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When Crates Became Canvases The artful labels that helped Rio Grande packers market their produce in the early 1900s are much craved by collectors *By Eileen Mattei* **8**

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By Susan Hayden Kennedy



COVER PHOTO *Citrus labels of the early 1900s played up imagery of Texas, the Rio Grande Valley and Mexico.* *By John Scheiber*

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Scootin' Back in Time

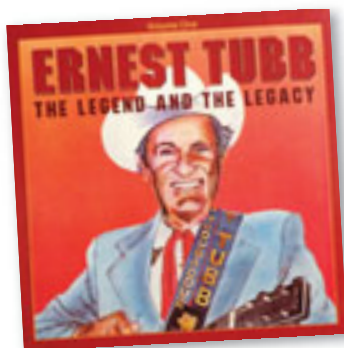
Walkin' the floor—actually boot scootin' around the floor of the old Esquire Ballroom on Hempstead Highway in Houston years ago—I enjoyed E.T.'s [Ernest Tubb's] show there several times. And when the song ended, he always flashed one of the biggest smiles ever while thanking the crowd for the applause. Thanks for the memory ["Honky-Tonk Pioneer," February 2014].

ROGER WERCHAN | MID-SOUTH SYNERGY

Viva Charro Days

I was born and raised in Brownsville and attended public school there. Your article ["Charro Days," February 2014] brought back many fond memories of participating in the parades as a student. It really was a family tradition my whole family looked forward to and enjoyed every year.

JOSE A. FLORES | SOUTH PLAINS EC



Recipe Response

Editor's note: TCP's 2013 winning holiday recipe drew the ire of one reader who wrote us a letter published in the February issue. Other recipe watchers chimed in in response.

Don't you dare "try to do better" with regards to the recipes. Let the readers worry about whether or not we want to make them.

ANN-MARIE HARRINGTON | COSERV ELECTRIC

I tried the winning recipe from the 2013 Holiday Recipe Contest. It was everything it was made out to be. This one will go into the recipe file.

I would not worry too much about obesity. I have found that getting the kids away from the TV

and video games and going outside pretty much takes care of that part. Keep those recipes coming.

MILTON JAMES | BANDERA EC

The recipes are the first pages I look at. I don't care how much fat, calories or carbohydrates there are in a recipe.

MARY KAY DAVIS | UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES

We are intelligent enough to modify any of the recipes to fit our dietary needs and tastes. For instance, I rarely use salt in cooking because we like the flavor of the food, and now that my husband has tested prediabetic, he has eliminated sugar of any kind almost completely. But I am still able to figure out how to make a recipe printed here if I would like to and just change things that I want to.

SUSAN WELLBORN | CONCHO VALLEY EC

Tall Tale

Thanks for the story on the Shields Brothers ["Towering Texans' Circus Tour," January 2014]. It answered a question I have had for many years. I found an oversized ring in a bag of my grandpa and grandma's things that contained my grandpa's dog tags from World War I and some tintypes of both of them. The

ring is extremely large and has "TALLEST MARRIED COUPLE ON EARTH" on top.

DENIS SNIDER | LYNTGAR EC

On the Trail Again

The inset, "A Kolach by Any Other Name" ["The Kolach Trail," January 2014], reminded me of an experience I had while attending Czech language training at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California.

One of our instructors had been a baker before he was a teacher. On the odd Saturday morning, he would bake koláče for the bakery in downtown Monterey. My fellow students and I would sometimes go there and have them with coffee. He normally filled them in the traditional fashion, with fruit or sometimes cream cheese.

Once he made some chocolate-filled ones, which were absolutely delicious. On the following Monday, however, we came to class with three instructors in a heated discussion with the baker about something. It was early in our training, and they were talking very quickly, so the most I could pull out of the conversation was "není koláč!" (that's not a kolache).

After the discussion, our homeroom teacher, Mrs. Langova, spent the next several minutes letting us

know that a proper koláč can only be filled with fruit, and if the pastry was filled with anything else, no matter how delicious it may be and no matter what the baker called it, it most certainly is not a "koláč."

ELMER BOUTIN | PEDERNALES EC

Editor's note: Read more feedback about "The Kolach Trail," including reader favorites that didn't make our map, on TexasCoopPower.com.

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CO-OP PEOPLE

The Coat Collector

Some folks were a little warmer in Montgomery County this winter, thanks to the determination of a certain third-grader.

Lia Witt, a member of Sam Houston Electric Cooperative and a member services employee there, was telling her family in November how she had heard Montgomery County Emergency Assistance was overwhelmed with requests for coats. (Remember how early winter arrived?)

Her son, 9-year-old Noah, piped up, “Mom, we can keep those people warm. We can give them my coats!”

The spark of that gesture turned into a flame: Young Noah organized a coat drive.

He enlisted the help of teachers, neighbors and family, and word of Noah’s drive spread. Sam Houston EC stepped in, collecting coats in every department and at every branch office, and in about a month’s time, Noah collected 71 coats, which were divided between MCEA and Community Action in Livingston.

“They were really excited that people got coats,” Noah says of the East Texas organizations.

Lia said her son has always been generous. “He’ll buy a pack of gum, and immediately he’s giving it all away,” Lia says. “He’s always been selfless.”

Noah has set a goal to collect more than 100 coats next winter. It appears his donation days are far from over.



HAPPENINGS

Spring Has Sprung in Edom

Have a little spring in your step? Consider heading over to April in Edom, slated for April 12 and 13.

Each year, families—and pets—visit this East Texas town between Canton and Tyler to peruse handmade items from Texas vendors and enjoy delectable fair-style treats and live music. Children’s activities include pony and train rides, bouncy houses, karaoke, rock climbing, dance performances and more. And you can show off your four-legged friends in the pet parade!

Sponsored by the Edom Area Chamber, it all goes down in the parking lot of the Shed Café.

INFO: (214) 478-8999, aprilledom.net

Find more happenings all across the state at TexasCoopPower.com



The Beat Goes On

Visit any honky-tonk in Texas and you’ll likely hear the legacy of Ray Price. The bandleader, who died in December at 87 with a string of hits to his credit, is best remembered for a 4/4 walking bass beat—dubbed the Ray Price Sound—that’s a standard of boot-scootin’ tunes today.

He formed the Cherokee Cowboys in the 1950s, and the band eventually included such future stars as Willie Nelson, Johnny Paycheck and Roger Miller. Price, who was born in Perryville in Wood County and grew up in Dallas, produced hit after hit on the charts. He added a citified sensibility to country music, pioneering the popular “countryopolitan” sound that bridged pop and twang but made purists frown.

“He was probably the first outlaw,” Merle Haggard told The Associated Press after Price’s death in December. “He was out there fighting for what he believed and doing it his way, and being criticized and all that. I remember when he laid the guitar down and started hiring violin players and all that, and everybody thought he was crazy. Crazy like a fox. He knew what he was doing.”

COAT COLLECTOR: LIA WITT, EDMON; JOHN MARGESON

WHO KNEW?

The Genius Castaway

TV fans of a certain generation are probably aware that Russell Johnson, the actor who played the Professor on the zany 1960s sitcom “Gilligan’s Island,” died January 16. He was 89.

Johnson was born in Pennsylvania, died in Washington and lived for decades in Los Angeles. But Texas can claim to have helped make the Professor what he was, if only for trivial purposes.

In a conversation with fellow S.S. Minnow castaway Thurston Howell III during one episode, the Professor—the character did have a name: Dr. Roy Hinkley—said: “I have a B.A. from USC, a B.S. from UCLA, an M.A. from SMU and a Ph.D. from TCU.”

The actor liked to note how his genius character could build a short-wave radio out of a coconut shell but somehow couldn’t figure out how to patch a hole in a boat to get off the tropical island.



ON THIS DATE

Mustang Mania

The Ford Mustang made its debut April 17, 1964, at the World’s Fair in Flushing Meadows, New York, and immediately started a stampede at dealerships across the country. Ford forecast annual sales of about 100,000 cars, but on the first day alone, 22,000 Mustangs were sold. The list price was \$2,368.

In Garland, outside of Dallas, 15 customers wanted the one Mustang on the lot, and the highest bidder insisted on spending the night in the car until his check cleared.

Southern Methodist University football lore suggests the team inspired the sports car’s name. After the Mustangs played the only game against Michigan in school history, in 1963, Ford executive Lee Iacocca supposedly visited the SMU locker room and told the losing team, “After watching the SMU Mustangs play with such flair, we reached a decision. We will call our new car the Mustang. Because it will be light, like your team. It will be quick, like your team. And it will be sporty, like your team.”

