

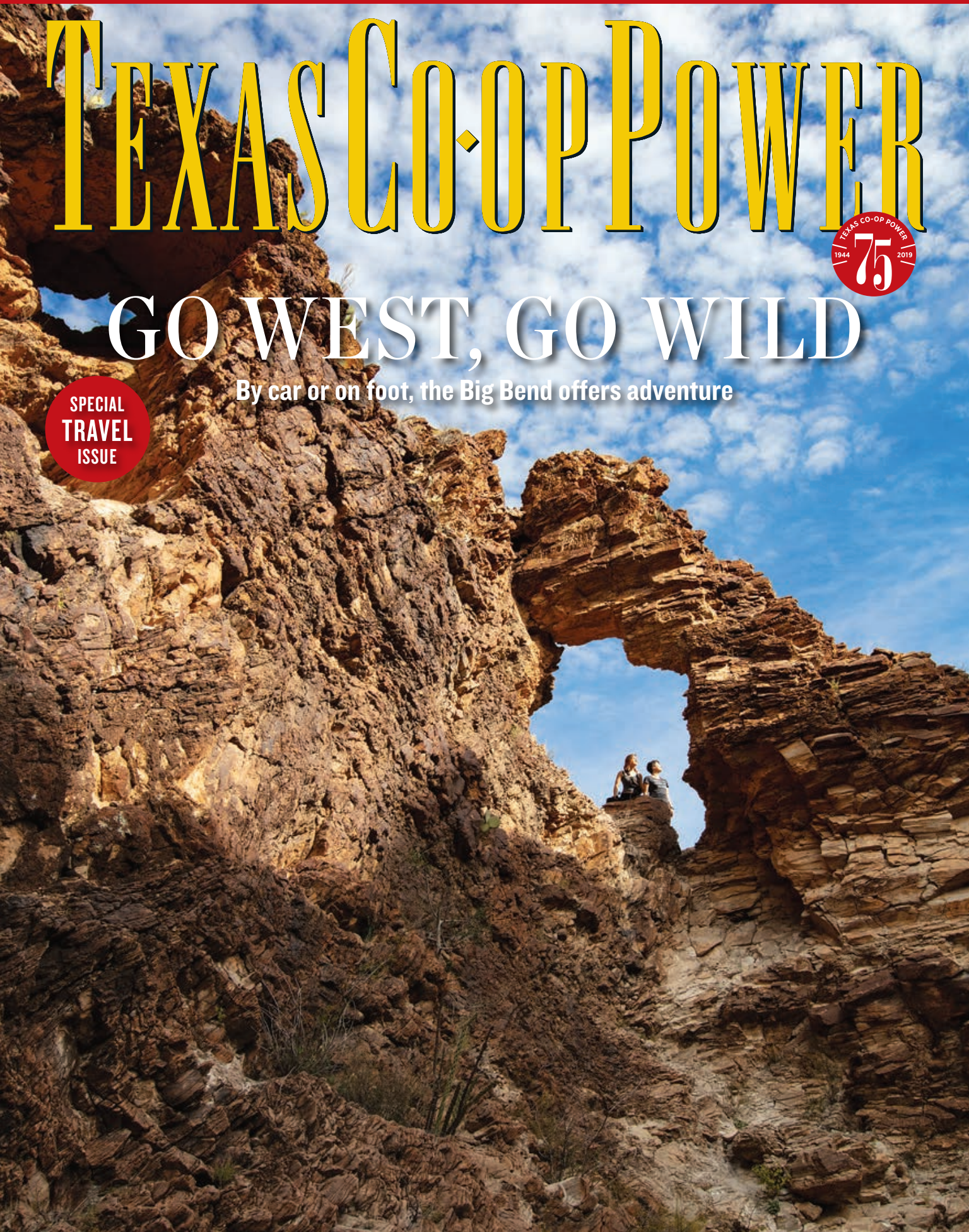
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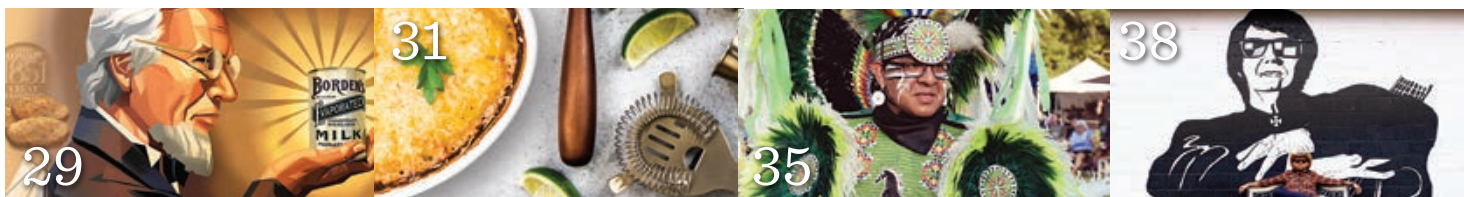
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*A Storied Life*

By Lonny Taylor

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**Putting Others First** Volunteer fire departments, with strong co-op ties, sustain rural life.



MAP BACKGROUND: E. DAN KLEPPER. OUTLINE: ILLPOS | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. FIRETRUCK: ROB WILSON | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

**ON THE COVER** *Hikers at a natural arch above the Upper Burro Mesa Pour-Off Trail in Big Bend National Park. Photo by E. Dan Klepper*

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## Touching Texas Soil

When I went to my brother's funeral in Norway, I took a zip-close bag of soil from my yard in College Station [*Native Soil*, July 2019]. To make sure I wasn't going to introduce foreign enzymes or insects, I sterilized the soil in the oven.

Before the service, my sister and I sprinkled the soil into the open grave. We were comforted in knowing that even that far from home, his body rested on Texas soil.

JEAN W. MCDERMOTT | COLLEGE STATION  
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES

I did this! Lived in Oklahoma when my first kid was born. Had a bag of dirt from my hometown and one from Dad's hometown. The nurse wasn't happy about dirt in her operating room (C-section)!

SUZIE BATES CLARK | VIA FACEBOOK

Love, love, love this story. Wish I had thought of it in 1986 when my daughter was born in Boston. Fortunately, she's in Austin now, and my grandson, Owen, is a bona fide Texan.

CASSANDRA CAMP | AUSTIN  
PEDERNALES EC

## Geronimo and History

My mother grew up at Fort Sam Houston as my grandpa was in the Army. My grandpa was fond of telling tall tales, and one of our family favorites was when



## Far From Texas

I wish I'd had a bag of soil when my second daughter had to be born so far from home [*Native Soil*, July 2019]. While my first daughter, Katie, got to be born in Houston and live there for a year, my second, Jeanne, was born in New York. Then the poor tyke couldn't touch Texas soil till she was 14 months old, when we got off the plane in Corpus Christi.

ANNE STEVENSON | CORTEZ, COLORADO | PEDERNALES EC



he told all of his kids that he captured Geronimo [*Geronimo in San Antonio*, July 2019]. They proudly marched to school to tell their friends and teachers. Imagine their disappointment when they found out it wasn't possible: My grandpa was born in 1902, well after Geronimo had left the Quadrangle.

DEBORAH PAGE | BURNET  
PEDERNALES EC

Native Americans have been mistreated more than any other group of people in the history of this country. Their lands were stolen by the U.S. government and given for free to settlers. Thank you for the article. We must never forget what was done to the Native Americans.

ROBERTA MCLAUGHLIN | LORENA  
HEART OF TEXAS EC

## Wonderful Pigs

I love pigs, so my daddy bought a pot-bellied pig for me and my husband in 1992 [*This Little Piggy*, May 2019]. Yes, he

did grow to about 250-300 pounds, but he was wonderful.

It breaks my heart that people don't really understand what they are doing when obtaining an animal. Thankfully, there are people like the ones in your story who bless these intelligent, wonderful animals.

JO ANN AND TERRY ELY | LUBBOCK  
SOUTH PLAINS EC

## Texas Tech Studies

Tech has a history of interesting degree offerings in hospitality careers. This one is cooler yet [*Grown Locally*, July 2019].

KEVIN STAHNKE | VIA FACEBOOK

## Slice of Life

Giving a knife to someone as a gift signifies a desire to cut the relationship [*Bad Moon Waning*, June 2019]. Don't know if that qualifies as a superstition or an unspoken gesture.

