

LOCAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE EDITION

DECEMBER 2011

HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST

CORAL REEF: UNDERWATER THEATER

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

SUNDAY BEST

**Famed Painted Churches
Are About the Steeples ...
and the People**





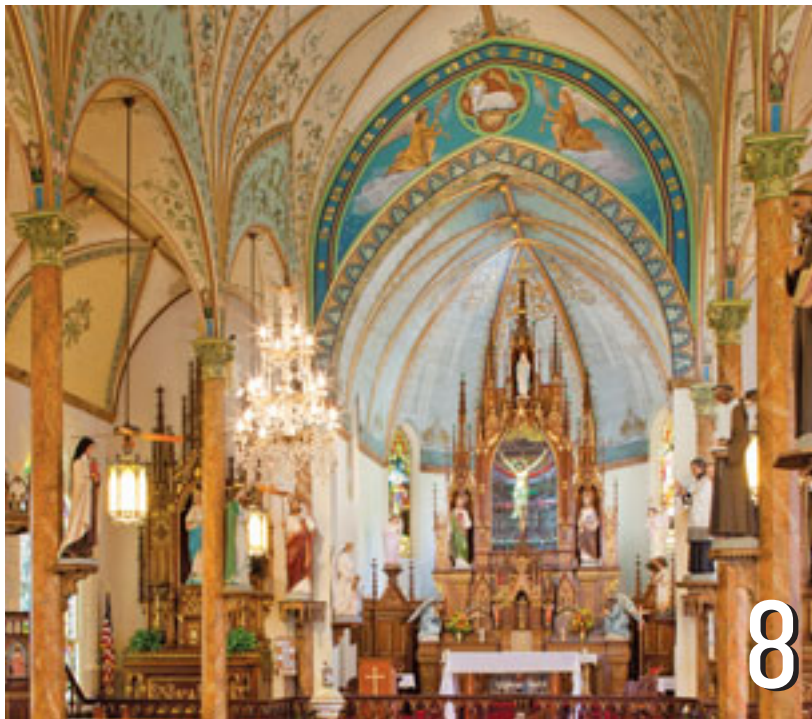
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FEATURES

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By Camille Wheeler

Photos by Rick Patrick

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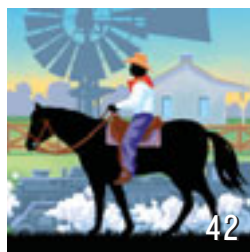
The following December stories are available on our website.

Texas Reader by Connie Strong

RoseAleta Laurell: the Librarian on the Roof

Observations by Sheryl Smith-Rodgers

Finding Closure on a Special Friendship



TEXAS CO-OP POWER

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POWERtalk

Letters from Texas Co-op Power Readers

THE ARENA OF LIFE

Your feature article "Showtime" [October 2011] brought a flood of emotions and memories. Words can hardly express the cherished lessons of life that I learned in my time of showing some 30 years ago. I felt as if I were back in that barn with my show steer, "Specks," who was the grand champion at the State Fair of Texas in October 1975. And yes, my boys now show, and it is, in my opinion, one of the best teachers of the life lessons of responsibility, hard work and, of course, that cherished relationship with your show animal. Thank you, Camille Wheeler, for describing what so many youths experience in this arena of life!

KELLY HUSTON

Cooke County Electric Cooperative

Camille Wheeler mentions the bond between the children and their show animals—how they care and love their animals, then briefly mentions the sadness of separation once the animals are sold. I doubt few of our children know the real truth as to what happens once the sale is final. The animals are often sold to factory farms where they are confined in compact, unsanitary quarters and then led to an inhumane death. If the children who raised and nurtured these animals knew the real truth, I doubt they would ever sell them.

GREG HALL

CoServ Electric

HOME ENERGY MAKEOVERS

The stories in the Home Energy Makeover contest are interesting [October 2011], but fall well short of the com-

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plete story. In fairness, you should always include the full costs of the installation of the changes, including parts and labor, and, given current energy costs for the residence, the payback for those costs—the real rate of return.

Depending, a five- to seven-year payback would be reasonable for most homeowners. But if the payback

extends to 15 to 20 years, not too many people will consider that a reasonable investment. Leaving those figures out is misleading.

MAX HOLLAND

Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative

Editor's note: You can find much more information about the details of each winning home, including total parts and labor costs, by following the Complete Case Studies link in the online story at TexasCoopPower.com.

SHIPBUILDING IN ORANGE

Your article on Orange's shipbuilding boom [October 2011] brought me back to my Navy days. I served from October 1958 to October 1960 on the USS Meredith DD-890. She was commissioned December 31, 1945, at Orange. During my tour of duty on the "Merry" Meredith, we made 18 ports in nine countries. What a way to serve your country as a 19- and 20-year-old!

DICK MARTIN

Magic Valley Electric Cooperative

Though Ginger Mynatt is billed as a fiction writer, she told the truth about Orange and the shipbuilding boom in the early 1940s. My dad was one of the East Texas clodhoppers who went to work in the shipyard, after being trained as a welder.

TOM HANSON

Wood County Electric Cooperative

COMING BACK FOR SECONDS

I'm a well-traveled old-timer who enjoys cooking and eating good food from all over the world. When I read the September 2011 issue, the recipes submitted by Betty Maskey, Sandy Becker, Kathy Buley and Ellen Squier really caught my eye. The recipes were out of the mainstream because of the combinations of ingredients they offered. I followed all their directions religiously and prepared four of the best meals my wife and I have EVER eaten.

DOUG MOORE

Pedernales Electric Cooperative

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Simple Photos, Fantastic Storytelling



I was particularly taken with the cemetery photos in your October 2011 Focus on Texas section. The contrast between a dark gravestone seemingly rising from a field of vibrant wildflowers was touching and effective, as were the images of simple but chilling epitaphs to the deadly Galveston hurricane in 1900. Sometimes a simple photo can carry a lot of storytelling in a small frame!

Dave Garlock, Senior Lecturer in Journalism, Magazine Sequence Head, University of Texas,
Pedernales Electric Cooperative

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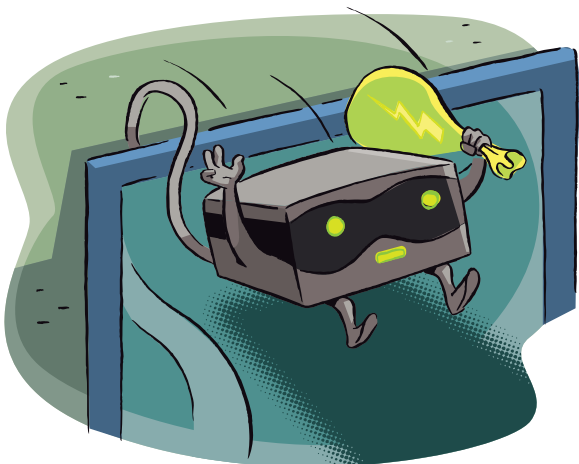


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Energy and Innovation News—People, Places and Events in Texas

Energy-Saving Tips for Set-Top Boxes and DVRs



Energy Thieves

Watch out: You might be paying the price for power-greedy TV set-top boxes

By Suzanne Haberman

Cable, satellite and other set-top boxes that run nonstop, sending signals to TVs or digital video recorders (DVRs), are racking up more kilowatt-hours (kWh) than some new refrigerators. And consumers are paying the price on their electricity bills.

In 2010, set-top boxes in the U.S. consumed approximately 27 billion kWh, according to a recent study by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC). That amount, according to the NRDC, is equivalent to the average annual output of nine 500-megawatt power plants.

There are about 160 million set-top boxes installed in homes nationwide, one for every two people, the NRDC reports. DVRs, which use about 40 percent more energy per year than nonrecording set-top boxes, have also gained popularity.

A set-top box and high-definition DVR combined, which often run 24 hours a day, use more electricity than many other high-energy users in the home—more energy than a 21-cubic-foot, Energy Star-rated refrigerator or some central air-conditioning units, the NRDC reports.

Set-top boxes and DVRs are similar to computers, with components such as hard drives and processors that draw power as long as they are plugged in. Because most set-top boxes and DVRs don't have a standby or sleep mode—the “off” button often only dims the digital clock—they consume power even when not in active use.

So, according to the study, the devices consume about two-thirds of their electricity

when no one is using them to watch TV or record shows. These kWh cost Americans approximately \$2 billion a year.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued new Energy Star requirements specifying that cable and satellite boxes use at least 40 percent less energy than comparable brands and enter into a “deep-sleep” mode when not in use to wear the Energy Star brand.

Previous standards called for Energy Star-rated set-top boxes to be 30 percent more energy efficient than conventional models. Energy Star standards are voluntary guidelines to which manufacturers adhere to obtain the government's energy-efficient certification.

Consumers who receive set-top boxes and DVRs from their cable or satellite service providers might be able to request an energy-efficient model. However, more efficient designs and Energy Star products might not always be available.

Until more energy-efficient designs reach the market, consumers themselves have to control the amount of power drawn when these devices are not in use. But because some service providers perform system maintenance while set-top boxes are on, and the purpose of a DVR is to have an ever-ready recording device, saving energy is more complicated than just pulling the plug. Powering down takes planning. Making that effort, according to Consumer Reports, could save consumers money on their electric bills.

Saving energy with digital video recorders (DVRs) and set-top boxes, such as a cable box, takes some planning, but a few steps can help you reduce your home entertainment center's electricity use. Here are some suggestions:

Use surge protectors or timers. Cutting power to the TV and speakers does not disrupt most entertainment systems, but unplugging set-top boxes and DVRs can interfere with automatic updates and recording.

Follow these steps to power down these devices to reduce the risk of missing your favorite shows:

- Plug all home entertainment components (TV, set-top boxes, DVR, speakers, etc.) into a power strip or surge protector.

- Plug the power strip into a timer.

- Set the timer to turn the power off when you are not watching TV or recording shows. For example, if you're not using the devices between midnight and 5 a.m., set the timer to turn off at midnight and turn on again at 5 a.m.

- Plug the timer into an outlet.

Tech Tips:

- Ask your service provider for a schedule of system maintenance or updates, and make sure your devices are on when the updates occur.

- Give your set-top box and/or DVR enough time to reboot. Start-up times can vary anywhere from five to 45 minutes, so it's a good idea to do a test run and plan ahead for rebooting. Exercise due diligence in applying these findings to their specific needs.

