna grads who have gathered for their 20th reunion. Many of them now live in Houston, Dallas and other cities.

Several former football players are standing around, laughing and telling stories. They try to explain how Donna's football traditions are unmatched elsewhere in the Valley. Donna's noisy home crowd, with its spectators rhythmically stomping their feet and making chopping tomahawk gestures with their arms, and its drumbeat-playing band, fire up the team.

"It gives me chills," Frank Villanueva says of coming back and hearing the drumbeats of the band. When you hear that, he says, "you know it's Donna."

**Friday, 7 a.m.:** The offensive linemen, or O line, as Andrew Salinas calls them, are having breakfast at the IHOP in Weslaco. The Friday breakfast is a game-day tradition. In addition to Salinas, there are four other linemen filling up on pancakes, syrup and bacon. Salinas and the other seniors talk about tonight's contest being the last game—not only of the season, but also, perhaps, of their entire lives. They are confident that they can beat Mission, with its 3-6 record, and go out with a win.

**Just before 9 a.m.:** I catch Head Coach Manuel Moreno—an offensive lineman during his high school football days at Donna—in his cramped office. Moreno, who also serves as athletic director, grew up in Donna idolizing Donna players, including the members of the 1961 championship team. Fifty years ago, the Donna team came from behind to defeat powerhouse Quanah in the Class 2A state championship game at Memorial Stadium in Austin. The victory is still commemorated on Donna's downtown water tower. Moreno, who has served 23 years as a coach, including the last four as head



**LEFT:** Mum's the word for Nessa Perez, whose bright smile says it all: Any high school girl would be proud to wear this homecoming ornament. **CENTER:** With a fog machine working its magic, the Donna Redskins blast out of a tepee in the end zone. This spectacular, game-time entry is a tradition at Bennie La Prade Stadium: 'The Reservation.' **RIGHT:** As the Redskins get off to a fast start against the Mission Eagles, cheerleader Hillary Padilla jump-starts the crowd.

coach, proudly points to the '61 trophy, which sits on a bookshelf. He gets it down, and I can see it has become tarnished over the years, its once-shiny golden football dulled with time.

**11:55 a.m.:** Donna High School Principal Nancy Castillo greets us from behind her desk. She is a Donna native and served as Indian Sweetheart in 1980 before she graduated and became a teacher and school administrator. She took over as principal two years ago, succeeding her husband, Fernando Castillo (Donna class of 1981), a former football coach and player. Fernando is now assistant superintendent. The Castillos say their local roots are not unusual among the school's staff, which they agree includes an inordinately high percentage of Donna alumni. It is these deep family roots and connections that help keep the faculty tied to the community, which they say gives them strength and helps to uphold traditions.

**3:15 p.m. to 3:55 p.m.:** Students fill the gymnasium for the Friday game-day pep rally. They squeeze into the bleachers and compete for the "spirit stick," given to the most boisterous class. Most join in and unleash ear-splitting sounds when prompted by cheerleaders, teachers and the D'ettes—the dance team members. They sway back and forth, dance in place and sing the fight song and the alma mater, the words of which appear on big signs on a wall along with posters ("Beat Mission," "Cage the Eagles," "Pluck the Eagles").

**Sometime between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m.:** Just outside of the high school, I spot four boys sitting around a concrete picnic table. I discover they are members of the freshman football team that won the district championship by beating Mission the day before. They each intend to play on the varsity team

when their time comes. "I'm just waiting for the chance to get out there," says Austin Nash, the quarterback of the team, motioning to the nearby stadium where the lights have just come on.

**7:15 p.m.:** Coach Moreno huddles his players and coaches in the temporary building adjacent to the field. After a pep talk about how they have prepared for games like this since they were little boys, and how they need to pick each other up and carry on the proud tradition of Donna football, he does what he always does: He leads the team in reciting the Lord's Prayer. After the prayer, players bellow as if exhaling and pound each other's shoulder pads, slap on their helmets and bolt out the door into the darkness, running toward the lighted field.

**7:30 p.m.:** The players emerge from a tepee set up in one end zone, running through the cloud generated by a fog machine—another tradition at Bennie La Prade Stadium, also known as "The Reservation." Depending on whom you talk to, the stadium seats 10,000 or 12,500, meaning it can accommodate about three-quarters of Donna's population.

After the opening kickoff, the Redskins take the lead on a 50-yard touchdown run. But Mission ties the score on a long pass play and pulls in front 14-7 in the second quarter of what proves a back-and-forth scoring affair.

Just before halftime, I catch up with players from the 1961 team sitting together in the packed bleachers on the Donna side of the field. The quarterback of that team, Luz Pedraza, motions to a man on the sidelines, Hollywood filmmaker Frank Aragon, who wants to make a documentary and possibly a feature film about the '61 team. He later explains that he is intrigued by the story of how the team overcame prejudice to





**LEFT:** Head Coach Manuel Moreno, who suited up as an offensive lineman during his high school days at Donna, talks strategy with his players during a timeout. **RIGHT:** Clarissa Gonzales, the 2010 Indian Sweetheart, comforts Dillon Castillo after the Redskins' 34-28 homecoming loss to Mission. The Donna Indian Sweetheart is the oldest student-elected position, dating back to 1934. The Indian Sweetheart is expected to spare no expense on her elaborate costume, collecting donations from family, friends and local businesses. Gonzales says her costume cost about \$2,000.

win the state title. At a time when few teams were integrated, the Donna team was roughly half Hispanic and half Anglo.

"To me, if it hadn't been for athletics, there's no telling where I'd wind up," Pedraza told me in an earlier interview, recounting how he went to college, played semipro ball in San Antonio and spent 35 years as a coach and teacher. "I might have ended up on the wrong side, too. But it gave me something to do, to be part of a team."

**Fourth quarter, after 9 p.m.:** With only seconds left in the game, Donna senior quarterback P.J. "Pete" Quiroga throws an 11-yard touchdown pass, and the Redskins tie the score 21-21 with the extra-point kick. Play is extended to an overtime period, but neither side musters a score in the first OT. They match touchdowns and extra-point kicks in the second OT. In the third OT, Mission scores first but misses the two-point conversion.

With Donna driving to tie the score and possibly win, it's clear the momentum has shifted in favor of the Redskins. Donna moves the ball forward, the drummers pound out a relentless Indian beat, ever louder and louder, and the Donna crowd stomps its feet and chops the air, with fans using their arms as faux tomahawks. Then—suddenly—a Redskin running back fumbles. Donna holds its breath. A Mission player emerges with the ball. The drumbeats fade. But—clearly—the running back's knee was down before he fumbled ... wasn't it? The pleas of the exhausted Donna players and coaches to the referees go unheeded. The realization sinks in: The home team has lost. The scoreboard reads: Donna 28, Visitors 34.

As they begin to comprehend their loss, tears roll down

the cheeks of some players, including Salinas and other seniors. A cheerleader comforts a crying player, his head on her shoulder. Nearby, youngsters beg for mementos (a chin strap, a sweat band) and autographs from their heroes. Family and friends snap photos of the players, who reluctantly leave the field, but not before touching fingers and fist bumping fans who've remained.

**10 a.m., Saturday:** The game is the talk over breakfast at Danny's, a downtown diner and popular meeting place. Among the topics: Will Coach Moreno keep his job? This is the first year since he became head coach four years earlier that the team didn't make the playoffs.

**Postscript:** In January, the school board relieved Moreno of his athletic director duties. He remains head coach, but with only a one-year contract. "We take our football very seriously," Assistant Superintendent Fernando Castillo says in an e-mail, explaining the board's actions.

Rattling around in my head are the words the coach told me during an earlier interview: "If there are strangers or people coming through the area, we help them out or whatever. We are very friendly people. We're a humble people and a very proud people. That's the key about my hometown."

That—and they take their football very seriously.