LISA KEENAN | VIA FACEBOOK

## Another Drive-In

Was sorry to see that there was

no mention of the great drive-in located on FM 2920 in Hockley [*Drive In, Chill Out*, June 2019].

C. MARTIN | BELLVILLE  
SAN BERNARD EC

**Editor's note:** We couldn't mention every Texas drive-in theater in our story. We did, however, put together a map of drive-ins across the state, which includes Hockley's Showboat Drive-In. See the map at [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com).

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Please include your town and electric co-op. Letters may be edited for clarity and length.



Texas Co-op Power

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Dorothy Bray is third from right.

**WEB EXTRAS**  
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## HAPPENINGS

# Fighting Kidney Disease

Dorothy Bray has been hit hard by polycystic kidney disease, a genetic disorder that causes the growth of fluid-filled cysts. She has undergone two kidney transplants and watched her father and two older siblings die of the disease. Her son, daughter and a granddaughter also have PKD.

So Bray, a longtime member of Guadalupe Valley Electric Cooperative, passionately volunteers for the annual **SAN ANTONIO WALK FOR PKD**, which this year is **SEPTEMBER 14**.

"I feel so blessed to live in an age of medical advancement that makes it possible for someone like me to survive much longer than people like my dad ever had a chance to," says Bray, 72.

**INFO** ► (210) 414-6614, [walkforpkd.org/sanantonio](http://walkforpkd.org/sanantonio)

## ALMANAC

**75 YEARS AGO:** Navy pilot George H.W. Bush was hit by antiaircraft fire during a World War II bombing run on Chichi Jima, a Japanese island. Before bailing out into the Pacific Ocean on September 2, 1944, he dropped his four 500-pound bombs on the target, a radio facility. He banged his head on his plane's tail after he ejected, and once in the water, jellyfish stings and swallowed seawater made him sick.



## BY THE NUMBERS

**Those are the odds of an amateur golfer making a hole-in-one.** A pro golfer has a much better chance—2,500-1. This month marks the 150th anniversary of the first known ace. Young Tom Morris hit a hole-in-one September 15, 1869, during the Open Championship in Scotland.

## ◀ LOOKING BACK AT TRAVEL THIS MONTH



**TRAVEL AROUND, over and into Texas has marked many milestones in the 75 years since Texas Co-op Power debuted in July 1944. Here are just a few:**

### 1940s

**1945** The Texas Aeronautics Act establishes the Texas Aeronautics Commission as a nonfederal public entity that oversees civilian flying.

**1947** The Spruce Goose, a creation of eccentric millionaire Howard Hughes of Houston and the largest wooden airplane ever constructed, makes its first and only flight.

### 1950s

**1950** The Los Ebanos Ferry, connecting Los Ebanos, Texas, to Ciudad Díaz Ordaz across the Rio Grande, is established. It is the last Coast Guard-licensed ferry in the U.S. to be powered by the tug of a rope.



### 1960s

**1963** The state creates the Texas Tourist Development Agency. By 1970, visitors to Texas would triple, totaling 21 million.



**1967** The first specialty license plate becomes available from the Texas Department of Transportation.

**1969** Houston Intercontinental Airport begins operations.



# Tackling Hunger in Eldorado

**WHEN BRENDA HARDESTY** moved from Austin to Eldorado about 13 years ago, the former social worker didn't know many people in the small town, about 45 miles south of San Angelo. But she eventually came to know Leigh Lloyd, the pastor at her church, First United Methodist, who worked with Hardesty to turn what was an emergency food closet in the church into a full-fledged pantry for those in need.

"Our community has a high rate of unemployment at various times and a high rate of poverty," Hardesty said, adding that stable jobs and reliable child care can be hard to come by in the oilfield town. "So we have a lot of people getting by on very little income."

The Eldorado Second Harvest Food Pantry provides monthly food distributions to more than 60 households, or about 130 people, in Schleicher County. Hardesty, a member of Southwest Texas Electric Cooperative, has coordinated food intake and distribution—the whole process—since the pantry began in August 2016. Lloyd has since moved to another church in another town, but Hardesty now has connections across the county.

"The people that hand out the boxes get a lot of joy from actually giving a box of food to somebody that needs it," Hardesty said. "Seeing how many people in our community are willing to pitch in and help people in need is a fulfilling part to me—to see that a lot of people care in this community and are willing to back it up with some work."

**INFO ►** [facebook.com/eldoradoservicecenter](https://facebook.com/eldoradoservicecenter)

**Brenda Hardesty at the Eldorado Second Harvest Food Pantry.**



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## 1970s

**1971** You are now free to move about the state. Southwest Airlines begins service to Dallas, San Antonio and Houston with \$20 one-way fares.

**1973** The Motorcycle Safety Foundation is established, with curriculum shaped in part by motorcyclists at Texas A&M.

**1974** The first commercial flight lands at DFW International, now the fourth busiest airport in the U.S.



## 1980s

**1982** The iconic Pennybacker Bridge over Lake Austin, with its unique untied arch suspension construction, opens in Austin.

**1986** Jeana Yeager, born in Fort Worth, co-pilots the first nonstop around-the-world flight over nine days.



## 1990s

**1995** Bernard Harris Jr. of Temple, payload commander aboard space shuttle Discovery, becomes the first African American to walk in space.

**1995** The Fred Hartman Bridge between Baytown and La Porte, built to withstand hurricane-force winds, replaces the Baytown Tunnel as a means to cross the Houston Ship Channel.

## LOOKING BACK AT OUTDOORS NEXT MONTH ►

## 2000s



**2003** Space shuttle Columbia breaks up over Texas as it returns to Earth, killing the seven astronauts on board.

**2018** Mid-South Synergy launches electric vehicle charging stations in the co-op's territory.



# Big Bend's

**GOLDEN  
TRIANGLE**



**Story and photos by E. Dan Klepper**

**B**efore you begin a Big Bend adventure, bear one thing in mind: Once you arrive at your destination, you might not want to go home again.

It might be the dry, temperate afternoons and cool evening breezes that keep you here—especially in the summer months, when the rest of the state is sweltering. Or it might be the sensational vistas with their high desert grasslands; rugged, sky-island mountaintops; and miles of empty blacktop countering the traffic-packed freeways and crowded suburbs. Maybe it will be the challenging nature hikes, the one-of-a-kind artworks, the fine dining and luxury getaways, or the quirky vacation rentals. Or perhaps it will be something as simple as the unexpected stillness when you pause during your morning cup of locally roasted coffee and realize that the only things you can hear are birdsong and your own quiet

thoughts. But whatever ends up taking your breath away, rest assured you'll return, if not for good then at least for more.

Big Bend covers a considerable amount of territory. Although composed of only three counties—Jeff Davis, Presidio and Brewster—it encompasses more than 12,000 square miles. That's more area than Connecticut, Delaware and Rhode Island combined. Its vast size means a lot of driving. To minimize road time and maximize downtime, you may want to focus a trip around the Big Bend's "golden triangle"—Fort Davis, Marfa and Alpine. You'll sample everything Big Bend has to offer with the least amount of tire rotation. In fact, less than an hour separates one town from the next, yet each one offers something unique.

If traveling first to Fort Davis, the triangle's apex, you'll likely be driving south along Texas Highway 17, one of the prettiest routes in the state. You'll be cruising through the Davis Mountains, the second-highest range in Texas, and slowly gaining elevation with each bend in the road. The range is a result of volcanic activity that took place millions of years ago, making it ground zero for geology enthusiasts. Avid birders and wildlife watchers also favor





## Visit Fort Davis, Marfa and Alpine—lofty destinations that offer big skies, luxury and down-to-earth adventure



**Above: Looking northeast into Alpine. Left: Stellina is a chic dining option in Marfa.**

the range, particularly the upper elevations around Mount Livermore—at 8,378 feet above sea level, it's the fifth-highest peak in Texas. Considered a “sky island” for its wetter,

cooler, more diverse habitat than the elevations below it, Livermore offers a friendly environment for hundreds of species, including a variety of birds making their seasonal migration across North America. Much of the mountain is protected by the Nature Conservancy, which provides opportunities to visit its Davis Mountains Preserve on open-to-the-public days.

