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OCTOBER 2011

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FEATURES

8 Showtime

By Camille Wheeler
Photos by Kent Barker

Kids grow up fast. Too fast. But at the Walker County Fair, they sure don't do it alone. Visit the livestock show barn, and you'll see entire families lugging feed buckets and cleaning stalls.

14 Home Energy Makeover Winners See Big Savings

By Carol Moczygemba
Photos by Will van Overbeek

For Texas Co-op Power's three Home Energy Makeover contest winners, energy-efficiency upgrades translate to greater comfort and lower electricity bills.

DEPARTMENTS

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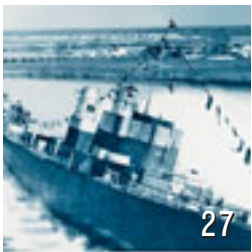
ONLINE

TexasCoopPower.com

The following October stories are available on our website.

Texas USA by Kaye Northcott
Sandhill Cranes

Observations by John Davidson
Cemeteries: Narrative of Life and Death



TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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

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POWERtalk

Letters from Texas Co-op Power Readers

'COURAGE BEYOND THE GAME'

I thoroughly and tearfully enjoyed reading Jim Dent's story about Freddie Steinmark ["Courage Beyond the Game," August 2011]. I was a student at The University of Texas from fall 1968 until my graduation in May 1972. I was there to see Freddie play football, to hear crowds cheer for Freddie and the Longhorns, to see Freddie walk out on crutches at the Cotton Bowl. I was there ... and I hadn't thought about this era of my life in a long time. I was back home in La Marque for summer break when he died in 1971, but I'll never forget hearing of his death. My tears were orange that day. Thank you, Jim Dent, for helping to recall those dynamic years of my life.

ALICE BUTTERY JOHNSON
Bryan Texas Utilities

REACTIONS TO DONNA STORY

The story on Donna football claims the team overcame prejudice, yet denigrates Native Americans. Many schools with cruel and outdated nicknames such as Redskins have changed their mascots. Shame on Donna for not doing the same.

JAY WORKMAN
Nueces Electric Cooperative

Teachers are being laid off all around the country and in Texas, and yet Allen is building a \$60 million football stadium??? Shocking.

JAY SILBER
Farmers Electric Cooperative

Your article about the Donna Redskins football team brought back memories for me. As a 1955 graduate of Pharr-San Juan-Alamo High School, I am very familiar with the Redskins. Donna is the only team from the Rio Grande Valley to ever win a state championship in football. My school went to the Class 3A state finals in 1962 and 1963, but lost both times. Thank you for the memories.

D.U. "BUCK" BUCKNER
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

CASA COVERAGE

Thank you for the coverage of CASA ["Co-op CASAs Stand Up for Children"] in the August 2011 issue. Thanks to this wonderfully well-written story by Ashley Clary, you've helped raised awareness

about CASA and the impact it can have on children in foster care throughout Texas. Ashley, you captured the essence of our amazing volunteers and the heartbreaking and heartwarming stories they have to share.

KATHERINE KERR
Communications and public relations manager Texas CASA, Austin

Editor's note: A longer version of the CASA story can be found at TexasCoopPower.com.

READ MORE LETTERS

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

TexasCoopPower.com

DIG IN

Armadillos [identified as the official small mammal of Texas in the August 2011 Who Knew] feed at night by digging into the ground. Well, the only places soft enough at our house are where the

crape myrtle, fig bush, peach trees and rose bushes are. They dig little holes, and that's where I water. It's a cooperative program!

TERRY MILLER
Farmers Electric Cooperative

BRACKENRIDGE PARK

I enjoyed the article on Brackenridge Park [Hit the Road, July 2011]. I grew up in San Antonio during the Great Depression, and the park provided free family outings. There were playgrounds, picnic areas, swimming in the San Antonio River and burro rides. My most treasured memory is that in 1945 my husband proposed to me, and 66 years later, we both hold fond memories of that day in Brackenridge Park.

SYLVIA FELTON
Heart of Texas 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.

Donna High School Football: Hard to Beat

What a wonderful story about the Donna Redskins ["Huddling Up in Donna," August 2011]. Growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, I remember those Friday nights [in 1961] when Donna won the state title. At Edcouch-Elsa High School, we were rivals of the Redskins, but in the Valley, when a team advanced to the playoffs, everyone supported that team all the way to state. The one big thing about the Redskins' games was that when the team needed a boost, the band would play a very loud Indian war chant, followed by an equally loud drum section playing staccato eighth notes with an accent on every fourth note. Then the team would suddenly perk up and start hitting harder and running faster. The opposing team would wonder if a new team had been brought in. It was amazing to see the effect of that relentless Indian beat!

Ed Zamora, *Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative*



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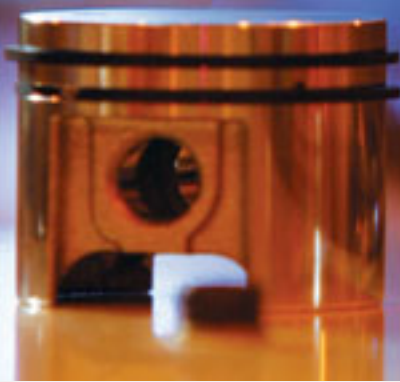


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WHO KNEW?

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The chuck wagon was designated the official state vehicle of Texas in 2005. These covered carts carried food and cooking equipment on the prairies of the U.S. during the massive westward expansion beginning at the end of the Civil War. The chuck wagon was more than a mobile kitchen: The wagon and its cooks (who were notoriously surly) had to supply everything else cowboys needed on cattle drives, like clothing repair and equipment, entertainment, medical help and moral support.

H A P P E N I N G S



Cluck like a chicken and strut away with a trophy at the 35th annual East Texas Poultry Festival in Center. Set for October 6-8, the festival promises a good time with arts and craft booths, live entertainment, food booths and a carnival.

The festival takes place on the town square surrounding the 1885 Shelby County courthouse. First held in 1977 to celebrate the broiler industry in East Texas, the festival holds a most prestigious title: The official poultry festival of Texas.

On the festival's final day, more than 70 area 4-H and Future Farmers of America members will show chickens they've cared for since the birds hatched. The top 40 pens—each contains three chickens—enter an auction, with proceeds going toward scholarships for students whose chickens are sold. For more

information, call 1-800-854-5328 or go to www.shelbycountychamber.com.

From Art shows to Zucchini festivals, you'll find hundreds of happenings all across the state at TexasCoopPower.com.



CO-OP PEOPLE

*Living High on the Wing
Via Ancient Sport of Falconry*

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS

Since childhood, nothing has mesmerized Dan Hillsman more than the sight of a hawk high on the wing. "My kindergarten teacher inspired me to bird-watch," says the 59-year-old Austinite, who's a member of Nueces Electric Cooperative (NEC). "Later, my dad's business partner gave me a book on falconry. Not long after that, I trapped and trained my first hawk."

Simply put, falconry is the sport of hunting wild game—specifically, ducks—using a trained raptor. Considered an art form, the sport's origins date to the fourth and fifth centuries in Europe and Asia.

In-depth research and visits with seasoned falconers help many decide whether they can handle the long hours and hard work required to become one themselves. Those willing to commit must obtain permits, pass a written exam, find a sponsor who's a general or master falconer and then apprentice at least two years. In Texas, approximately 210 permitted falconers live the "hawking" lifestyle.

As a master falconer, Hillsman, a software engineer, may keep up to five raptors. In 2005, he purchased a Peregrine Falcon, named



Dan Hillsman and Sandia, his Peregrine Falcon, hunt on land he owns near Kenedy.

Sandia, from a South Dakota breeder. On weekends, he and Sandia hunt on land he owns near Kenedy—115 rural acres southeast of San Antonio served by NEC. Most weekdays, he flies her in nearby Hays County. "Sandia's a supremely fine duck hunter," Hillsman says. "She ignores doves and other birds."

Each fall, he trains a young, wild-trapped bird, like a Harris's Hawk or a Prairie Falcon. "Basically, I use food as a lure and associate that presentation with a whistle so the bird learns to return to me on that command," he explains, adding that for tracking purposes, he fits his birds with radio transmitters.

Hillsman says he feels deep awe every time he watches a falcon dive from the sky

and skillfully maneuver to capture its prey. "Their speed is truly amazing," he says, "and a miracle of nature."

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

For more information on falconry, go to www.texasawking.org.

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

SHOWTIME

From the livestock barn to the iconic Ferris wheel, county fairs revolve around the circle of life.