Iacocca neither confirms nor denies that story, which SMU included in a news release about the school scheduling a game at Michigan in 2018.



This is the year Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto introduced pigs to the continental U.S. After wandering around the southeastern U.S. in search of gold, his party in 1542 brought 700 pigs into what would become Texas. Today wild pigs number in the millions in the state and wreak havoc on the landscape. See “Here a Pig, There a Pig,” Page 13.

MUSTANG: AP/2003; GILLIGAN'S ISLAND: CBS | PHOTOEST; WILD BOAR FUR: ZORANDI | BIGSTOCK.COM

BY EILEEN MATTEI

WHEN CRATES BECAME CANVASES



The label art that sold Rio Grande Valley produce

The vibrant colors and original art of the citrus crate label cradled in Dale Murden's hands represent a cherished link to the past. "This is a cool piece of history that people have forgotten about," says Murden, manager of Rio Farms, a private Rio Grande Valley agricultural research organization. "The colors are so brilliant it looks like it was printed today, not in 1938."

GLUED ONTO THE ENDS OF SLATTED WOODEN CRATES PACKED with aromatic, sun-ripened citrus and shipped north, Texas fruit labels were an eye-catching marketing tool for almost 50 years. Today, the original labels rank as an American art form prized by collectors.

The glossy, square Sun Rich label from the Lindsay Gardens packing shed in Mission is one of 400 in Murden's collection. After discovering label art and its history in the mid-1990s, he began searching the few remaining packing sheds for long-abandoned boxes of labels. "It's a treasure hunt. For me it is all about Texas citrus, but they are getting harder and harder to find," he says.

High on his wish list are citrus brands with a personal connection, such as Rio Farms' elusive Rio Way and Rio Star labels. "Those would be my holy grail," he says. "I'm always on the lookout."

The 9-inch-square fruit crate labels, along with labels for tomatoes, yams and other produce, had their heyday from the 1910s to about 1960. The illustrations were designed to appeal to wholesaler buyers who frequented produce auctions in New York, New Jersey, Detroit and Chicago. Dazzling colors, picturesque images and stylized lettering made Rio Grande Valley packing and shipping brands easily recognizable.

Citrus label art played up the appeal of Texas, the Rio Grande Valley and its tropical, exotic neighbor, Mexico. Bold men, cute kids, winsome women, lively animals and Mexican themes were more common images on the Valley brands than the fruit itself, an instance of selling the sizzle rather than the steak. The art frequently featured a cowboy on a bucking horse or with guns blazing or pictured on a lonesome, moonlit prairie. Some labels depicted exotic monkeys and parrots along with animals ranging from whitewing doves and deer to Assault, the 1946 Triple Crown-winning quarter horse from the King Ranch. Illustrations of men in wide sombreros, women with swirling skirts, Native Americans, old sailing ships, trains, planes and palm trees decorated labels of brands that, over time, have merged or disappeared.

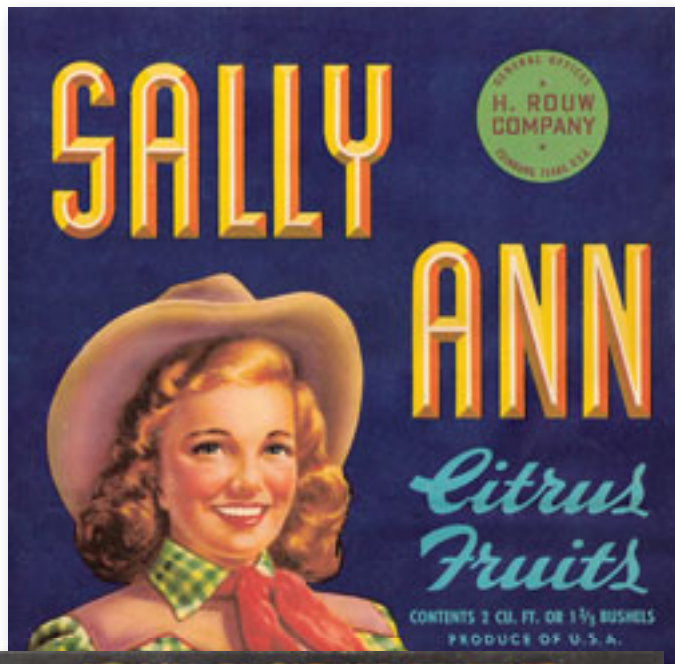
IN THE GROVE

THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY ONCE HAD DOZENS OF CITRUS PACKING sheds located adjacent to rail lines. Many whistle-stop towns on the San Benito & Rio Grande Valley Railway, known as the Spider Web railroad (a precursor of farm-to-market roads), supported at least one packinghouse. Each packer used a variety of labels for its brands, with the illustrations and lettering tweaked and upgraded over the years. H. Rouw Company of Edinburg used the Rio Moon label, a Sally Ann brand that featured Norman Rockwell-style art with two children and a dog watching an orange moon rise above a citrus grove. Edinburg Citrus Association shipped under four brands: Tropic Valley, Tropic Moon, Edinburg's Best and Mission Pride.

Growers and packers ordered labels displaying their children, pets, wives and houses. Family played a role in brand names, too, says Cyndie Haden, Murden's wife. Her grandfather, who

The Valley packinghouses along the Spider Web railroad counted on the national appeal of Texas cowboys, pretty women and cute kids—and not just their produce—to sell oranges and grapefruit. Some crate labels seem to resemble movie posters—is that John Wayne shooting straight with you about grapefruit on the crate shown on the magazine cover? The Rio Moon label, top, less than subtly mimicked the painting style of Norman Rockwell.





owned the Schmidt packing shed in Mission, named one label Billy Joe for his son, Haden's dad. So Murden began hunting for a Billy Joe label, too.

THE ART

ARTISTS WORKING FOR CALIFORNIA LITHOGRAPHERS, SUCH AS Schmidt Lithograph Company, Stecher-Traung and Louis Roesch, created almost all the fruit and vegetable labels used in Texas. The printers ran studios with as many as 100 commercial artists designing fruit and vegetable labels along with ones for soap powders, crackers and cereal boxes. Fruit label art did not rank as prestigious work and was not signed. Labels, in fact, were joint projects with illustrators, who added jazzy lettering.

By the 1930s, technical improvements in label production ushered in an era of attention-grabbing colors and more stylized, less realistic images. The four-color offset printing process created dazzling colors on cheap paper that nevertheless managed to withstand the heat and humidity of packing sheds and the cold, damp environment of refrigerated railcars.

Label artwork depicted the dancing señorita of Donnatex, the red and yellow spread-wing macaw of the Weslaco Citrus Association, the cloche-hatted beauty posed for the Stuart Place Citrus Association, the cocky rooster on the Mornin' Judge label of the Donna Citrus Association, and the leather-helmeted pilot on the Tex-Ace label of Elsa. A few labels spotlighted Valley history: An early Monte Alto label featured the Delta Lake mansion where land developers sweet-talked visiting Midwesterners into buying Valley farms. Others like the Rio Moon label mimicked styles of famous artists.

Packing companies typically owned the rights to the label images, but the brand names rather than the art were registered. Building their brand, packinghouses used the same label design for their citrus and produce. The label art was ready-made for use in print ads and on billboards, but, truth be told, few consumers knew citrus brand names. Labels continued to be designed to catch the eye of the wholesale buyer. The sheer volume of labels shows how competitive and diverse the Valley citrus industry was.

FRUIT OF THE BOOM

BY THE LATE 1940S, WITH THE GROWING POPULARITY OF THE Ruby Red, the first patented grapefruit, the Rio Grande Valley was shipping 10,000 railcars filled with citrus annually. Texas supplied almost half of the grapefruit eaten in the U.S., the bounty from more than 5.5 million trees. Between 50 and 60 citrus packinghouses shipped to northern produce auctions, says Ted Brasch, whose grandfather started the Interstate brand in 1937.

Murden treasures three wooden citrus crates, dating from the 1950s, that he acquired from Mayer's Market, a small family-owned grocery in Iowa. The crates evoked a bygone era for Sharon Mayer, who helped her parents run the store. "I have memories of opening crates like this and smelling that first

The 9-inch-square fruit crate labels, usually created by California lithographers, served as marketing tools for dozens of Rio Grande Valley packinghouses. The labels had their heyday from the 1910s to about 1960. The crates, with their eye-catching, artistic packaging, were shipped north for produce auctions. Often they ended up discarded, like old boxes. In the late 1950s, the wooden crates were replaced with cheaper, preprinted corrugated boxes.

LABEL ART COURTESY CAROL PEASE

whiff of citrus, then carefully setting up a display of fruit in the refrigerated cases,” she says.