HAPPENINGS

WHO KNEW?

HORNED LIZARD CAPITAL OF TEXAS: KENEDY

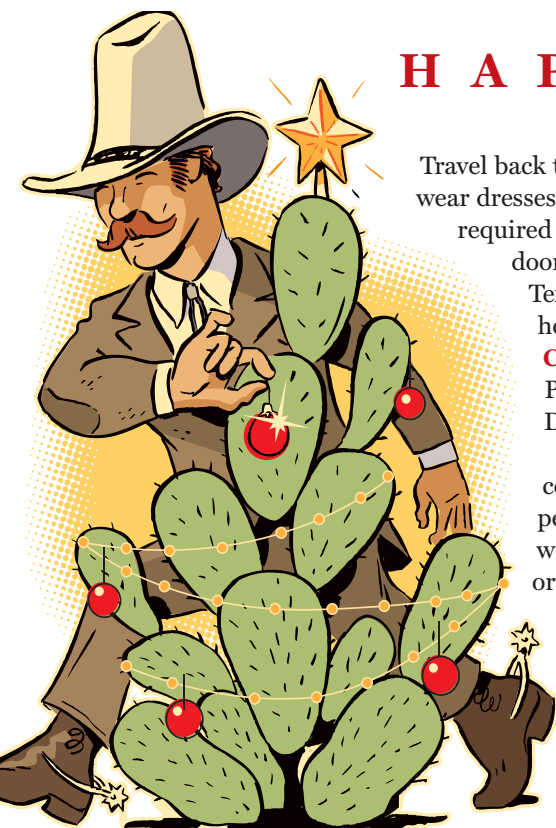
A decade ago, some Kenedy residents were remodeling a bed-and-breakfast when they discovered lots of horned lizards—a threatened species in Texas—in the yard. With the Horned Lizard Conservation Society's help, it was determined that Kenedy was home to a large population of the little reptiles, or horny toads, as Texans like to say. So at the community's urging, the Legislature designated Kenedy the "Horned Lizard Capital of Texas" in 2001.



Travel back to a time when ladies were required to wear dresses on the dance floor, and gentlemen were required to check hats, guns and spurs at the door. For the 77th consecutive year, the West Texas town of Anson, near Abilene, will hold its re-enactment of the 1885 **TEXAS COWBOYS' CHRISTMAS BALL** in Pioneer Hall. The event is scheduled for December 15-17.

The first dance was held to honor area cowboys and their families and continued periodically until 1934, when a group of women in Anson decided to re-create the original ball. The 1885 rules and dances remain the same. There's the waltz, Paul Jones, Cotton-Eyed Joe, polka, Virginia reel and square dance.

On opening night, country star Michael Martin Murphey and his band will perform "The Cowboys' Christmas Ball" for the 19th straight year. Originally a poem by William Lawrence Chittenden,



who was inspired by the ball, the poem was later put to music.

For information, call (325) 537-2589 or visit www.ansoncowboyschristmasball.com.

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CO-OP PEOPLE

Youth Tour Leads to Happily Ever After

BY ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER

Ask almost any Government-in-Action Youth Tour participant about the experience of visiting our nation's capital, and you will likely hear: "It was the trip of a lifetime."

On the annual pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., sponsored by electric cooperatives across the nation, students see monuments, memorials and historic sites. For many, it's their first trip outside Texas. They have the chance to be independent and find themselves. Kaelyn McPherson and Seth King found each other.

On the night before the 2005 Youth Tour, Kaelyn and Seth arrived at a hotel in Irving representing HILCO Electric Cooperative and United Cooperative Services, respectively. Early the next morning, the

soon-to-be high school juniors were on the plane to Washington, D.C., with about 100 other Texas students.

But fate didn't step in until the day they flew home. Seth's parents were late picking him up, and Kaelyn and her parents waited

with him until they arrived. By the next day, the teenagers—who didn't converse during the tour—were texting and talking. They traveled 1½ hours each way to see one another's football games and volleyball matches—his in Stephenville and hers in Blum—but it was more of a friendly matter until one December 2006 evening when they shared their first kiss.

Kaelyn said they saw each other on the weekends and would—*shhh!*—break curfew to be with one another. Before their high school graduations in 2007, when Seth found out he had been accepted at West Point, he gave Kaelyn a promise ring and asked her to marry him. "I said yes and scared the heck out of my parents!" she says, laughing.

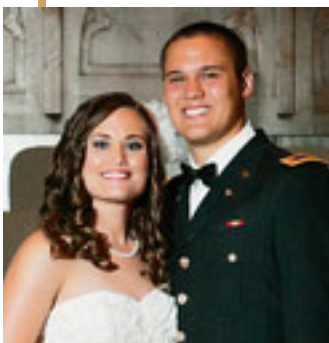
After officially getting engaged December 19, 2009, they were married June 3, 2011, and today live on a U.S. Army post at Fort Rucker, Alabama. Kaelyn is a nurse at the nearby Medical Center Enterprise, and Seth is in flight school, having completed the Basic Officer Leaders Course. Kaelyn's joy is contagious: "We are so grateful for the Youth Tour! We couldn't be happier."

It's a real-life fairy tale, Youth Tour-style.

Ashley Clary-Carpenter, field editor

Have a suggestion for a future Co-op People?

Contact editor@TexasCoopPower.com.



Kaelyn McPherson and Seth King on their wedding day.

GEORGE DEAN PHOTOGRAPHY



High Hill's St. Mary Catholic Church—the queen of Central Texas' painted churches—doesn't need promotion. Her beauty sells itself.

Sunday Best

All Dressed Up and Somewhere to Go: Majestic Painted Churches are About the Steeples ... and the People

BY CAMILLE WHEELER • PHOTOS BY RICK PATRICK

It would make a great commercial: First-time visitors to St. Mary Catholic Church in High Hill slowly walk through the vestibule, drinking in each dramatic Gothic script-style, gilded letter of Psalms verses painted on opposite walls. They study the exquisite stencilings that, like the verses, were discovered and painstakingly replicated to match the original artwork during a restoration of the church's interior.

The visitors push open swinging doors, step onto the plush, red carpet of the sanctuary, or nave, and react as if on cue: Falling silent, they stand still for a few seconds, eyes open wide at the artistic buffet before them. You can almost hear the silently mouthed "wows" reverberating off the statues, stained-glass windows and works of art too many to count.

Of course, St. Mary—the queen of Central Texas' painted churches—does not need any promotional help. Her beauty sells itself. But her looks can also overwhelm.

So for those who don't know where to look first, simply let the eyes wander, perhaps focusing on two of the church's most incredible features: the crucifixion reredos, a stained-glass panel adorning the magnificent high altar that features spires carved from walnut wood; and the arched, sky-blue ceiling laced with gilded, or gold-leafed, wood moldings called ribs.

Throughout the nave, there's an architectural sense of spaciousness and jubilation, like that of angels soaring. It appears the canvased, hand-painted ceiling is in motion, its arching ribs racing upward from decoratively marbled wooden columns to collide at the top.

The church herself seems to be reaching for the heavens. But longtime parishioners will tell you: No matter how many times one scoots back on the slick and narrow longleaf pine pews, gravity prevails. Sooner or later, everyone slides toward the kneeling rail.

"You've gotta keep awake," the Rev. Timothy Kosler says. Instant penance, you might call it. And it is there, in that quiet space of humility akin to staring up at a clear, star-filled sky, that the thought arises: Who, then, made all this? The answer: mortals, mere mortals, who



A sight and sound like no other: Bandleader and accordion player Benny Okruhlik sets an oompah tempo during High Hill's polka Mass. The polka dancers in the first six pews are dressed for action: After the service, they're on tap to perform for a huge crowd.

built and rebuilt, letting nothing—not even fire or hurricane winds—stop them from creating this Catholic church and others like it in the surrounding Central Texas area.

Old black-and-white photos of the Czech and German immigrants who settled Fayette County more than 150 years ago show stern, unsmiling faces. Life was not easy for these pioneers who weathered rough voyages to Galveston and long ox-cart rides to a new and strange land in search of economic and religious freedom. But they found joy in constructing amazing places of worship—painted churches, with some brush strokes applied by prominent artists from the Old World—that reminded them of home.

Over time, some of the churches took on celebrity status, with the most famous known more by town name than church name: Ammannsville (pronounced AH-mans-ville or, as locals now call it, AM-mans-ville), Dubina (du-BEE-na), High Hill and Praha (PRA-ha)—the four stops on the official painted churches tour that starts from the Schulenburg Chamber of Commerce.

'They Come Home to Roost'

It's the first Sunday of September: polka Mass and parish picnic day in the tiny German community of High Hill northwest of Schulenburg. By nightfall, 3,500 people, including those driving through to pick up preordered plates, will have eaten their fill of fried chicken, sauerkraut and beef stew made from a secret, generations-old recipe.

Many of the 2,000 people attending the picnic will have danced, played bingo, caught up with family and friends, tried to outbid each other in one of the most competitive auctions around, and watched a mostly silver- and gray-haired polka group perform a line dance to "Achy Breaky Heart."

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. First on the agenda is the polka Mass, one of the most storied celebrations in Central Texas inside one of its most sacred structures. And in honor of the occasion, this historic church is wearing her Sunday best.

Granted, St. Mary, which has been in this building since 1906 and whose congregational history dates to 1860, is dressed to the nines every day. Even during a restoration of the interior completed in summer 2010, the church remained a gorgeous example of Gothic revival architecture despite drop cloths on the carpet and scaffolding stretching up to the barrel-vault ceiling.

So on a gusty Sunday morning, with people smoothing down their hair as they enter the sanctuary, St. Mary is looking better than ever. The congregation's looking pretty spiffy, too.

Lilting laughter rises from the front of the sanctuary where 35 polka dancers, resplendent in their bright red outfits, take their seats in the first six pews. Morning light streams in as a polka band, Texas Sound Czech, sets up in front of a side altar. Two life-size statues—the Sacred Heart of Jesus, his hands outstretched, and St. Joseph—look down on the five blue-shirted musicians.