BY CAMILLE WHEELER • PHOTOS BY KENT BARKER

It looks like 9-year-old Lane Henley is leading a ship through the show barn at the Walker County Fair and Rodeo. But there's no need to clear the decks: The peaceful passage of small boy and a huge steer named Daddy's Boy creates merely a ripple among bystanders as Lane guides the animal into his stall.

Daddy's Boy, a coal-black, 1,240-pound Maine-Angus-Chianina cross-breed, outweighs the 50-pound Lane by more than half a ton. And from the hip, the steer stands a good 4 inches taller than the 4-foot-1-inch third-grader who will put him through his paces in the show ring.

But as Lane anchors his steer—"High or low, Daddy?" he asks his foster dad, Alan Bagwell, about where to tie the halter rope on a red, pipe-rail fence—it's clear from the lad's smooth motions that he's in no danger of emotional sinkage. This is just another easy docking of a powerful, gentled animal he's been work-

Who's the boss? Lane Henley's easy smile says it all: This Walker County Fair livestock show exhibitor has the upper, and gentle, hand with Daddy's Boy.



ing with for the past six months.

With his steer settled in on a clean bed of hay, Lane hops up on a wooden equipment box, sits and extends one foot: “Daddy, will you tie my shoe?”

It’s one of those sweet, innocent moments that slip away, uncaptured by camera or video recorder. Kids grow up fast. Too fast. Yet here at the Walker County Fair just west of Huntsville, and at regional and county fairs across Texas, they sure don’t do it alone.

As evidenced by a steady stream of rural and urban visitors at the 2011 Walker County Fair, country still matters: And country at this East Texas fair, like so many others around the state, means shining an extra-special spotlight on the kinship between youths and animals.

It’s a bond buoyed by family love and support. Drop in on any livestock show barn across Texas, and you’ll see the same scenes: moms, dads, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles lugging feed and water buckets, cleaning stalls and pushing wheelbarrows.

You’ll hear the same thread of conversation: “My grandparents showed, my parents showed, I showed, and now my kids are in the ring ...” It’s the circle of life, on and on. It’s the building of relationships, between children and parents, youngsters and animals, youngsters and spectators, youngsters and judges, youngsters and each other.

But these young exhibitors know the score: Only one grand champion is named in each livestock division. Only so many belt buckles and trophies are awarded. And they know that their steers, rabbits, goats, lambs, hogs and broilers (chickens) are being judged for meat. This is the end of the road.

Every year, tears roll down youngsters’ faces after livestock sales. Some exhibitors snuggle up to their animals in pens and stalls, hugging their necks and whispering soft goodbyes. I remember the cold winter day some 40 years ago at the Garza County livestock show in Post when I watched my steer, one of several I showed as a 4-H member, walk the plank into a livestock truck. Brokenhearted, I held the halter he would never wear again.

Don Ahrens, a 73-year-old director for the Texas Association of Fairs & Events of which the Walker County Fair is a member, showed the grand



One day before showtime, 9-year-old McKayla Schultz snuggles up with Wilbur—yes, she solemnly informs, named for the pig in ‘Charlotte’s Web.’ This is McKayla’s first livestock show, and she’s adjusting to the experience: ‘When I don’t feel like I have any friends, I always go to Wilbur.’

champion lamb at the 1954 Washington County Fair in Brenham. “You put a halter on your lamb, you feed your lamb, you clip your lamb. It taught me to be responsible for something,” Ahrens recalls.

But when Ahrens’ lamb, a ewe, sold for \$90 at the livestock sale, the boy couldn’t bear to see her go. So his dad bought the lamb back and returned her to the family’s sheep herd.

Fair rules today typically dictate that once an animal is sold, it’s gone. But the lucrative upside is that many exhibitors put that sale money toward a college education. And there’s something else they can bank on: the priceless county fair experience of learning things like responsibility, humility and confidence that will serve them well the rest of their lives.

I visited the Walker County Fair on a Monday and Tuesday in late March, soaking up conversations with livestock exhibitors, learning East Texas showbarn fashion etiquette (it’s all about the belt buckle, baby), and relaxing on that most iconic of county fair symbols: the Ferris wheel. The circle of life goes on and on.

‘THEY’RE NOT IN JAIL OR TROUBLE’

On a gray, chilly Monday morning, lambs wearing colorful blankets are

arriving for weigh-in at the livestock barn. Eddie Smith, a former president of the Walker County Fair Association, is hoofing it up and down the aisles, greeting exhibitors and livestock committee members.

Smith recaps the fair’s beginnings in 1978 when a group of parents, educators and community volunteers, including himself, formed the fair association. They bought 55 acres on which to start hammering out, literally, the details of the present-day fairgrounds served by Mid-South Synergy.

Whether first or last, Smith muses, watching a youngster struggle to hold a water bucket level while opening a hog-pen gate, these kids are all winners. For sure, they’re learning how to work. “They’re not in jail or trouble,” he says. “They don’t have time.”

FOSTERING LOVE

Mike Smith of Huntsville clenches his jaw in anger when asked about the backgrounds of the foster children he’s helping raise, 9-year-old identical twin sisters Kyla and Kyael (last name withheld). All he’s comfortable saying is that they came from a troubled home. But his eyes shine when he thinks about the present. “We’re trying to give them a new life,” he says.

Judging by the girls’ bubbly laughter



STYLE MATTERS: At top, from left, Elizabeth Bounds, Jessica Hoyt, Jenny Dunseith and Jennifer Poole model outfits they sewed for the 4-H style show. Five-year-old Lauren Klawinsky, center, gives a sneak preview of her future stage presence. **BUCKLE UP:** Jayce Miller, accompanied by his lamb, Bubba, shows his impeccable fashion sense by wearing one of his older brother's belt buckles—always socially acceptable—and tucking his shirt in behind the buckle for maximum display.

and ear-to-ear grins, Smith, his wife, Kim, and the whole family are succeeding. Kyla and Kyael live on a farm with Kim's parents, Roy and Paula Bear, who are serving as the girls' foster parents. The fourth-graders are making A's and B's as first-time honor-roll stu-

dents, and they're showing hogs supplied by Smith. The girls excitedly point out Diego and Ribs, the Hampshires they'll exhibit.

Smith's 12-year-old son Dawson, who also has a show hog, hovers nearby in the protective role of big brother

while his younger brother Graham, 7, works out the kinks in the rope he constantly carries. Dawson shakes hands like a man, confident and firm, and introduces Tanner Smith (no relation), his best buddy since pre-K. They're inseparable.

So are Kyla and Kyael. When asked if they always complete each others' sentences, the twins respond "Sometimes!" in unison, breaking into wild giggles. As for showing hogs, "It's a fun experience," Kyla begins, "but don't get too attached because you know ... they're gonna leave at one point," Kyael sums up.

'FASTER, LANE!'

Alan Bagwell and his wife, Charlotte, have built their lives around making sure kids have a home. The Bagwells raised or temporarily cared for more than 50 foster children during the years they worked for the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department.

Alan and Charlotte, who moved from New Mexico to the Huntsville area in 2009, took in Lane Henley when he was 10 months old. He was born in Roswell, New Mexico, with fetal alcohol syndrome, a condition that stunted his physical growth. But he's blossoming under the Bagwells' care. "Anybody can be a mother and father, but it takes something special to be a mommy and daddy," says the 65-year-old Alan Bagwell, who is retired.

On Tuesday, the day before the steer show, Bagwell tells his son to go exercise Daddy's Boy in the show arena. The steer's on the heavy side, and the strategy is to sleeken his appearance for the judge. "We want him to walk fast, Lane, so if you have to run to keep up, that's all right," Bagwell hollers after the departing duo. "Faster, Lane!"

QUEEN OF THE SHOW RING

Monday night belongs to Abby Christian, the queen of the show ring, whose grand champion lamb win—along with a grand champion goat crown the day before—gives her a total of six grand championships in five years of showing at the county fair.

As she exits the ring, younger competitors touch and congratulate her. "Way to go, Abby," they say wistfully, venerating as though in the presence of royalty.

Abby, a sophomore at Huntsville High

School, started showing livestock at the age of 3 in peewee programs. She grew up watching her two older sisters show but says it took countless hours of hard work to develop what she calls ring presence. Even after being named tonight's lamb-division Grand Senior Showmanship winner, Abby comes across as a quiet and humble teenager who's taken aback by her own success.

"I used to be horrible at showing," she says. "After my sisters graduated, I stepped up to the plate."