*Charles Boisseau is an Austin-based freelance writer.*

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ATHLETICS ARCHIVES

# COURAGE BEYOND THE GAME

Remembering Freddie Steinmark, the Scrappy University of Texas Football Player Whose Heroic Story Riveted a Nation

BY JIM DENT

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Jim Dent is the author of **Courage Beyond the Game: The Freddie Steinmark Story**, a biography of The University of Texas football hero scheduled for release this month by St. Martin's Press. Dent, a New York Times bestselling author of **The Junction Boys: How Ten Days in Hell With Bear Bryant Forged a Championship Team**, previews*

*Steinmark's biography in this story written exclusively for Texas Co-op Power. To read more of Dent's work, go to [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) ("Mighty Mites," December 2009) for a story about the legendary Masonic Widows and Orphans Home football team.*

OF ALL THE PLAYERS IN THE GLORIOUS history of University of Texas Long-

horns football, the late Freddie Steinmark remains one of the most loved and revered. "In his short time at Texas, Freddie became a hero," current Longhorns Head Football Coach Mack Brown wrote in the prologue to **Courage Beyond the Game: The Freddie Steinmark Story**, a new biography of the hard-hitting safety whose heroic story riveted the nation. "Not



necessarily for what he did, although he was a fine player, but for who he was.”

It's little wonder that two large photos of Steinmark adorn the walls of the tunnel leading to the field at Darrell K. Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium in Austin. Just seconds before charging onto the turf before games, each Texas player touches one of the photos with the Hook 'em Horns hand salute.

It is one of the university's most respected traditions.

Coming out of high school and enrolling at The University of Texas (UT) in the fall of 1967, Steinmark provided an underdog story that touched every heart. Not a single big-time football program recruited the feisty scatback in spite of his selection for the Denver Post's Golden Helmet Award as the best high school scholar/football player in Colorado. That was before Coach Darrell Royal studied film of the diminutive Steinmark and decided to take a chance.

Royal dispatched Assistant Coach Fred Akers on a fact-finding mission to Steinmark's hometown of Wheat Ridge, Colorado. Akers knocked on the door, and a slight youngster greeted him with a big smile. Akers actually thought it was Steinmark's younger brother, Sammy, six years his junior.

On his recruiting trip to Austin, Steinmark wore high-heeled cowboy boots, hoping he would look taller. He stood 5 feet, 9 inches and weighed 150 pounds.

When he sat down on the other side of Royal's long oaken desk, he could barely believe what the coach said.

“Son, let me tell you something very interesting,” Royal said. “I didn't get to the University of Oklahoma until I was 25 years old because of the war. I was just about your size. I quarterbacked the Oklahoma Sooners to a national championship one year. On defense, I broke the record for interceptions. I don't care how big you are.”

That day, Steinmark committed to UT and made a vow to himself that he would start every game. He did not care how high the odds were stacked. When Steinmark arrived for fall practice, sophomore rover Mike Campbell mistook him for a team manager.

“The kid looked like he was 15 years old,” Campbell recalled.

That was before Steinmark was

issued a uniform and began knocking freshman teammates all over the field.

Playing for the Yearlings (the freshman team's mascot) during an unbeaten five-game schedule, Steinmark led the Southwest Conference (SWC) in interceptions with four. During a 45-0 victory over Texas A&M University in the season finale, Steinmark returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown.

Everything was clicking for the young man with the warm smile and bright, sparkling eyes. He strolled the campus with his blonde-haired, blue-eyed girlfriend, Linda Wheeler, whom he had dated since the eighth grade. Freddie was making good grades, attending Catholic mass on a regular basis and living the ideal life.

On the first day of preseason drills in 1968, Steinmark replaced Scooter Monzingo at safety on the varsity defense. It was rare when Royal opened the season with a sophomore in the starting lineup, but Steinmark, with his speed and agility, offered the perfect antidote to some of the country's best passing attacks, which were popping up all over the SWC. (The conference was formed in 1914 and disbanded in 1996, with four of its members—UT, Texas A&M, Texas Tech University and Baylor University—uniting with the Big Eight Conference to create the Big 12 Conference.)

The Longhorns began the 1968 season raggedly, tying Houston and losing to a mediocre Texas Tech team. But with James Street replacing Bill Bradley at quarterback, the wishbone offense began to roll in the third game against Oklahoma State. The Longhorns won eight straight games en route to 18-wheeling Tennessee 36-13 in the Cotton Bowl, finishing the season as the third-ranked team in the national Associated Press (AP) poll.

The start of the 1969 season generated enormous hope. America's sporting press trumpeted Texas as a possible national champion, and the ABC television network persuaded Texas and Arkansas to move their mid-October game to December 6 with the prospect of playing for the collegiate title on national TV.

Steinmark was named to the preseason All-SWC team. But he had developed a limp, and the Texas coaches were keeping an eye on him. The hitch

in Steinmark's gait had first been spotted that summer by his boss at a car dealership in Denver. Then his dad, Fred Steinmark, noticed him running unevenly during conditioning sprints.

In the early part of the season, Steinmark tried to hide his pain. Finally, Akers insisted that he undergo treatment from team trainer Frank Medina. He initially diagnosed the injury as a charley horse that would heal in time. Steinmark limped his way through the season, intercepting only one pass.

Both Arkansas and Texas rolled through the season with nine straight wins. The Horns and Hogs were ranked 1 and 2, respectively, in the AP Top 20 poll for the “Big Shootout” in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Steinmark was limping so badly in pregame warmups that his friend, Bill Zapalac, began to call him “Ratso,” the gimp, third-rate con man played by Dustin Hoffman in “Midnight Cowboy.”

The Texas coaches considered benching Steinmark before recognizing the extent of his contributions during the 18-game winning streak. In spite of his limp, Steinmark remained a savvy coverage man, never letting a receiver past him. Plus, when tackling, he packed a sledgehammer wallop.

## THE SHOOTOUT

DECEMBER 6, 1969, WAS COLD AND DRIZZLY in Fayetteville. Almost every seat in Razorback Stadium was filled more than an hour before kickoff, and President Richard Nixon was in attendance.

Steinmark was limping badly.

Arkansas built a 14-0 lead through three quarters. But two Texas miracles were coming: Street opened the fourth quarter by splitting the Arkansas defense and sprinting 42 yards for a touchdown. He also scored the two-point conversion. With six minutes and 32 seconds left to play, he completed a 43-yard pass to Randy Peschel on fourth down to set up another touchdown. Jim Bertelsen's 1-yard touchdown run and Happy Feller's extra-point kick made it 15-14.

That deficit was almost erased on Arkansas' next possession. The Hogs targeted Steinmark on a post route by Chuck Dicus. The little safety showed a huge amount of gumption, grabbing the All-America wide receiver as he ran past him. The holding penalty moved



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ATHLETICS ARCHIVES



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ATHLETICS ARCHIVES

**TOP:** In 1970, only 19 days after his left leg was amputated, Freddie Steinmark crutched down the Cotton Bowl tunnel to a standing ovation, stood on the sideline and watched the Longhorns rally to defeat Notre Dame 21-17. **BOTTOM:** Four decades later, in one of The University of Texas' most respected traditions, each football player touches a photo of Steinmark before charging onto the turf for home games.

the Hogs to the 7-yard line—but they did not score. Three plays later, Steinmark's gamble paid off as UT's Danny Lester intercepted quarterback Bill Montgomery at the goal line, killing the scoring threat.

At the final gun, the pain finally died in Steinmark's leg. Numbed by the excitement and the adrenaline, he danced with his teammates along the sideline. Then he took off running at full speed for the dressing room. When he came upon teammate Steve Worster, he asked, "Why are you crying?"

"No, Freddie," Worster replied. "Why are you crying?"

## TRAGIC NEWS

THREE DAYS LATER, STEINMARK FINALLY confessed his pain to Royal. The coach sent him for X-rays, and a few hours later, Steinmark learned he might have a tumor at the tip of his left thighbone. He was flown to Houston's M.D. Anderson Hospital, and a biopsy was scheduled. Royal caught the next flight back from New York, where his team was receiving the MacArthur Trophy as the national champion. He paced the hospital's hallways, repeating the same phrase. "I can't believe this is happening."