My own decision to move to the Big Bend, 20-plus years ago, occurred during one of the preserve's open weekends in the late 1990s. Over the course of a 24-hour period, I hiked to the craggy peak of Livermore, took a dip in a rainwater tinaja—a natural pool, saw a Mexican spotted owl and sheltered in a ponderosa pine forest during a torrential rainstorm before camping under a canopy of starlight. “I want all of this right outside my own back door,” I thought to myself that night.





Fort Davis features an assortment of quaint, old-fashioned lodging, including the grande dame of them all—Hotel Limpia. Constructed from locally quarried stone in 1912, the Limpia features 21 rooms and 10 suites, an outdoor patio, indoor fine dining courtesy of the Blue Mountain Bistro, and a pool for you and your fellow “summer swallows” (as guests were known during the hotel’s early years). Or, for adventurers on a budget, try the Stone Village Tourist Camp with its creature comforts, a pool and the best deli market in town.

Once you’ve unpacked and relaxed, get out of

**Above: Al Campo in Marfa offers indoor and outdoor spots to chill—and stay warm. Below: El Cosmico, a campground and hotel in Marfa, has a quirky gift shop.**

this world with a visit to nearby McDonald Observatory. Check for sun flares through the observatory’s solar program, in which live, safe views of the sun are projected onto a giant auditorium screen. Then join a star party and see the stars the way the observatory’s researchers see them—up close and personal.

To continue, view some luminaries of the art world by heading to Marfa, where the internationally known Chinati Foundation houses works by Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Robert Irwin and Roni Horn—members of the American art canon. Designed specifically for the location, the works include *Things That Happen Again: For a Here and a There*, Horn’s hand-lathed identical copper forms; Irwin’s ethereal *untitled (dawn to dusk)*, an installation of scrimlike material that transforms the interior space as the light changes outside; Flavin’s colorful large-scale fluorescent light piece called *untitled (Marfa Project)*, installed in six Chinati buildings; and Judd’s *100 untitled works in mill aluminum*, in which each of the works retains the same outer dimensions but features unique interior dimensions. They are installed throughout two enormous former artillery sheds on the Chinati grounds.

Marfa offers visitors an opportunity to indulge at the town’s latest lodging addition, the elegant Hotel Saint George. The Saint George adds an international chic to the local character, providing stylishly appointed rooms and fine art throughout. The hotel also offers day passes to its Bar Nadar pool and grill, a fine place to swim and socialize.

If you feel a little more adventurous, set up a tent at El Cosmico, a 30-acre campground within walking distance of downtown. El Cosmico sponsors the annual Trans-Pecos Festival of Music + Love with its lineup of bands from all over the country. If tenting is not your thing, book one of El Cosmico’s luxury tepees, yurts or vintage travel trailers.







**A trek around Big Bend's golden triangle won't leave you struggling to fill your time. You'll have plenty to do, even if it's just sitting on a porch rocker sipping a favorite beverage and watching the sun drop.**

Then satisfy your hunger at Al Campo, Marfa's indoor-outdoor wine bar and bistro. With a relaxed atmosphere and uncomplicated menu, Al Campo offers rustic countryside cooking, inspired by Chilean and Argentinian cuisines, and a robust selection of wines and beers. Or score a meal at Stellina, where you can order small plates of queso fundido and seafood tostadas or fill up on enchiladas suizas or wild salmon Veracruz. Stellina, possibly the most popular eatery in Marfa, doesn't take reservations. Just walk in and you'll be seated on a first-come, first-served basis. If it's busy, relax. It's worth the wait.

**W**hen you're ready to leave the high life behind, head to Alpine and back down to earth. You'll find yourself in cowboy country, home to rodeo cowboys, cowboy poets and plain ol' hardworking ranch hands. Alpine, the largest of the three communities, is also home to Sul Ross State University, considered the frontier university of Texas. The campus is home to the Museum of the Big Bend, where visitors learn about the region's history, from its ancient geology to its 19th-century ranching culture. Changing exhibits complement an array of permanent displays designed to provide a comprehensive overview of Big Bend's unique character.

Explore history and then overnight in some with a room at Alpine's Holland Hotel, designed in 1928 by Henry Trost, the acclaimed Southwest architect. Trost designed the hotel in the Spanish Colonial Revival style of the period, and after decades of renovation and repair, its splendid lobby now reflects its original grandeur. The ground floor also features the Century Bar and Grill, a lively gathering spot for locals and guests.

Alpine offers year-round events for visitors, including the annual Trappings of Texas, an exhibition and sale of contemporary West-



**Top: Hikers atop Mount Livermore, northwest of Fort Davis. Above: Spurs from an annual Trappings of Texas exhibition at the Museum of the Big Bend in Alpine.**

ern art and custom cowboy gear; an entire professional baseball season featuring the homegrown Alpine Cowboys; and the Viva Big Bend Music Festival, with big-name head-

liners among the more than 50 bands that perform all over the region during the four-day fest.

A trek around Big Bend's golden triangle won't leave you struggling to fill your time. You'll have plenty to do, even if it's just sitting on a porch rocker sipping a favorite beverage and watching the sun drop. But consider this: The triangle comprises only the Big Bend's high country. A vast network of desert and mountains, national and state parks, river drives, hiking, lodging and dining await throughout the rest of the region. In other words, your adventures in the Big Bend have just begun.

**E. Dan Klepper** is a photographer, author and artist who lives in Marathon.



# Which

**West Texas explorers have many answers to this enduring question**

**Story by Joe Nick Patoski**

**Photos by E. Dan Klepper**

**W**hat do you mean, which Big Bend? There's only one Big Bend! That's true, geographically. The Big Bend is where the Rio Grande makes a 100-mile end-around of the Chisos Mountains on its way to the Gulf of Mexico. This Big Bend encompasses three majestic canyons—Santa Elena, Mariscal and Boquillas—all within the 801,000-acre Big Bend National Park. That's the Big Bend most folks have been talking about since the national park was established in 1944.

Now, Big Bend also refers to the neighboring Big Bend Ranch State Park, a 311,000-acre spread west of the national park that first opened to the public in 1991.

My first encounter with the national park was a visit at age 8, when I was immediately awed by the Chisos Mountains and

javelinas. Since then, I've paddled all three canyons as well as the Lower Canyons, hiked 80 miles from Rio Grande Village to the town of Lajitas and completed the 14-mile round trip to the South Rim with my family.

I started visiting Big Bend Ranch as soon as it became accessible. I've paddled Colorado Canyon, hiked 14 miles from the Lower Shutup to near Lajitas, bushwhacked to Madrid Falls and spotlighted scorpions with a black light while taking a desert survival course.

The state park is most definitely part of the geographic Big Bend. That was easy to see flying over the region in a Cessna named Brownie piloted by Marcos Paredes of Rio Aviation in Terlingua. The bending of the Rio Grande starts in Colorado Canyon, which forms the southern boundary of the state ranch, long before the river reaches the national park.

But visitors, especially first-timers, still ask: Which Big Bend?

When asked, six people who know the region well, starting with Paredes, a retired river ranger for Big Bend National Park, had



**JOE NICK PATOSKI**



# Big Bend?



some answers. “What separates the state park from the national park is live water,” he says. “That’s what stands out as you fly over this country. The cottonwood *bosques* and the live streams scattered throughout the arroyos and canyons of the state park are conspicuous and their absence is glaring as you come over the national park.”

Big Bend Ranch State Park is loaded with 118 springs, seeps, tinajas, and Texas’ second- and third-highest waterfalls. The national park has hot springs to soak in, 100 miles of the Rio Grande, a hidden waterfall and Ernst Tinaja—a natural pool, campsite and trail.

“The Chisos [Mountains] are a lot higher than anything in Big Bend Ranch,” explains John Karges, a conservation biologist. “On the other hand, the Big Bend Ranch has the Solitario.”

The Solitario is a volcanic dome, a mile across, that emerged from a collapsed caldera, a wholly unique feature that doesn’t dazzle like the Window in the Chisos or the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon in the national park until you see it from above.