Murden is not the only citrus label collector. In McAllen, Carol Pease safeguards the mother lode of Texas labels: 1,278 citrus and vegetable labels collected by her late husband, Ed. He saw the label collection as a way of preserving the history of the produce industry that he worked in for 40 years.

“Ed went through the old packing sheds searching for labels,” Pease says. “He would find labels pasted in old yearbooks of the Texas Citrus & Vegetables Growers and Shippers Association, too. The history behind them is what is fascinating.”

The abrupt switch in the late 1950s from wooden crates to cheaper, preprinted corrugated boxes left mountains of unused labels that were shoved into backrooms and attics of packing sheds. Despite the passage of time and packing shed fires, the supply of labels remains greater than the demand. While most labels today cost only a few dollars, rare citrus labels bring \$225 and up.

When Carol Pease and Murden first met in November to look over Pease’s collection, they uncovered mutual friends, a shared love of label art and Murden’s holy grail, the Rio Farms labels. He also found the label produced for the packinghouse owned by his wife’s grandfather. “Did you see Cyndie’s face light up when she saw the Billy Joe label for the first time?” Murden asks, all smiles after finding the Rio Farms labels and several other gems in Pease’s collection.

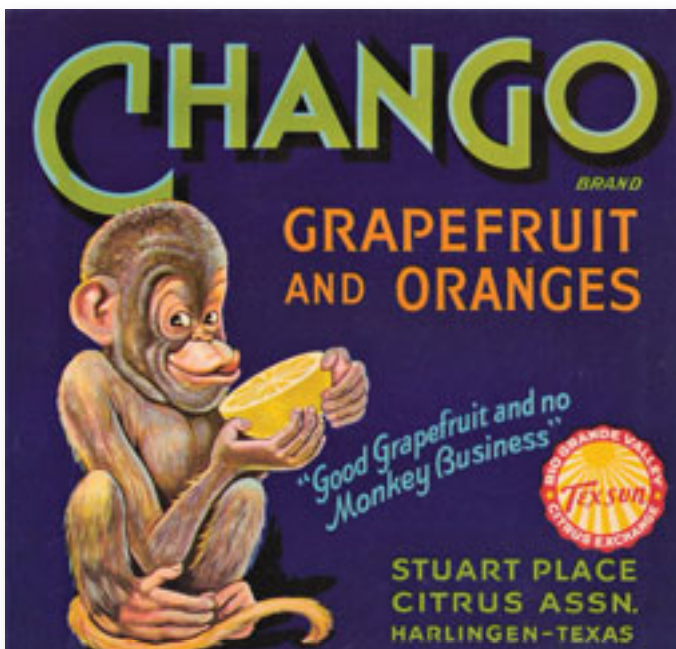
Collectors such as Pease and Murden can determine a label’s age by the paper, subject, design and lettering. Western Lithograph’s labels often had a date stamp on the back. “Grown in the USA” was used from the 1920s to 1940s, while “Produce of the USA” was used from the 1930s to 1950s. Complicating label dating, Mexican fruit was packed by Valley shippers.

When Ed Pease started collecting labels, every piece was authentic. That’s no longer the case, Carol Pease warns, because people online are selling copies of labels without full disclosure.

Yet label collecting is contagious. I followed some leads, and, on the back shelf of a storeroom belonging to friends, I opened a box filled with Texas citrus shippers’ yearbooks dating from 1943 to 1983. Most of the early books had six to eight original citrus labels pasted on the pages of advertisers. Oh, my! I discovered the MarVLus label with a majestic bald eagle and the Texas Ranger label packed by McDavitt and Lightner of Brownsville. And vegetable labels, too.

Citrus crate labels chronicle the evolution and increasing sophistication of commercial design in the first half of the 20th century. The labels show history, scenic beauty and a changing society. But for Dale Murden and Carol Pease, they are pieces of Americana, beautiful in their own right.

Eileen Mattei is a Harlingen writer.



Web Extras on TexasCoopPower.com

View a slideshow with more Rio Grande Valley produce labels.

Today, the remaining labels rank as an American art form prized by collectors. Although most cost only a few dollars, some rare labels are valued at \$225 and up. Bottom right: Looking at the rare and familiar labels owned by Carol Pease, left, triggered delight and childhood memories for Cyndie Haden and her husband, Dale Murden. This first meeting of the collectors revealed mutual friends and a shared passion for the old trademarks.

LABEL ART COURTESY CAROL PEASE

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HERE A PIG, THERE A PIG

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Wild pigs are mostly nocturnal and rarely seen in the open during daylight. More readily seen is the damage they cause to farms, lawns and golf courses.

‘... now we could do it with conventional weapons but that could take years and cost millions of lives ...’

Eric ‘Otter’ Stratton in ‘Animal House’

IT’S A SITUATION RIPE FOR BAD PUNS AND hyperbolic prose, for manic ravings about the havoc the invasion is wreaking and the inevitable “what if” musings of politicians,

landowners and wild-animal watchers.

But whatever we call it—the “zombie aporkalypse”—and however we choose to label their coming, the wild pig population explosion plaguing Texas and 35 other states is real. The feral, or wild, pig population in the U.S. is estimated at 4 million to 5 million animals, with at least half of them in Texas. It’s advancing in long, rapid strides, and it’s threatening much more than a few farms.

Golf courses and backyards, creek

drainages and corn fields, even high-speed highway traffic are affected as marauding groups—sounders—of wild pigs exit the dark of the woods, thickets and brush country and move ever closer to roads, towns and subdivisions. The resulting clashes cost \$50 million annually in crop and pasture damage and an estimated \$500 million in annual statewide economic losses, according to the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Service.

“I always say there are two kinds of



Wild pigs rooting for food gouged out this suburban lawn. It's not an exaggeration to say the destructive beasts are everywhere: Wild pigs have been documented in 253 of Texas' 254 counties.

landowners in Texas,” says Billy Higginbotham, an AgriLife Extension biologist in Overton, “those that have pigs and those that are going to have pigs. We have an estimate of about 2.6 million wild pigs in Texas. That’s with a margin of error of half a million on either side.”

Make no mistake, this is a mess:

- **Wild pigs have been documented in 253 of Texas’ 254 counties. Only El Paso County has no confirmed population.**

- **“We estimate that population growth is occurring in Texas at the rate of about 21 percent a year,” Higginbotham says.**

- **Unless the overall population of wild pigs is reduced by at least 70 percent per year, every year, the numbers will continue to increase, and the space those pigs occupy will increase with it, Higginbotham says.**

When pigs, which are omnivorous, root in pastures and fields or yards—they eat grasses, roots and tubers, shoots, acorns, fruits, bulbs and mushrooms—they dig up broad expanses of the land, leaving holes that can be more than a foot deep. When that ground hardens, especially after a rain, the bumpy texture is hard on tractors, tillers and mowers. If that ground is planted, the crops are

destroyed. Rebuilding a pig-damaged golf course can cost \$30,000 to \$40,000 for a single green.

Higginbotham, “Billy Pigs” to his friends, has spent many of his 33 years with the extension service studying wild pigs and their spread in Texas. He’s come to believe that the animal, for years referred to as a feral hog, is something more. “People ran their pigs in the woods well into the 1960s, and some of them ran wild. Those [formerly domestic pigs] were feral,” he says. “Now we have so many, and they’ve established themselves so well that we should call them wild pigs.”

They’ve shown a remarkable ability to live in the deepest, darkest parts of Texas river bottoms, in arid deserts and even in states where snow might reach their backs at times. “This is the most prolific large animal on the face of the earth,” Higginbotham says. “They’re not born pregnant—but it’s close.”

There’s an old saying, attributed to veteran Texas wildlife biologist David Whitehouse, that the average litter for a wild sow is five to six pigs—and eight survive. That isn’t far from the truth.

Once a baby pig reaches 12 to 15 pounds, there’s virtually nothing that preys on it other than bullets and bumpers. The females among those young pigs begin breeding at just over a year and can deliver as many as two litters a year during a four- to eight-year lifespan.

Wild pigs are also aggressively adaptive to multiple environments and seem to keep finding new terrain to take over. Their presence is noxious, especially to white-tailed deer, one of the major cash crops for rural Texas landowners. Landowners who lease access to their property each fall to hunters take in close to \$1 billion. “They are an exotic, invasive animal that’s in direct competition with deer,” Higginbotham says.

Pigs thrive along rivers and creeks. State officials are beginning to worry about the animal’s effect on water quality.

“It’s a pretty big problem here,” says Richard Parrish, a Hays County AgriLife Extension agent. “We have yards and pastures dug up by pigs. We’re also seeing rooting in creekside areas, and that’s creating water-quality and environmental problems.”