Did she ever: Abby has won roughly \$20,000 in scholarship money, including here and at larger livestock shows around the state. The Christian family name is revered in the Walker County Fair show barn. "I'm just glad they don't have a pig," a fellow competitor says, laughing, as he walks past.

EMOTIONAL EQUITY

One year ago, she was a calf running wild through the Walker County Fair rodeo arena. Now, Southern Belle (shown on cover) is a heifer showing off her power steering as 13-year-old Justin Wilson backs her out of her stall.

Justin is showing Southern Belle through the Scramble Heifer program. Justin, along with 20 other winners, caught and haltered calves during scrambles at the 2010 fair rodeo. They'll become the heifers' official owners at showtime and may keep the animals to start their own herds.

Justin plans to sell Southern Belle, but it's not an easy decision. He and the other exhibitors, as seen by their thick record books and elaborately decorated plywood board signs hanging above the animals' stalls, have invested a great deal of emotional equity.

Justin kneels beside Southern Belle. They're a striking pair, with her ebony coat and his short-cropped red hair. "I tell her that she can calm down and that no one's gonna hurt her," he says, stroking her side. Justin glances up at the question: Do you love her? "Very much," he says softly, shyly smiling and returning his gaze to Southern Belle.

MODEL OF BRAVERY

With cameras at the ready, about 200 anxious mothers, grandmothers, other family members and friends perch on the edge of their seats: We're moments away from the start of the youth style



Show-ring royalty (from right): Fair Queen Kaci King, lamb grand-champion winner Abby Christian, Fair Queen second runner-up Brittany Drake and judge Jess Yeaman pose for an iconic moment perfectly framed by McKinley Yargo, far left, the second runner-up princess. The queen and her court grace the show ring with their presence, handing out belt buckles and trophies.

show as 11 contestants nervously wait behind the stage curtain. The youngsters are in a 4-H sewing club, and each made an outfit to model today. The natural assumption is that all the contestants are girls.

But there's nothing feminine about the second contestant: 9-year-old Braden Brock, looking cool in sunshades and gray and navy blue camouflage shorts, struts to the edge of the T-shaped stage, lets the audience get a good look, then turns and self-assuredly exits.

After the show, Braden blames his mom, Shelby Brock, a lecturer and interior design specialist in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department at Sam Houston State University, for making him enter the contest. "It's kind of freaky," he says.

But Braden's big smile tells the truth: He's proud of his fashionable, cotton-polyester-blend shorts, and an aunt has already asked him to make her a pair. "I could put you on the list," he says nonchalantly, hands in his pockets.

'THAT'S MY NIECE'

It's standing room only for the swine show, with the crowd easily swelling to 500. The scene repeats for each weight class: Just before entering the show ring, exhibitors and hogs come barreling into a holding pen, followed closely

by parents wielding spray bottles and applying last-minute touch-ups. "Let me mist him, and then you brush him," a mother tells her daughter.

Inside the ring, the swine shine, but some run wild. The more experienced competitors walk slowly, crouching, always keeping an eye on the judge, as they wield show sticks like conductors: tap, tap, swat, swat, guiding their hogs, never panicking.

Finally, it's the moment everyone's been waiting for: the naming of the grand champion. As 14-year-old Montana Hatcher comes out of the ring with her winning hog, she's scooped off her feet by her Uncle Jeff Snow. He hugs her tight and spins her around. "That's my niece. That's my family," he says, his face beet-red with pride.

The circle of life goes on and on.

Camille Wheeler, associate editor

On TexasCoopPower.com



• **Testing their wings:** Read about the broiler show, which doesn't start until exhibitors have performed the Chicken Dance.

• **Agricultural roots:** County fairs, as this story explains, remind us of how food gets to the table.

• **Slideshow:** See more county fair photos.

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ENERGY WELL SPENT

Advice From Home Energy Makeover Winners: First, Find the Leaks

BY CAROL MOCZYGEMBA • PHOTOS BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK

It's unanimous.

All three of our Texas Co-op Power Home Energy Makeover contest winners agree that a home energy audit is a must before you start investing in energy-efficiency upgrades. They also agree that even if they hadn't each won packages of energy-efficiency improvements, the audit alone would have been invaluable for pointing out where energy drains existed and what cost-effective, incremental steps they might take to fix them.

This is the second year for the competition. We initiated the contest as a way to move our readers from words on a page to real-life experience with saving money through energy-efficiency upgrades and practices. The lucky winners each received improvements worth up to \$10,000, but a smaller, strategic investment can go a long way toward lowering your electricity bill.

The following pages present a snapshot of our winning families and details of their energy makeovers. You'll hear them exclaim over attic insulation and sing the praises of an energy-efficient water heater. For complete case studies of the winning homes, go to TexasCoopPower.com.

Electricity cost comparisons for each household are based on the same 45-day, July and August time period in 2010, before the upgrades, and in 2011 after the energy efficiency makeovers. The savings are especially significant given that average daily temperatures in July and August of this year were 4 to 6 degrees higher than last year.

We hope our winners' stories will inspire you to get started on your own energy-efficiency upgrades. And remember to enter the 2012 Home Energy Makeover contest. Go to TexasCoopPower.com and register for the e-newsletter to receive information about the 2012 competition. Next year, it could be your turn.

Carol Moczygema, *executive editor*

Niagara Conservation provided do-it-yourself Home Energy Efficiency Kits to each of the contest runners-up to help them begin their own home energy makeover.

Energy Sieve to Energy Saver

Why are you wasting your time with that thing?" Tyson Feemster teased his wife, Sherry, as she sat at the kitchen table filling out an application for the Home Energy Makeover contest. "He just laughed at me," Sherry, a member of Bowie-Cass Electric Cooperative, recalls with an impish side-glance at her husband.

Tyson isn't laughing anymore. But he does have a big smile on his face. The Feemsters' 1,650-square-foot home in Redwater, including an added-on back room, has gone from an energy sieve to an energy saver.

Professional energy assessments showed inadequate insulation throughout the nearly 40-year-old home, and an air duct with a disconnected elbow was leaking significant amounts of air into the attic. The audit also revealed that the added-on back-room enclosure was so poorly sealed it had more air leakage than the entire rest of the home. And the existing HVAC system was operating at 80 percent efficiency. As if that weren't enough to make a person break a sweat, air was leaking from plumbing penetrations, electrical outlets and other holes in the walls, ceiling and floor.

All this information struck Sherry



The Feemsters gather for a family moment. From left: Tyson, Blake, Clint and Sherry. Suspended in mid-air is Jackson. Son Colby, not pictured, is serving in the military.

with an "Aha!" moment. "No wonder it was always so hot in the kitchen," she said. It was so hot (or cold) that she couldn't sit comfortably at the kitchen table located next to a large picture window, a favored spot to relax after a day's work with the Texas attorney general's Texarkana office. For Tyson, a graphic designer who recently earned a teaching certificate, it was a good place to spread out his homework. But it just wasn't comfortable.

The discomfort was bad enough, but on top of that, one month last summer the Feemsters received a

\$465 electricity bill. Even their four sons going in and out of the house couldn't use that much energy!

After the Home Energy Makeover upgrades were complete, Sherry and Tyson were amazed at how much cooler the house was and how infrequently the air conditioner cycled on.

For the Feemsters, "energy efficiency" is no longer just a phrase. They happily extol the virtues of insulation, caulking, energy-efficient appliances and compact fluorescent lightbulbs—while sipping coffee at their kitchen table.

The Feemster Home

Cost comparison before and after energy-efficiency upgrades:

July 8, 2010, to August 22, 2010—\$573.14

July 8, 2011, to August 22, 2011—\$471.86,

with average daily temperature increase of 6.2 degrees

Savings of \$101.28 or 18 percent

Home energy assessments provided by **Aloha Aire** and **Sustainable Services** recommended a combination of air sealing, insulation, a new, more efficient HVAC system and a water heater upgrade.

GreenFiber provided cellulose insulation that **Sustainable Services** installed on top of the home's existing R-10 efficiency level insulation to bring it to an R-40 efficiency level. **Sustainable Services** also performed extensive air sealing, which reduced the home's air leakage by more than 50 percent and duct leakage by more than 75 percent.



Sustainable Services manufactured and installed solar-screen window coverings on all 14 of the home's windows to prevent more than 80 percent of the sun's radiant heat from entering the home.

Industrial Air Systems made significant enhancements to the existing ductwork, adding three new air supplies for better airflow, and installed an air conditioner with a SEER of 15 and a 97 percent efficient furnace provided by **Lennox**.