The biopsy revealed that Steinmark had played most of the season with almost an inch of his femur devoured by cancer. The leg was amputated at the hip. But Steinmark was not about to be beaten by osteosarcoma, a malignant bone tumor. He was up and walking on crutches within a few days, and soon announced that he would stand on the sideline during the Longhorns' Cotton Bowl matchup with Notre Dame.

Nineteen days after the operation, he crutched down the long Cotton Bowl tunnel to a standing ovation. He saw his team rally in the fourth quarter once more to defeat the Fighting Irish 21-17.

Twelve days later, he walked across the stage on a shiny new prosthetic to receive his letter jacket from Royal. There was not a dry eye among the 6,000 fans at the Austin Municipal Auditorium.

Steinmark's life in the next few months became a whirlwind of change. One night at a restaurant, he broke up with Linda, telling her: "Linda, I might not make it. You, on the other hand, have a long life ahead of you. We are going to live two different lives."

He moved into the Catholic rectory on the east side of town. He drove his first car, a brand-new blue Grand Prix. He learned to play golf and water ski on one leg, visited Nixon in the White

House, grew his hair out, and even started drinking beer for the first time.

By the fall, he was missing Linda so badly that he asked her to come back. They were walking across campus one day when Freddie spit blood on the ground. Linda rushed him to the hospital, and soon he was undergoing painful chemotherapy treatments for lung cancer. With his hair falling out, Steinmark asked his friend, Texas offensive tackle Bobby Wuensch, to shave his head in front of the entire team as a form of "hazing" for becoming a freshman coach. Steinmark, who had been named a coach by Royal, did not want the team to know his condition was deteriorating.

Over the Christmas holidays, Freddie and Linda went to see "Love Story," the movie about two Harvard students, Jennifer Cavalleri (played by actress Ali MacGraw) and Oliver Barrett IV (Ryan O'Neal). In the movie, Oliver marries Jenny, and she is soon stricken with deadly leukemia.

Before seeing "Love Story," Freddie and Linda knew nothing about the storyline. Thus, they were rendered speechless at the end. Standing outside in the falling snow, in Denver, a tearful Freddie said, "We just watched our future."

A few days later, in spite of his bleak condition, Freddie proposed marriage. Rings were purchased and a date of May 23, 1971, set for the wedding. Linda sewed her own dress, and Freddie bought a white Italian suit for the wedding. Invitations went out.

But the wedding was called off: On May 23, Freddie was beginning to slip in and out of a coma. He died on June 6, 1971, and the funeral held in Denver drew the largest crowd in the history of the state.

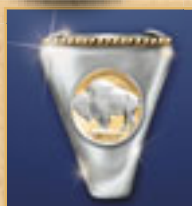
The glorious life of Freddie Steinmark spanned 22 years, five months and nine days. On the morning he died, he was a national symbol for courage. His great friend and teammate Tom Campbell compared Steinmark to Notre Dame legend George Gipp, who died at the age of 25 and is considered by some to be the greatest all-around player in the history of college football. "Freddie," Campbell said, "was George Gipp without all of the hype."

Or, as former trainer Spanky Stephens summed up: "Freddie gave us a road map for life."



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## Efficiency Upgrades That Make Sense

BY BRIAN SLOBODA

Surveys show that only about 15 percent of folks actually take steps to enhance the energy efficiency of their home. In most cases, people think energy-efficiency improvements are too complicated or expensive to tackle.

be 20 percent to 45 percent more efficient than an existing central heating and cooling system, up-front installation costs are often a barrier.

Simple solutions such as changing air filters at least every month will increase airflow to rooms, increase the lifespan of your central-heating and

Energy Star label.

To keep appliances running more efficiently, try these tips:

- Replace worn refrigerator door gaskets to stop cool air from seeping out.

- Clean lint traps on dryers and don't overdry clothes.

- Clean refrigerator coils and keep refrigerators away from heat-generating appliances such as an oven.

Many home electronics, like computers, TVs and DVD players, consume power even when turned off. Called "vampire" or "phantom" load, the average home loses 5 to 15 percent of its monthly energy consumption to these devices, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). In fact, the DOE reports a full 75 percent of the power used to run home electronics is consumed when they're turned off. Plugging these items into a power or smart strip and turning off the strip when not in use is a simple way to stop this loss of energy.

### Other Ideas

The best energy-efficiency improvements are often the easiest, such as turning lights off when leaving a room, sealing windows and doors, and cleaning refrigerator coils.

To measure the success of any energy-efficiency upgrades, big or small, first look at the payback period, the amount of time it takes for the improvement to pay for itself. Then consider your home's comfort level. Check whether fixes you've made keep room temperatures level, and whether you find fewer drafts around doors, windows and other openings like vents or outlets.

For more information, contact the energy experts at your electric cooperative.

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*Brian Sloboda is a program manager for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*



Video games provide loads of entertainment and consume loads of electricity—most of it when they're turned off. Unplugging them or using a smart power strip can make a big difference.

However, there are several simple upgrades you can consider that won't break your household budget.

### Lighting

Compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) may look odd, but one CFL uses about 75 percent less energy than a traditional incandescent lightbulb. That can save more than \$40 over its lifetime, according to estimates by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program. Early CFLs had some issues with color or quality of the light, but with today's versions, you probably won't notice a difference using a CFL.

### Heating and Air Conditioning

The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates that heating and air conditioning account for 39 percent of a typical home's annual electric bill. While an air-source heat pump or a geothermal heat pump can

cooling unit and improve air quality. Sealing and insulating ductwork can be done in a weekend and result in energy savings of up to 20 percent.

To lessen the amount of work that heating and cooling systems need to do, it's important to find and fix air leaks. Walk around your house on a windy day and feel for drafts around exterior doors and windows, electric outlets and entrance points for TV and telephone cables. Fix leaks with caulk, spray foam or weatherstripping.

Simple acts such as cooking outdoors on a hot summer day and closing curtains to block the summer sun will keep the interior of your home cooler.

### Appliances and Electronics

Gadgets and equipment that make life easier are also some of the largest electric users in our homes. When buying a new appliance, look for the



# Play Up Outdoor Safety

Sunny summer days beckon the child in all of us to head outside and play. Your electric cooperative and Safe Electricity recommend that families review and stress that children follow simple electric safety rules for safe outdoor play.

"Help keep your kids out of harm's way when they play outdoors," said Molly Hall, executive director of Safe Electricity. "Children often do not understand the dangers of electricity. Make them aware of overhead power lines and electrical equipment, and emphasize they should never climb or play near them."

Teach your children these electric safety rules:

- Never climb trees near power lines. Even if the power lines are not touching the tree, they could touch when more weight is added to a branch.
- Fly kites and model airplanes in large open areas such as parks or fields, safely away from trees and overhead power lines. If a kite gets stuck in a tree that's near power lines, don't climb up to get it.
- Never climb a utility pole or tower.
- Don't play on or around pad-mounted electrical equipment.
- Never go into an electric substation for any reason. Electric substations contain high-voltage equipment, which can be deadly. Never try to rescue a pet or retrieve a ball or toy that goes inside. Call your co-op instead.

When designing an outdoor play area for your children, do not install playground equipment or swimming pools underneath or near power lines. Protect all family members from serious shock and injuries by installing and using outdoor outlets with ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). Use portable GFCIs for outdoor outlets that don't have them. Be careful using electrical appliances outdoors, even if plugged into GFCI-equipped outlets.

"Water always attracts kids, but water and electricity never mix," Hall said. "Teach older children to exercise caution before plugging in a radio, CD player or any electrical gadget outdoors, and keep all electrical appliances at least 10 feet away from hot tubs, pools, ponds, puddles and wet surfaces."

Make sure that all of your family members know to stay away from downed power lines and wires, and tell children to report to an adult any fallen or dangling wires.