This isn't just any day: This is home-



LEFT: Like their fellow polka dancers, 78-year-old Mildred Hollas and Willie Bohuslav, who was coming up on his 80th birthday, look younger than their ages: 'I love to dance. I keep in shape. I watch my diet. And I have a positive mind,' Bohuslav explains of his youthful appearance. **RIGHT:** Dennis Sumner and Betty Tidwell, the 2011 king and queen of Texas' Chapter 1 polka club, demonstrate the sensible, two-handed method of carrying loaded-down picnic plates.

coming day, and among the crowd are those who grew up here and moved away. Others left to pursue careers and came back years later. Some never left.

Those who call High Hill home, such as 80-year-old Armand Hollas and his wife, 78-year-old Mildred Hollas, speak of its magnet-like pull on their hearts. They were raised here and then worked 38 years in the oil industry in Houston. The couple retired in the early 1990s and returned to the community and church where they were baptized and married and where Armand served as an altar boy.

"That's what a lot of people do," Armand says. "They come home to roost."

'I'm the Past'

The polka dancers—whose role is to sing with the congregation during Mass and then dance at the picnic immediately afterward—really dress things up: The men are wearing red slacks, white-trimmed red vests over white shirts and white, red or black shoes. The look is the same for the women, save for their red skirts and heels. Rene Sustr (pronounced REE-nee SHOE-ster), wife of polka dancer and painted churches tour guide Ben Sustr, sports white ankle-high boots with fringe.

White-stitched letters on the backs of the dancers' vests spell out that many of them are former—and present—kings, queens, princes and princesses as Texas members of the Polka Lovers Klub of America. Many of them, such as 78-

year-old Pauline Trefny of Houston, have deep roots in the Schulenburg area's painted churches. Trefny was raised in Ammannsville and attended St. John the Baptist Church, where she received what she calls "the works": baptism, first communion and marriage. She and her husband, Robert, who's at her side today, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary there in 2006.

Robert and Pauline were the 1995 state king and queen for what was then Texas' single polka dancing chapter, and Pauline beams when asked about the royal stitching on her back. "I'm the past," she says, gesturing toward herself, then pointing at red-vested backs in the pews ahead. "And that's the past, and that's the past ..."

The present has suddenly arrived as Texas Sound Czech bandleader Benny Okruhlik squeezes the opening notes of Mass from his accordion. The harmonizing of saxophone and trumpet and texture of bass and drums set an upbeat, reverent tone as the congregation stands to sing the opening hymn: "*Here we gather, Lord, in this special place ... In this humble church, hands in prayer we raise ...*"

Toes tap, and fingers keep time on pews: It is perfectly acceptable to worship and groove on one's oompah musical heritage at the same time.

As communion begins, with two lines forming, those seated search the center aisle for familiar faces. Young and old, gaits fast and slow, move toward the front. A father in blue jeans,

taking quick, measured steps, cradles his infant son. A man with a cane carefully works his way up the aisle.

One communion hymn is played and sung to the tune of "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain": "*... Hearts to grow a little tender, as the time of life goes by. Love and kindness for each other, much too fast the moments fly ...*"

And in the blink of an eye, Mass is ending with the recessional hymn: "*We've got that joy, joy, joy, joy deep in our hearts, deep in our hearts to stay ...*"

'Polka!'

Under a tin-roofed pavilion, the polka dancers execute swing-style spins and twirls, their shoes scuffling on concrete as they move through traditional numbers, such as "Barn Dance Polka." They throw in the nontraditional as well, earning big, appreciative smiles from onlookers with the "Achy Breaky Heart" line dance.

Sustr announces songs into a hand-held microphone. "We do the real-time schottisch, so y'all get lined up there," he tells the group. "Ready? Here we go."

At the end of each song, the dancers hold hands in a circle and then simultaneously raise them, shouting, "Polka!"

Armand Hollas, the 1996 Texas Chapter 1 king alongside Mildred, his queen, sits just outside the pavilion. He had a stroke six years ago, and his walker tells the story: He's come a long way, but he's not fully recovered. "I almost start crying when I see 'em dance," he says, watching Mildred, his childhood sweet-

heart, go gliding past. Hollas sets his jaw. No, he's not *hoping* to dance again. "I'm *going* to dance again," he says.

And dancing, with this group, means exactly that: They're athletes, their steps polished through decades of practice. Describing them as "spry" would be an insult. As he nears his 80th birthday, Austinite Willie Bohuslav bounces around the dance floor with the springy legs of a young man. "As you believe, so you become," Bohuslav says. "So if you believe you can, you will."

Rolling Chicken Chairman

OK. Hold that thought and apply it to the hefty plates of food being served, which require two hands for transport and weigh, oh say, about the same as a small bowling ball. It takes some doing to work one's way through a gigantic piece of fried chicken, heaping helpings of beef stew, green beans, German-style potatoes and sauerkraut, a pickle, a half peach in syrup and a slice of pound cake.

And it takes an army of volunteers to pull off this Labor Day weekend extravaganza. Picnic Chairman Willie Schoener and his right-hand man, Assistant Picnic and Food Chairman Dennis Kristynik, were well into planning for the 2012 picnic long before the 2011 one even began.

"I work it all year," says the 76-year-old Schoener, a 6-foot-3-inch gregarious fellow with an easy smile and a long, loping walk. He naturally strikes up conversations with people, getting to know them. Then, "the second thing out of your mouth is, 'Would you like to work at the picnic?' You're always looking for help," he says.

For sure, organizers' plates are full: Some 30 years ago, the picnic served fewer than 500 people. This year, even with gusting winds and dust keeping some people away, event coordinators sold 3,500 plates, including those to go. The picnic fills bellies—and the church's coffers: Last year's \$160,000 earnings helped pay for St. Mary's \$450,000-plus restoration. The auction—the top-dollar item this year was a multifamily barbecue feast that went for \$6,000—is always the picnic's largest moneymaker, but the food draws the crowds.

The workers' schedule is a menu in and of itself with such titles as: Take Home Plates Chairman. Potato Peeling

Chairman. Cooking Stew Chairman. Rolling Chicken Chairman. That last one—the rolling of chicken in flour—is a particularly messy job. But chicken and stew, the 53-year-old Kristynik says, are the picnic's bread and butter: "That's what they look for. If you mess either one of 'em up, they won't be back."

'I Love to Tell Them the Story'

At dusk, during a drive on the rolling country roads surrounding Schulenburg, the painted churches' steeples rise into view above a landscape of massive live oak trees.

On the eve of High Hill's once-a-year polka Mass, its regular Saturday night Mass will soon be letting out. It would never occur to church members to question their weekend plans. Here, and at Ammannsville, Dubina and Praha, which also hold regular weekend Masses, tradition holds sway: For quick inspiration, look up and see the steeples. For knees-on-the-rail faith, look inside and see the people.

The churches—Ammannsville and Dubina are both served by Fayette Electric Cooperative—are virtually empty during weekday tours. But these buildings are not museum pieces, existing for placement under an architectural microscope. Nor is the tour like wandering into an old, abandoned house and pulling back dusty sheets to see what lies underneath.

These are living, breathing churches with small but active congregations and fiercely competitive annual picnics that draw people by the thousands. Even the cemeteries, in which some couples reserve their burial plots years in advance, represent renewal: Accept one's death now and get on with life.

The four churches have undergone many renovations through the years. Yet despite offering such conveniences as air conditioning and electricity, they're not textbook modern. You won't find restrooms inside the main buildings or padded pews at any of the churches.

One of the main tour guides, 83-year-old Sustr of Schulenburg, respectfully removes his felt cowboy hat when leading visitors through the front doors. He gives people a few seconds to turn in circles, craning their necks to look at paintings, frescoes and stencilings, then launches right into history.



Knees-on-the-rail faith quietly endures at polka Mass, above, and at regular Masses at all four stops on the painted churches tour.

He seemingly touches on every date and detail, down to the old hat hooks still in place on the pews in Ammannsville and Dubina.

Sustr was raised in nearby Moulton and attended a Catholic church, but he and Rene are longtime members of First United Methodist Church in Schulenburg. Yet while Sustr doesn't attend Mass at the painted churches, these are his people: parishioners and tourists. "I love to tell them the story," says Sustr, whose grandparents emigrated from the province of Bohemia to Fayette County in 1887.

Seemingly nothing escapes the attention of Sustr, a retired Schulenburg Independent School District superintendent. On a gusty Saturday afternoon at the Praha church cemetery, he worriedly takes note of a flower arrangement blown by strong winds into a pathway. "Where did it come from?" he asks, not expecting an answer. He picks up the fresh flowers and approaches a nearby grave. "I'll put it on this one," he says. "It doesn't have any."

Camille Wheeler, associate editor

On TexasCoopPower.com

View photos of the painted churches, see more pictures from High Hill's polka Mass and parish picnic, and jot down starting times for Christmas Eve services.



HOLIDAY

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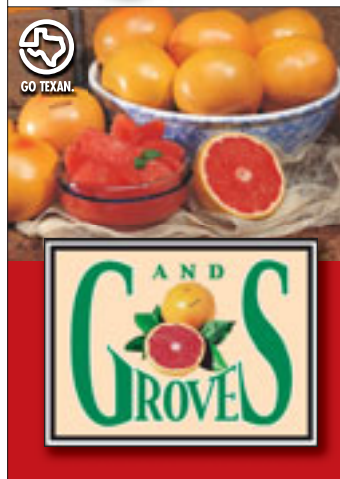
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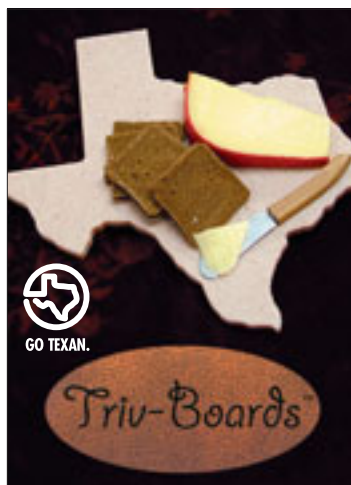
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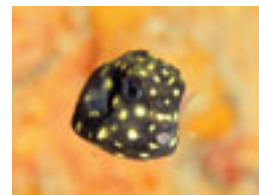
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BROWN CHROMIS



JUVENILE SMOOTH TRUNKFISH



FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY: STETSON BANK



BARRACUDA

A blue and yellow fish the size of my index finger darts across the dimpled surface of a pale green coral sphere. A school of brown chromis, four inches long with fins that seem to have been dipped in yellow, circle us, and a French angelfish the diameter of a dinner plate cruises past. My scuba diving buddy Jacqueline Stanley points at what appears to be a black marble with yellow spots hovering above the coral. I look closer and discern a tiny snout and tail; the swimming marble is a juvenile smooth trunkfish, one of the smallest denizens of the coral reef, and not easy to find. We give each other an underwater high-five and fin away to gawk at dozens of other creatures that inhabit this thriving coral reef.