Niagara Conservation donated energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs as well as water-efficient, low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads that were installed by **Sustainable Services**.

Come On In, the Temperature's Fine



Peggy Pillar is all smiles over her home energy makeover. She and her dog, Brutus, relax by her pool with its new energy-efficient and quiet pool pump.

Peggy Pillar's electric bill is nearly half of what it used to be, and it's not because she changed her lifestyle. Or, more accurately, as Peggy, a member of Bandera Electric Cooperative (BEC), says, "My lifestyle is upgraded."

The energy-efficiency upgrades that Peggy won in the Home Energy Makeover contest have made her 1,900-square-foot home in Boerne even more hospitable as the favorite gathering place for family events.

With her effervescent personality

and generous spirit, Peggy is something of a people magnet. It's easy to see why her large extended family would gravitate to her home. Built in 1993, the modest ranch-style house exudes coziness. But it didn't take too kindly to crowds, especially in the hot summer months when the 18-year-old heat pump strained to keep the inside cooler than the outside. Then there was the issue of hot water. The water heater was as old as the house, and guests soon learned to nab a spot at the front of the shower line.

Peggy says she entered the Home Energy Makeover competition not expecting to win, but just because she saw it in Texas Co-op Power and remembered how much last year's winners saved on their electricity bills after the upgrades. "I don't just go around entering contests, but I saw it in the co-op magazine, and I'm such a believer in the co-ops, I thought I'd enter," she recalls.

The energy audit found that more than 20 percent of the air moving through the attic duct system was lost due to leaks, holes and poor connections. More air escaped from leaks in walls around faucets and around recessed lighting fixtures in the ceiling. "It was amazing how I saw my energy use drop from the time they started sealing the leaks and replacing the insulation," Peggy says.

The energy needle dipped even further after the installation of a new Lennox heat pump and a Rheem Marathon water heater. With BEC's SmartWATCH system, Peggy can check her daily energy use on the Internet. "It dropped from between \$7 and \$8 to between \$4 and \$5 a day once all the upgrades were complete," she says. "I was lucky and blessed, and wow! It's really made a difference."

The Pillar Home

Cost comparison before and after energy-efficiency upgrades:

July 8, 2010, to August 22, 2010—\$317.71

July 8, 2011, to August 22, 2011—\$244.48,

with average daily temperature increase of 3.9 degrees

Savings of \$73.23 or 23 percent

WellHome conducted a comprehensive home energy analysis using diagnostic equipment that included a blower door test, and recommended sealing air leaks, insulating the attic and installing a new heat pump system.

WellHome increased attic insulation from an R-24 to an R-49 efficiency level and sealed all significant wall, ceiling and floor penetrations caused by plumbing, electrical and other holes.

WellHome upgraded the home's in-ground pool pump with a more efficient programmable, variable-speed IntelliFlo pump provided by **Pentair Water Pool and Spa**.

Lennox Industries provided a Model XPI4 3-ton-capacity heat pump with a SEER of 15 and a programmable touchscreen thermostat, installed by **WellHome**.

Bergheim Plumbing replaced the existing 18-year-old water heater with an 85-gallon **Rheem Marathon** high-efficiency water heater provided by **Texas Electric Cooperatives**.

Niagara Conservation provided energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs as well as water-efficient, low-flow faucet aerators and a showerhead installed by **WellHome**.

Building Performance Institute provided a third-party inspection to ensure that the highest level of industry standards were followed on the project.



Thanks to the sponsors who made this year's contest possible.

Start saving today. Contact one of this year's participating sponsors to get started on your own home energy makeover.

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To find out more about the **TEXAS CO-OP POWER HOME ENERGY MAKEOVER CONTESTS**, register for the Texas Co-op Power E-newsletter on TexasCoopPower.com. We'll notify you when the entry period for next year's contest begins.

Cool Air and Hot Showers



The Deskins work together and play together. From left: Jarod and Joseph, with little brother Joel, Joe, Beth and Josalin.

Beth Deskin had a plan. After reading last year's Texas Co-op Power story about the 2010 Home Energy Makeover winners, she was on the lookout for the contest announcement in 2011. "The day it opened, I sent my application online," she said. After 18 years of marriage, her husband, Joe, was used to his wife's creative frugality, which often involved entering contests to win practical items the family needed.

The Deskins, members of United Cooperative Services (UCS), and their four children live in Granbury in a 1,700-square-foot home built in 1988. For the past several years, they'd been saving to replace their 23-year-old heat pump, which was working so hard during this past summer of drought and triple-digit temperatures that it rarely cycled off. "Even with it running almost constantly, it didn't get below 81 degrees in the afternoon," Beth says.

As surprised as she was to be a winner, Beth says a UCS energy audit revealed even more surprises. The biggest shock was finding out their eight-year-old water heater accounted for almost as much energy use as their old HVAC system and provided the family with frequent involuntary cold showers. Beth beams as she reports that with the new Rheem Marathon water heater, there is hot water to spare after four showers and a load of laundry, all in one hour.

On the day of our July visit, the temperature outside was 104 degrees. I was invited to climb into the newly insulated attic. This would be the critical test. If attic insulation were truly the one heat-blasting weapon above all others, I would know it. The temperature in the Deskins' attic was 84 degrees.

Beth confirmed the star role of insulation: "We felt it almost instantly. The house cooled down with a crisp cool air instead of the warm cool we had before." And that was before installation of the new air conditioner.

Joe, an electrical engineer, confessed his amazement at what a difference the energy upgrades have made. "The audit showed us things we never thought about," he said.

The Deskin Home

Cost comparison before and after energy-efficiency upgrades:

July 8, 2010, to August 22, 2010—\$529.41

July 8, 2011, to August 22, 2011—\$385.98,

with average daily temperature increase of 2.1 degrees

Savings of \$143.43 or 27 percent

United Cooperative Services (UCS)

provided a comprehensive home energy analysis. UCS also installed energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs throughout the house.

AirTight SprayFoam Insulation of Texas

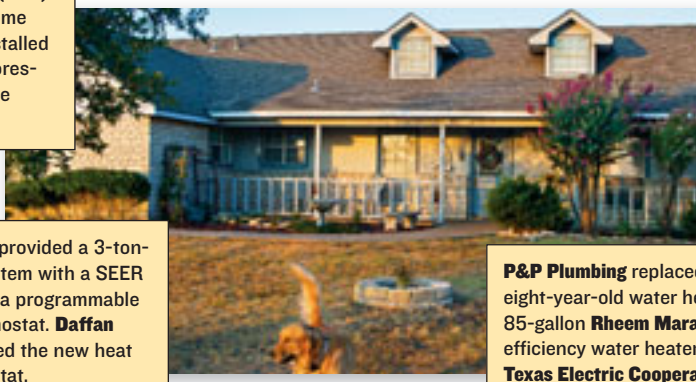
applied closed-cell SprayFoam insulation to the roof deck, gables and soffit areas over all living spaces.

Niagara Conservation

donated energy-efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs as well as water-efficient, low-flow faucet aerators and a showerhead that were installed by UCS staff.

Lennox Industries provided a 3-ton-capacity HVAC system with a SEER of 15 and included a programmable touchscreen thermostat. **Daffan Mechanical** installed the new heat pump and thermostat.

P&P Plumbing replaced the existing eight-year-old water heater with an 85-gallon **Rheem Marathon** high-efficiency water heater provided by **Texas Electric Cooperatives**.



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Stay Safe in Stormy Weather

In Texas, the fall season can be a mixed bag of weather extremes. Sometimes it's hot, sometimes it's cold, and it might bring hurricanes, tornadoes or floods.

Severe weather can bring power lines down, creating a tremendous potential hazard. And debris from storms can easily ignite if it comes into contact with downed power lines, especially when electrical wires are severed. Also, standing water and appliances can become electrically charged.