Big Bend National Park is nearly three times the size of Big Bend Ranch and more developed, with paved, RV-friendly road-

**Big Bend National Park, opposite, with the Chisos Mountains, is considered more approachable than Big Bend Ranch State Park, with its sparse amenities.**

ways, big campgrounds, and a hotel and restaurant. The only paved road in the state park is River Road, FM 170, along the park’s southern boundary. State park campsites are primitive.

“You have to bring your own water and carry out your waste,” Karges says. “It’s a little more of a rugged experience.” The sole alternative to camping is a bed in the bunkhouse at Saucedo headquarters and use of its kitchen.

Karges says the national park is tailored for windshield tourists—the majority of first-timers, who tend to stick to their vehicles. “You spend a day or two driving to the highlights at both ends and the [Chisos] basin,” he says of tourists who seek out Santa Elena and Boquillas canyons. On the other hand, “Big Bend Ranch, you really have to want to go there.”

Photographer Crystal Allbright lives and works between the parks and takes advantage of each. “If I want to go on a multiday river trip in a designated wild and scenic area, I head for the national park,” she says. “For mountain biking trails and a few





MARCOS PAREDES

JOHN KARGES

CRYSTAL ALLBRIGHT

PAM LEBLANC

DON ALEXANDER

KARL FLOCKE

dog-friendly areas, it's the state park. If I have to choose hiking, camping or dark skies ... well, then I might have to flip a coin."

Writer Pam LeBlanc from Austin leans ranch, which she visited six times in 2018, including for several multiday bicycle treks. "They are entirely different worlds," she says. "I go to the national park for the South Rim. I can lay on my belly and peer down on a million miles of what looks like rumpled rhinoceros hide. Or I climb to my secret spot on Mesa de Anguila to take in the best view in the state. But when I feel scrappy and wild, like I need to get lost among the rocks and spiky things, I go to the state park. No one can find me there."

The desert, the remoteness and the heat can test visitors of either destination. Don Alexander, a Big Bend regular from Waco, observes that the popularity of the national park makes it difficult to find absolute solitude, which he says is "one of the highlights of the Chihuahuan Desert."

**B**ig Bend National Park attracts about 4 million visitors annually, peaking at around 8,000 daily. Big Bend Ranch State Park hosts fewer than 50,000 visitors, with 8,000 visiting the park itself, 28,000 stopping at the Barton Warnock Visitor Center in Lajitas and about 5,000 at the Fort Leaton State Historic Site at the western edge of the park, near Presidio.

times I have heard people comment that the state park is how they remember the national park being 'back in the day,' he says.

Flocke nonetheless recommends experiencing the national park first. "This isn't out of any attempt to scare people away or to suggest that the state park is only for people who are worth their mettle," he says. "It is simply that the national park is much more approachable. The Chisos Mountains offer contrast of scenery for those who may not be wowed by desert expanses. There are more restrooms, more trash service, better trails, more ranger programs, convenience stores and restaurants. Intrepid hikers still have the opportunity to get off the beaten path, but no matter where you go, it seems like you are more likely to see people in the national park."

Then try the alternative. "The gravel road into the center of the state park is a portal that transports you to an entirely different time and place," Flocke says. "Something about that washboard road really disconnects you from the rest of the world. It lends a wilderness vibe to the park that is unlike anywhere else in Texas.

"First-timers, inexperienced family campers and RVers—go to the national park. Experienced family campers, backpackers, bikers, horseback riders and Jeepers—give the state park a try. Go there before it gets discovered."

One factor that complicates comparisons is that each park operates differently. "The national park is federal and has more mandates, doctrines and management protocols than the Big



**Karges says the national park is tailored for windshield tourists—the majority of first-timers, who tend to stick to their vehicles. On the other hand, "Big Bend Ranch, you really have to want to go there."**

Alexander's most recent Big Bend adventures have been with his 75-year-old brother-in-law, who has mobility issues and a fear of heights. "That means 2-mile hikes with rocky scrambles, such as Upper Burro Mesa in the national park, are out," he says.

Alexander found the state park campgrounds at Lower Madera Canyon and Grassy Banks, just off FM 170, to be less crowded than those at the national park but susceptible to sounds of passing traffic. He says they found "perfect desert silence" camping near Big Bend Ranch's Saucedo headquarters, after driving 27 miles of rough gravel road to the center of the ranch.

Karl Flocke's idea of the ultimate Big Bend experience is "solo hiking through a remote canyon, rounding a bend to the next expansive view and wondering if I'm the first modern man to stand in this spot," he says. "While the answer is most likely 'no,' I find it much easier to entertain these kind of thoughts at the state park."

As a former law enforcement ranger at Big Bend Ranch, Flocke, now a woodland ecologist for the Texas A&M Forest Service in Austin, may be biased. But it's not just him. "I can't recall how many

Bend Ranch State Park," explains Bonnie McKinney, wildlife coordinator at El Carmen Land and Conservation Company adjacent to the national park and a onetime Texas Parks and Wildlife Department employee. "They have similar rules and regulations, particularly pertaining to artifacts and historic sites, but differ on wildlife and land management," McKinney explains. "Most national parks let nature take its course. Big Bend National Park doesn't create water sites for wildlife. Big Bend Ranch has built water sites in remote areas for wildlife."

Maybe the best answer to "Which Big Bend?" depends on which way you plan to enjoy exploring the region. Will you be driving through or staying a while? Does the next adventure involve a long hike in the desert or in the mountains, a short one-mile hike from the road, off-road bicycling or four-wheel drive, or a canyon paddle on the river? With all these options, the answer to "Which Big Bend?" really is "Both."

Writer **Joe Nick Patoski** lives outside Wimberley and is a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative.



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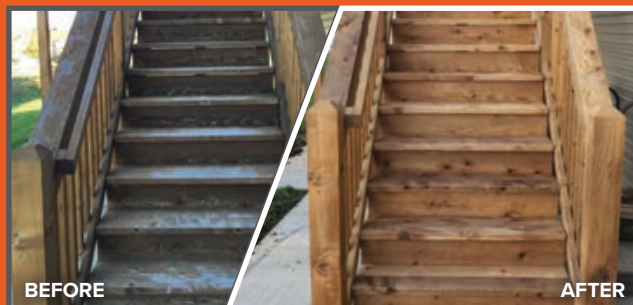


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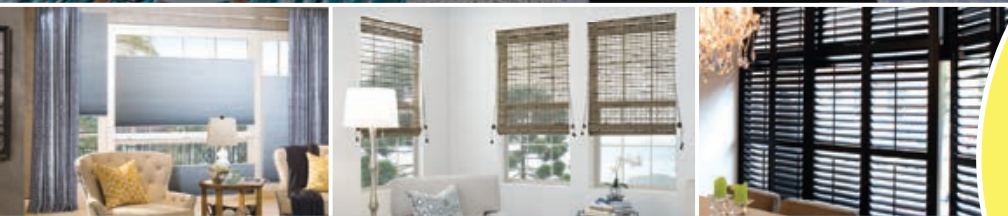
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# Don't Be Fooled

**ELECTRIC UTILITY SCAMMERS ARE CONTINUALLY SWITCHING UP** their game (and lies) to try to get your money.

One of the most common tricks scammers now use involves a spoofing app that they use to create a fake caller ID to trick co-op members into thinking a call they are receiving is coming from their co-op or another local number. Your caller ID will show some variation of your electric cooperative's name or come from a local number, seemingly giving scammers instant credibility.

They will tell members they are late on paying their bill and need to do so in the next couple of hours or their electricity will be disconnected. They then tell the member to head to a local store to purchase a reloadable debit card and call back with the card information. Or they directly ask for credit card or bank account information.

The scammers don't stop there. Some swindlers encourage members to deliver them cash in person at a meeting spot or come to the member's front door and claim they need to read their meter for money.

If you receive a call, email or visit from anyone claiming to be a co-op employee and asking you for money, immediately report it to the cooperative—using the co-op phone number you look up yourself. Never call a number given to you by a potential scammer to verify the request for money; giving you a fake number is another common scheme, and the call will be answered by the scammer's team.

## Your co-op will never:

- ▶ Call from an out-of-state number.
- ▶ Have a technician call you to say he or she is coming out to disconnect power.
- ▶ Request a cash payment at your home or business.
- ▶ Threaten a service disconnection on holidays or weekends.