While it might sound like we're deep in the Caribbean, Stanley and I are actually 100 miles off the Texas coast. Here,

a piece of beneath-the-surface tropical paradise called the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary flourishes where salt domes on the floor of the Gulf of Mexico rise close enough to the surface to support coral reefs. These reefs probably originated more than 10,000 years ago when baby coral organisms, called polyps, floated on currents from reefs off Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, about 400 miles away.

The Texas Flower Gardens, as they were called, likely were discovered by fishermen in the late 1800s. As the story goes, they named the banks after the brightly colored sponges, plants and other marine life they sometimes snagged or could see on the colorful reefs below from their boats.

Later, divers found the reefs enthralling, and in 1979, the Houston Underwater Club submitted a formal nomination for the creation of a National Marine Sanctuary protected under federal law. That official designation finally came in 1992, with two sites—the East Flower Garden and West Flower Garden banks—forming Flower Garden Banks, the first such sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico.

A third site, the Stetson Bank, was added in 1996. The three sections protect about 56 square miles of critical marine habitat, with roughly 1 percent of it shallow enough for coral—and recreational divers.

Blue, Clear Water

The only way to reach the Flower Gardens is by boat, and we came here aboard the *Fling*, a dive charter based in Freeport. We left the dock late in the evening, sleeping in berths below decks as we traveled to the sanctuary. The crew roused us at 7:30 the next morning for our first dive, at the West bank.

On the back deck, scuba tanks line the sides, wetsuits hang overhead and gear is stashed everywhere. I haven't had my morning coffee, instead relying on excitement about the coming dive to get me going. One of the first things I notice is the water, a travel-brochure-worthy blue, and incredibly clear. I gear up, step off the side and descend. I look up and can see the shadow of the boat bobbing on the surface 70 feet above; and in the distance, the shadowy shapes of schools of large fish. Outstanding visibility, or "viz" in scuba parlance, is one of the Flower Garden's signature traits.

The sheer volume and variety of life here is another. Stanley, an educator and artist in Houston, has been diving around the world for almost 40 years, yet was impressed by the wealth of healthy corals and fish when she first saw the



BRAIN CORAL



HORSE-EYE JACKS



SPOTTED EAGLE RAY

Flower Gardens four years ago. More than 20 species of hard coral grow here, with their wild variety of colors, shapes and combinations making every dive a different experience. The sanctuary is also home to at least 280 species of fish, and despite poring over my reef fish identification book before and after every dive, I don't come close to naming everything I see on our nine dives on the 2 1/2-day excursion.

In fact, the sanctuary contains the healthiest reef habitat in North America, according to Quenton Dokken, executive director of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, a conservation organization focused on the Gulf and Caribbean Sea. That's especially meaningful given that coral reefs represent one of the most endangered ecosystems on the planet. At many of the world's reefs, intense fishing pressure is reducing the numbers of fish species that are necessary for maintaining a healthy reef. For example, many reef fish eat algae, and without enough of them keeping it at bay, this marine plant can grow so thick it actually smothers corals.

This isn't a problem for the Flower Gardens, mainly because the sanctuary lies 100 miles from shore, which keeps the fishing pressure down. At least so far.

Manta Ray, But No Whale Shark

After two morning dives at the West bank, we head to High Island 389A, an offshore oil platform inside sanctuary boundaries. As a matter of fact, the Flower Gardens sit smack in the middle of one of the world's busiest oil and gas production fields. While spills and accidents pose a potential threat, Dokken points out that, as yet, no incidents have harmed the reefs. In fact, as he sees it, the health of the sanctuary proves that oil and gas production and a healthy marine environment can co-exist, provided the industry takes to heart the challenges of operating in a sensitive area.

Offshore structures actually make excellent dive sites, supporting coral and sponge communities and attracting schools of fish and other marine life seeking shelter from the surrounding open water.

Beneath High Island, I watch a sea turtle nibble at tiny sponges growing on the enormous legs of the structure, while a large school of shiny jacks weaves among the supports. I swim in close and follow a bar that runs between two legs of the platform, amazed at the abundant and colorful miniscule creatures growing on it.

Next morning, we dive twice on the East bank. Here, I notice patches of white on an enormous brain coral, a rounded, boulder-sized ball of ridged coral that, true to its name, resembles a human brain.

Reefs are made up of thousands of individual coral organisms living inside a calcium skeleton. These organisms feed by sticking out tentacles to collect microscopic food, but get most of their nutrition from special algae that cohabitate with them. Actually tiny plants, algae use photosynthesis to convert sunlight into food. Corals sometimes expel these algae when stressed, such as when water temperatures rise higher than normal. Scientists call the resulting effect "bleaching" because the loss of the algae deprives coral of its color, leaving it looking white. Without the algae to provide oxygen and help feed them, coral organisms can die.

In 2005, coral reefs all over the world suffered from bleaching, with up to 45 percent of coral at the Flower Gardens affected, according to Emma Hickerson, the sanctuary's research coordinator. Worldwide bleaching occurred again in 2010, affecting some 7 percent of corals at the Flower Gardens.

On subsequent dives, I find myself looking for telltale white patches, and I almost always discover at least a few small ones. Fortunately, Hickerson also says that many corals recover from bleaching once water temperatures return to normal.

On our second East bank dive, I spot a manta ray, its wide, winged body—at least 12 feet across—soaring past like some kind of underwater spaceship. Mantas have unique spot patterns on their undersides, and sanctuary staff members have collected photographs of those seen here into a catalog of more than 75 identified individuals.

I didn't bring an underwater camera, but several other divers on the boat snap photos of the manta, which we compare against the database on laptop computers back on the boat. In summer, divers sometimes spot whale sharks around the sanctuary. These enormous sharks can grow to 50 feet long and weigh 10 tons, but they have only tiny teeth and eat plankton. Scientists aren't sure what attracts the gentle giants here.

I spend the entire trip hoping for a glimpse of one with no luck, only to hear that several weeks later, a 20-foot male made an appearance.



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Say cheese: Actually, this whale shark posing for the camera would prefer plankton or other floating organisms as a snack. Scuba divers thrill at the sight of these gentle giants, the world's largest fish, which have no interest in stirring up trouble.



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LIONFISH



LOGGERHEAD SEA TURTLE



FIRE CORAL

Another sighting a few weeks after my visit was decidedly less welcome. Divers photographed a lionfish—a brightly striped, foot-long fish with venomous spines—that's native to the Indo-Pacific and has spread along the East Coast as far north as Rhode Island and as far south as South America. They are voracious eaters; research has shown that one large lionfish is capable of reducing the number of other fishes in an area by almost 80 percent in just five weeks—perhaps because native fish simply don't recognize these recent arrivals as a threat and swim right up to them to become lunch.

While lionfish encounter natural predators in their native habitat, they have few known natural predators in the Atlantic or Gulf. Invasive species like lionfish can upset the balance in a coral reef ecosystem, and their arrival has the sanctuary staff worried.

Hope for the Future

We dive another platform before the boat chugs to the Stetson bank while we sleep. Located about 30 miles northwest of the East and West banks, its slightly cooler waters support fire coral. Its bright yellow branches rise from the seafloor like a mustard-coated miniature forest, along with a variety of colorful sponges, including barrel sponges, which resemble flower vases. I peer into a few of them and occasionally spot a tiny fish or crab hiding out.

There are plentiful schools of large fish such as jack, mackerel and spotted eagle rays and an assortment of reef fish of all sizes. I'm thrilled to spot a sailfin blenny, a baby carrot-sized fish that rises up from a hole in the sand to wave an undulating fin along its tiny back. What it lacks in size, it makes up for in chutzpah, seeming certain that this display will scare off any unwelcome guests.

As Stanley and I return to the surface at the end of our last dive, the colors of the reef fade to blue. We pass another

school of shiny, silvery jacks and a couple of torpedo-shaped barracuda, which move closer, curious. I think back to the first day's sighting of the tiny juvenile trunkfish. It seems an apt symbol of hope for the future of these reefs.

Melissa Gaskill, frequent contributor

On TexasCoopPower.com

Scientists use a variety of research tools, including submersibles, as they study the coral reefs and a world of wonder below. Plus, if you're not a diver but want to see the Flower Garden Banks, check out a list of locations offering sanctuary exhibits.

SANCTUARY FACTS

Designation: The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is one of 14 federally designated underwater areas protected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Location: The East Flower Garden and West Flower Garden banks are 12 miles apart and are 100 to 115 miles directly south of the Texas-Louisiana border. Stetson Bank is about 70 miles south of Galveston—30 miles northwest of the other two banks. The three banks are separated by miles of open ocean ranging from 200 to 400 feet deep.

Recreational diving: Diving is allowed in the sanctuary, but check out the trip preparation page at <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov> before heading out. The banks are not recommended for beginning divers: Currents can change speed and direction, and wave heights vary, sometimes making it difficult to safely reboard a boat.

Diving depth: Only about 1 percent of the sanctuary is within the maximum recommended recreational dive depth of 130 feet.

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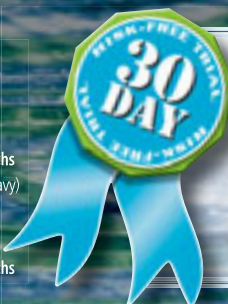


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If you're making the switch, use your artificial tree safely. Just because its needles won't dry out doesn't mean your tree can't be a fire or safety hazard.

- When you buy a pre-lit artificial tree, check for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label on each strand of lights.



- Buy a model that has light strings equipped with an anti-twist mechanism in the bulb and socket. Poorly made lights are so easily twisted—and released—from sockets that they light up unreliably and also can pose a choking hazard for children who might pull them off the tree.

- Anchor your tree to a wall with a sturdy hook planted into a beam. That will make it harder for a child or a pet to topple it over.

- Choose a tree with a steel base—not plastic. A plastic base can bend and even break.

- Be sure artificial and metallic trees are clearly marked as flame retardant and fire resistant.

- Never place electric lights on trees with metallic foliage.