These tips should help keep you safe following storms:

General Electrical Safety

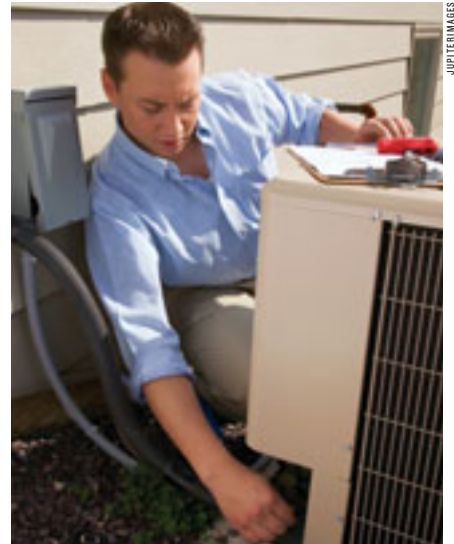
- Never touch a downed power line. Call your electric cooperative to report it immediately. Avoid contact with overhead lines during cleanup and other activities. Assume that all wires on the ground are electrically charged.
- Be sure all electric and gas services are turned off before entering buildings for the first time after a storm.
- If water has risen above the electrical outlets in your home, contact a licensed electrician before turning on your main circuit breaker. Outlets and wiring that have come in contact with water could present a fire and shock hazard.
- Allow all electrical appliances and electronic equipment, after being submerged, to dry thoroughly. Have them checked by a qualified repair professional before turning them on.
- Look for and replace damaged extension and appliance cords, loose prongs and plugs.
- Keep an emergency supply kit on hand in the event of a power outage.

Generator Safety

- Portable electric generators are often put into use for temporary power. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's directions for installation and operation.
- Use generators or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. Carbon monoxide fumes are odorless and can quickly poison you indoors.
- Take special care not to overload the generator. Use appropriately sized extension cords to carry the electric load. Make sure the cords have grounded, three-pronged plugs and are in good condition.
- Never run cords under rugs or carpets.
- Unless the connection is properly installed by an electrician, never connect generators to a building's wiring system or plug them into a wall outlet. The reverse flow of electricity can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

BASIC EMERGENCY SUPPLY KIT CONTENTS

- One gallon of water per person per day for three days
- A supply of nonperishable food. It is good to have enough for at least three days. Some good ideas are ready-to-eat canned meats, peanut butter, protein or fruit bars, dry cereal or granola.
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- A manual can opener and eating utensils
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation



JUPITER IMAGES

Have Heating Inspection Done Before Halloween

The best time to have your heating system inspected is after the hot summer air is gone—but before winter's chill sets in.

It's important to have your heater inspected every year before heating season kicks in. A licensed service technician can warn you about problems—and fix them—before they become so big that your system shuts down during the dead of winter, leaving your house uncomfortably cold for a day or more while you wait for repairs.

That inspection could also reveal needed improvements or repairs that might make it easier for your system to heat and cool your home more efficiently—helping lower your electric bill.

If your system is more than 10 years old, it may be worth looking into replacing it. Today's systems are much more energy efficient and will likely cut your monthly heating and cooling costs significantly.

You can do your part by changing filters regularly and having a working carbon monoxide detector in place.

How Low Can Your Thermostat Go?

DEAR JIM: I hear how important it is to lower my thermostat setting during winter. It seems it would just take more energy to reheat the house each morning. What is the best thermostat setting for the most savings? —Don G.

DEAR DON: Selecting the proper temperatures throughout the day and night can be a bit confusing. You want to balance comfort with energy—and dollar—savings. It is surprising how comfortable you can be at a lower indoor temperature once you become accustomed to it. Thereafter, you find yourself uncomfortable at higher indoor temperatures that used to seem normal.

It actually does save energy overall if you lower the temperature setting on your central furnace or heat pump thermostat. The actual amount of dollar savings depends primarily on how low you set the thermostat, how long you have it set back, and, to a lesser degree, your climate.

There are other advantages to lowering the thermostat setting during winter. If your house temperature is lower, it requires less moisture indoors to keep the indoor air at a given relative humidity level. The fact that your furnace or heat pump runs less at a lower indoor temperature means the equipment will last longer and need fewer repairs.

If you look at setback savings charts, you'll notice that the percentage savings are actually higher in milder climates than in colder climates. This is because the total amount of energy used to keep a house comfortably warm in a cold climate is much greater than in a warm climate. This makes the base number larger in cold climates so the percentage savings are less even though the dollar savings are greater.

It is a common myth that it takes as much energy to reheat a house, in the morning for example, as was saved during the temperature setback

period overnight. The amount of heat a house loses through its walls, ceilings and floors is directly proportional to the difference between the indoor and the outdoor temperatures. Air leakage into and out of your house also increases with larger temperature differences.

When the indoor temperature is set lower, the indoor-to-outdoor temperature difference is smaller, so less heat is lost from your house. During the summer, the same is true in reverse. If less heat is lost from your house, your furnace has to use less

If you have a heat pump, install a special setback thermostat designed for heat pumps. These heat pump thermostats have electronic circuitry to keep the backup resistance heating elements off after the setback period. My own heat pump thermostat works this way, and it also allows me to block out the resistance heating when the outdoor temperature is above a certain temperature. I have mine set at 20 degrees.

There is not a "best" thermostat setting for all homes and climates. The lower you set it, the greater the overall



Setting back your thermostat in the winter can save energy and money. And, if your thermostat looks like this one, there are even more savings awaiting you by replacing it with a programmable version.

electricity or other energy sources to create the heat to replace it. The amount of heat used to reheat the house, therefore, is less than the amount saved over the temperature setback period.

The only time a temperature setback may not be wise is if you have a heat pump with backup electric resistance heat and an old thermostat. When it is time to reheat the house and you set the thermostat higher again, the expensive backup electric resistance heater might come on. For a long eight-hour setback, you will likely still save overall, but not for just a short setback.

savings will be. The amount of savings per degree for each nighttime, eight-hour setback period ranges from 1 to 3 percent. Because many people are also gone during the daytime, the temperature can be set lower for about 16 hours per day. Unless there are health problems in your family, 62 degrees can be comfortable if you are wearing long sleeves or a sweater.

Let your comfort dictate how low you initially set the furnace or heat pump thermostat. As you get used to the lower temperatures and learn to wear a sweater, you will be able to gradually lower it more.

© James Dulley

Blessed Are the Watchers

*Giving thanks
for a glimpse of
Sandhill Cranes*

By Kaye Northcott



I recently developed an interest in birds despite my poor vision and resistance to getting up early. I can watch common birds drinking from the fountain in my backyard, but after reading *The Echo Maker* (Thompson Gale, 2006), a novel by Richard Powers, I felt a yearning to see something epic, specifically Sandhill Cranes.

I had been carried along by the author's eloquence as he described a migratory stop: "They converge on the river at winter's end as they have for eons, carpeting the wetlands ... the oldest flying things on earth, one stutter-step away from pterodactyls. As darkness falls for real, it's a beginner's world again, the same evening as the day sixty million years ago when the migration began."

So Powers describes the birds' arrival in spring and fall on the Platte River in Nebraska, where they stop to clean up harvested grainfields. They do the same in far North Texas on their yearly circuit from summer nesting grounds in the northern U.S., Canada and the Arctic to winter feeding areas in Northern Mexico, New Mexico and Texas.

I wanted to be in the presence of this magic. Even if I can't write with Powers' eloquence, I wanted to see and report on these magnificent creatures, so large they are employed by rescue workers to foster chicks of endangered whooping cranes. The Texas sanctuary that usually records the most Sandhill Cranes is the remote Muleshoe National Wildlife Refuge on the High Plains, the oldest national wildlife refuge in the state. In February 1981, the count reached a soaring high of 250,000. The fact that the birds are usually at their most bountiful when it's as cold as it gets in Texas—they begin arriving in about October and leave in early March—did not deter me.

I'd been hounding the wildlife refuge manager by telephone asking for a crane count every week. Right before my trip in early 2011, there were about 8,000 cranes at the refuge and 16,000 or so in the area. No records were going to be broken, but after you've seen several thousand, who's counting?

Those of you who don't get around much might not know of Muleshoe, home of Bailey County Electric Cooperative. To get there, find your way to Lubbock and proceed about 70 miles northwest; from Amarillo, go about 100 miles southwest. You've gone too far if you reach the New Mexico line. The cranes are attracted by grain in nearby wheat fields and insects, rodents and tubers. They feed and socialize during the day and seek overnight accommodations where they can keep their feet wet and watch out for predators.

My friends Saralee, Sara and I drove from Austin, leaving about 7 a.m. and arriving at the wildlife refuge, which is 20 miles south of Muleshoe on State Highway 214, at about 5 p.m. It was pretty clear that the cranes were going to be at Paul's Lake because it was the only one of the three extant playa lakes within the 5,000-acre refuge that had water.

Because of the drought, one had to look sharp to see any water at all. Playas are

formed in depressions where freshwater precipitation or spring water accumulates and then evaporates. Paul's Lake is a desolate clay expanse, lumpy with encrusted minerals, predominantly salt. Scrawny, salt-tolerant vegetation rings the playa. Other than that, it's sky as far as you can see.