Wild pigs can carry at least 15 known diseases, the most damaging of which are pseudo rabies and swine brucellosis. Neither affects the quality of the meat, should it be eaten, but brucellosis can migrate to humans through a cut in the skin and cause lingering flu-like symptoms.

Parrish, a member of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, says his county and others have instituted bounty programs to induce more lethal control of wild pigs and provided continuing education. Landowners are taught how to trap and shoot wild pigs effectively and learn ways to protect their land.

Biologists say it doesn’t matter how many pigs we have as much as how many we kill. We need to kill lots of them.

Jared Timmons, who until recently worked as an AgriLife Extension associate, helped landowners ward off high E. coli numbers and nutrient loading in water sources, such as Plum Creek in Hays and Caldwell counties, due to swine feces. “The Plum Creek Watershed Partnership was one of the first ever to implement a watershed protection program that included feral pigs,” Timmons says. “We’ve not been able to show that Plum Creek water quality has been impacted, but there are other problems with that area. It depends on the property.”

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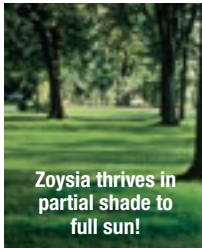
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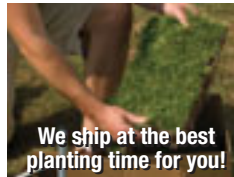
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“This is the most prolific large animal on the face of the earth. They’re not born pregnant—but it’s close.”

Billy Higginbotham, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service biologist

“Pigs have been on the radar here for a long time,” says Nick Dornak, the Plum Creek Watershed coordinator who has been working with the Caldwell County Feral Hog Task Force and individual landowners who are experiencing wild pig damage. “They are one of a variety of water-quality issues that cause the creek not to meet its best use.”

“The response to the feral hog pandemic has not been on the radar of governments and funding entities until recently,” Dornak says.

Working with a \$30,000 grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture and \$50,000 in matching funds provided by local governments and landowners, Dornak has helped develop a wild pig action plan as a partnership between Hays and Caldwell counties. One aspect of that plan is a bounty for killing pigs.

The bounty pays \$5 for a tail from a dead wild pig or a receipt from a certified holding facility that takes the animal before its slaughtered and processed into

as “wild boar” and is quite popular, Higginbotham says.

The Caldwell County Feral Hog Task Force is buying drop nets to aid landowners and contracting with commercial trappers to remove pigs from suburban areas. “We’re hoping for 6,000 to 7,000 pigs per year, but we have a very smart animal, and we’ll be lucky to slow the growth, much less cut into the growth,” Dornak says.

Landowners can see the changes that wild pigs have brought to their land. “I’ve got a lot of hogs,” says Larry Lindsey, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member who owns 640 acres in Caldwell County. “I didn’t see many pigs when I first bought the place, and I have 300 acres high-fenced. I managed to keep them out of there for five or six years, but over the years, they’ve managed to get through the fence into that part of the ranch.”

Lindsey suffers mostly pasture damage from the pigs on his land, but he knows they cause considerable damage to roads, crops and fields for landowners everywhere. “I have 15 tails in my freezer right now, just from picking them off myself,” he says. “I kill about 90 pigs during a 12-month period. They’re mostly nocturnal now. I think a lot of times, we just push them over to a neighbor who’s not doing much to control them.”

That would be normal for most landowners, many of whom think they don’t have many wild pigs or who aren’t diligent about controlling them by any means possible. “They’re a huge problem, but I’ve kind of learned to live with them,” says Stan Graff, who owns a large ranch in Red River County in North Texas.

“They’re more of a nuisance because of the damage they do to Coastal [Bermuda, a common pasture grass] fields. It’s really hard on machinery,” says Graff, a member of Lamar County Electric Cooperative Association. “But there’s been a resurgence of row crops around us, and that has them leaving us in the summer and going to our neighbors.”

Graff has used circle traps to capture pigs in the past, and he issues orders for any hunters on his ranch to shoot them on sight. “There were no pigs when I first bought the ranch in 1982. We saw our first hog about 10 years ago during a deer survey,” he says. “By the third year, we were shooting and trapping about 100 a year, and now it’s more than 200 each year. But that’s not doing much good.”

That is Higginbotham’s point. Wild



Hunting and trapping are the only effective ways to control the pig population. Because pigs are so intelligent, they require creative methods in a battle of wits.

Timmons says some landowners have been able to reduce populations of wild pigs in urban areas, especially the green spaces and creeks where pigs travel, with extensive use of circle traps and aerial gunning where appropriate. Circle traps are large, round enclosures made of heavy wire to capture an entire sounder.

meat by a commercial pork processor. Dornak says that resulted in 1,000 pigs killed in 2012.

Texas law allows permitted individuals to capture pigs and hold them for a short time before delivering them to federally inspected processors with proper permits. The meat is often sold overseas

pigs are prolific, smart and able to leap tall buildings in a single bound.

The Texas Legislature in 2011 passed what's come to be known as the "Pork Chopper" bill, legislation that allows landowners to sell seats on permitted helicopters for hunters who want to shoot pigs from the air. The money helps offset the cost of the helicopter time.

By 2012, more than 24,000 pigs were killed by aerial gunning, a number Higginbotham says will grow. And commercial pig processors took in about 640,000 pigs between 2004 and 2009, he says.

"Wild pigs are no longer just a rural issue," Higginbotham says. "They've come to town, and they're showing up on lawns and golf courses. They can be a significant presence and never be seen in the daytime. We're always going to be managing pigs in Texas, so landowners have to be willing to use the best management practices. Pigs are here to stay."

Mike Leggett is the former outdoors writer for the Austin American-Statesman.

Test Your Pig Smarts

Wild pigs are one of the most intelligent species—exotic or native—found in the United States, writes Billy Higginbotham on a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service website. So are humans. See how much you know about wild pigs.

1. There are 254 counties in Texas. There are confirmed wild pig populations in 253 of them. Name the one county without any wild pigs. **5 points**
2. The average size litter for a pig in the wild is: a) 2-3 pigs; b) 4-5 pigs; c) 5-6 pigs. **5 points**
3. It's been estimated that a wild pig can smell food as far away as: a) 2 miles; b) 5 miles; c) 10 miles. **3 points**
4. Wild pigs can spread diseases, such as swine brucellosis. True or false. **3 points**
5. Sows can reproduce at a very young age. What is the average age at which they typically deliver their first litter of pigs? a) 8 months; b) 11 months; c) 13 months. **5 points**

Answers

1. El Paso County
2. 5-6 pigs
3. 5 miles or more
4. True
5. 13 months

21 points. Perfect score. You know your pigs.

13-18 points: Pretty good. You can stay in the sounder.

12 points or less: Perhaps you're not hog-wild about pig trivia.

FIELD GUIDE *to* BASTROP COUNTY

ISSUE
No 24



Bird Watching

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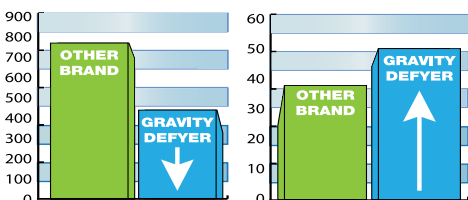
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Storm Safety

When thunderstorms and tornadoes strike

BY B. DENISE HAWKINS

Beware. Spring can usher in more than April showers. From now through the summer months, thunderstorms can quickly roll in and tornadoes can touch down, often during the afternoon and evening hours, according to researchers at the National Severe Storms Laboratory, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Follow these tips from NOAA and the American Red Cross to keep you and your home safe when tornadoes and severe thunderstorms come your way.

- ▶ Remove diseased and damaged tree limbs before storm season begins.
- ▶ Listen to local news or National Weather Service broadcasts to stay informed about tornado watches and warnings.



▶ If you are in a mobile home, immediately head to a sturdy shelter. Mobile homes, especially hallways and bathrooms, are not safe places to take shelter during tornadoes or other severe winds.

▶ Designate a family meeting place for shelter during and after a storm. If possible, go to your home's basement, a small interior room, or under stairs on the lowest level. Also, have a battery-operated weather radio handy along with emergency supplies.

▶ Unplug electronics. Avoid using electrical equipment and corded telephones while lightning is in the area.

▶ Remember that there is no safe place outside during

a severe storm. If you are caught in a storm while driving, switch on your headlights, try to safely exit the roadway, and park. Stay in the vehicle with your seat belt on, and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. If thunder and lightning is occurring, avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.