- Locate your artificial tree at least three feet away from heat sources, such as vents, fireplaces and radiators.

- Decorate your tree only with noncombustible or flame-resistant materials.

- Invest in a tree pre-lit with light-emitting diode lights, which are cool to the touch and are far more energy efficient than traditional tree lights.

*Getting Wired
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Protect Your Electronics

If you're asking Santa to leave an expensive flat-screen TV or home theater system under the tree, add something else to your wish list: effective surge protection.

Thunderstorms, lightning strikes, minor fluctuations in the power that comes to your house, or even interference generated when you turn on a hair dryer or vacuum cleaner can cause your electronics to react—sometimes permanently and badly.

Plugging them into an inexpensive power strip won't prevent any problems unless it's designed to detect even minor surges and trip the circuit breaker or sacrifice itself to save your TV.

And power spikes also can enter the home through the lines that connect your phone, cable TV or satellite receiver to the house. So you need power protection to protect all of the lines that touch your TV, stereo, home theater system or other expensive devices.

Choose either whole-house surge protection—installed by an electrician at the breaker box—or individual surge-protection power strips that will sacrifice themselves to save your electronics during a power surge.

And consider a model that will save energy by automatically turning off a device that it senses has entered standby mode.

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Beginning in January 2012, Texans wanting to claim a sales tax exemption on electricity and other items used in agricultural and timber operations must provide a Texas Agriculture and Timber Exemption Registration Number. House Bill 268, passed during the 2011 legislative session, added this requirement.

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Teach Children About Electrical Safety

Amid the cooking and the cleaning and the Christmastime company, don't neglect your most important holiday blessing: kids.

Before the bustle begins, sit them down and talk about staying safe during the holidays—how to stay safe around hot stoves, flickering fireplaces and electric lights and decorations.

The U.S. Fire Administration reports that deaths from fires caused by children spike during the winter, and twice as many kids die or are injured by fires during the holidays than at any other time of the year.

Some cautions:

- Electrical accidents involving children are far more likely to happen when no adult is supervising the kids.
- The holidays come with safety risks that might not be present during other times of the year: more electrical cords, extension cords in high-traffic areas, electric lights on the tree, burning candles and fires in the hearth.
- Keep children away from cords and decorations to prevent shocks and burns. Carefully select decorations for the bottom limbs of the tree that children can easily reach.
- Don't leave children alone with a lighted fireplace, candles or an operating space heater.
- Do not leave a hot stove unattended when children are present. Move hot pots to back burners.
- Teach your children that hot things can burn them. When they're old enough, teach them how to cook and use the stove safely.
- Choose battery-powered toys instead of electric versions that plug in for children younger than 10.
- Buy electrical toys only if they bear a safety label from Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or another credible testing agency.
- If you bring your children to visit someone else's home, do a visual sweep for potential hazards, such as exposed electrical outlets and cords or lit candles.

TOP 10

Energy-Saving Tips for a Happy Holiday Season

- 10** Shop for Energy Star-rated appliances and compact fluorescent lightbulbs.
- 9** Skip the electronics and get kids board games.
- 8** Don't preheat your oven when cooking large pieces of meat.
- 7** Lower thermostats and replace HVAC filters every 30 days.
- 6** Check windows and doors for leaks and seal them.
- 5** Install timers on outdoor lighting displays.
- 4** Decorate inside and out with strands of lights made with light-emitting diodes (LEDs).
- 3** Adjust power settings on video game consoles to the power-saving mode.
- 2** Vanquish energy vampires with a smart power strip.
- 1** Unplug the electronics, turn down the thermostat and go on vacation.

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Choose LED lights to help save energy and money during the holiday season.



One for the Books

*Then and now,
RoseAleta Laurell—the
famous librarian on
the roof—keeps
children turning
the pages.*

By Connie Strong



Growing up on a North Carolina tobacco farm two miles from the nearest paved road, RoseAleta Laurell's routine childhood existence of sleeping, going to school and working did little to ease her increasing sense of isolation. It was the bookmobile that stopped on the blacktop that opened the world for the little girl and led to her career as a librarian. But no, not the stereotypical quiet librarian.

In 1989, Laurell arrived in Lockhart as director for the small Central Texas town's public library. Her gregarious personality and an unorthodox fundraising scheme became the stuff of legend, inspiring author M.G. King to pen a children's book—*Librarian on the Roof! A True Story*—about the self-described "lunatic librarian." In the book, King describes Laurell's arrival as "a clatter of heels on the floor and eyelashes as long as bird feathers."

Not surprisingly, the new librarian took Lockhart by storm in her determination to liven up the "quiet-please" library. The Dr. Eugene Clark Library, built in 1899, is the oldest continuously operating library in Texas. The two-story red brick building with limestone trim features classic revival architecture. It originally included a lyceum, or hall, making it the cultural center for the region. And the stage, illuminated by rays of light filtering through a central stained-glass window, was once graced by the presence of President William Howard Taft and opera soprano Dorothy Sarnoff.

By the time Laurell arrived, the venerable library was no longer the center of community life. It didn't reflect her philosophy: "Everyone should love coming to the library. The rich, the poor, the farmers, the townsfolk. We're here for grownups and for children." So her next question—"By the way, where ARE the children?"—led to the stunt that would make her a celebrity.

Laurell decided what the library really needed was a section just for children. She dreamed big. More picture books, mystery books, adventure books, child-size tables, comfortable chairs, colorful artwork and computers. She poured her energy into raising the \$20,000 it would take to make her dream a reality.

She knew it would take more than bake sales to raise that kind of money. "I visited every single classroom in every single school in Lockhart to ask for their pennies, nickels and dimes," she says. But it wasn't enough.

So she concocted the seemingly ridiculous idea of residing on the library's roof for seven days and seven nights. With grit and determination, she decided to personally carry out her peculiar plan. In her cigarette smoking-induced raspy, contagious laugh, she remembers, "Well, it's not like it was something I could ask someone else to do!"

On Monday, October 16, 2000, the flamboyant Laurell—donning fluorescent pink rain gear, a gold hard hat, and, as she says, "enough jewelry to sink the Titanic"—stepped into the basket of a Lower Colorado River Authority bucket truck and was hoisted 50 feet high to her perch atop the library. Carrying only the

essentials, including a tent, a laptop computer, two cellphones, a bull-horn and a slingshot to launch water balloons at the kids below, Laurell announced: “I will stay on this roof until we have raised enough money for our children’s section.”

Food was delivered in buckets by a pulley system. At night, Laurell hunkered down in a tent tethered to the rails around the domed roof, waiting for the next day’s opportunity to create a spectacle for the scores of media and onlookers who showed up to witness her antics.

On Tuesday, a check for \$10,000 arrived, but Thursday brought a different surprise. After an 18-month drought, wicked weather opened the skies of Caldwell County and drenched Laurell. Buffeted by great gusts of wind, and despite the threat of tornadoes, she remained on the roof. In her lyrical Southern twang, she remembers, “I thought for sure I had angered the weather gods, and they were trying to drive me off the roof! But then I decided it would just be much more fun to take credit for ending the drought.”

By week’s end, the proud librarian had exceeded her goal, raising nearly \$40,000. Included in the donations were sacks of pennies, nickels and dimes from area schoolchildren, delivered from the back of an old pickup truck in the midst of fanfare.

Today, the children’s area that Laurell so desperately fought to create is a reality. Best of all, King writes, you will always find crowds of children who love to read and learn inside these historic walls.

Laurell’s work and studies eventually took her away from Lockhart. She is now director for the Bell/Whittington Library in the Texas coastal town of Portland. She believes that libraries are taking on a new role as resource centers for navigating life. For example, she says, some people need to know how to fill out their Social Security forms. Others need information about how to raise pigs and goats and chickens. Others need Internet access.

“Libraries are really not where you find the wealthy,” Laurell says. “The people we make the real difference for are the people who are struggling in this complicated, technically-driven, high-powered, fast-moving world.”

Laurell, 63, is working toward a Certificate of Advanced Studies with an emphasis on small, rural libraries from the University of North Texas. Her goal is to obtain a doctorate degree, focusing on service to rural communities.

Laurell describes herself as a “flamboyant character who has been called everything from an embarrassment to a constant source of humor”—traits that make the book written about her a delightful read. King’s book, published in 2010 by Albert Whitman & Company and illustrated by cartoonist Stephen Gilpin, represented Texas on the 2010 National Book Festival’s “52 Great Reads” list.

Connie Strong is a freelance writer based in Chappell Hill.



RoseAleta Laurell’s unorthodox fundraising stunt inspired author M.G. King to write a book about the librarian who was raised to the roof—and from there, during a one-week stay, brought in almost \$40,000 for the Dr. Eugene Clark Library in Lockhart. The money went toward building a children’s book section.

Closure Via a Stamp

*Successful search for
surviving relatives
produces final
chapter on special
friendship that
unfolded decades ago.*

BY SHERYL
SMITH-RODGERS

D

ear Mrs. Wentworth:

You don't know me. But I think I knew your grandfather.

That is, if I have the right Mary Wentworth. ...

Thoughtfully, I penned a few more paragraphs, then signed my name and addressed an envelope. After scouring the Internet, my high-tech search had finally ended. A special friendship that unfolded long before e-mail and cellphones might finally find closure via a postage stamp.

Cedric Noble and I crossed paths in downtown San Antonio in February 1979. Nearly a lifetime separated us. Barely 20, I was a journalism student, determined to expose the "corrupt" managers of a run-down hotel. He was old and gaunt, crossing a street in front of me. He glared at me when I dared to ask if he'd ever stayed at the hotel. "Yeah," he replied gruffly. Could I call him? "Yeah."

It turned out that Mr. Noble had indeed rented a room at the place I was investigating, but it had been 40 years ago. After we spoke, I could have tossed away his phone number. Instead, I called him a week or so later. "I don't give a damn about anyone," he told me, "and no one gives a damn about me." I listened. I asked how he was. Then I said I'd call again, which I did. Regularly. Gradually, he softened.

Mr. Noble shared little about his past. I knew he was born in Chicago. He'd had a daughter with his first wife but left them after returning from World War I. He never told me why. His second marriage lasted many years. But eventually, it ended, too. His third marriage was tumultuous and short. Well past the age of 80, he'd ended up in San Antonio, alone and with little to his name.