If you experience any of these things, give us a call and let us know so we can warn other members about the scam.

It is unfortunate that we feel obligated to encourage you to be suspicious, but we care about our members, and it's important to us that our members not be taken advantage of.

## KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND to keep your money where it belongs:

- ▶ **If someone claims** to be from your electric cooperative and pressures you for immediate payment or personal information, hang up and call your co-op using a phone number you look up.
- ▶ **Never give** your Social Security number, credit card number or banking information to any caller, no matter whom they claim to represent.
- ▶ **Delete suspicious emails** saying you must act immediately to verify or provide personal information. Do not click on any links in these emails.
- ▶ **Delete any emails** from utilities and companies you don't have a relationship with.
- ▶ **Do not respond** to suspicious emails. Responding often results in even more spam and scam attempts.
- ▶ **Don't give in to** high-pressure tactics for information over the phone or in person.







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# Surge and Protect

**A POWER SURGE, OR TRANSIENT VOLTAGE, IS A SUDDEN AND UNWANTED INCREASE IN voltage that can damage, degrade or destroy sensitive electronic equipment in your home or business.**

The National Electrical Manufacturers Association estimates that 60%–80% of surges are created within a building, such as when large appliances, like air conditioners, turn on and off. Far less common are surges that originate from an electric utility during power grid switching. The most powerful surges can be caused by lightning.

A spike in voltage can be harmful to electrical devices in your home if the increase is above a device's intended operating voltage. This excess voltage can cause an arc of electrical current resulting in heat that damages electrical components. Repeated small-scale surges may slowly damage your electronic equipment and shorten its life span.

## Surge Protection Options

Consider protecting your devices and appliances with surge protection. Several levels of protection are available to consumers.

Point-of-use surge protectors protect only the items that are directly plugged into the device. They do not suppress or arrest a surge but divert the surge to ground. Use point-of-use surge protectors that have an indicator light or audible alarm that alerts you when the surge protector needs replacement.

Service entrance surge protection devices are mounted in or on your main electrical panel or at the base of the electric meter and provide protection for your entire electrical system. These devices cover components that cannot be connected to a point-of-use device, such as outlets and light switches.

Power strips do NOT provide surge protection. Be sure you are relying on the appropriate device for protection. And remember, power strips and surge suppressors don't provide more power to a location, only more access to the same limited capacity of the circuit into which it is connected. Be careful not to overload the circuit.

Unfortunately, no surge protection device can handle a direct lightning strike. The best way to gird against surges caused by storms is to unplug devices.

## Save Energy With a Fresh Paint Job

**WHILE IT'S STILL WARM OUTSIDE, CON-**sider having the exterior of your house painted—and save some energy in the process.

A coat of fresh paint on your house can boost more than just curb appeal when you add an energy-efficient compound to the paint that girds against the summer heat. These paint additives are designed to insulate the materials on your home's exterior and come in a powder, which you can stir into any paint or coating without changing the texture or color of the paint.

As the paint dries, tiny, nontoxic ceramic bits in the additives form a layer that reflects radiant and solar heat instead of absorbing it. That means your air conditioner won't have to work as hard during the summer to fend off the outdoor heat.

Used indoors, the paint additives can benefit your bottom line in the winter, too. The energy-efficient layer reflects heat back into the room that normally would be lost to the cold outdoors.

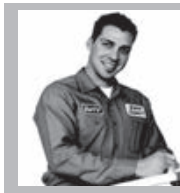


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# Clogged, Backed—up Septic System...Can anything Restore It?

**DEAR DARRYL:** My home is about 10 years old, and so is my septic system. I have always taken pride in keeping my home and property in top shape. In fact, my neighbors and I are always kidding each other about who keeps their home and yard nicest. Lately, however, I have had a horrible smell in my yard, and also in one of my bathrooms, coming from the shower drain. My grass is muddy and all the drains in my home are very slow.



Dear  
Darryl

My wife is on my back to make the bathroom stop smelling and as you can imagine, my neighbors are having a field day, kidding me about the mud pit and sewage stench in my yard. It's humiliating. I called a plumber buddy of mine, who recommended pumping (and maybe even replacing) my septic system. But at the potential cost of thousands of dollars, I hate to explore that option.

I tried the store bought, so called, Septic treatments out there, and they did Nothing to clear up my problem. Is there anything on the market I can pour or flush into my system that will restore it to normal, and keep it maintained?

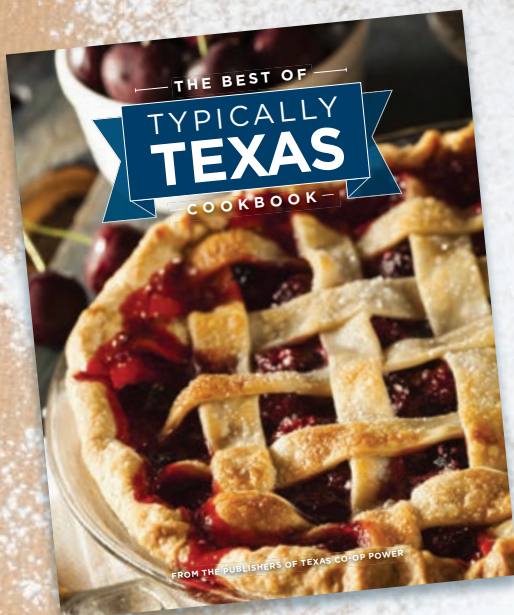
*Clogged and Smelly – Amarillo, TX*

**DEAR CLOGGED AND SMELLY:** As a reader of my column, I am sure you are aware that I have a great deal of experience in this particular field. You will be glad to know that there IS a septic solution that will solve your back-up and effectively restore your entire system from interior piping throughout the septic system and even unclog the drain field as well. **SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** deliver your system the fast active bacteria and enzymes needed to liquefy solid waste and free the clogs causing your back-up.

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**SeptiCleanse® Shock and Maintenance Programs** are designed to work on any septic system regardless of design or age. From modern day systems to sand mounds, and systems installed generations ago, I have personally seen SeptiCleanse unclog and restore these systems in a matter of weeks. I highly recommend that you try it before spending any money on repairs. SeptiCleanse products are available online at [www.septicleanse.com](http://www.septicleanse.com) or you can order or learn more by calling toll free at 1-888-899-8345. If you use the promo code "TXS9", you can get a free shock treatment, added to your order, which normally costs \$169. So, make sure you use that code when you call or buy online.

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# Texas Wonders

Answers to the questions that keep us guessing

BY LONN TAYLOR

MARFA PUBLIC RADIO STATION KRTS-FM invites listeners to call in with questions about West Texas. I have fielded a few in conjunction with my weekly program, *The Rambling Boy*.

Susan Kirr of Marfa wanted to know why several of the old houses on Sacramento Street have two front doors. The two-front-door house is a very old building tradition in America, and its origin is something that people who study vernacular architecture have wrangled about for years. Most scholars agree that houses with two front doors were a German tradition brought to Pennsylvania in the 1700s, and that originally, one door went into a formal public room, such as a parlor, and the other door went into a private, more utilitarian space, such as a kitchen with a cooking fireplace and perhaps a bed.

What no one can agree on is why the form became so popular, how it spread across the country and why it prevailed into the 1940s even when both doors opened into the same room. I favor the climatic theory: The extra door provided additional ventilation in the summertime. I'll bet that extra door was welcome in Marfa in May and June.

Linda Baronie of Marathon asked, "What's the story about the Sierra Madera Astrobleme signs between Fort Stockton and Marathon?" The signs were erected by the Texas Department of Transportation along U.S. Highway 67 where the road passes through the geological feature called the Sierra Madera Astrobleme. An astrobleme is a crater caused by a meteor or comet striking Earth. Astrobleme de-

rives from a Greek word that means "star wound."

The Sierra Madera Astrobleme's outer edge forms a circular cluster of hills about 6 miles in diameter. The uplifted peak in the center of the crater, about 800 feet above the desert floor, is called the Sierra Madera, or wooded mountain. Geologists originally thought that the formation was an oil dome, but drilling showed that there was no dome under the formation; only the upper strata were disturbed by the impact. Geologists at the University of Texas of the Permian Basin estimate that the impact took place fairly recently, less than 1 million years ago.