▶ As a storm moves in, move or secure lawn furniture, trash cans, hanging plants or anything else that can be picked up by the wind and become a projectile.

▶ Stay safe after a storm. Remain indoors at least 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder. Also, stay away from downed power lines and avoid flooded areas. Power lines could be submerged and still live with electricity. Report them to public safety authorities and your electric cooperative immediately.

B. Denise Hawkins writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Seal Air Leaks; Save Energy

Heating and cooling your home costs money, yet most homes let some of that conditioned air escape to the outdoors through tiny leaks, like cracks around windows; doors that don't close quite tightly enough; and holes in walls that allow cable, telephone, sump pump and electrical lines to enter the building.

Those same holes and cracks allow hot air to seep into your air-conditioned home from the outside during the summer and cold air to sneak in during the winter.

No matter if conditioned air is getting outside or fresh air is coming in, the result is the same: Your air-conditioning or heating system has to do extra work to keep the indoor air at the temperature you like.

Remove old, cracked caulking and replace with new caulking designed for the application. Caulking can be designated for exterior, interior and bathroom applications, and you don't want to use bathroom caulk on the outside of your home. Also, make sure the caulk can be painted if you want it to blend in with colors used in the rest of your home.

So find those leaks and seal them. Here are some tips:

▶ On a windy day, light a stick of incense or a match indoors, blow it out and hold it near the interior of each window, door, electrical box, plumbing fixture, electrical outlet, ceiling fixture, attic hatch and anywhere else where you see an opening that lets something from the outside in. If the smoke moves, you have found an air leak.

▶ Plug the leaks. You can do that by applying caulk right into the hole or crack. You also can install weatherstripping around doors and windows.

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'E' Stands for Energy Efficiency This Earth Day

Earth Day is April 22, and this year, "E" stands for energy efficiency. It serves as an important reminder that you can care for Mother Earth and reduce your energy bills at the same time. The cleanest, greenest energy is the energy we do not use. So this Earth Day, the Energy Education Council encourages you to discover ways that you can become more energy efficient.

An easy first step to learn more is to check out all of the helpful tips and resources on EfficiencyResource.org. The site has a variety of articles, videos, games and educational materials. Many people do not realize just how easy it is to cut their energy bill by replacing their most used incandescent lightbulbs with compact fluorescent lamps or light-emitting diodes. Even simpler, just unplugging electronics when they are not in use can save you money.

Here are some efficiency actions you can start incorporating into your energy habits this Earth Day:

- ▶ Put a thermal blanket, sold at hardware and home-improvement stores, on your older water heater to help water in the tank stay hot.
- ▶ Install low-flow showerheads and faucet aerators to help you save water, which takes energy to pump and heat.
- ▶ Set your thermostat higher in the summer when you can accept warmer conditions. This generally includes nighttime and whenever you leave your home for several hours. Many people find it easier to use a programmable thermostat that can be set to automatically adjust.
- ▶ Separate your electricity and natural gas bills. Target the biggest bill for energy conservation remedies.
- ▶ Assess your heating and cooling systems and determine whether replacements are justified or whether you should retrofit them to make them work more efficiently and provide the same comfort (or better) for less energy.
- ▶ Insulate hot water pipes and air ducts that run through unheated areas.
- ▶ Have an energy auditor with a blower door determine where the worst cracks are. Small invisible cracks and holes may add up to as much as an open window or door—without you even knowing it! Call your electric cooperative to schedule an audit or to get a recommendation on hiring an energy auditor.

Unearth the information you need this Earth Day. Visit EfficiencyResource.org and make your energy use more efficient.



Household Batteries Need Attention

Almost as frustrating as discovering you don't have any batteries for your flashlight if the power goes out is learning that the ones you do have aren't working.

You can extend the life of your household batteries, use them more safely and dispose of them properly by following some advice from battery manufacturers:

- ▶ Batteries should be clean before you put them into a flashlight, radio or other device. If yours has gunk on it, rub it with a pencil eraser.
- ▶ If you're not going to use your battery-operated device for a few months, remove the batteries. They will last longer if you do.
- ▶ Remove batteries from your flashlight or other device as soon as they stop working.
- ▶ Store batteries in a dry place at normal room temperature. Don't store them in the refrigerator or freezer; that doesn't make them last longer. Similarly, avoid leaving your batteries or battery-powered gadgets out in the heat.
- ▶ You can't recharge a battery that's not rechargeable.

While it's better to take alkaline batteries to a household hazardous waste disposal center, if one is available in your area, you can toss them in the trash. Avoid disposing of lots of them out in the same bag, though; used batteries that aren't completely "dead" can react badly when they contact other live batteries. Never dispose of batteries in a fire. They could explode.

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A Quiet Life Thrust into the Spotlight



At 107, Richard Overton meets the president as oldest living U.S. World War II veteran

BY CAROL MOCZYGEMBA

RICHARD OVERTON, AT THE AGE OF 107, sits comfortably in his recliner at home in Austin, dressed in a plaid flannel shirt on this cold December day, his World War II veteran's cap placed snugly on his head and an unlit cigar held between his fingers.

Behind his quiet and dignified demeanor is a remarkable story that Overton is too humble to voluntarily talk about. You have to ask. On Veterans Day 2013, Overton was ubiquitous in the media, heralded as the oldest known World War II veteran in the U.S. Born May 11, 1906, in Bastrop County, Overton was honored during a Veterans Day breakfast at the White House attended by President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden. Later he was able to speak with the president.

Overton will tell you how much he admires Obama and how he prays for him. But he'll demur if asked what he and the president talked about during their brief conversation. Whether out of respect for the president's privacy or his sense of the ineffable nature of the occasion, Overton, in response to a question about their interaction, simply smiles and says, "I can't tell you." But he will reveal that Obama told him to "keep the Word."

During a memorial service at Arlington National Cemetery, Obama twice called on Overton to stand and be recognized. Both times the crowd of thousands erupted in wild applause. Earlier that day, as word of Overton's impending arrival at Reagan National Airport spread, an honor guard of civilians and soldiers formed to greet him. Such is the

admiration he inspired everywhere he appeared in the nation's capital.

It was Overton's second trip to D.C. in 2013. On May 17, along with 35 other Central Texas World War II veterans, he flew to Washington as part of the Honor Flight program. The nationwide Honor Flight project's goal is to escort as many veterans as possible to the World War II Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery and other national monuments.

Overton was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942 when he was living and farming in Creedmoor with his wife, who is now deceased. I asked Overton how he, as an African-American, felt about being conscripted to defend a country that was mostly racially segregated, especially in the South where segregation was law and blacks did not enjoy many of the freedoms for which America was fighting.

His answer?

"You do what you have to do for the good of everyone."

Overton was assigned to the South Pacific with the all-black 188th Aviation Engineer Battalion. His unit had a white commander, as did the rest of the black units. He says the soldiers were never told where they were going or where they had been. But a little detective work and keen observation by Overton and his fellow soldiers showed they had served in Hawaii, Guam, Palau and Iwo Jima.

Life in the Limelight

A seemingly nonstop stream of cards and letters, certificates of honor and printed emails—many of them sent through

Austin veterans' service representative Allen Bergeron—are stacked on Overton's dining room table in the house he built himself in 1945. Photos of Obama hang on the wall.

Overton's story drew writers, TV reporters and well-wishers from across the U.S. But closer to home, in the East Texas town of Henderson, staff at Emeritus, an assisted living facility, had a different reason for contacting Overton: His name was Elmer Hill. Hill, a resident there and a retired high school principal, served in the Navy during World War II and was also 107. Only three months younger than Overton, Hill suddenly was sharing the spotlight as news cameras recorded their lunch meeting in Austin in December. Hill and Overton discovered they had more in common than WWII military service.

Both men are African-American, and both attribute their longevity, in part, to positive attitudes. Hill told reporters, "Nothing could be better than meeting someone my own age. There's so much to tell; I can't tell it all, but I tried to be a good citizen, whether it was in the Navy

or just at home."

Overton, who has outlived three brothers and six sisters, says he's lived so long because he has always been a good neighbor and abides by a simple philosophy: "Try to treat everybody right. Try to help people, any kind of way they ask for help."

He has a few daily rituals that help, too. He takes one baby aspirin, smokes several cigars and has a tablespoon of bourbon with his morning coffee and another with a lemon-lime soda before going to bed.

He watches very little television (local news sometimes). He's a regular churchgoer, still drives his 1971 Chevrolet Monte Carlo (his 1971 Ford pickup is for sale), mows his own lawn and enjoys many friendships. Overton's family now includes his companion of many years, Earlene Love, 90. Her daughters and grandchildren call Overton "Papa" and frequently gather at his house, filling the place with animated conversation and laughter.