Several phone conversations into our friendship, I suggested lunch at a diner not far from where he lived in a 1920s hotel called the Robert E. Lee. At other times, we ate breakfast out. I ran errands for him and grocery shopped when his supplies ran low. One afternoon, I brought my 35-millimeter camera, and he agreed to a photo session. While Mr. Noble talked, laughed and reflected, I snapped pictures of him seated in a worn chair next to the window of his dingy room. I treasure those black-and-white images.

While at home on summer break, I called him weekly. "Hey, how are you gettin' on?" he'd ask. Fine, I'd say. We'd chitchat but never for long. At 87, Mr. Noble's health was failing, and he tired quickly. After we hung up, I knew he'd shuffle back to bed and listen to the news or maybe a ballgame on his transistor radio.

In May 1981, I graduated from college and moved home. Six weeks later, I married. Though busy with a new husband and newspaper work, I worried about Mr. Noble some 150 miles away. Could I move him to our town? Should I make other living arrangements for him? I didn't know. But I kept calling.

A time or two, I drove to San Antonio to visit him. When he went into a veterans hospital in March 1982, I made a special trip. Feeble and groggy, Mr. Noble's sunken eyes lit up when I sat down by his bed. "How's the old man?" he asked, referring to my husband. I smiled, took his thin hand in mine and fought back tears. Then I told him that I loved him.

A few days later, the phone rang at 2 a.m. "Mr. Noble just passed away peacefully," the doctor gently said. "You left instructions to be notified." After thanking him, I hung up and cried. My dear friend was gone.

I'd been told that if no one claimed his body, he'd be buried in a pauper's grave. My husband accompanied me back to San Antonio so I could sign the paperwork that authorized a military funeral. Among Mr. Noble's few belongings, I found letters I'd mailed him, bundled with string.

In July 1988, my mother and I located Mr. Noble's grave at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio. With her Kodak Instamatic, she photographed me and my toddler son, Patrick Noble Rodgers, by his gravestone. At the cemetery office, I left my name and address, hoping that someday his family might find me.

Through the years, I never stopped hoping. But I never had the tools to search myself. Until I sat down at my computer last March. Little by little, I traced Mr. Noble's family tree. Amazingly, I contacted Betty and Ann, two great-nieces by his second wife. Ann mailed me pictures of Mr. Noble as a child, teen, soldier and dapper older man. She also sent an antique locket with two photos—a dashing Cedric in his 20s and a young girl wearing a white bonnet. "That's probably his mother, but we've never known for sure," Ann told me.

Since talking, we both now believe the unidentified child was Mr. Noble's daughter. After hours of online digging, I finally found her—Miriam Noble Clements Stilling. I also learned that several years after Mr. Noble left, Miriam's stepfather adopted her. In 1937, she married Kenneth Stilling. In 1989, Miriam passed (just seven years after her father). Were there any children? I held my breath and ordered copies of obituaries. Yes, she'd had two daughters!

I'd never know one daughter, Laura Stilling. She passed in 2002. But Mary Wentworth still lived in Albuquerque, and I'd found an address. That is, if I had the right Mary. ...

Ten days after I mailed my letter, the phone rang. "This is Mary Wentworth. I got your letter, and yes, you have the right Mary." Stunned, I sat down. "My sister and I always wondered what happened," she continued. "No one ever talked about my grandfather. Thank you for being so kind to him."

"Oh, thank you," I began, blinking back tears. "You see, I'd always hoped I could someday tell his family that I knew Cedric Noble ... and that I loved him, too."



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



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Judge Roy Bean

BY MARTHA DEERING

Armed with a tattered law book and a pair of six-shooters, the legendary Judge Roy Bean doled out a peculiar form of frontier justice in a lawless section of far West Texas during the last half of the 19th century. Photographs show a tough, grizzled old geezer in a dusty black coat. Tales from the life of the manipulative magistrate bridge the gap between horror and amusement.

Before he mounted the judicial bench in Texas, Roy Bean served as a California Ranger with a penchant for stealing the hearts of San Diego señoritas. One such amorous episode nearly cost him his life. With Bean in the saddle, a jealous suitor and others got the jump on Bean, strung him up to a poplar tree, urged his horse out from under him and left the scene. Unseen, the señorita dashed from her hiding place to cut Bean down. He was alive and kicking, but spent the rest of his life with a stiff neck.

After that incident, Bean, who was born in Kentucky, left California and drifted through the Southwest, at one point delivering milk in San Antonio. In time, as the story goes, he decided to increase his take by adding creek water to the milk. This scheme worked until one of his customers found a minnow swimming in a milk bottle.

"By Gobs," Bean said when the customer confronted him, "I'll have to stop them cows from drinkin' outa the creek."

Bean left town and in 1882 set up a saloon in a shabby railroaders tent camp called Vinegarroon—named for a whip scorpion—west of the Pecos River and just north of the Rio Grande. There, he planned to line his pockets with money made selling whiskey. When the railroad came through and whiskey began to flow, disorderly conduct followed, and the nearest law was hundreds of miles away in El Paso. But packed in the bottom of an old trunk, Roy Bean had a solution: a dusty law book—the 1879 Revised Statutes of Texas.

Soon a sign appeared outside the saloon: ROY BEAN - BARREL WHISKEY - JUSTICE OF THE PEACE - LAW WEST OF THE PECOS. Eventually, the judge sent word to the authorities of Precinct 6 that he was willing to accept an appointment to the position of justice of the peace for Pecos County. He got it. With a whiskey barrel for a bench and a gun butt for a gavel, he began to dole out his own brand of frontier justice. Bean's rulings often had little connection to the statutes in his beloved law book. One handwritten entry read: "cheating at cards is a hanging offense, if ketched." With no jail in town, the rare prisoner was shackled to a mesquite tree, and justice was meted out in the form of fines,



CORBIS

which disappeared into Bean's pocket.

The tent village, at first called Eagle Nest, was renamed in honor of railroad man George Langtry. Inside Bean's saloon, an oak bar and poker tables shared space with a crude courtroom. He named the establishment the Jersey Lilly after an English actress, Emilie Lillie Langtry (no relation to George Langtry) of Jersey in the Channel Islands, whose picture he spotted in a newspaper.

Bean, who ignored the correct spelling of Lillie, lost his heart to the beauty. "By Gobs," he said when he saw the picture, "Ain't she a purty critter?"

As time passed, murders, robberies, horse thieving, cattle rustling, inquests, marriages, assaults and civil suits all generated income for Judge Roy Bean, who had a tough reputation. He sentenced many criminals to hang, but there is no evidence that he ever actually carried out the threat. He allowed some to escape. Needless to say, they never came back to Langtry.

In his later years, Bean fined a dead man \$40—all that the man had in his pockets—for carrying a concealed weapon. But the judge had a softer side that was less well known. The \$40 bought a coffin and headstone and paid the grave digger to bury the corpse. And money collected from fines often bought food and medicines for the poor of Langtry.

In 1903, Bean died as he had lived, after a drinking binge. He built his reputation as "The Law West of the Pecos" at a time when West Texas was infested with gunslingers, desperadoes, cutthroats and thieves. The homespun law of Judge Roy Bean worked. And, by Gobs, there are times when the end justifies the means.

Martha Deering, frequent contributor

Holiday Recipe Contest

SPONSORED BY TEXAS PECAN BOARD



Linda Morten with her prize-winning Pecan-Cranberry Bread Pudding with Lemon Hard Sauce

BY KEVIN HARGIS Savory or sweet? That was the decision facing judges of the 2011 Holiday Recipe Contest sponsored by the Texas Pecan Board. More specifically, it was the decision faced by one judge. The ballots had all been returned and counted except one, and the contest was too close to call. Anticipation filled the room as the deliberative judge tasted, thought and tasted again, then finally marked her ballot.

That vote made Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member Linda Morten's Pecan-Cranberry Bread Pudding with Lemon Hard Sauce this year's grand-prizewinning recipe. "That's amazing," said Morten of the win that earned her \$2,000. "I've been doing that (recipe) for years for Thanksgiving" in response to numerous requests, she said.

Morten, who works for the Brenham State School, is no stranger to cooking contest victories. In 2005, she won the National Beef Cook-Off, claiming a

\$50,000 prize with which she and her husband, Michael, bought their house, just minutes away from Lake Somerville. One of her three daughters, Natalie, is following in her mother's footsteps as an avid cook and is attending the Culinary Arts Institute in Houston.

This year, prizes were also awarded to category winners and runners-up. Bandera Electric Cooperative member Sativa Rasmussen-Sanders' entry, Twisted Texas Chicken Diablos, was named Savory Category winner with a prize of \$1,000.

The Sweet Category winning prize, also \$1,000, went to Luke Canatella, whose home is served by Bryan Texas Utilities, for his pecan-laden Breakfast Cookies.

The category runners-up, who each won \$500, were: J-A-C Electric Cooperative member G.W. Quick for Texas-Style Savory Deviled Eggs and Rusk County EC member Jean A. Bunyard for Fig Pecan Pie.

\$2,000 GRAND PRIZEWINNER

Linda Morten

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative

Morten said she got a broad range of culinary experience growing up. She was born in Venezuela, and her father was in the oil business, which took the family to destinations around the world, including a stint in Singapore. "If it wasn't for traveling, I wouldn't be exposed to many tastes," she said. "That's where I got my cooking ability."

Morten said she loves to create desserts, making things that look pretty and taste good. She also loves to enter cooking contests. "Formulating recipes for pay," she said with a laugh. "That's my love and my passion."

PECAN-CRANBERRY BREAD PUDDING WITH LEMON HARD SAUCE

- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine, melted
- 3/4 cup half and half
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups chopped, toasted Texas pecans, divided
- 1 1/2 cups fresh cranberries, divided

- 1 loaf (16 ounces) raisin bread, cut into 1-inch cubes
- Lemon-Vanilla Hard Sauce
- Pumpkin Shell Serving Bowls, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease 8x8-inch pan. In large mixing bowl, stir together eggs, sugar, butter, half and half, vanilla, 1 cup pecans, 1 cup cranberries and cubed bread. Spoon into prepared pan. Bake for 25 minutes. Immediately top with Lemon-Vanilla Hard Sauce and allow to melt. Sprinkle with reserved pecans and cranberries. Serve in Pumpkin Shell Serving Bowls, if desired (instructions follow).