*Source: Safe Electricity*



## Keep the Sun Out To Stay Cool

One of the best ways to keep your house cooler during the summer is to keep the sun and the heat outdoors.

By following these tips, you'll be able to inch the thermostat up a few degrees and see a reduction in your cooling bill. Plus, your family will feel more comfortable.

■ Replace your window curtains with a style that has a white backing on the window side, and then close them during the day. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) says the heat-deflecting white backing can reduce the amount of heat that gets into the house by up to 45 percent.

■ Hang window awnings on south-, west- and east-facing windows. The DOE says awnings can reduce solar heat gain on the hottest days by up to 65 percent on south-facing windows and 77 percent on west-facing windows.

■ Try sunscreens. Sometimes called solar shades, they are made from see-through mesh that's tightly woven to block a lot of heat and ultraviolet rays, but transparent enough that you can see through them, so they don't block your view.

■ Plant shade trees near windows that get the most sunlight during the summer. A young tree won't keep you cool this year, but as it grows, it will keep more sun out.

■ Caulk around windows and doors to keep your conditioned air in the house and the hot air out. Also, look for and patch other holes in indoor walls that are on the perimeter of the house.

# Wends of Change

*Even as their language disappears, descendants of Slavic immigrants still embrace their cultural and religious freedom in tiny Serbin.*

By Elaine Robbins



In Serbin, a tiny settlement on the windy, post-oak plains of Central Texas about six miles southwest of Giddings, the strains of a Czech polka band emerge from a pavilion. Inside, hundreds of people sit at long tables tucking into plates of sausage, sauerkraut, Wendish homemade noodles, pickled beets and baked desserts and talking boisterously above the music.

In the food line, a man in front of me turns around and quips, “You can’t eat unless you can speak Wendish.” We both laugh. Although historic Serbin is the mother colony of Wendish immigrants in Texas, the Wendish language pretty much died out in Texas in the 1920s. One of the state’s last known fluent speakers and readers of Wendish, Carl Miertschin of Serbin, died in 1996.

The man, 63-year-old David Goeke of San Antonio, introduces himself, and we sit down to chat about his Wendish roots. Like many Texas Wends, Goeke grew up thinking he was German. That wasn’t a surprising conclusion: After all, his great-great grandparents immigrated to Texas from Germany, and his grandparents and parents spoke German.

But at the age of 23, Goeke found a book about the Wends on his pastor’s bookshelf. He turned to the book’s appendix and was stunned to find several of his ancestors on a list of Wendish immigrants to Texas. The most notable find was that his maternal great-great grandparents, Joseph Birnbaum and Magdalena Pilak, as well as another maternal great-great grandfather, Johann Kieschnick, sailed to Texas in 1854 on an English ship named Ben Nevis. They and their fellow passengers were pioneers, descendants of a group of Slavic tribes that had developed a common language and, in the 10th century, occupied much of Central Europe. But by the 19th century, invading armies had squeezed them into a small area called Lusatia, comprising parts of Saxony and Prussia near modern-day Dresden, Germany.

Clinging to their culture as a Slavic island in a German sea—their language is closely related to Polish, Czech and Slovak—the Wends lived under German rule and were forbidden to own land and were denied admission to professional guilds. They faced increasing pressure to abandon their language and merge their beloved Lutheran church with the Calvinists. The Wends feared that unifying both Protestant bodies into a single state church would dilute their pure Lutheran faith.

“Suddenly, I realized that the Germanization of the Wends had directly affected our perception of who we are,” says Goeke, whose great-great grandparents were trilingual, fluent in Wendish, German and English. “I was as much Wendish as German.” That awareness set him off on a lifelong journey to learn more about his heritage.

In 1854, in search of religious freedom, almost 600 Wends traveled to Liverpool, England, and boarded the three-masted Ben Nevis ultimately bound for Texas. (Another group sailed to Australia.) It was a treacherous journey: A



cholera epidemic struck, and 15 people died before the ship reached Ireland, where 23 more passengers died during a three-week quarantine. Another 18 died at sea en route to Texas. When the ship finally reached Galveston in December 1854, many more Wends succumbed to the yellow fever scourge sweeping the city. The approximate 500 survivors quickly moved on to Houston and then made a two-week journey on foot and by oxcart to Central Texas, where they founded Serbin.

In Texas, they planted corn and cotton and lived the hardscrabble lives familiar to many early settlers. A scarcity of fertile land and squabbles over what language to conduct religious services in—Wendish or German—led splinter groups to establish new communities, each with its own church, including in nearby Fedor, Warda, Lincoln, Manheim, Thorndale and Winchester.

Ironically, what centuries of pressure in Europe couldn't accomplish, the American melting pot did. The Wends conducted business and intermarried with their German neighbors in Central Texas—whose language and ways they knew from their homeland—and quickly assimilated. In just two generations after their arrival, their language had mostly died out, along with many of their customs. Today, it is estimated that Wendish is spoken by fewer than 50,000 people worldwide.

These days, the Wendish culture lives on in Serbin, home of St. Paul Lutheran Church, which was built in 1871. Every Sunday morning, some 400 parishioners pack services at the church, where sermons are still delivered from a pulpit that rests about 20 feet above the congregation. About 100 preschool to eighth-grade students attend the adjoining St. Paul Lutheran School.

Also on the grounds is the Texas Wendish Heritage Museum, which tells the fascinating story of the immigrants' journey to Texas and life in the new settlement. Nearby is the church cemetery and three log cabins, including the original home of The Rev. Jan Kilian, built in 1855. The names and ages of those who died en route to their new home in Texas are engraved on a granite monument near the cemetery.

Every year, on the fourth Sunday in September, hundreds of Texans—many of whom, like Goeke, have rediscovered their Wendish roots—gather in Serbin for the Wendish Festival. If you go, don't be surprised if you meet people who drink beer like Germans but paint Easter eggs like Ukrainians, and who speak German but can sing hymns in a language that sounds more like Czech. Now perhaps those contradictions will start to make some sense.

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

**Further Reading:** *In Search of a Home: Nineteenth-Century Wendish Immigration*, by George R. Nielsen (1989, Texas A&M University Press) Note: The book was first published in 1977 under the title *In Search of a Home: The Wends (Sorbs) on the Australian and Texas Frontier*.



**A granite monument honoring the Wendish immigrants who died en route to Texas sits near the cemetery in Serbin.**

#### WENDISH FESTIVAL

At the annual Wendish Festival, scheduled for September 25 this year, you can enjoy lunch, listen to a live band and witness Easter-egg engraving, noodle- and sauerkraut-making demonstrations and a stone-ground corn-mill demonstration.

Serbin is about 55 miles east of Austin and six miles southwest of Giddings. From U.S. Highway 290, turn south on County Road 448 and then west on FM 2239. Go six-tenths of a mile, turn west onto County Road 212 and pull into the parking lot of the Texas Wendish Heritage Museum. The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. and is closed on certain holidays. For more information, go to [www.texaswendish.org](http://www.texaswendish.org) or call (979) 366-2441.

# A Gift from a Ghost

*Wild romp with a ghost crab yields a treasured night for father and daughter.*

BY MIKE COX

I'd had a great day catching my limit of red snapper, but eight hours on a boat out in the Gulf of Mexico under a summer sun wrings out a lot of energy along with the sweat. Now, though, having enjoyed a long shower and fried shrimp for supper, I sat with my wife on the balcony of our rented condo four stories above a South Padre Island beach, taking in the surreal scene below as dozens of moving flashlight beams played back and forth across the sand.

The roar of the surf all but washed out the excited squeals of the kids below as they scurried here and there chasing ghosts—ghost crabs (*Ocypode quadrata*). It's the seaside version of catching fireflies and putting them in a jar, except that the crabs are bigger than bugs, about the size of a small child's fist.

Our daughter Hallie opened the sliding-glass door and joined us on the porch. "Daddy, I want to go catch some crabs," she said. I tried at first to beg off, but she persisted. Finally, realizing how disappointed she would be if we didn't go, I gave in. Looking back, I'm sure glad I did.