Guadalupe Espinoza of Marfa wanted to know if it was true that Indian Lodge in Davis Mountains State Park was built on a cemetery and is haunted. It seems like no hotel can show a profit these days unless it is haunted, but I can guarantee you that Indian Lodge was not built over a cemetery. The lodge was built on pastureland in Keesey Canyon donated to the Texas State Parks Board in 1933 by Fort Davis rancher Jesse Merrill and his son R.K. Merrill, adjacent to land donated for the Davis Mountains State Park by Joe Espy. There were no cemeteries on any of that land.

There were problems involved in building the lodge, however. Construction was started by the Civilian Conservation Corps in December 1933 and proceeded in fits and starts. The plans were redrawn at least twice, and the building was not completed until March 1935, way over budget and far behind schedule. The flat roofs leaked, and



it took three more years of work to get them to drain properly. Unaccountably, the architects had not included a hot water system, and until one was installed, the manager told guests that there was no hot water because Native Americans did not take hot baths. Perhaps the ghosts that are haunting the lodge today, if indeed there are any, are those of the first visitors who have come back to see if they can get a warm bath. Today, Indian Lodge, having undergone several renovations since 1935, is considered the crown jewel of Texas' state park system.

And then there is the Toenail Trail, the local name for FM 2084, which runs from Christoval to Fort McKavett in Tom Green and Schleicher counties. David Dunn of

Oakland, Mississippi, wanted to know how the road got its name. The short answer is because it runs across the Toenail Ranch. According to Dale Huggins, one of the current owners of that ranch, the ranch takes its name from an incident in the 1880s, shortly after the ranch was founded, when someone asked one of the owners what the new ranch was called. "Don't have no name," he replied. "Why, all ranches have names," his interrogator said. "Why doesn't yours?" "Well," the owner replied, "we're just hangin' on by our toenails. Guess we haven't had time to think up a name." And so it became the Toenail Ranch.

The late **Lonn Taylor** was historian at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and lived in Fort Davis.



# A Storied Life

Remembering the inspired Bill Wittliff, a prolific teller and keeper of stories

BY LONN TAYLOR

BILL WITTLIFF WAS ONE OF THE MOST talented and creative people I have ever known. When I first met Bill and his wife, Sally, in Austin in 1964, Bill had just quit his job at Southern Methodist University Press, and he and Sally had started Encino Press, a publishing company of their own. Bill had considerable talent as a book designer, and in the 18 years of its existence, Encino Press published 100 or so of the most beautiful books ever produced in Texas.

Wittliff started writing screenplays in the 1970s. The first full-length film he co-wrote was *The Black Stallion* in 1979, followed by a string of hits he either wrote or co-wrote, including *Lonesome Dove*, *Honeysuckle Rose*, *Raggedy Man* (based on his mother's reminiscences of working as a telephone operator in Edna) and *The Perfect Storm*.

He became a mentor to dozens of young screenwriters in Texas and always had time to visit with them when they dropped by his office in the two-story house at Sixth and Baylor streets in Austin, an office that *Texas Monthly* writer Skip Hollandsworth described as "a combination museum and rent-by-the-month storage unit." The last time I visited Wittliff there, much of the space was taken up by a life-size wooden horse, complete with charro saddle, that had been used for a prop by a street photographer in Mexico.

Wittliff died June 9 in Austin. He was 79.

The preservation of stories was the overriding theme of Wittliff's life. In 1985, he received a phone call from J. Frank Dobie's former secretary. Dobie's estate

was being sold, and she wanted to know if Wittliff wanted to buy Dobie's desk. He did, and when he drove to the Dobie house to get it, he noticed about 30 cardboard boxes full of papers. He bought those, too. They turned out to be Dobie's papers that had not gone to the University of Texas after his death. They included extensive correspondence and a diary Dobie had kept when he was a graduate student at Columbia University. Dobie himself thought the diary had been destroyed.

The Wittliffs donated these papers to Texas State University in San Marcos, and they became the foundation of the Southwestern Writers Collection, which, combined with the Southwestern & Mexican Photography Collection, the Lonesome Dove Collection and the Texas Music Collection, comprise the expanded Wittliff Collections. The collections now occupy the entire seventh floor of Texas State's Albert B. Alkek Library.

Wittliff was a compulsive archivist himself. When he was 15, he and two high school buddies drove to San Antonio for an Elvis Presley concert. The hall was sold out, and they decided to sneak in. Wittliff climbed a tree behind the building and jumped to a window ledge that opened into Elvis' dressing room. He explained to a surprised Elvis that he and two friends had driven from Blanco to hear him but could not get into the hall. Elvis tore a paper towel from the wall dispenser and wrote on it, "To the doorkeeper. Let these 3 fellows in. I know them. Thanks. Elvis Presley." That paper towel is now in the Wittliff Collections.



My fondest memory of Wittliff is of sitting in the lobby of the Gage Hotel in Marathon with him one afternoon before a *Lonesome Dove* event that philanthropist J.P. Bryan was producing. Wittliff was telling stories about the difficulties of filmmaking. I told him that I had seen *The Black Stallion* and that I loved the shipwreck scene, where the boy and the horse swim to safety through the surf.

Wittliff explained that they used six different horses to shoot that scene. The black stallion they started with proved to be totally unmanageable, so the film company provided six other older horses, but they were all different colors, so they dyed them all black. When the horses got in the water, Wittliff explained, the dye started coming off. They were on the sixth horse when the director decided he had the shot he wanted.

I mentioned that I remembered a lot of underwater shots from that scene, and Wittliff said, "That's because the director and the cameraman hated each other. The

director was always yelling at the cameraman. The cameraman was a scuba diver, and he figured that if he was underwater, he couldn't hear the director. So he tried to stay underwater as much as possible."

I know that Wittliff wrote those stories down and that they are in the Wittliff Collections. There was nothing ephemeral about Bill Wittliff.

**Editor's note:** For years, Lonnn Taylor emailed his weekly *Rambling Boy* column on Wednesdays. As soon as I received his June 19 Ramble, with his tribute to Bill Wittliff, I asked if we could publish an excerpt in *TCP*. Lonnn responded quickly and enthusiastically the next day with an edited version. How could I have imagined that would be my last email from Lonnn? Less than a week later, on June 26, Lonnn followed Bill into the great beyond. I'm sure the stories will be outstanding. I only wish he would be sending them to us so we could share them with you.

**Bill Wittliff in his Austin study with his dog, Chica.**



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# Gail Borden's Follies

The invention of canned condensed milk followed many failures, including the meat biscuit

BY MARTHA DEERING

GAIL BORDEN JR., AN INVETERATE INVENTOR with just a year and a half of formal schooling and not a scintilla of scientific training, discovered an ingenious method of condensing milk so it could be stored without refrigeration and safely shipped great distances. The 1856 invention reversed the dismal failure of his earlier discoveries.

In 1844, when he lived in Galveston, Borden lost his wife and 4-year-old son to yellow fever. Devastated, he reasoned that, because the disease raged in summer and receded after the first frost, a giant refrigerator could “keep patients for a week under a white frost” and cure them. No one volunteered to test the theory.

Another invention, a terraqueous machine, was supposed to navigate land and sea equally well. The wagon-sailboat combination, complete with mast, sail and wheels that served as paddles in the water, worked admirably when a horse pulled it across land. However, on its first voyage into the Gulf of Mexico, the contraption capsized and dumped its passengers into the surf.

Despite these spectacular failures, Borden was not a buffoon. Born in 1801 in Norwich, New York, he was a teacher and surveyor and was said to have been captain of the local militia before his move to Galveston. In Texas, he founded a newspaper, *The Telegraph and Texas Register*, and prepared the first topographical map of the state.

In 1849, a Borden invention called meat



biscuits promised wholesome, portable nutrition, and the biscuits won a gold medal at London's Great Exhibition in 1851. Borden explained that the nutritive portions of beef or another meat would be separated from the bones and other parts of the body by boiling. Next, the water holding the nutritious matters in solution would first be evaporated to extreme thickness and then made into a dough with firm wheat flour. This meaty dough would be rolled and cut into a biscuit shape, then baked at a moderate heat to achieve the appearance and firmness of crackers—so it would keep for years.