LEMON-VANILLA HARD SAUCE

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups powdered sugar
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Cream butter, zest and juice on medium speed with electric mixer. Gradually add powdered sugar and vanilla, beating until light and fluffy.

PUMPKIN SHELL SERVING BOWLS

- 12 pie pumpkins ($\frac{1}{2}$ pound each)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter or margarine, melted and divided
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar, divided

Cut tops off pumpkins, reserving lids with stems. Scoop out seeds and pulp. Brush inside of each with about 1 teaspoon butter and sprinkle inside of each with about 1 teaspoon brown sugar. Top with lids. Place pumpkins on baking sheet and bake along with pudding for 25 minutes.

Allow pumpkins to cool slightly and spoon pudding evenly into each pumpkin shell. Top each with 1 tablespoon of Lemon-Vanilla Hard Sauce and allow it to melt. Sprinkle with reserved pecans and cranberries.

Servings (pudding with sauce only): 12. Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 465 calories, 6 g protein, 27.5 g fat, 47.5 g carbohydrates, 3.5 g dietary fiber, 138 mg sodium, 26.8 g sugars, 77 mg cholesterol

COOK'S TIP: Try Lemon-Vanilla Hard Sauce over other warm baked goods such as scones or muffins.

\$1,000 SAVORY WINNER

Sativa Rasmussen-Sanders

Bandera Electric Cooperative

Rasmussen-Sanders, who lives in Pipe Creek with her husband, Ryan, and sons Ryeth, 15; Colsten, 9; and Vanden, 6; does a lot of cooking to feed her boys. "They eat a lot," she said.

The inspiration for her Twisted Texas Chicken Diablos recipe came from eating similar dishes at area restaurants. She made a few changes, incorporating pecans and grilling or baking them instead of deep frying, as with the versions she'd eaten off local menus.



TWISTED TEXAS CHICKEN DIABLOS

- 2 pounds chicken tenders
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup orange juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons dry steak seasoning
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup chopped Texas pecans
- 12 whole fresh jalapeños
- 2 pounds thin-sliced bacon
- 2 cups barbecue sauce

Place chicken tenders in bowl, add orange juice and 1 tablespoon steak seasoning, stir, cover and set in refrigerator to marinate 1 or more hours, but not overnight. In separate bowl, mix cream cheese, pecans and $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon steak seasoning, blend well by hand, and set aside. When ready to assemble, wash and slice jalapeños in half lengthways, remove seeds, then rinse again. Fill jalapeño half with cream cheese mixture, place chicken tender on top of filling, wrap with 1 slice of bacon, and secure with large grilling skewer so that bacon stays wrapped around jalapeño. Place three stuffed jalapeños on each skewer. When finished, brush all finished jalapeños generously with barbecue sauce. Bake or grill until chicken is thoroughly cooked, approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour at 350 degrees, turning halfway through cooking time and basting with more sauce. Baste one last time about 5 minutes before finishing cooking or use remaining sauce to serve.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 2 diablos. Per serving: 788 calories, 41.1 g protein, 47.6 g fat, 32 g carbohydrates, 2.3 g dietary fiber, 2,549 mg sodium, 13.7 g sugars, 134 mg cholesterol



TWISTED TEXAS CHICKEN DIABLOS

\$1,000 SWEET WINNER

Luke Canatella

*Bryan Texas
Utilities*

Canatella, who works for Luby's Cafeterias as an account manager, loves to make pastries and play around with recipes. For this contest, he modified a breakfast cookie recipe he'd created, adding pecans and the special ingredient—bacon—to yield a hearty cookie with a salty-sweet taste and crunchy texture that wowed the judges.

He said he loves to “take a recipe and take it apart, then put it back together to make something everyone likes.”



- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups quick-cooking oatmeal
- 2 cups Texas pecan pieces
- 12 ounces bacon, cooked crisp and roughly chopped
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1½ tablespoons baking powder
- 4 cups regular corn flakes
- ⅛ cup cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In large mixing bowl, mix butter, brown sugar, 2 cups granulated sugar, eggs and vanilla until well blended. Fold in oatmeal, pecans and bacon. Add flour, salt and baking powder, mixing well. Add corn flakes and mix until combined evenly. Do not over mix. Drop onto parchment paper using 4-ounce scoop. Leave at least one inch of space between cookies. Flatten each into 2-inch circle. Mix cinnamon and remaining sugar. Sprinkle atop each cookie. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until cookies are set but not crunchy.

BREAKFAST COOKIES

- 2 cups unsalted butter, melted
- 2 cups light brown sugar packed lightly
- 3 cups granulated sugar, divided
- 6 large eggs

BREAKFAST COOKIES



Servings: 36. Serving size: 1 cookie. Per serving: 387 calories, 7.4 g protein, 18.3 g fat, 46.6 g carbohydrates, 1.7 g dietary fiber, 415 mg sodium, 39.1 g sugars, 68 mg cholesterol

\$500 SAVORY RUNNER-UP

G.W. Quick

*J-A-C Electric
Cooperative*

Quick, an administrative law judge, said he used to make deviled eggs using walnuts, but because he and his wife, Pat, have pecan trees in their yard, he switched. This was the first recipe contest entry he's attempted.



TEXAS-STYLE SAVORY DEVILED EGGS

- 12 eggs
- 5 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 5 teaspoons dill pickle juice
- Juice of 1 small lime
- ½ teaspoon prepared yellow mustard
- 5 teaspoons sweet relish
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped sweet onion
- 2 finely chopped large pimiento-stuffed olives
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped dried cranberries
- 3 teaspoons finely chopped, seeded jalapeño
- 4 tablespoons finely chopped pecans
- ¼ teaspoon coarse ground pepper
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 24 Texas pecan halves
- Paprika for garnish

Fill pot with enough water to cover eggs. Bring to rapid boil and cook 1 minute. Remove from heat and let sit 15 minutes, covered. Drain and cool eggs in ice water. Peel and slice eggs in half lengthwise, scooping yolks into bowl. Mash egg yolks to crumb size. Add mayonnaise, pickle juice, lime juice and mustard. Stir until mixture forms even paste. Fold in relish, onion, olives, cranberries, jalapeño, chopped pecans, pepper and sugar and mix well. Spoon carefully into egg white halves. Top each egg with pecan half and sprinkle with paprika. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 2 egg halves. Per serving: 142 calories, 7 g protein, 10.6 g fat, 4 g carbohydrates, 0.7 g dietary fiber, 163 mg sodium, 1.7 g sugars, 187 mg cholesterol

\$500 SWEET RUNNER-UP

Jean A. Bunyard

Rusk County

Electric Cooperative

Bunyard, who works part time as an insurance office manager, stays busy with volunteer work and helping her husband, Guy, entertain their four grandchildren. She gets figs from her daughter, who has her own trees. She came up with this recipe by modifying an old one she had found and adding lemon juice for a sweet-tart zing.



FIG PECAN PIE

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- Pinch salt
- Top and bottom crusts for 9-inch pie
- 2 cups sliced figs (fresh or dried)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Texas pecans, chopped
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- Butter
- Milk

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix sugar, flour and salt; sprinkle half of mixture evenly into pastry-lined pie pan. Arrange figs and pecans on top and sprinkle with lemon juice, zest and remaining flour mixture. Dot generously with butter. Fit top crust over pie, sealing edges. Brush top with milk and cut vents. Bake 15 minutes, then reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees and bake 30 minutes longer. Cover edges of crust with strips of foil to prevent overbrowning, if necessary. Allow to cool before cutting.

Servings: 8. Serving size: 1 slice. Per serving: 411 calories, 2.9 g protein, 20.4 g fat, 51.9 g carbohydrates, 2.2 g dietary fiber, 310 mg sodium, 20 g sugars, 8 mg cholesterol

\$100 RECIPE CONTEST

April's recipe contest topic is Cupcakes. You can go big with these tasty, little cakes. The deadline is December 10.

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 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. 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.



TEXAS-STYLE SAVORY DEVILED EGGS



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African Gem Cutter Makes \$2,689,000 Mistake...Will You?

This story breaks my heart every time. Allegedly, just two years after the discovery of tanzanite in 1967, a Maasai tribesman knocked on the door of a gem cutter's office in Nairobi. The Maasai had brought along an enormous chunk of tanzanite and he was looking to sell. His asking price? Fifty dollars. But the gem cutter was suspicious and assumed that a stone so large could only be glass. The cutter told the tribesman, no thanks, and sent him on his way. Huge mistake. It turns out that the gem was genuine and would have easily dwarfed the world's largest cut tanzanite at the time. Based on common pricing, that "chunk" could have been worth close to \$3,000,000!

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Found in only one remote place on Earth (in Tanzania's Merelani Hills, in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro), the precious purple stone is 1,000 times rarer than diamonds. Luxury retailers have been quick to sound the alarm, warning that supplies of tanzanite will not last forever. And in this case, they're right. Once the last purple gem is pulled from the Earth, that's it. No more tanzanite. Most believe that we only have a few years supply left, which is why it's so amazing for us to offer this incredible price break. Some retailers along Fifth Avenue are more than happy to charge you outrageous prices for this rarity. Not Stauer. Staying true to our contrarian nature, we've decided to *lower the price of one of the world's rarest and most popular gemstones.*

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▲ **Kaleb**, grandson of Nueces and San Patricio electric cooperatives member “**Grand Paw**” **Mike Roach**, is pulled out of this photograph, or so it seems. Grand Paw did the photo taking and editing, and Dad **Mike Roach** did the pulling.



▲ Truly a Painted Bunting: Pedernales Electric Cooperative member **Michael Krouse** shot the photo, and friend **Jason Boyd** altered the image.

Upcoming in Focus on Texas

ISSUE	SUBJECT	DEADLINE
Feb	Going Nuts	Dec 10
<i>Sponsored by Texas Peanut Producers</i>		
Mar	Wild Animals	Jan 10
Apr	Easter	Feb 10
May	Everything's Bigger in Texas	Mar 10
Jun	Hard at Work	Apr 10
Jul	Yard Art	May 10

GOING NUTS is the topic for our FEBRUARY 2012 issue. Send your photo—along with your name, address, day-time phone, co-op affiliation and a brief description—to Going Nuts, Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701, before DECEMBER 10. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. If you use a digital camera, submit your highest-resolution images online at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests. 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.