Ghost crabs, whose pale coloring blends in so well with the sand that they seem to disappear, are so named because they primarily come out at night to scavenge the beach for food—from sand fleas to dead fish. During the day, these crustaceans spend most of their time digging, cleaning and repairing their burrows. And they dash to the water's edge several times a day to wet their gills, thereby enabling them to extract oxygen from the air.

With large, black eyes on the ends of long, vertical stalks, ghost crabs have excellent 360-degree vision—and a startling appearance. They also live up to their genus name, *Ocypode*, which is derived from a Greek phrase that means "swift-footed." When ghost crabs spot something threatening or bigger than they are—like a little girl with a flashlight and a green plastic bucket with a yellow handle—their eight legs can propel them up to speeds of 10 mph.

Operating on pure fight-or-flight instinct, the crabs don't realize it's all just a game when a kid is on their trail. If captured, they don't get cooked or even kept for "life." A seasoned crab chaser, Hallie only holds them in her partially sand-filled bucket overnight. She releases them on the beach the next morning, none the worse for wear.

On a good night, she can round up a dozen or more crabs in an hour. And each year, she gets better at it. Now on the verge of being too cool for such childish



behavior, especially with her dad tagging along to offer an extra light as well as parental supervision, she could offer ghost-crabbing lessons:

- The bigger crabs, maybe 3 inches wide, tend to be found farther from the surf.
- Those larger crabs, though not as common, run slower and are easier to catch.
- Bigger crabs are best captured by throwing sand on them. When the sand hits them, they usually stop running and dig in. But they seldom get deep enough to save themselves from a bucket ride.

- Sometimes, a particularly sizable crab will turn and stand to fight, its pinchers snapping menacingly in the air. Keep the crab occupied while your buddy sneaks around and catches it from behind. And try not to let it pinch you.

Despite the experiential knowledge Hallie has gained on our annual trips to South Padre, a crab taught father and daughter a lesson neither of us has forgotten.

As we walked along the beach on the night that I tried to get out of going with her, Hallie's flashlight beam soon locked on a hefty crab scooting rapidly across the sand on its spindly legs. I tried to keep my flashlight trained on it as it zigged and zagged. The chase went on and on, a human-crab version of "America's Scariest Chase Videos." Finally, Hallie got it cornered, tossing a handful of sand on it.

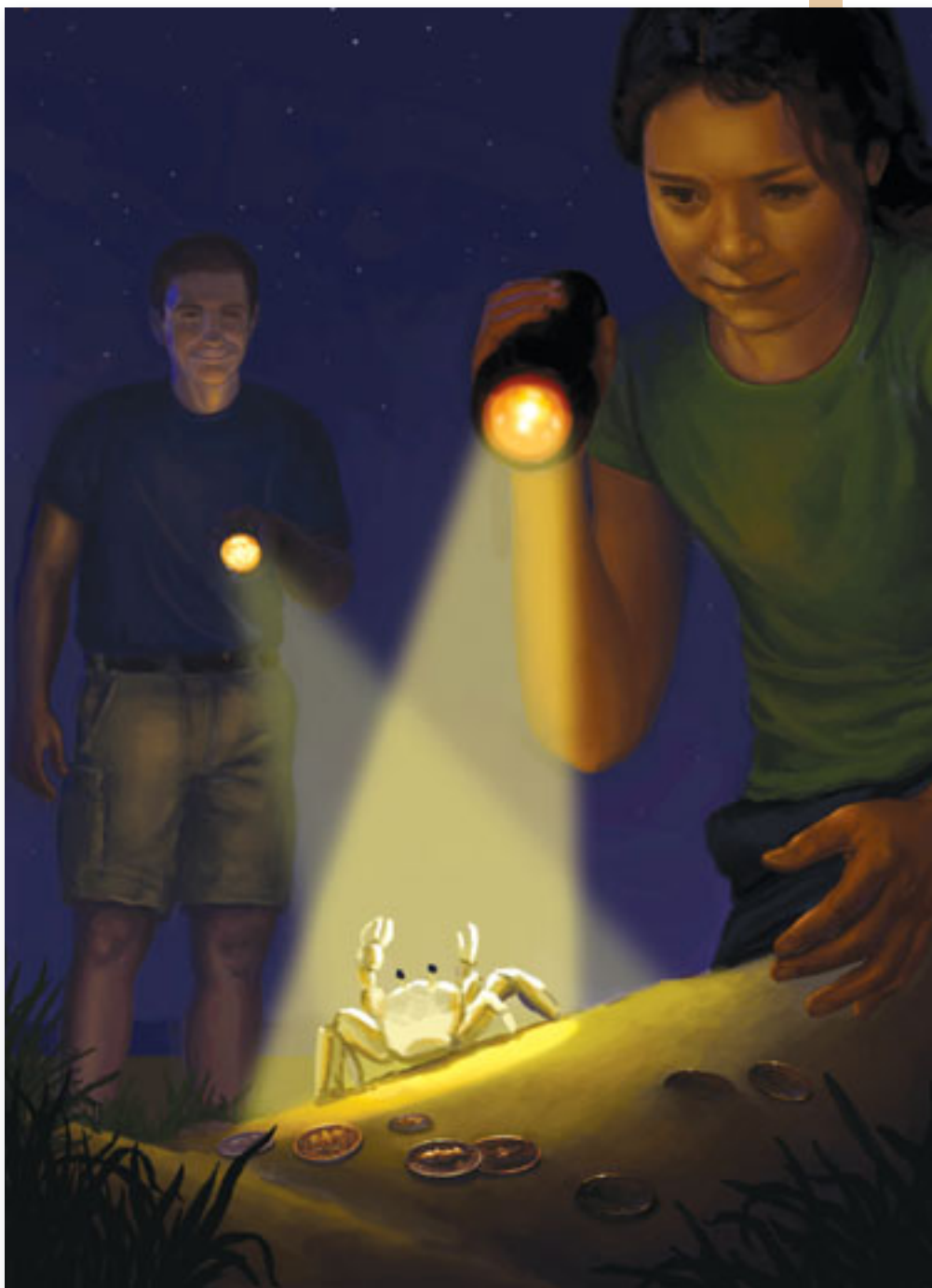
"It's daring us," she said, moving in for the capture. I looked closer and saw its larger of two claws extended and ominously opening and closing in a silent warning to back off. Then I spotted something shiny in the circle of light my flashlight made: coins. The feisty crab had drawn its figurative line in the sand surrounded by coins. "Looks like somebody lost some money," I said.

Hallie waited for the right moment and snatched the crab as I started collecting the scattered coins—an assortment of quarters, dimes and nickels. Catching her breath after the spirited race, Hallie began to process what had just happened. "He led us to treasure," she said. "He paid for his freedom." Thinking for a moment, she added, "I'm gonna let him go."

"Good idea," I said, busy counting the ransom money.

As treasures go, it wasn't much. A little more than \$3, barely enough for a caffe latte. But treasure, I began to realize, is not just money. That night's real treasure was the chance to experience a real-life fairy tale with a young princess. Not only had the crab led us leprechaun-style to a small pot of gold—well, contemporary silver coins—it had turned the tables and captured us in a special father-daughter moment.

As I pocketed the gritty change, Hallie reached in the bucket, pulled out the crab and gently released it. We both watched as it hurried away, its own story to tell.



*Mike Cox is a frequent contributor to Texas Co-op Power.*



# Defy Pain, Defy Aging, Defy Fatigue

## This is my story

I used to be more active. I used to run, play basketball, tennis, football... I was more than a weekend warrior. I woke up every day filled with life! But now, in my late 30's, I spend most of my day in the office or sacked out in front of



the TV. I rarely get to the gym – not that I don't like working out, it's the nagging pain in my knees and ankles. Low energy and laziness has got me down. My energy has fizzled and I'm embarrassed to admit that I've grown a spare tire (I'm sure it's hurting my love life). Nowadays I rarely walk. For some reason it's just harder now. Gravity has done a job on me.