It's no wonder that when Overton—who worked at the Capitol under four Texas governors—retired at age 85, he was

asked to come back. It seems none of his replacements had the same pride in distributing mail, delivering messages, making airport runs and multiple other supportive tasks. When he again handed in his retirement papers, Overton was 100.

Carol Moczygemba is former editor of Texas Co-op Power.

Theodore Roosevelt was president when Richard Overton was born. Eighteen presidents later, Overton shook Barack Obama's hand in the White House.



JEFF JONER

The Butterfly Midwife

Gardener learns life lessons from a beautiful insect

BY SUSAN HAYDEN KENNEDY

THE IRRIGATION CONTRACTOR WAS checking the sprinkler heads. “Say, do you know your plant is covered with caterpillars?” he asked with some dismay. His brow furrowed with a quizzical look; he clearly couldn’t believe I hadn’t noticed. He was ready to call in the fumigators. Indeed, hundreds of caterpillars lolled about on the bushy vine, and I couldn’t have been happier.

You see, my backyard in Colleyville is a preferred spawning ground of the local Gulf fritillary butterfly population. I call it my butterfly farm. It’s not licensed, certified or in any way official. It started off as my backyard, became my garden, and with the addition of one native passion vine, it evolved into a haven for Gulf fritillaries to fulfill their life cycle.

Butterflies require specific plants when it comes to laying eggs. Monarchs require milkweed. Swallowtails need parsley, dill or fennel. Gulf fritillaries need passion vine. It’s the only plant their caterpillars eat. Without passion vine, they would be no more.

The first season, my passion vine grew to epic proportions. It clearly relished its place in the sun, trellised against a stone wall. It flowered beautifully, too. Pretty orange butterflies constantly danced about it, alighting momentarily on a leaf or a tendril before flitting away. Eventually, when the leaves began disappearing, I figured out what those spring beauties were doing when they rested their weary selves on my plant! I soon had a vine full of hungry caterpillars, and walls, lawn furniture and plant pots dotted with chrysalides.

Several seasons later, my vine has withstood the annual rapid growth and gradual defoliation of every summer and fall, and I have tallied hundreds of new Gulf fritillaries.

Giving over my passion vine to the butterflies has cost me nothing and repays me with joy and a constant reminder of some of life’s most valuable lessons:

Listen to your instincts. A caterpillar knows its purpose in life: eat, eat and eat some more. Then one day, it stops. It drops off the vine, crawls to a vertical object and climbs.

Tenacity triumphs. Once it decides on a roost, the caterpillar spins a tiny silk pad with its mouth. Then comes the hard part. It must turn around and catch the silk pad with claspers on its back end, for a caterpillar must hang upside down to form a chrysalis. Once, I watched a caterpillar locate the pad with its mouth, turn around and feel for the pad with its claspers, but fail to connect. It did this repeatedly nine times as I watched. On the 10th attempt, it went back to the silk pad and began to rework it. I gave up. It didn’t. The next morning, a glistening chrysalis marked its success.

Hard work is necessary. When a butterfly first emerges from its chrysalis, it looks like a wadded mess. Immediately the wings unfurl, all ruffled and crumpled. The first time I saw one emerge, I nearly wept for its “deformity.” But as the butterfly clings to its papery perch, the empty chrysalis, its floppy wings fill with hemolymph, a blood-like liquid, ironing out the wrinkles. It pumps its new wings



repeatedly to move the liquid and dry the moisture from its rebirth. Without this effort, the butterfly would never be able to fly.

Transformation is always possible.

In its short life of only a couple of months, a Gulf fritillary changes from a tiny, barrel-shaped yellow egg to a fat, blue-striped, reddish caterpillar sporting

black spikes to a cream-in-my-coffee-colored chrysalis to a large butterfly with an orange backside and silver underside. It's had several lives in one.

Something can go wrong at every turn. Eggs rot. Wasps, cardinals and wrens eat caterpillars. Pupating goes awry and the chrysalis never forms. Some chrysalides are attacked by gnat-like

insects or simply disappear in the night. Lizards nab the newly hatched, and some butterflies, indeed, are born with misshapen wings that never find lift.

So, when a butterfly emerges successfully and flies away—victory! “Welcome to the world,” I murmur.

Susan Hayden Kennedy is a writer from Colleyville.

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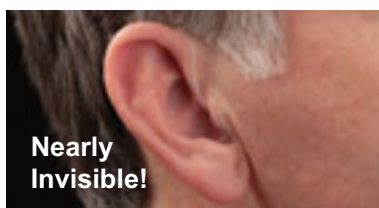
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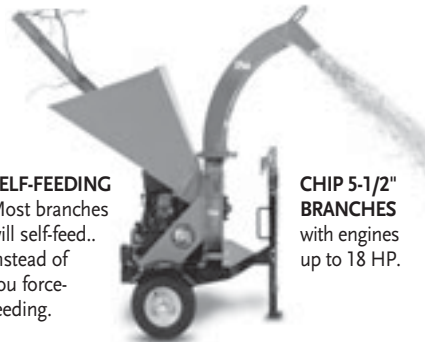
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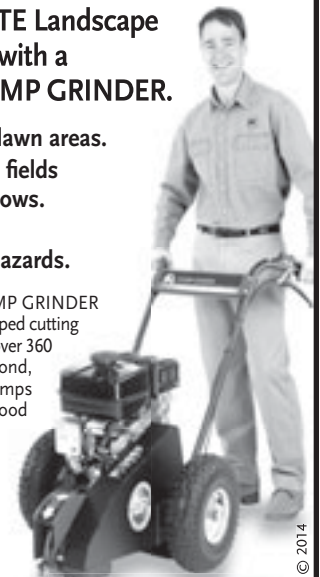
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Waco's Wild West Shootout

William Cowper Brann's rapier barrage on Baylor

A bullet silences

BY MARTHA DEERINGER

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD, ENGLISH AUTHOR Edward Bulwer-Lytton insisted in 1839, but it was no protection against the bullet that buried itself in the back of William Cowper Brann, acid-tongued editor of Waco's controversial monthly newspaper, the *Iconoclast*.

As Brann strolled down Austin Avenue in Waco on the evening of April 1, 1898, enraged businessman Tom Davis shouted unprintable epithets, leveled a pistol at Brann's receding back and fired, hitting him "right where his suspenders crossed," wrote Charles Carver in "Brann & the *Iconoclast*" (University of Texas Press, 1957). Brann returned fire.

Both participants in this Wild West-style shootout died of their wounds.

Davis' daughter attended Baylor University, and the institution was one of Brann's favorite targets for editorial assault. The defensive father was among hundreds whose threats against Brann had been "thick as the bluebonnets in the meadows," wrote Carver.

Baylor University, the educational jewel of the Baptist Church since 1845, hit a stretch of rocky road in 1895 after a 14-year-old female student from Brazil working in the home of Baylor's revered president, Rufus C. Burleson, became pregnant and accused one of Burleson's young relatives. Brann decried this "brutish crime against the chastity of childhood" and referred to Baylor as "a factory for the manufacture of ministers and Magdalenes," a comment that didn't sit well with Baylor's many supporters, according to Carver's book.

Brann, who first published the *Iconoclast* in 1891 in Austin where it went belly-up from lack of interest, was well aware of the boost to circulation that would result from an assault on Baylor. Nothing sells papers quicker than controversy. "Change is the order of the day," Brann wrote, "and as Baylor cannot very well become worse, it must, of necessity become better."

Wacoans snatched up the paper for its biting controversy interspersed with bits of wisdom and wry humor. By the late 1890s, almost 100,000 subscribers across the nation and in England, Hawaii and Canada read the *Iconoclast*.

In October 1897, Brann launched a particularly mean-spirited attack on candidates hoping to replace Burleson, who was retiring as Baylor president, accusing them of "blatant jackasserie." The scalding commentary prompted a group of Baylor students to kidnap Brann. Several hundred milling students planned to tar and feather him, but someone had gotten wind of the plan and hid the tar and feathers. Frustrated, the students began to chant "hang him." Only the intervention of some Baylor professors saved Brann, but not before he had been tied up, soundly beaten and forced to sign a promise to leave town by sunset.

Brann did not leave town and took the "Baylor bullies" to task in his newspaper. He planned to let it go at that, but others in



Waco did not consider the matter settled. Tempers flared again when Brann offered to teach a night school at Baylor free of charge "... for the instruction of its faculty—if each member thereof will give bond not to seek a better paying situation as soon as he learns something."