I couldn't see any cranes at all until Saralee, a genuine bird-watcher, pointed across the playa to what looked to me like piles of gray stones at the edge of the water. When I adjusted my binoculars, and the prairie wind died down, I could see them and hear their rough cries. They were standing close together in shallow water. And more were arriving every minute. From a distance, they looked like V-shaped wisps of smoke, circling downward, getting darker and denser as each new group circled the playa and landed on the other side of the lake. They seemed to shy away from our side of the lake with its observation platform, and they were too far away to judge their height or fully admire their wingspans, which spread up to 6 feet across.

It was on to Muleshoe for the night, but the next morning found us up well before dawn in our warmest clothes. It was literally a beginner's world for me. I rarely get up before dawn and had never done so on the High Plains, hushed under a vast obsidian dome of stars.

Even before the sun rose, we sensed stirrings across the lake and could hear soft vocalizations. It seemed as if the cranes would all be gone by the time the sun came up. But just as the morning sky turned pink, four cranes flew silently over us; graceful necks stretched urgently forward, spindly legs elongating each torso to at least my 5-foot height. Powerful black-tipped wings cut the freezing air with the merest effort.

As Powers writes, "The blood-red head bows and the wings sweep together, a cloaked priest giving benediction."

As they journeyed toward the sunrise, all I could do was give thanks for being present for a few seconds of their never-ending cycle.

Kaye Northcott is retired editor of Texas Co-op Power.

Author's note: To hear the cranes' cries, go to www.savingcranes.org/sandhillcrane.html.



CHASE FOUNTAIN/TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

Narrative of Life and Death

*In cemeteries,
storylines and
long-lost connections
pull two worlds
together.*

BY JOHN DAVIDSON

After my mother's funeral, I put off returning to the cemetery as long as possible—indeed, until I began to hear her saying in an exasperated tone of voice: “Two years, I've been gone. It seems you'd at least want to see if my headstone is in place.”

I knew exactly what her headstone looked like, but I finally got in the car and made the 80-mile drive from Austin to Fredericksburg. I turned off Main Street and headed north on Texas Highway 16 to the Greenwood Cemetery, which dates back to 1898. Post oaks and blackjack oaks line the 20-acre cemetery just north of town. Away from the cemetery's paved roads, its narrow, gravel ways are like quiet country lanes.

Greenwood has a silk-stocking district where affluent families rest in small mausoleums or in enclosed terraces surrounded by rock walls. They remind me of House & Garden magazine photo spreads from the 1950s.

My parents had chosen to be buried in a newer section, which is like a lawn with flat, minimalistic headstones. Confident that an inner compass would guide me to them, I started across the grass, but when I arrived at our row, the graves weren't there. I moved to the next row, looked around, then to the next. Bewildered and beginning to panic, I was reduced to that most unnerving state of childhood: I had lost my parents; therefore, I was lost. Had a nearby grave been open, I might have toppled in, but then, looking down, I noticed a familiar name carved on a stone: one of my mother's friends and one of my junior high teachers. If she was there, then I couldn't be very lost.

Calmer, I saw that I was in the wrong section of the cemetery. After finding our graves, other familiar names drew me from one headstone to another. I was surprised by how many people I knew, such as my friends' parents and some of my friends. The past came back to me, all of the names and stories, the overlapping lives, the romances, the intertwined tragedies. The town I'd known was there, an entire community.

In most cemeteries, there are many competing narratives. There are the stories of the individual deaths, which are often sad, if not tragic. Then, there is the larger narrative that the surviving community tells by creating a place of peace and order.

Fredericksburg had seemed like a separate world when I was a child—safe, confined, yet somewhat strange. There were, of course, two languages—German and



English—and my family spoke only the latter. There were two cultures, and, without quite realizing it, we were in the minority. We lived on a block that people in Fredericksburg called “little America” and that we referred to as “the neighborhood,” and by that we meant four families—the Coxes, the Browns, the Lawrences and the Davidsons.

Our parents had all come of age during the Depression and World War II and wanted our lives to be ideal. The mothers stayed home, baking cookies and organizing Scout troops and PTA events. The fathers came home for lunch. At noon, you could hear the town stop for the midday meal, the clatter of knives and forks; you could smell the food. In the long, cool Hill Country evenings, the parents would sit together in lawn chairs, while the children played hide-and-seek, chased fireflies or lay on quilts spread on the lawn and looked up at the stars.

In the summers, we rode our bicycles to the public swimming pool or to the public library, which was housed in the octagonal-shaped Vereins Kirche, Fredericksburg’s first public building. Its polished granite and marble floors were cool no matter how hot it was outside. Our world was so small that I always scanned the library checkout card inside a book to see who had read it and was aware that someone would do the same and see my name.

In high school, we drove up and down Main Street as though we were tethered on an invisible leash. We would cruise through the Dairy Queen or The Tower to see who was there, but we would always turn back at the same place at either end of the street. We were innocents, raised to believe that government should be respected and that we lived in a fair society. We didn’t know what lay beyond, didn’t realize we could break the gravitational pull of Fredericksburg. Only one car kept going, the three boys sailing all the way through West Texas on their way to California.

I found the graves of two classmates, then walked back to my car, stopping again at my family’s headstones. I’d never noticed how the much the cemetery was a reflection of the town or considered what a spell graveyards cast upon the living.

But that is part of their intended function, to pull the living back to the dead, to create a sense of continuity and meaning to help us confront the mystery of life and death.

John Davidson is an Austin-based writer.



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Orange's World War II Shipbuilding Boom

BY GINGER MYNATT

The city of Orange, on Texas' eastern border, was nearly wiped out by the Depression despite a proud history of lumbering and shipbuilding on the banks of the Sabine River near the Gulf of Mexico. In the 1930s, Orange was broke. The population had dwindled. A mere 8 percent of residents had jobs. Businesses were shuttered, and farms were repossessed.

But then the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States entered World War II. Overnight, Orange became a bustling metropolis, helping supply the largest navy in the world as one of the nation's leading shipbuilding towns.

Because Orange already had shipbuilding infrastructure, U.S. Navy officials arrived with lucrative contracts in hand. Steel fabricator Consolidated Western Steel Corp. built a shipyard, and the existing Levingston and Weaver shipbuilding companies expanded. Within a few months, these three companies created thousands of jobs. People came from everywhere: nearby communities and farms, East and North Texas, the swamps of Louisiana and hills of Oklahoma. From 1941 to 1945, Orange's population ballooned from a few thousand to about 70,000.

Production churned around the clock. The bright lights of the shipyards illuminated the revamped downtown 24 hours a day. The bustle of people coming and going at all hours, the hammering and drilling of sheet metal and the pneumatic pounding of rivets made night like day. Young boys stood at the gates of shipyards at midnight hawking newspapers, shoeshines and anything else they could find to sell.

New service businesses opened up. Cleaners, shoe repairs, auto shops, barbershops and grocery stores could not keep up with demand. Employers opened early, closed late and tried to keep wages competitive with those of the shipyards to retain help. Every commodity was in short supply: dry goods, canned goods, clothing, auto parts, construction materials and fresh food. Local gardeners and farmers sold produce before it ripened and eggs before they were laid.

A housing shortage drove people to live in tents, fields, barns and sheds. To solve the problem, the federal government bulldozed sand into a marsh and built more than 4,500 temporary homes in a development called Riverside. Because Riverside bordered the Sabine River, the ground was always wet. Concrete streets, designed as drains, channeled the water when it rained, but there was nowhere for it to go. Even if a Riverside resident could afford a car, it couldn't make it through the streets; therefore, people walked barefoot to their homes.

Educated locals filled office and supervisory positions, mingling with naval officers and administrators from other parts of the country. Uneducated workers attended school



COURTESY HERITAGE HOUSE MUSEUM/THE PORTAL TO TEXAS HISTORY

and trained for specific jobs. They became machinists, welders or fabricators in a matter of weeks. Even with all of the workers descending on the town, Orange needed more. Women entered the workforce.

Young single women from farms and widowed women whose husbands were killed overseas—many with children to support—joined the ranks. Even townswomen lined up to work, donning pants and hardhats to the shock of some of their neighbors.

To the surprise of many men, women proved to be great workers in the shipyards, eagerly learning, paying attention to detail and taking their jobs seriously. In small areas, women's smaller hands and statures were big assets. But women weren't restricted to dainty work. They tackled grueling projects and didn't complain, even when shooting hot rivets deep in the hull of a ship, enduring 100-degree heat.