## Wear them and you'll know

That's what my doctor recommended! He said, "Gravity Defyer shoes are pain-relieving shoes." He promised they would change my life—like they were a fountain of youth. "They ease the force of gravity, relieving stress on your heels, ankles, knees and back. They boost your energy by propelling you forward." The longer he talked, the more sense it made. He was even wearing a pair himself!

## Excitement swept through my body like a drug

I received my package from GravityDefyer.com and rushed to tear it open like a kid at Christmas. Inside I found the most amazing shoes I had ever seen – different than most running shoes. Sturdy construction. Cool colors. Nice lines... I was holding a miracle of technology. This was the real thing.

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# The Deadly Crash at Crush

BY MARTHA DEERING

On September 15, 1896, two massive steam locomotives raced toward each other at full throttle on a single track 15 miles north of Waco. The trains' planned rendezvous point was the temporary town of Crush, created for a single day to host a bizarre publicity stunt staged by the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, commonly known as the Katy.

More than 40,000 people crowded the slopes above the crash site, pushing forward anxiously to get a good view of the collision between the locomotives—each pulling six boxcars. Roaring downhill at estimated speeds of 45 to 60 mph, steam whistles screaming, the trains collided with a shattering boom punctuated by rending timbers and billowing black smoke. By some accounts, the locomotives reared up against each other like battling beasts, and then fell over on their sides. Silence fell for an instant, and then the boilers of both engines simultaneously exploded, launching missiles of metal through the air and into the crowd.

In the blink of an eye, what was supposed to be a safe publicity stunt turned deadly: Three people were killed, including teenager Ernest Darnall, who watched the spectacle from his perch in a mesquite tree and died instantly when a heavy hook on the end of a wrecking chain hit him between the eyes and split his skull. Several dozen people were injured, including those scalded by steam and burned by jagged, hot shrapnel. A flying bolt ripped out the right eye of official event photographer Jervis Deane, who was on a stand less than 100 feet from the track.

Injured spectators sprawled on the ground in pain and bewilderment—they had been assured that the engines' boilers would not explode.

The train wreck was the brainchild of William George Crush, passenger agent for the Katy, who convinced his superiors that a staged train wreck would generate much-needed publicity for the railroad during a time of national economic downturn. Crush was right. Newspapers from all over wrote about the impending event, and the Katy arranged for 33 excursion trains to pick up onlookers from around the state and deliver them for the price of a \$2 round-trip ticket.

Two 35-ton engines (1870s vintage) were chosen as the participants. Old No. 999 was painted bright green and No. 1001 blood red. Each was outfitted with six boxcars plastered with advertising posters. Crush, a friend of showman P.T. Barnum, threw himself into the preparations with theatrical gusto, setting up a restaurant inside a borrowed Ringling Brothers circus tent.



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Excitement reached fever pitch around 4 p.m. as the two trains steamed slowly together and touched cowcatchers, the locomotive equivalent of the dueling handshake. Then each engine backed up one mile. The track lay in a shallow valley among three hills, creating a natural amphitheater and affording the shoulder-to-shoulder crowd a fine view. Crews onboard the locomotives had their instructions: Open the throttles all the way, tie the whistle cords down and JUMP. Crush, conspicuous on a prancing white horse, rode back and forth before the crowd, which pressed ever forward, beyond the roped-off safety zone. When all was ready, Crush threw his hat into the air, and the trains began to move.

After the crash and explosion, the crowd momentarily stood stunned as groans and cries from the injured filled the air. Those wounded were collected, some from as far as half a mile away, and treated by doctors who had closed their offices to witness the event. The uninjured rushed forward to snatch souvenirs from the smoking ruins.

Before nightfall, Agent Crush was summarily fired, but it only took a few days for railroad officials to discover that the crash at Crush had accomplished its purpose: Overnight, the story made headlines around the world. Everyone was talking about the Katy, business boomed, and Crush was quietly rehired. Scott Joplin, the great ragtime composer who was rumored to be at the event, wrote a musical tribute called "The Great Crush Collision March" later that year.

Katy officials financially compensated the injured and the families of the deceased. Deane accepted a \$10,000 settlement and a lifetime pass on the Katy. A few months after the crash, he put this notice in a Waco newspaper: "Having gotten all the loose screws and other hardware out of my head, am now ready for all photographic business."

The crash of the locomotives achieved its publicity purpose, but, not surprisingly, no railroad has ever elected to repeat it.

*Martha Deeringer is a frequent contributor.*

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Thai Chicken Coconut Soup

## Exploring a Flavorful Continent

**BY KEVIN HARGIS** When I was younger, the words Asian cuisine would bring to mind familiar dishes like sweet and sour shrimp or moo goo gai pan, but not much else. The local Chinese restaurant was my only exposure to the food of an entire continent.

But as a grownup, my horizons have been expanded. In large part, it's because I moved to a larger city with more variety in restaurant choices—thus I became exposed to more previously unfamiliar fare.

I remember my first visit to an Indian restaurant, when I was a college student. I was so baffled by the unfamiliar menu that I left without ordering. That was a shame, because it was many years before I tried Indian food again, and now it's one of my absolute favorite cuisines. I think about the years I missed out on such delights as chicken tikka masala, lamb vindaloo and shrimp coconut curry with some regret.

Now, my palate is definitely attuned to pan-Asian cuisine. Japanese (and not just sushi), Vietnamese and Thai foods are part of my regular dining experiences. And I can thank my wife, Lisa, for my exposure to many of these cuisines. She has been my guide into a larger and tastier world.

A couple of years ago, she had a soup at a Thai restaurant that she liked so much, she came home and, with some trial and error, figured out how to make it herself. This spicy-sweet-tangy broth with the rich flavor of coconut milk is a satisfying meal by itself or can be the starter for a larger dinner.

Lisa is an “eyeball” cook, tossing ingredients together more by look and feel than by measurement. But to share her recipe, she took the time to figure out the basic amounts of ingredients she uses. And because some of the ingredients may not be available in smaller grocery stores (you can find everything but lemongrass online), I have included some possible substitutions.

Sample the soup as you cook, especially if you use substitutes. The amounts of just about any of its components can be adjusted to fit your particular tastes.

### THAI CHICKEN COCONUT SOUP

- 1 medium onion, diced
- 6 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon oil
- 6 green onions or shallots, sliced
- 4 large cloves garlic, minced
- 2 stalks lemongrass (or substitute 1 teaspoon lemon zest and a teaspoon or so of minced fresh ginger)
- 1 quart chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon fresh grated ginger
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
- 2 pounds chicken thighs or breasts
- 3 tablespoons miso paste\*
- ½ cup fresh basil (or Thai basil)
- Juice of 1½ limes, or to taste
- 8 baby bok choy (Chinese cabbage)
- 8 to 10 mint leaves, torn into small pieces
- 1 bunch cilantro, leaves only
- 1 can (13.5 ounces) coconut milk
- ¼ cup fish sauce,\*\* or to taste
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
- ⅛ cup rice wine vinegar, or to taste

Sauté onion in 6 tablespoons oil in large stock pot until translucent. Add green onions (or shallots) and garlic. Discard tough, brown stalk from lemongrass and chop tender green portion. Add to sauté along with chicken broth, grated ginger, carrots and 1 quart water. Meanwhile, debone chicken, cut into bite-sized pieces and sauté in frying pan with teaspoon oil until browned. As chicken is cooking, remove about ½ cup hot broth from stock pot and mix with miso until smooth. Return to pot along with basil and lime juice. Trim and discard ends from bok choy and add to soup along with mint leaves, cilantro leaves, coconut milk, fish sauce, pepper and vinegar. Taste and adjust amounts of lime juice, fish sauce and vinegar. Add browned chicken and juices from skillet to soup. Simmer an additional 10 minutes, or until carrots are tender. Serve by itself or over noodles.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 2 cups. Per serving: 289 calories, 27.1 g protein, 12.7 g fat, 18.6 g carbohydrates, 6.6 g dietary fiber, 827 mg sodium, 8.3 g sugars, 48 mg cholesterol

\* Miso is a fermented soybean and/or rice product often used to make soups or sauces in Japanese cuisine. If it's not available, try substituting soy sauce at a rate of a teaspoon of soy sauce per tablespoon of miso, or an equivalent amount of tahini (sesame paste).