The chairman of jurors at the Great Exhibition called it “one of the most important discoveries of the age.” Borden set up a plant in Galveston to manufacture meat biscuits for a worldwide market. Borden planned to market them with a partner named Ashbel Smith.

“Dr. Smith, a gentleman of scientific reputation,” according to an 1850 article in *Scientific American*, “has communicated a paper on the subject to Prof. Bache, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science,” in which he

says, “I have several times eaten of the soup made of this meat biscuit. It has a fresh, lively, clean and thoroughly done or cooked flavor.”

In spite of favorable recommendations from Smith; Texas Ranger Rip Ford, who preferred to sweeten and fry the biscuits; and Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, who took a supply on two Arctic expeditions, the meat biscuit failed to win badly needed military contracts.

The Army deemed it “not only unpalatable, but [it] failed to appease the cravings of hunger, producing headache, nausea and great muscular depression.” By 1852, Borden, who had poured his fortune into the manufacture of meat biscuits, was bankrupt.

Just three years later, in 1855, he employed an oddly shaped copper vacuum pan to successfully condense milk. The dairy business boomed. Borden's Eagle Brand Condensed Milk saw many a starving soldier through the Civil War and escorted Gail Borden's bank balance back into the black.

Martha Deering, a member of Heart of Texas EC, lives near McGregor.





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## Happy Hours

THANKS TO THE LAUNCH OF THE Food Network and culinary celebrities like Martha Stewart, Emeril Lagasse and Wolfgang Puck, the 1990s ushered in an exciting decade of “gourmet” home cooking. Salsa surpassed ketchup as the country’s favorite condiment, miniature vegetables and grape tomatoes became salad staples, and instead of spaghetti, we proudly prepared fettuccine, rigatoni, penne and other types of pasta. Recipes that showcase a specialty ingredient (like this Vidalia Onion Dip, which ran in March 1998), seem to say, “This is not your grandmother’s Lipton Onion Soup dip.”

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

### Vidalia Onion Dip

- 2 large Vidalia or 1015 sweet onions, finely chopped
- 1½ cups shredded Parmesan cheese, divided use
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup sour cream
- ¼ cup fresh dill, lightly chopped (or 2½ teaspoons dried dill), divided use
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, as desired

1. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
  2. Place onions, 1 cup Parmesan, mayonnaise, sour cream, 3 tablespoons dill (or 2 teaspoons dried), parsley, horseradish and red pepper flakes in a mixing bowl and use a spatula to combine. Season to taste with salt and pepper, then transfer the mixture to a deep-dish 10-inch pie dish. Sprinkle the top evenly with the remaining ½ cup of Parmesan and remaining dill.
  3. Bake 40–45 minutes until lightly browned. Serve with chips or crackers.
- Serves 4–6.

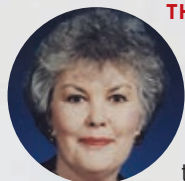
**COOK’S TIP** To create a crispier top, bake the dip in a 9-by-13-inch casserole and finish it under the broiler.

BACKGROUND: MARCIN JUCIA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; DIP: IRINA ROSTOVINA | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



# Retro Recipes

## Happy Hours



### THIS MONTH'S RECIPE CONTEST WINNER

MILLIE KIRCHOFF | NUECES EC

"These are great for family gatherings or parties," says Kirchoff, who has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. "We have fresh tomatoes often, so those were the inspiration for the recipe. I've tried these with different fillings, but this is the way my family likes them." With their flaky crust and savory filling, we like them, too!

### Bacon and Tomato Minicups

- 1 pound bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 cup finely shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 8-count tube (16 ounces) flaky buttermilk biscuits

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Mix bacon, tomatoes, green onions, cheese and mayonnaise in a bowl.

3. Apply cooking spray to mini-muffin pans. Cut each raw biscuit into fourths and roll each into a ball. Flatten partial biscuits between 2 sheets of waxed paper with a rolling pin. Gently form each piece of dough into a minimuffin cup.
4. Fill with bacon and tomato mixture. Bake 12 minutes. ▶ Makes 32 minicups.

**COOK'S TIP** For a zestier flavor, add Mrs. Dash and/or cayenne pepper, to taste.

## Texas Rattlesnake Eggs

BETH GERHARDT | GUADALUPE VALLEY EC

"I've been making these Rattlesnake Eggs for over 30 years," says Gerhardt. "It's my most requested appetizer. I take these 'eggs' to parade-watching parties, Super Bowl parties or any get-together. Just a warning—they will disappear quickly!"

- 24 medium-size fresh jalapeño peppers
- 8 mozzarella cheese sticks
- 2 cups buttermilk baking mix
- 1 pound hot pork breakfast sausage
- 1 pound grated cheddar cheese
- 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt

1. Line a cookie sheet with parchment or aluminum foil.
2. Remove the stems and seeds of the jalapeños, keeping each whole.
3. Cut the cheese sticks into thirds and stuff a cheese piece into each pepper. Set aside.
4. Preheat oven to 325 degrees.
5. Using a stand mixer, combine the baking mix, pork sausage, cheese and spices; mix until it forms into a stiff dough. Form dough into 24 rounded balls of equal size using a cookie scoop or heaping tablespoon. Take one piece of dough, flatten it and shape it around one stuffed jalapeño to completely seal it inside. Continue to form the dough pieces around each pepper until all are covered.
6. Place the "eggs" on the prepared baking sheet and bake 30–40 minutes, or until lightly browned. ▶ Makes 24 appetizers.

**COOK'S TIP** Wear disposable gloves when deseeding the peppers.

## Grilled Onion Mushroom Cheeseburger Dip

MARIAN EVONIUK | PEDERNALES EC

Evoniuk loves caramelized onions and mushrooms, and she knows almost everyone loves cheeseburgers, so she decided to create a dip with all those flavors. "It's like a cheeseburger with onions and mushrooms in a bowl and maybe just a little easier to eat," she says.

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 sweet onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 cups (8 ounces) cremini mushrooms, coarsely chopped



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### \$100 Recipe Contest

February's recipe contest topic is **Forget Chocolate, My Sweetie Likes...** Not everyone is wild about chocolate. What unexpected treat do you make for your valentine? The deadline is **September 10**.

ENTER ONLINE at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](http://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.

- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried dill
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 tub (7.5 ounces) chive and onion cream cheese spread
- ¾ cup mayonnaise
- ¾ cup sour cream
- 1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 baguette, cut into ½-inch slices and toasted

**1.** Melt butter in a large nonstick skillet. Add onion, cover and cook on low heat about 30 minutes or until onion begins to caramelize.

**2.** Add the mushrooms, garlic, salt, pepper and dill. Raise heat to medium, cover and cook 10 minutes. Uncover and continue cooking until any remaining liquid from the mushrooms has evaporated, about 7–10 minutes. Remove from heat and transfer to a large glass mixing bowl. Set aside.

**3.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

## Happy Hour in Just Minutes

The recipes on these pages require some shopping and forethought. But what do you do when a happy hour breaks out unexpectedly? Friends drop over, wine corks are loosened, and you need something to munch on. You may be able to find what you need in your pantry, fridge and freezer.

**Make up a quick relish tray** with any pickles, olives, peppers or other marinated vegetables you might have.

**Cut vegetables** from the crisper drawer into sticks or bite-size pieces and serve

with any creamy dressing you have on hand.

**Raid the pantry** for crackers, cut sandwich cheese from the fridge and slice an apple.

**Voilà!** Instant party!

—SHANNON OELRICH



**4.** Crumble ground beef into the same skillet. Cover and cook over medium heat until beef is cooked through. Drain juices and transfer meat to the same bowl as the onion-mushroom mixture.

**5.** Add the cream cheese spread, mayonnaise, sour cream and Parmesan to meat mixture. Mix well and transfer to an 8-by-8-inch (or similar) oven-safe baking dish.

**6.** Bake until top is light brown and bubbly, about 20–30 minutes. Remove and serve hot with toasted baguette slices.

► Serves 12–14.

### WEB EXTRAS

► Read these recipes on our website to see the original Vidalia Onion Dip recipe from March 1998.

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**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

◀ **TANYA MURPHY**, Pedernales EC: Murphy's granddaughter enjoys her pool with spraying water. Her cow friends seem to want to join her.