In early April, Brann scheduled a lecture tour beginning in San Antonio. His wife, Carrie, suffered from frayed nerves brought on by the host of threats, and the timing was right for a vacation. The day before they were scheduled to leave, the deadly shots rang out on Austin Avenue.

Hundreds of people lined the streets as Brann's funeral cortege made its way to the cemetery, preceded by a brass band. No one had ever seen so many people at a funeral in Waco, although it was unclear whether the spectators loved or hated the deceased. A large obelisk was erected above his grave bearing a bas-relief profile of Brann done in marble. Before grass had grown over the grave, an unknown gunman fired a final bullet into the side of the controversial editor's carved face.

Martha Deeringer is a frequent contributor who lives in McGregor.

Spring into Strawberries

Sometimes the best way to break the ice is to share a recipe, but it helps if you introduce yourself first, so I'll do just that and say how delighted I am to be the new host of the Texas Co-op Power recipe section. A Texan, I came from a family of eaters rather than cooks, which worked out well because my mother let me take over the kitchen at an early age. Cooking never felt like a chore, and I kept at it into adulthood though never pursued it as a career. But things changed.

A baby entered our lives, keeping me very busy; but it was also a turning point, and I began looking for a way to channel my passion for cooking into something more lucrative. I began submitting recipes to contests. Most of the time, I never heard back, but one day a letter arrived saying I'd won the grand prize in a cheesecake contest. Victory! I became hooked on contests. In 2005, I won the Texas Co-op Power Holiday Recipe Contest. In 2006, I won the Pillsbury Bake-Off Contest. I've also written a cookbook, "The Daily Cookie" (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2012), and maintain a blog, Cookie Madness.

I love coming up with recipes by adding a little twist, like my recipe, below, for a strawberry icebox dessert combining berries with malted milk powder to create a flavor reminiscent of a strawberry malted milkshake. My dessert shares these pages with excellent recipes submitted by Texas Co-op Power readers. If your recipe wasn't chosen this month, please send one for the August contest, Frozen Treats. Good luck!

ANNA GINSBERG, FOOD EDITOR



Anna Ginsberg with her Strawberry Malt Napoleon

Strawberry Malt Napoleon

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry
- 5 cups sliced fresh strawberries, divided
- 6 ounces white chocolate, chopped
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- ½ cup malted milk powder
- 2 cups heavy cream, whipped
- Strawberry syrup, optional

- Allow puff pastry to thaw at room temperature as directed on the box.
- Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Unfold the puff pastry sheet on a large, flat surface and cut it into nine equal squares. Arrange the squares about an inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet and bake for 11 to 13 minutes or until puffed. Let the squares cool on a wire rack.
- Meanwhile, puree half of the strawberries and set aside.
- Melt the white chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl or in a bowl set over a pan of simmering water. If using a microwave, melt using 50 percent power, stirring every 30 seconds until smooth.
- In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese and vanilla together until smooth, then beat in the melted chocolate. Add the powdered sugar and malted milk powder and beat until smooth, then stir in the pureed strawberries. Fold in the whipped cream.
- Split cooled pastry squares in half and lay the bottom halves across the bottom of an ungreased 13-by-9-inch dish, cut side up; spread with 3½ cups of the strawberry cream and scatter about a cup of sliced strawberries over the top. Cap with the pastry tops, cut side down. Spread with remaining strawberry cream and remaining cut strawberries.
- Chill thoroughly for about 3 hours or until ready to serve. To serve, cut in squares and garnish with strawberry syrup, additional strawberries and whipped cream if desired.

Servings: 12. Serving size: 1 square. Per serving: 396 calories, 4.7 g protein, 28.1 g fat, 33.2 g carbohydrates, 1.4 g dietary fiber, 134 mg sodium, 26.1 g sugars, 80 mg cholesterol

Web Extra on TexasCoopPower.com

Meet Anna Ginsberg, our new food editor, and watch her video tips for making your recipe contest submissions stand out.

Strawberry Recipe Contest Winner: Spring brings thoughts of warmer days and sweet fruits. The strawberry is celebrated far and wide, including in the Texas town of Poteet, which fetes the berry every April, this year from the 4th through 6th. In honor of the festival, here are some ways to enjoy the red, ripe fruit, including this month's winning recipe.



Frozen Strawberry Cream Dessert

- 1 cup sifted flour
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- ½ cup melted butter
- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups sliced strawberries or 10 ounces frozen berries, thawed
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 cup heavy cream

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour, brown sugar, walnuts and butter and place into the bottom of a shallow pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Stir occasionally.
- Sprinkle ⅔ of the crumbs in the bottom of a 13-by-9-by-2-inch pan. Combine egg whites, sugar, strawberries and lemon juice. Beat at high speed with an electric mixer or in a blender for 10 minutes.
- Whip cream in a separate bowl until stiff and fold into strawberry mixture. Pour into crumb-lined pan and top with reserved crumbs. Freeze at least 6 hours.
- Serve with a dollop of whipped cream and a fresh strawberry on the side.

Servings: 8. Serving size: ½ cup. Per serving: 450 calories, 5.4 g protein, 25.5 g fat, 48.8 g carbohydrates, 1.8 g dietary fiber, 29 mg sodium, 34 g sugars, 71 mg cholesterol



Cook's Tip: *If using frozen berries with added sugar, reduce amount of sugar by ½ cup.*

- In a medium saucepan, combine sugar with ¾ cup water, zests and basil. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes. Cool slightly. Strain and discard zest and basil. Stir in juices.
- Using a blender or food processor, combine half of the juice mixture, half of the strawberries and half of the mascarpone. Cover and pulse until smooth. Transfer to a 2-quart freezer container. Repeat with remaining juice mixture, strawberries and mascarpone.
- Cover and freeze 6 hours or overnight. Stir once after 3 hours.
- To serve, scrape across frozen granita with a large spoon and place into individual dishes (if mixture is too firm, let stand at room temperature 20 to 30 minutes).

Servings: 8. Serving size: 1 cup. Per serving: 214 calories, 2.7 g protein, 7.9 g fat, 34.5 g carbohydrates, 1.9 g dietary fiber, 191 mg sodium, 31.1 g sugars, 25 mg cholesterol

JAMIE PARCHMAN | MAGIC VALLEY EC

Chocolate Strawberries Romanoff

- ½ cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- ¼ cup chocolate syrup
- 1 tablespoon cognac
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 4 cups (2 pints) strawberries

- Mix sour cream, brown sugar, chocolate syrup and cognac in a medium bowl.
- In a separate bowl, whip the cream until it starts to thicken. Add sugar and whip until thick.
- Fold whipped cream into the sour cream mixture until well blended.
- Clean and core the strawberries. Put about ½ cup of berries each in eight wineglasses. Divide sauce equally among glasses.

Servings: 8. Serving size: ½ cup plus sauce. Per serving: 168 calories, 1.4 g protein, 8 g fat, 21.8 g carbohydrates, 2 g dietary fiber, 25 mg sodium, 17.5 g sugars, 27 mg cholesterol

ALI ALLIE | COSERV ELECTRIC

Strawberry Mascarpone Granita

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
- 2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
- 1½ teaspoons finely grated lime zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh basil sliced into thin strips
- ⅓ cup orange juice
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 4 cups chopped fresh strawberries
- 8 ounces mascarpone or cream cheese

Web Extra on TexasCoopPower.com

Find a bonus reader recipe featuring strawberries.

\$100 Recipe Contest

August's recipe contest topic is **Frozen Treats**. It doesn't have to be ice cream, but getting through the summer is easier with a bit of cool comfort from the freezer. Do you have a frozen concoction that helps you through the dog days? The deadline is **April 10**.

There are three ways to enter: **ONLINE** at TexasCoopPower.com/contests; **MAIL** to 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701; **FAX** to (512) 763-3401. Include your name, address and phone number, plus your co-op and the name of the contest you are entering.