\*\* If you must substitute for the fish sauce, which is a condiment popular in Thai and Vietnamese cooking, try a combination of soy sauce and a squeeze of lime juice to equal the amount of fish sauce.



**THOMAS ADAMS**, *Central Texas Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Gobi Manchurian (Manchurian Cauliflower)**

Vegetables dominated our favorites from among the many Asian recipes sent in for this month's contest. The winning entry was one that Central Texas Electric Cooperative member Thomas Adams said he derived from an online video and the recipe from his favorite Indian restaurant in San Antonio.

- 1 tablespoon oil or ghee
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 2 green chilies, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced or chopped finely
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 to 3 tablespoons red chili sauce
- 4 teaspoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons vinegar
- Oil to deep fry
- 4 tablespoons cornstarch, divided
- 5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon rice flour
- Dash salt and black pepper
- Dash red color powder, optional
- 1/2 head cauliflower, cut into even-sized florets
- 2 scallions, sliced finely

Heat oil or ghee (a type of clarified butter, available in some grocery or specialty stores) in medium/large nonstick pan. Add onion, chilies and garlic and cook until onion is slightly brown. Add ketchup and chili sauce and simmer until the oil begins to separate. Add soy sauce and vinegar and turn heat to low. Make paste with 2 tablespoons cornstarch and 4 tablespoons water. Add to pan and simmer until sauce thickens. Heat frying oil in deep pot. In bowl, make batter from remaining cornstarch plus flour, rice flour, salt, pepper and 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons water. Mix until smooth. Add red color powder (available at Indian grocers), if desired. Coat cauliflower florets and fry until cauliflower is browned. When all is fried, add to the pan with sauce and toss to coat. Sprinkle on scallions and serve immediately.

flower is browned. When all is fried, add to the pan with sauce and toss to coat. Sprinkle on scallions and serve immediately.

Servings: 6. Serving size: 1/2 cup. Per serving: 102 calories, 2.7 g protein, 2.4 g fat, 17.8 g carbohydrates, 1.7 g dietary fiber, 773 mg sodium, 3.8 g sugars, trace cholesterol

## CARROT HALWA

Halwa is a dessert popular in India and Pakistan. This version is time-intensive but yields a rich treat with a surprisingly creamy texture.

- 2 pounds carrots, peeled and grated
- 1 gallon milk
- Pinch ground cardamom
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup raisins, almonds or cashews, optional

Combine carrots and milk in large, heavy-bottomed pot. Bring to boil, add cardamom, then simmer, stirring often. When the carrot-milk mixture starts to thicken, add sugar. Continue to cook,

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*Turkey Neck, Dallas, TX*

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# RECIPE ROUNDUP

stirring often, until mixture achieves a mostly dry consistency, about 2 to 3 hours. Garnish with raisins or nuts, if desired. Serve warm or cold.

Servings: 16. Serving size: 1/4 cup. Per serving: 169 calories, 2.9 g protein, 2.9 g fat, 33.8 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g dietary fiber, 65 mg sodium, 30.8 g sugars, 6 mg cholesterol

**VIKAS MITTAL**

*Farmers Electric Cooperative  
and CoServ Electric*

1/4 cup cornstarch

Chop spinach and greens medium fine. In a large pot add the spinach, greens, broccoli, one chopped onion, salt, crushed red pepper and 2 cups boiling water. Cook over low heat for 3 hours covered, stirring and adding additional water as needed—mixture should be fairly thick. When saag is almost done, sauté half onion, garlic and ginger in olive oil until lightly golden and stir into

mixture. Combine the cornstarch with 1/2 cup cold water and add, cook 5 minutes. Warm corn tortillas are a great shortcut to the makki roti, a flatbread traditionally served with saag.

Servings: 16. Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 79 calories, 5.3 g protein, 2.8 g fat, 10.5 g carbohydrates, 5.5 g dietary fiber, 944 mg sodium, 1.6 g sugars, trace cholesterol

**TUNISIA SINGLETON**

*Pedernales Electric Cooperative*

## AUNT SHARN'S SAAG

- 2 pounds fresh or frozen spinach
- 2 pounds fresh or frozen mustard or collard greens
- 2 pounds fresh or frozen chopped broccoli
- 1 1/2 onions, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sea salt
- 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper, or to taste
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 2-inch-by-2-inch piece fresh ginger, minced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

## \$5,000 HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST

Time is running out to enter the **Annual Holiday Recipe** contest sponsored by the **Texas Pecan Board**. This year, there are two categories: **Savory and Sweet**. For the official rules, visit **TexasCoopPower.com**. The deadline is **August 10**.

Submit recipes online at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com) under the Submit and Share tab. Or mail them to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may also fax them to (512) 763-3408. Please include your name, address and phone number, as well as the name of your electric co-op. Recipes must be originals and never before published.



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▲ A visit to Galveston Island provided the perfect opportunity for **Samantha Hvidbjerg** to build her first sand castle. She is the daughter of **Søren** and **Kristi Hvidbjerg** and the granddaughter of **Judy Swinger**, who took the photo. All are members of Fayette Electric Cooperative.

## Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Oct	Cemeteries	Aug 10
Nov	At the Cook-Off	Sep 10
Dec	Fun with Photoshop	Oct 10
Jan	Baby, It's Cold Outside	Nov 10
Feb	Going Nuts!	Dec 10
Sponsored by Texas Peanut Producers		

**CEMETERIES** is the topic for our **OCTOBER 2011** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Cemeteries, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before **AUGUST 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](http://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.

## MILESTONES

From something as significant as obtaining a college degree, to the whimsical, childhood moment of flying your first kite, our winners this month ranged from the momentous and life altering to the simple, yet unforgettable. Most milestones do not easily escape one's mind. Captured in time, they chronicle our achievements and fondest memories.

—ASHLEY CLARY

◀ Brothers **Ryder**, 2, and **Sage Price**, 4, fly their first kite up to its highest height on a windy hill in Navasota. Mom **Brandy Price**, a Mid-South Synergy member, says the boys' uncle bought them the kite for Easter.



▲ At the age of 58, Wise Electric Cooperative member **Darlene Fields**, who held two associate degrees, received her bachelor's degree from Texas Woman's University. "I was happy, and my family was proud for me," she says.



▲ Snip, snip. A small, but noteworthy milestone: the first haircut. Little 15-month-old **Asa "Ace Man" Chapman** had never seen scissors cut hair before. Asa's mom, **Devanee Chapman**, is a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative.



▲ In the thrill of a lifetime, 11-year-old **Gaby Martinez** met astronaut Alan Bean, the fourth man to walk on the moon, at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches. Gaby is the granddaughter of Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative members **Mickey** and **Glenn Bowles**.

# AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

This is just a sampling of the events and festivals around Texas. For the complete listing, please visit the Events page at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).