FUN WITH PHOTOSHOP

Wow! When we decided to run this modern-day category, we had no idea we'd receive so many entries. It was a blast to look at all of the creative digital touches—both beautiful and batty—on your everyday photos. From the slightest enhancement to the most masterful of manipulations, we enjoyed them all. And now, we share them with you!

—ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER

On TexasCoopPower.com: See more digitally altered submissions.



▲ Calypso wants to escape the dog days of summer, say “grand-parents” and Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative members **Gil** and **Sue Merkle**, doggie-sitters for granddaughter **Sarah Henderson**.



▲ Welcome home: Nueces Electric Cooperative and Bryan Texas Utilities member **Kelsey Hellmann** shot and altered this photo of Gibbs in honor of all past and present military.



▲ All CoServ Electric member **Charles Baxter** needed to create this image was a thunderstorm, a rainbow, a great lens and his photo-editing software.

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

DECEMBER 10 CHAPPELL HILL

Holiday Home Tour & Teddy Bear Parade, (979) 836-6033, www.chappellhillmuseum.org



TEDDY BEAR: 2011 © IVAN KMIT. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. COOKIES: 2011 © TORU UCHIDA. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. VEST: 2011 © BETHANY L. VAN TREES. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.

DECEMBER

09

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

KILGORE
Kilgore Snow Hill Festival,
(903) 984-5022,
www.kilgorechamber.com

TOMBALL [9-11]
German Festival &
Christmas Market, (281)
379-6844, www.tomballgermanfest.org

WEATHERFORD [9-11]
Candlelight Christmas Gift
Market at the Doss,
(817) 599-6168,
www.dosscenter.org

10

CANYON LAKE
Christmas Parade,
(830) 964-2461,
<http://clnoonlions.com>



9

TOMBALL
German Festival &
Christmas Market

10

FRANKLIN
Christmas Parade & Party,
(979) 828-3276,
www.franklintexas.com

ROUND TOP
Christmas in Winedale,
1-888-273-6426,
www.cah.utexas.edu

SANGER
Arts & Crafts Show,
(940) 458-7497,
www.sisd.sangerisd.net

SAN SABA
Christmas on the Square
& Lighted Parade, (325)
372-5141, <http://sansabachamber.com>

10

SINTON
"Old Fashioned" Christmas
Illuminated Parade,
(361) 364-2381

VERNON
Christmas on the Western
Trail, (940) 552-6803



10

SANGER
Arts & Crafts Show

ADVERTISEMENT

Loose Saggy Neck Skin – Can Any Cream Cure Turkey Neck?



Dear Dorris:

DEAR DORRIS:

I'm a woman who is 64 years young who suffers from really loose skin under my

chin and on my lower neck. I hate the term, but my grandkids say I have "turkey neck" and frankly, I've had enough of it!

I have tried some creams designed to help tighten and firm that loose, saggy skin, but they did not work. Is there any cream out there that can truly help my loose neck skin?

Turkey Neck , Tarrant County

DEAR TURKEY-NECK: In fact, there is a very potent cream on the market that firms, tightens and regenerates new skin cells on the neck area. It is called the Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®.

This cream contains an instant lift ingredient that tightens the skin naturally, as well as deep moisturizing ingredients to firm the skin and make it more supple. Amazingly, the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®** also has Stem Cells taken from *Malus Domestica*, a special apple from Switzerland.

These stem cells are actually unprogrammed cells that can mimic those of young skin that stays tight, firm and wrinkle free.

As an alternative to the scary surgeries or face lifts that many people resort to, this cream really packs a big punch on the loose saggy skin of the neck. **The Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream®** is available online at Dermagist.com or you can order or learn more by calling toll-free, **888-771-5355**. Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me **10% off**. The code was "TXN3". It's worth a try to see if it still work.

AROUND TEXAS AROUND TEXAS



17 LUCKENBACH
Christmas Ball, 1-888-311-8990, www.luckenbachtexas.com

SNYDER
Big Country Christmas Ball, (325) 660-8338, www.westtexasrehab.org

McKINNEY [17-19]
Holiday Trail of Lights, (972) 562-5566, www.heardmuseum.org

18

INDEPENDENCE
Bethlehem in Independence Live Nativity

10 WIMBERLEY
Winter's Eve "A Christmas Festival," (512) 757-5507, www.wimberleymerchants.com

DECATUR [10-11]
A Cowboy Christmas Story, (903) 227-7369, www.wisecountycowboychurch.com



31

CALDWELL
New Year's Eve Jeans & Jewels Dinner & Dance

18 INDEPENDENCE [18-19]
Bethlehem in Independence Live Nativity, (979) 830-3461

26 FREDERICKSBURG
Boxing Day Celebration at Becker Vineyards, (830) 644-2681, www.beckervineyards.com

31 CALDWELL
New Year's Eve Jeans & Jewels Dinner & Dance, (979) 535-7702, <http://tgburlesoncounty.com>

JANUARY

06 DEL RIO
First Friday Art Walk, (830) 768-2287, <http://casadelacultura.com>

07 CORPUS CHRISTI
30th Annual Boar's Head & Yule Log Festival, (361) 854-3044, <http://firstchristiancc.org>

6

DEL RIO
First Friday Art Walk



We pick events for the magazine directly from **TexasCoopPower.com**. Submit your event for February by December 10, and it just might be featured in this calendar!

NATIVITY: 2011 © ANNEKAS. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. NEW YEAR'S PUPPY: 2011 © BARBARA HELGASON. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM. ART PALETTE: 2011 © VERNIA BICE. IMAGE FROM BIGSTOCK.COM.



Gettysburg
Pennsylvania
Infantry Monument

Glacier
Montana
Mtn. Goat & Mt. Reynolds

Olympic Washington
Elk & Mt. Olympus

Vicksburg
Mississippi
Ironclad U.S.S. Cairo

Chickasaw
Oklahoma
The Lincoln Bridge

NEW State Quarters!

Honoring America's National Parks

Don't miss out on this exciting new 2010-2021 quarter series. Now the 2011 coins have all been released, and you can own all 10 popular second-year coins in this series honoring America's national parks and historic sites. Each year, five new designs are minted in about 10-week intervals, then never again.

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Long before Texas Tech University, Jones AT&T Stadium and the Metro Tower defined the Lubbock skyline, pioneers from the East Coast and Europe who dreamed of land ownership and cattle ranching drove an existence from this flat, semiarid stretch of the South Plains, leading to the rise of the largest city in the Panhandle.

Lubbock embraces its heritage with museums and parks that take visitors back in time. “Lubbock is a destination for people who want to see the real West,” says Jim Pfluger, executive director of the **NATIONAL RANCHING HERITAGE CENTER**.

Volunteer ranch host Ron Cox kicks back on the porch of a preserved, 1900s-era house at the ranching center at Texas Tech. His broad-rimmed hat and jacket, trappings of his period-specific costume, rest near his elbow.

“Did you lose your saddle?” he asks a visitor strolling up on foot. Playing the character of a West Texas rancher, Cox insinuates that anyone walking must have lost a horse.

Cox drops his act only when a couple tries to step over the threshold for a better look inside. “Actually, I’m not supposed to let you in there,” he says. He then stands in the doorway and explains what life was like for the original resident living near modern-day Midland, where the house once stood.

The Box and Strip House, made by nailing vertical boards to a box-like frame without horizontal support, is one of the 48 historic—and mostly original—ranch structures relocated to the ranching center for preservation. “These are the reminders of the physical presence of the pioneers,” Pfluger says, “the actual three-dimensional items of the people who settled the American West.”

Walking the outdoor park trail—from a replica of Los Corralitos, a 1780s fortified home; to the Pitchfork Ranch Cookhouse, a mess hall used at the Pitchfork Ranch from the 1890s to 2003—visitors inhale the scent of cedar and spy an occasional jackrabbit. The

LUBBOCK

Relive the real West.

BY SUZANNE HABERMAN



relics reveal the nature of early settlers’ home and work life, right down to details like branding irons in the 6666 Barn. A train station display features a steam locomotive, King Ranch shipping pens and a red caboose.

During **CANDLELIGHT AT THE RANCH**, this year scheduled from 6 to 9 p.m. on December 9-10, the park comes alive as more volunteers such as Cox don costumes and perform re-enactments for more than 6,000 viewers. “People can look into the buildings and see what the inhabitants were doing to prepare for or celebrate the holiday,” Pfluger says.

But life on the dusty Plains would not have been possible without the ability to pump water. In northeast Lubbock, the **AMERICAN WIND POWER CENTER’S** more than 150 windmills narrate the history of wind power, which was vital to settling the dry lands. “You couldn’t come out here to this part of Texas and live without a windmill,” says Coy Harris, the museum’s executive director.

Inside the main building, a breeze

enters the open doors and propels the arms of windmills on display. Blades whirl, gears creak and a sucker rod alternately draws up and spurts water into a metal tank with the clinking of check balls, spheres in the sucker rod that regulate water flow.

Outside, an English post mill commemorates the first windmill built in America in 1621. Its oak cabin, equipped with 2,400-pound stones to grind grains, swivels on a post to obtain the best angle in the wind.

The post mill’s wood sails juxtapose the nearby Vestas Model V47 windmill, a modern wind turbine standing 250 feet high from its base to the tip of an upright blade. The machine has a capacity to generate 660 kilowatts of electricity, a fraction of which powers the museum; the rest goes into the grid.

The wind power center museum’s 6,000-square-foot mural, “Legacy of the Wind,” illustrates the evolution of windmills on a Texas landscape dotted with cattle, mockingbirds and black-tailed prairie dogs. (To get close enough to almost touch a live prairie dog, visit Lubbock’s **PRAIRIE DOG TOWN**.) On one end of the mural, the post mill stands alone on the horizon. In the center, a town—Lubbock, perhaps—sprouts up in the midst of water-pumping windmills. Afar, groups of white wind turbines stripe a pink sunset.

To top off a day of touring, stop at The **TRIPLE J CHOPHOUSE & BREW CO.** on Buddy Holly Avenue for dinner, and toast the American Wind Power Center with a beer on tap, such as the seasonal, honey-colored Windmill Wheat. Then bunk for the night in a Santa Fe Railroad caboose—much like the caboose at the ranching center—that owners David and Dawn Fleming converted into a suite at **WOODROW HOUSE BED AND BREAKFAST**.

Suzanne Haberman, communications specialist

On TexasCoopPower.com

Read more about Lubbock destinations and experience the real West in a slideshow.



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