Collectively, the community of Orange produced hundreds of ships, including the USS *Aulick*—the first warship from Texas to enter active service. Consolidated Steel produced 39 destroyers and 110 destroyer escorts, well-armed, fast-moving warships that protected troop carriers and other large ships. In four years, Levingston Shipbuilding built 160 vessels: barges, small river and large ocean tugboats, tenders to ferry supplies and messages. Weaver Shipbuilding completed 135 minesweepers made from wood to deter German magnetic explosives.

Nine other major U.S. shipbuilders bolstered the American fleet during World War II, most of them near large cities such as Pittsburgh, Jacksonville, Florida, Los Angeles and Houston, areas that touted huge workforces. Per capita, however, the once tiny town of Orange outproduced them all.

Ginger Mynatt is a fiction writer and freelance journalist living in Sherman.



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Clockwise from top: Mary Louise Butters' Walnut Brownie, Pecan Blondie and Brownie/Blondie

A Little Slice of Heaven

BY KEVIN HARGIS What's not to love about brownies (except the empty calories)? Chocolate, butter, sugar: The combination smells heavenly while baking and tastes divine, especially to us chocolate lovers.

For Texan Mary Louise Butters, brownies are a way of life. Butters (yes, that's her real name) has built a robust business around her brownie-making prowess. In nine years, her rich treats have taken her business from an Austin farmers market to national attention from the likes of the "Today Show" and Food Network. They are available in 21 varieties with whimsical names like the Sane Jane (a simple brownie with no additions) and my personal favorite, Aztec God, which has a smoky, spicy undertone thanks to chipotle and ancho chiles.

Butters recently shared with us the philosophy behind her success and offered some advice to home bakers: Great brownies start with setting a scene.

"It's the music you play while you're making it," Butters enthused. "It's the joy you have in the anticipation of knowing you're going to fill your house with this amazing aroma and that you are going to be pulling out a complete pan of heaven and deliciousness that you're going to share with someone else (or at least yourself)."

Equally important are high-quality ingredients, she said.

"The better the products you use, the better results you're going to have," she advised, adding that high-quality butter and chocolate will make a definite difference.

She also shared a piece of advice with which I heartily agree: Experiment with the recipe. "I recommend that since the muscle of a brownie is the chocolate, to experiment and play with the different kinds of chocolates that are out there," she said, explaining that, like wine, the flavor of chocolate can be influenced by weather and other conditions.

Brownie baking can also be therapeutic, she said: "By the time you finish [baking a batch] I'm sure that whatever problem is bothering you, you'll have at least halfway solved."

As much as Butters shared about the art of baking brownies, there was one thing she wouldn't share: her secret brownie recipe that is the backbone of her business.

So I will share one that comes from the 60 Years of Home Cooking cookbook

published by Texas Co-op Power in 2006.

Mary Louise Butters Brownies are available in select stores in the Austin area and in San Antonio, Houston and the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. They are also available on her website, www.buttersbrownies.com.

DOUBLE CHOCOLATE BROWNIES WITH RASPBERRY CHOCOLATE SAUCE

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
- 2 ounces white chocolate, broken into small chunks

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Cream butter in large mixing bowl until fluffy. Beat in sugar and vanilla until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Mix in flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt. Blend in melted chocolate. By hand, fold in white chocolate. Pour into well-buttered and floured 8-inch square baking pan. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely on wire rack. Serve with Raspberry Chocolate Sauce, and, if desired, ice cream and whipped cream. Garnish with raspberries and mint.

RASPBERRY CHOCOLATE SAUCE

- 6 ounces milk chocolate with raspberry liquid filling, broken into pieces
- 3 tablespoons whipping cream
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1 cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons raspberry schnapps

Combine chocolate, whipping cream and honey in medium saucepan. Heat over low setting, stirring constantly, until chocolate melts. Remove from heat and allow to cool slightly. Gently fold in sour cream and schnapps.

Servings: 9. Serving size: 1 brownie with sauce. Per serving: 461 calories, 5.7 g protein, 24.8 g fat, 51.1 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g dietary fiber, 184 mg sodium, 42.6 g sugars, 90 mg cholesterol



CHARMAINE MITCHELL, *Farmers Electric Cooperative*

Prize-winning recipe: **Chocolate Malt Brownies**

Simple brownies are a simple recipe. Just combine chocolate, flour, sugar and oil or butter, and you've got a basic brownie. But what we received from you bakers out there for our "Mmmm, Brownies" recipe contest went well beyond the simple squares of chocolate.

- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons butter, divided
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 ounce unsweetened chocolate, melted and cooled
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- 3/4 cup chocolate malt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon plus dash salt, divided
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons light cream

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cream 1/2 cup butter, sugar and vanilla. Add melted chocolate. Beat in eggs. Sift together flour, 1/2 cup malt, baking powder

and salt and stir into creamed mixture. Fold in pecans. Bake in greased 8 x 8-inch pan for 20 to 25 minutes. Cool completely, then frost. To make frosting, cream 2 tablespoons butter, 1/4 cup malt and dash salt. Beat in powdered sugar and enough light cream to create spreading consistency.

Servings: 16. Serving size: 1 brownie. Per serving: 232 calories, 2.5 g protein, 11 g fat, 30.8 g carbohydrates, 1.2 g dietary fiber, 112 mg sodium, 22.2 g sugars, 40 mg cholesterol

BRIAN'S WHISKEY TONK BROWNIES

- 14 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
- 1 ounce bittersweet chocolate,

- chopped
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons whiskey
- 3/4 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup walnuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and line 8 x 8-inch metal baking pan with foil sprayed with cooking spray. Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat. When butter starts to melt and coats pan bottom, add chocolate and reduce heat to low. Stir constantly until chocolate is melted, then add granulated sugar and stir over low heat for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool about 10 minutes. Beat eggs thoroughly with electric mixer for 3 minutes or until very light. Add brown sugar to eggs and continue beating for another 2 minutes. With mixer running, add melted chocolate mixture to egg mixture. Scrape sides of bowl and beat in vanilla,

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whiskey and salt. Add flour and stir until mixed. Fold in walnuts. Pour into pan and bake for 35 minutes. Let brownies cool to room temperature, then transfer to refrigerator and chill thoroughly. Use foil to lift from pan and cut into 12 squares.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 brownie. Per serving: 374 calories, 5.3 g protein, 21.6 g fat, 38.6 g carbohydrates, 2.3 g dietary fiber, 170 mg sodium, 27.1 g sugars, 82 mg cholesterol

BRIAN MCCURTIS
CoSero Electric

1 teaspoon salt
3 1/2 cups chopped nuts, optional
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt butter, chocolate chips and unsweetened chocolate in top of double boiler. Cool slightly. In large bowl, mix eggs, vanilla, sugar and malt or coffee. Stir in chocolate mixture and cool to room temperature. In another large bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt and nuts, if using. Add to chocolate mixture, stirring until just combined. Pour into a greased and floured 18 x 13 x

1-inch sheet pan and bake about 30 minutes. Do not overbake. Cool completely before cutting into squares.

Servings: 36. Serving size: 1 brownie. Per serving: 373 calories, 6.1 g protein, 25.4 g fat, 32.8 g carbohydrates, 3 g dietary fiber, 122 mg sodium, 24.8 g sugars, 58 mg cholesterol

MARGIE KYSER
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

On TexasCoopPower.com:
Find additional brownie recipes.

BET-YOU-CAN'T-EAT-JUST-ONE BROWNIES

- 1 pound unsalted butter
- 1 pound plus 2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
- 6 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 6 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 2 1/4 cups granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons instant malt or instant coffee
- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder

\$100 RECIPE CONTEST

February's recipe contest topic is **Movie Snacks**. Whether it's for an Oscar-watching party or movie night with the family, what is your favorite treat to eat? The deadline is **October 10**.



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Submit recipes online at TexasCoopPower.com under the Submit and Share tab. Or mail them to Home Cooking, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. You may 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. Runners-up will also receive a prize.



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The Irish Blessing

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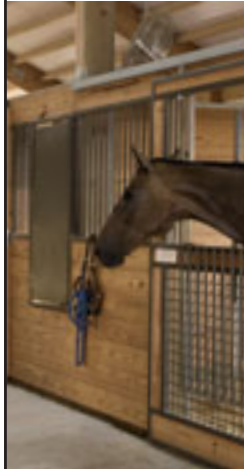
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CEMETERIES

While cemeteries are places of sadness, places to mourn and places to remember, they are also places of eerie beauty and mystery. Our favorite photos this month reflect those emotional layers that one can experience, whether it is to remember a lost friend and comrade, to speculate on the life of a victim lost to the Great Storm in Galveston in 1900, or to marvel at the beauty of a forgotten, crumbling graveyard remembered only by time. Thank you for sharing nearly 200 beautiful photos with us. —ASHLEY CLARY

On TexasCoopPower.com: See more of our readers' cemetery photos.