▲ **DAVID LARGENT**, HILCO EC: The Light-house formation at Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

▼ **VALLERY ORR**, Houston County EC: The iconic Gulf Glider at Galveston Island Historic Pleasure Pier.



▲ **VICTORIA JOHNSON**, Sam Houston EC: Dancer at the 50th annual Alabama-Coushatta Powwow in Livingston.

▼ **MICHAEL CULOTTA**, Cherokee County EC: Surf fishing at Sea Rim State Park in Sabine Pass.



## UPCOMING CONTESTS

JANUARY FENCES	DUE SEPTEMBER 10
FEBRUARY POWER	DUE OCTOBER 10
MARCH FIRST RIDE	DUE NOVEMBER 10

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

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**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.



## Pick of the Month Texas Arts & Crafts Fair

**Ingram** September 28-29

(830) 367-5121, txartsandcraftsfair.com

Renowned Southwestern artist Amado Peña returns to his Texas roots as the featured heritage artist at the fair. Peña, a Laredo native who now lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, got his start at the Texas State Arts & Crafts Fair almost 50 years ago. He is among dozens of artists whose works will be on display.



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## September 7

**Beaumont Neches River Rally**, (409) 543-7967, bigthicket.org

**Goliad The Calm Before the Storm**, (361) 645-3752, texasarmy.org

**Henderson Alive & Kicking Art Show**, (903) 475-2604, facebook.com/aliveandkickingartshow

**Mansfield Music Alley**, (817) 728-3382, mansfieldmusicalley.com

## 8

**Yorktown Holy Cross Catholic Church Festival**, (361) 564-2893, holycrossyorktown.net

## 12

**Little Elm [12-15] Autumn Fest**, (972) 731-3296, littleelm.org

## 13

**Caldwell [13-14] Creative Memories Quilt Guild Quilt Show**, (512) 567-5020

**September 7  
Beaumont  
Neches River Rally**



## 14

**Buda Hornet Races**, (512) 376-8089, athleteguild.com

**Lakehills American Legion Centennial**, (830) 751-3711, alpost410.com

**Sanger SELLabration**, (940) 458-7702, sangertexas.com

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**Medina** [14-21] QuiltFest, (830) 589-2825, medinacommunitylibrary.us

## 20

**Sulphur Springs** [20-21] Lone Star Heritage Quilt Guild Quilt Show, (903) 235-5700, sulphurspringstxquilts.com

**Grandview** [20-22] Antique Alley Texas, (817) 666-5024, antiquealleytexas.com

**Plano** [20-22] Balloon Festival, (972) 867-7566, planoballoonfest.org

## 21

**Anson** Party in the Park, (325) 823-3259

**Bonham** Farming Heritage Day, (903) 583-5558, thc.texas.gov

**Bulverde** Jubilee, (210) 213-4319, bulverdejubilee.com

**Hallettsville** Rock It, Don't Knock It Benefit Playday, (361) 578-8182, theridingtherapycenter.org

**Pontotoc** Pontotoc Ranch Fire Department BBQ & Cake Auction, (325) 251-6670

**Terrell** Flights of Our Fathers Air Show & Fly-In, (972) 551-1122, bftsmuseum.org

**Victoria** Conquer Chiari Walk Across America, (361) 648-8948, conquerchiari.org

## 27

**Louise** [27-28] Louise/Hillje BBQ Cook-Off & Fall Festival, (979) 541-7056

**Trinity** [27-28] Community Fair, (936) 661-6138

**Lockhart** [27-29] Western Swing & BBQ Festival, (512) 745-0659, lockhartfest.com

September 21  
Terrell  
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## 28

**Dumas** Museum Day, (806) 935-3113, dumasmuseumandartcenter.org

**Flower Mound** Fido Fest, humanetomorrow.org/fidofest

**Mount Selman** Bull Nettle Festival, (903) 372-6607, facebook.com/bullnettlefestival

## October 4

**Forney** [4-6] St. Martin of Tours 108th Annual Carnival, (972) 564-9114, stmartinforney.org

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# Wink's Spectacle

A dot on the map in West Texas boasts keepsakes from Roy Orbison's career

WHAT DO WILLIE NELSON, JANIS JOPLIN, George Strait and Roy Orbison have in common? Besides being some of America's iconic musicians, all were born in small towns in Texas. From Joplin's Port Arthur to Strait's Poteet, Texans love their home-grown troubadours. I recently made the long drive to Wink to pay homage to Orbison, one of my favorite crooners.

Sandwiched between Kermit and Pyote, Wink is a town with a population under 1,000 and not a stoplight to its name. As they say, "If you Wink, you'll miss it." It's internationally known for nearby sinkholes, named "Wink Sinks," but its true claim to fame is that it was the childhood home of the *Oh, Pretty Woman* singer himself, Roy Kelton Orbison.

I *Drove All Night* to get to Wink (not really, but what a great song) and arrived to find a small building with a mural of Orbison and branded "MUSEUM." It was closed, but posted on the door was a number for a volunteer who was gracious enough to open the museum for me. Note to Orbison fans: If you plan to visit, call first and arrange a time.

My Orbison education began. It turns out the man in the mysterious glasses wasn't born in Wink but 350 miles away, in Vernon, in 1936. When Orbison was 6, his father gave him a guitar and changed his life. In 1946, the family moved to Wink, and by 1949, Orbison had formed the Wink Westerners, playing honky-tonks and getting local radio airtime. Orbison's 1954 Wink High School yearbook stated, "To lead a Western band is his after school wish."



**A Roy Orbison mural makes the museum devoted to him hard to miss.**

45s, including *Only the Lonely*, *Love Hurts* and *Crying*. There was a guitar played by Orbison but owned by a neighbor, who received it one Christmas morning and immediately took it to Orbison for tuning. Newspaper clippings sang of his worldwide success; one quoted Elvis Presley calling Orbison "quite possibly the greatest singer in the world."

I was impressed with it all. However, I had yet to see the *pièce de résistance*. As I stared at items in one of the cases, the volunteer asked if I'd like to see the glasses. I assumed she was talking about the dark-rimmed, purple-hued glasses in the case. I said "sure," and she explained that these were Orbison's last pair of prescription sunglasses worn at his last concert, in 1988. "Folks love trying them on," she said. My jaw dropped.

I slowly slid them on my nose and immediately thought, "I can't see anything." Contrary to popular opinion, Orbison wasn't blind, but he did have poor

Every inch of the museum, maybe 20 feet wide and 15 feet deep, was full of memorabilia. There were

eyesight and needed the Coke-bottle glasses. The dark glasses became his signature look when he was on tour with the Beatles in 1963 and forgot his regular glasses on a plane. He wore his sunglasses onstage and never looked back. Donning his glasses was like trying on one of Elvis' jumpsuits or one of Dolly Parton's wigs.

The glasses could easily be in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame but are here for folks to try on in Wink. How crazy is that? I nervously handed them back and let out a sigh of relief knowing I wouldn't be responsible for dropping a priceless artifact.

I had walked into the museum a true Roy Orbison fan and left even more so. His unique voice was unmatched. My experience proves what all Texans know—that big things can come from small towns. It also proves that when traveling the back roads of Texas, one can never be sure what one might find. Sometimes reality is even better than what you discover *In Dreams*.

Chet Garner shares his Texplorations as the host of *The Daytripper* on PBS.

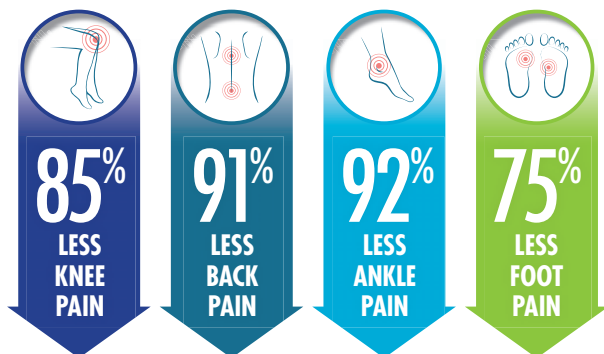
**WEB EXTRAS** ▶ Read this story on our website to see Chet's video of his visit to the Roy Orbison Museum in Wink.

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