## PICK OF THE MONTH

### AUGUST 12-13

#### FORESTBURG

Watermelon Festival & Rodeo  
(940) 964-2483



WATERMELON: 2011 © TOM SCHMUCKER. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. RODEO: 2011 © RON HILTON. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. STEEL GUITAR: 2011 © HANS ROSIE. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

## AUGUST

**04 BULVERDE** [4-7]  
Ring of Fire,  
(830) 438-2339,  
[www.stagebulverde.org](http://www.stagebulverde.org)

**05 CANTON**  
NRA Banquet,  
(903) 963-8337

**KILGORE**  
Friday After 5 Concert  
(free), (903) 988-4117,  
[www.downtownkilgore.com](http://www.downtownkilgore.com)

**NEW BRAUNFELS** [5-7]  
The Peddler Show,  
(830) 221-4000,  
[www.peddlershow.com](http://www.peddlershow.com)

**06 PALESTINE**  
Dogwood Jamboree,  
(903) 723-6291,  
<http://dogwoodjamboree.com>



**06 ROUND TOP** [6-7]  
Heart of the Tin Trunk,  
(979) 250-1843,  
<http://heartofthetintrunk.com>

**07 D'HANIS**  
Holy Cross Church  
Celebration,  
(830) 363-7269

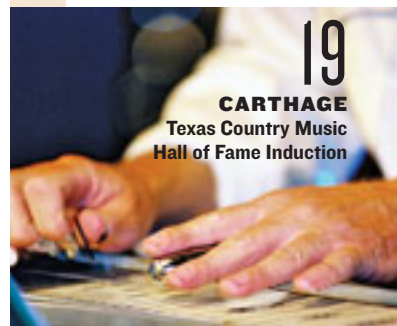
**12 ATHENS**  
Paws & Claws Casino  
Night, (903) 677-7387

**12 HITCHCOCK** [12-13]  
Good Ole Days Festival,  
(409) 986-9224

**HARPER** [12-13]  
3rd Annual Bar-B-Que  
Cook-Off Fundraiser,  
(830) 739-1328

**13 COLDSRING**  
Celebration of San Jacinto  
County, (936) 653-2009,  
[www.sanjacintocountytourism.org](http://www.sanjacintocountytourism.org)

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# AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS

19

**HIGHLAND VILLAGE**  
Highland Village Balloon  
Festival & Fair

13

**HENDERSON** [12-13]  
East Texas Sacred Harp  
Singing Convention,  
(903) 863-5379

18

**JOHNSON CITY** [18-20]  
Blanco County Fair &  
Rodeo, (830) 868-9392,  
[www.bcfra.org](http://www.bcfra.org)

**PLEASANTON** [18-20]  
Pleasanton Cowboy  
Homecoming,  
(830) 569-2163,  
[www.pleasantoncofc.com](http://www.pleasantoncofc.com)

19

**CARTHAGE** [19-20]  
Texas Country Music  
Hall of Fame Induction,  
(903) 693-6634

**HIGHLAND VILLAGE**  
[19-21] Highland Village  
Balloon Festival & Fair,  
(972) 317-6745,  
[www.hvballoonfest.com](http://www.hvballoonfest.com)

20

**BASTROP**  
Family Festival of the  
Arts, (512) 789-9903,  
[www.upstartbastrop.com](http://www.upstartbastrop.com)

20

**INDIANOLA**  
125th Indianola  
Commemoration,  
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[www.portlavacatx.org](http://www.portlavacatx.org)

**ROSENBERG**  
Roundup,  
(832) 595-3525,  
[www.rosenbergevents.com](http://www.rosenbergevents.com)

**LINCOLN** [20-21]  
Lincoln Community VFD  
Picnic, (979) 540-0670

27

**STONEWALL**  
LBJ's 103rd Birthday,  
(830) 644-2252,  
[www.tpww.state.tx.us](http://www.tpww.state.tx.us)

28

**LA VERNIA**  
Immanuel Lutheran  
Church Community  
Festival, (210) 648-1724

## SEPTEMBER

01

**HUNTSVILLE**  
Diva Night,  
(936) 295-8113

03

**PORT LAVACA**  
Flip Flop Festival,  
(361) 552-2959,  
[www.portlavacatx.org](http://www.portlavacatx.org)



Event information can be submitted on our website at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com), mailed to Around Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, or faxed to (512) 763-3407. Please submit events for October by August 10.

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The stars at night are not big and bright deep in this heart of Texas ... in fact, in the thousands of caves found beneath the state's surface, neither the stars nor sun nor sky are visible. But down here, you'll experience beauty you can't find anywhere else.

In these places, hundreds of feet of soil and rock loom above, and curiosity beckons you to venture farther into the unfamiliar and unknown underground. Many of Texas' caves are inaccessible to amateurs, but more than a handful welcome even the most casual of spelunkers.

Of these so-called "show caves," one of the best known is **NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS**. The family-owned and -operated cave system, about 15 miles west of New Braunfels, has been ushering visitors through its cavernous rooms since 1964. Discovered in 1960, parts of its 2½ miles of underground chambers and tunnels were developed for tours not long after. A variety of diversions have been added in the years since, such as a climbing tower/zip line, a kid-friendly mining sluice and a neighboring drive-through safari park.

But the caverns are the main draw. There are several tours from which to choose, varying by time and effort required. The most ambitious is a three- to four-hour journey that begins with a 160-foot drop into a well shaft 22 inches in diameter. But the more sedate **DISCOVERY TOUR**, which has been offered since the caverns opened to the public, is the most popular.

This tour, which takes about an hour and 15 minutes to complete, begins on a patio overlooking the caverns' namesake natural bridge—a rock span left when the roof of an upper cavern collapsed about 5,000 years ago. After following a guide down a textured concrete sidewalk to a locked, gated entrance, visitors are given a brief orientation.

Then, angling ever down, hikers descend through a set of humidity-fogged glass doors and, eventually, into the first large chamber, **PLUTO'S ANTEROOM**, where an array of dramati-

# TEXAS DOWN UNDER

*Deep below the surface, subterranean worlds of wonder await.*

**BY KEVIN HARGIS**



cally lighted stalactites, stalagmites, columns and cave ribbons decorate every surface.

Other striking formations and rooms on the tour also have colorful names, including **SHERWOOD FOREST**, with "broomstick" stalagmites that resemble tree trunks dominated by the towering, straight **TOTEM POLE** column and the **KING'S THRONE**, a large stalagmite decorated by a canopy of milky flowstone, which stands in the **CASTLE OF THE WHITE GIANTS**.

In places, the passage narrows and the ceiling drops so that tall or large people might have to duck their heads or turn sideways to fit. But much of the underground journey passes through rooms with towering ceilings housing colossal formations of rock that grow with each droplet of mineral-laden water that lands upon them.

Despite the 99 percent humidity in the caverns, a constant temperature of 70 degrees makes the half-mile Discovery Tour, which includes a vertical change of

180 feet, pleasant. Shoes with rubber soles are recommended, as the path is often wet, and angles can be steep.

The Discovery Tour's finale is a climb into the spectacular **HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING**, a "breakout dome" formation that forms a 350-foot-long, 100-foot-wide room with a 100-foot-tall ceiling.

Other Texas show caves include **CAVE WITHOUT A NAME** near Boerne, **LONGHORN CAVERN** near Burnet and the **CAVERNS OF SONORA**, which you can read more about in the December 2007 issue of Texas Co-op Power ([www.texascooppower.com](http://www.texascooppower.com)).

For a different caving experience, one without smooth, lighted paths or handrails, travel to South Texas to **KICKAPOO CAVERN STATE PARK**, northeast of Del Rio and about 25 miles north of Brackettville. Once each Saturday, visitors who have made reservations can experience a cave the way its discoverers might have.

Armed with two sources of light each and having signed liability waivers, explorers pile into Texas Parks and Wildlife Department vehicles for a jouncy, but short, trip up a rough track to the cave entrance. Guides unlock the iron gate that bars the narrow opening, and after a dusty scramble down, cavers find themselves standing in a large room. Light beams show the ceiling far above and a rough jumble of fallen rock ahead.

Picking their way among the debris, the guides lead visitors to the cave's most singular feature, a pair of massive floor-to-ceiling rock columns that are thought to be the biggest in any cave in the state.

As on many cave tours, at one point guides urge their charges to take a seat and turn off their lights. The absolute pitch black presses down. It's a relief when lights are switched back on.

At tour's end, cavers climb back into the land of sunlight, breathing in the fresh air and feeling a new appreciation for the wide-open Texas skies.

*Kevin Hargis, food editor*



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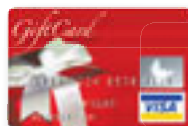
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