SMOKIN' PECAN MAC 'N' CHEESE
2010 Texas Co-op Power Holiday Recipe Contest \$500 Winner

- 1 cup pecans
- 12 ounces elbow pasta
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons shallots, minced
- 5 ounces hickory-smoked bacon
- 1½ tablespoons garlic, minced
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2½ cups heavy cream
- ½ teaspoon thyme
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 2½ cups sharp white cheddar, shredded
- 2 cups Gouda, shredded
- 1½ cups shredded smoked cheddar
- ¼ cup chives, chopped (optional)

- Toast pecans in 400-degree oven for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Watch carefully and remove if nuts begin to scorch. Remove to plate and let cool.
- Finely chop 3 tablespoons of pecans. Coarsely chop remaining pecans.
- Bring 4 quarts of water to a boil and add pasta and pinch of salt. Cook for 7 to 10 minutes. Drain and set aside. Pasta should be slightly firmer than al dente.
- Add olive oil, shallots, bacon and garlic to heavy pot and sauté for 5 minutes on low heat. Stir in flour and cook for 2 minutes on medium heat, stirring constantly. Slowly stir in heavy cream and bring to boil. Simmer for 10 minutes over low heat, stirring constantly.
- Add finely chopped pecans, thyme, white pepper, kosher salt and paprika.
- Stir in white cheddar and Gouda in four batches, using figure-eight motion, until smooth.
- Toss in pasta and thoroughly mix. Pour into 8-x-8-inch baking dish. Top with smoked cheddar cheese and coarsely chopped pecans.
- Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes or until bubbly. Garnish with chives if desired.

Let's Get Crackin'!

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Do you have a great recipe to share?
Your chance to enter the 2014 Texas Co-op Power Holiday Recipe Contest is coming soon.

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Slow Shutter Leaving your camera in automatic mode? That's no fun! Cameras are capable of great things—all it takes is a little knowledge of the settings. Find yourself uncertain behind the lens but want to hone your craft? A beginners' photography course and practice could be just what you need to create stunning images like our favorites this month made using slow shutter speeds. **ASHLEY CLARY-CARPENTER**

Web Extras on TexasCoopPower.com

Not so fast! Check out more slow shutter shots online.

◀ Medina EC's **Paul Garcia** calls his photo of dancer **Brittany Leos** at Fiesta Noche del Rio in San Antonio 'The Beauty of the Blur.'

Ralph Arvesen, Pedernales EC, kept his shutter open more than two hours facing the Blanco County sky to create the effect. ▼



◀ Deaf Smith EC's **Sheri Smith** went to the Tri-State Fair in Amarillo during a photography course.

Upcoming Contests

June Issue: In the Doghouse

Deadline: April 10

July: Friendship

August: Refreshing

All entries must include name, address, daytime phone and co-op affiliation, plus the contest topic and a brief description of your photo.

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. 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. We do not accept entries via email. We regret that Texas Co-op Power cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.



▲ The countryside whizzes by as **Diane Daniels** looks out during a train ride from Palestine to Rusk on the Texas State Railroad. **Eddie Daniels**, Farmers EC, says he took more than 20 photos to nail this shot.



▲ **Jan Howard**, Cooke County ECA, adjusted shutter speeds as nephew **Clay McCuiston** roped calves.

Pick of the Month

4th Annual Walk-N-Rolla

Edinburg [April 12]
(956) 969-5778, rgvevents.net

This 1980s-themed health fair features a 5K, two bike-riding challenges, a mutt strut, a costume contest, raffles and more in support of the South Texas Juvenile Diabetes Association.



April 12
Chappell Hill
Official Bluebonnet
Festival of Texas

12

Chappell Hill [12-13] Official Bluebonnet Festival of Texas, 1-888-273-6426, chappellhillmuseum.org

Mexia [12-13] Civil War Living History and Re-enactment, (254) 472-0959, visitconfederatereuniongrounds.com

13

Hico Lone Star Iris Society Show, (254) 597-1183

17

The Colony Spring Eggstravaganza, (972) 625-1106

April 17
The Colony
Spring
Eggstravaganza



April

9

Gainesville [9-12] Medal of Honor Host City Program, (940) 665-2831, medalofhonorhostcity.com

Henrietta [9-13] Turkey Fest, (940) 538-5261, claycountyoutdoors.org

11

Carthage [11-12] Piney Woods Quilt Festival, (903) 918-5370, carthagetexas.us

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and festivals around Texas. For a complete listing, please visit TexasCoopPower.com/events.

19

Frisco Easter Classic Car Show & Egg Hunt, (214) 244-7296, mustangsallyproductions.com

25

Burton [25-26] Cotton Gin Festival, 1-888-273-6426, cottonginmuseum.org



April 19
Frisco

Easter Classic Car Show & Egg Hunt

26

Burnet Bluebonnet Airshow, (512) 756-2226, bluebonnetairshow.com

Comanche Medical Center Healthcare Volunteer Golf Tournament, (254) 879-2758

Corsicana Derrick Days Festival, (903) 493-7205, derrickdays.com

Ingleside Cruise Your Ride to Ingleside Car Show, (361) 776-2906, inglesidetxchamber.org

La Porte San Jacinto Day Festival and Battle Re-enactment, (210) 824-9474, sanjacinto-museum.org

Weches Mission Tejas Folk Festival, (936) 687-2394

Buda [26-27] Country Fair and Wiener Dog Races, (512) 565-0505, budalionsclub.com

May

02

Brenham [2-4] Maifest, 1-888-273-6426, maifest.org



April 26
Burnet
Bluebonnet Airshow

02

Huntsville [2-4] General Sam Houston Folk Festival, (936) 294-1832, samhoustonfolkfestival.blogspot.com

Mount Vernon [2-4] Prairies & Pineywoods BirdFest, (713) 882-4195, birdingmtvernon.com

Submit Your Event!

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

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BY E.R. BILLS



A no-frills cabin in the bay anchors a getaway for fishing, boating and unobstructed views of sunrises and sunsets.



USED TO BE WHEN I THOUGHT OF CABIN getaways in Texas, the Goodnight Cabin on the rim of Palo Duro Canyon came to mind. Or one of the Civilian Conservation Corps cabins at Caddo Lake. I'd stayed in lots of cabins and some even on the water, near a lake or river. But I'd never stayed at a cabin in the water.

That changed last Labor Day. My long-time friends Ron and Stephen invited me to **CAPTAIN CARL'S CABINS** to do a little fishing. Captain Carl has four cabins, and they're all in the ocean. Two are on Laguna Madre along the Naval Air Station's former "crash channel" near Corpus Christi Bay, and two are farther south around Baffin Bay. They're all less than a mile from land, and we stayed at one near Corpus.

We went down on a Thursday and booked hotel rooms, grabbing any gear or tackle we might need that night. Early the next morning, we packed groceries for the next few days—food, drinks and plenty of ice. Then we loaded everything into coolers and went down to **CLEM'S MARINA**, our disembarkation point.

One of Captain Carl's associates met us at 10 a.m. and shuttled us out to our cabin. We unloaded and got settled in before lunch. The cabin was equipped with a gas generator, general lighting and receptacles, a giant fishing spotlight on the cabin roof, a window air-conditioning

unit, propane stove, charcoal grill, large plastic barrel of freshwater, sink, composting toilet, three solar showers and eight bunk beds. Nothing fancy, but functional.

Captain Carl's associate showed us how to work the generator, discussed the amenities and then shoved off.

At dusk, we activated the big spotlight and began sending our lines. Stephen caught a red drum and then a large flounder. Ron caught a speckled trout. I caught a mangrove snapper.

Then we took turns. Black drum, red drum and trout. And sometimes things got weird (especially for a landlubber like me)—we caught a ribbonfish and then an eel. I had never seen anything like them except on TV.

We did well the first night and fished late, packing the caught fish on ice. Then we availed ourselves of the solar showers and bunk beds. The air conditioning took the edge off the late summer heat and muffled the din of the generator.

The next morning, we had a half-day charter boat trip planned. **CAPTAIN RAM RODRIGUEZ** took us to the intercoastal areas and toward Baffin Bay. He located a school of speckled trout, and we caught them steadily for a good hour or so. Then he headed back toward our cabin and put us on a school of black drum. We

returned to the cabin for a late lunch and rested through the heat of the day.

After dinner, we were back out under the spotlight and fishing late again—casting and reeling, plumbing the depths of the crash channel and skimming the surface for top feeders. Occasionally, a boat would go by, transporting its occupants home or out to one of their favorite nocturnal fishing holes.

We caught drum, trout and flounder, mixed in with a gnarly-looking oyster toadfish and then something really big. It gave Stephen a ferocious tug of war for several minutes before spitting its hook out and returning to the depths.

Our cabin in the ocean was a unique spot well off the beaten path. We caught a lot of fish and saw some fantastic sunsets and sunrises. The setting was serene and peaceful, and I thought it might be a nice place to come back to even if I didn't fish, for deck time under the Gulf sun or solitude for that stack of books I'd been meaning to get to.

E.R. Bills is a writer from Aledo. He is the author of "Texas Obscurities: Stories of the Peculiar, Exceptional and Nefarious" (History Press, 2013).

Info: Email Captain Carl at captaincarl@stx.rr.com or call 1-800-368-8175. Email Captain Ram Rodriguez at stingrayram@yahoo.com or call (361) 549-5843.

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