◀ Nature decorates this small country cemetery in Goliad County, photographed by [Shirley Jarred](#), a Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative member.

CoServ Electric member [Pepper McCarty](#) sent this shot of a stranger in Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery during Memorial Day weekend. Wanting to respect his privacy, she stayed a discreet distance away. The man symbolizes paying respect to those who gave all, McCarty says. ▼



▲ More than a century after a never-to-be-forgotten hurricane, a simple epitaph tells a tragic story. Pedernales Electric Cooperative member [Dan Noack](#) sent this image taken in Old City Cemetery in Galveston.



▲ [Kim Luensmann](#), a Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative member, spotted an array of flowers covering the Christ Lutheran Church of Elm Creek cemetery in New Berlin near Seguin.



Some tombstones in the Terlingua Cemetery in far West Texas date to the early 1900s. Thanks to Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member [Jeff Heintschel](#) for taking the photo, and to his wife, [Karen Heintschel](#), for sending it in. ▶



Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Dec	Fun with Photoshop	Oct 10
Jan	Baby, It's Cold Outside	Nov 10
Feb	Going Nuts! <i>Sponsored by Texas Peanut Producers</i>	Dec 10
Mar	Wild Animals	Jan 10
Apr	April Showers	Feb 10
May	Everything's Bigger in Texas	Mar 10

FUN WITH PHOTOSHOP is the topic for our **DECEMBER 2011** issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, daytime phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to [Fun with Photoshop, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701](#), before **OCTOBER 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 Texas. For the complete listing, please visit the Events page at TexasCoopPower.com.

PICK OF THE MONTH

OCTOBER 22

SAN SABA

San Saba River Pecan Jam, (325) 372-5145, www.pecanjam.com



OCTOBER

07 CUERO [7-9]
Turkeyfest, (361) 275-2112, www.turkeyfest.org

08 LIPAN
Big Rocking Chair Celebration, (254) 646-3376, www.txhcountry.com

LULING
Night in Old Luling, (830) 875-9239

MARSHALL
Fire Ant Festival, (903) 935-7868, ext. 5, <http://marshallchamber.com>

MONTGOMERY
Doggies & Divas SPCA Benefit Fashion Show, (936) 447-6285, www.spcaofmc.petfinder.org



8

CHAPPELL HILL
Scarecrow Festival

08 CHAPPELL HILL [8-9]
Scarecrow Festival, (979) 836-6033, www.chappellhillmuseum.org

09 SMITHVILLE
Texas Photo Festival, (512) 237-2313, www.texasphoto festival.com

14 COOPER [14-15]
Chiggerfest, (903) 395-4314

CONROE [14-16]
The Conroe Cajun Catfish Festival, (936) 539-6009, <http://conroecajuncatfish festival.com>

15 EMORY
Hee Hawg Pig Roast, (903) 383-3309, www.lakecountry neighbors.com

HUBBARD
Art & Naturalist Fest, (254) 576-2576, <http://hubbardcity.com>

MARIETTA
Fall Fest, (903) 824-4272

CANADIAN [15-16]
Fall Foliage Festival, (806) 323-6234, www.canadiantx.org

EDOM [15-16]
Festival of the Arts, (903) 852-3294, www.edom festivalofthearts.com

GUITAR: 2011 © GORDON SWANSON. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. SCARECROW: 2011 © STEVE CUKROV. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

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- Tour de Pecan Bike Ride
- Pecan Bake Contest
- Mighty Muttadors Pet Parade
- "Hats Off to Juan Seguin" Street Dance
- Hoiy Toiy Hot Parade
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Nothing creates lasting childhood memories quite like life's simple pleasures. The red, plastic Igloo cooler with a crack across the top, chock-full of Mama's homemade chicken salad sandwiches and icy Sun Crest sodas, made the trek each year to La Grange where Mama, Daddy and I settled under the shade of a live oak tree at historic **MONUMENT HILL**. The little cooler's bounty was spread on Grandma's quilt, and the soda caps were popped, adding a new page to my heart's scrapbook.

But the hands of time change everything, and recently I wondered just how much its grip had changed La Grange, the cozy, nostalgic Central Texas town of my yesteryear.

I returned to the **MONUMENT HILL** and **KREISCHE BREWERY STATE HISTORIC SITES**, which, under the supervision of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, sits on a sandstone bluff overlooking the winding Colorado River, one mile south of La Grange off U.S. Highway 77 on State Loop 92. Amid live oaks and abundant cedars, a granite tomb provides a resting place for 52 Texas soldiers killed by Mexican forces during the 1842 Dawson Massacre and the 1843 Black Bean Episode in which victims were chosen by lottery: The men who drew the 17 black beans from a jar of 176 beans were executed.

As I walked the crooked path to the monument, it seemed that time stood still. A glimpse to the right offered the historic, intact Kreische home, where German immigrant Heinrich Kreische and his wife, Josepha Appelt, raised six children. Everything was as I remembered. The cardinals still welcomed me, and a cool breeze still swept up from the river's edge.

I recalled being a child of 7, scratching itchy, spindly, calamine lotion-slathered legs after blazing my own secret trail to the Kreische Brewery ruins. It was here, among the mountain laurel and mosquitoes, that the old brewmeister used the cool waters of the nearby spring to make his famous "Kreische's Bluff Beer," the last of

TUGGING on the HEARTSTRINGS

The beat goes on in cozy, nostalgic La Grange.

BY CONNIE STRONG



which was brewed in 1884.

German and Czech heritage runs deep in Fayette County, known as the cradle of Czech immigration because more Austro-Hungarian Empire colonists settled there during the mid-to-late 19th century than any other place in Texas. On the grounds of the **TEXAS CZECH HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER**, a gravel path led me through the **TEXAS CZECH VILLAGE**, composed of mid-19th century houses. A brief stop at the **HOELSCHER HAUS' POLKA LOVERS OF TEXAS MUSEUM** triggered memories of sitting on Grandpa's gallery, a screened-in porch, with mid-August sweat dripping down my spine as the strains of "Beer Barrel Polka" drifted through the house.

Following the path, I passed the **1925 FAIR PAVILION**, a historic building owned by the City of La Grange, whose sawdust-sprinkled hardwood floors have held up generations of schottische dancers.

Back in La Grange, home of Fayette Electric Cooperative, I passed **THE BUGLE BOY**, an intimate concert hall that seats 80 within a World War II Army barrack. Steeped in nostalgia, the venue is named for The Andrews Sisters' 1941 jump blues hit "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy."

I've sat quietly in the theater setting of this well-kept secret and listened as Paula Nelson, Willie Nelson's spunky daughter, Austin blues and soul performer Woody Russell and folk music legend Janis Ian held their listeners spellbound during sold-out weekend concerts.

Making my way to historic downtown, I marveled at the beauty of the 1891 Romanesque Revival-style **FAYETTE COUNTY COURTHOUSE** designed by architect J. Riely Gordon. Nearby, on the northeast corner of the square, a gnarled, historic live oak tree stands in front of Prosperity Bank. The "**MUSTER**" **TREE**—so called because of the courage it symbolizes throughout the generations—marks the spot where families and sweethearts have met to tell their soldiers goodbye.

One block south of the square, I visited the "haunted" **FAYETTE COUNTY JAIL**, where the spirit of Marie Dach is said to reside. Rather than face electrocution, the defiant murderess of farmhand Henry Stoever starved herself to death, leaving behind three small children.

La Grange has seen its share of hard times, including the devastating floods of 1869 and 1913 and the yellow fever epidemic of 1867 that claimed 240 lives—about 20 percent of its total population.

And yet, its small-town charm prevails. Much has changed since my family picnics. Both parents are gone, and the little red cooler has long since been replaced. But I still have Grandma's quilt—and Mama's chicken salad recipe. Maybe I'll share the quaint, historic town with the latest sprouts of the family tree.

I've got everything I need to add another page to my heart's scrapbook ... except that icy Sun Crest soda.

Connie Strong is a freelance writer based out of Chappell Hill, near Houston.

On TexasCoopPower.com

Check out more of La Grange via a slideshow and a story about shopping on the beautiful town square.



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