

THE JOYS OF
PASS-ALONG PLANTS

QUICK BREADS
AND MUFFINS

THE URGENCY OF
BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2021

Hump Day

Camels, with their plodding
gaits and affable charm,
still ply the Texas desert



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February 2021



08

Every Day Is Hump Day

Camels add unique silhouettes and affable charm to West Texas expeditions.

*By Pam LeBlanc
Photos by Scott Van Osdol*

ON THE COVER

Doug Baum and Richard,
one of his camels.

ABOVE

A face that only a ... no,
that anybody could love.

Photos by Scott Van Osdol

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Pass-along plants spread joy, friendship and legacies among gardeners.

*By Sheryl Smith-Rodgers
Illustrations by Chiara Vercesi*

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By Michael Hurd

No Crape of Wrath

JUST A FRIENDLY REMINDER to resist all temptation to commit crape murder this month. Prune crape myrtles gently—or not at all.

Our February 2020 story *Crape Murder* explains it all. Many gardeners drastically saw off the trees' limbs, thinking it the proper treatment for beautiful blooms later in the summer. Not so.

"The prettiest ones I've seen have never been touched," says horticulturist Greg Grant. "And I mean *never*."



"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."

—THURGOOD MARSHALL

End of the Republic

This month marks 175 years since the formal transfer of authority in Texas from the republic to the state.

The U.S. Congress accepted the Texas Constitution on December 29, 1845, which marked Texas' legal entry into the union. On February 19, 1846, the last president of Texas, Anson Jones, turned over the reins of government to Gov. James Pinckney Henderson.

"The final act in this great drama is now performed," Jones declared. "The Republic of Texas is no more."

LIVING LARGE

Last July, Austin became the 11th American city and fourth in Texas — joining Houston, San Antonio and Dallas—with a population exceeding 1 million. The last U.S. city to hit 1 million people was San Jose, California, in 2015.



February 18

NATIONAL DRINK WINE DAY

Texas has more than 500 wineries, according to the National Association of American Wineries. Only four states have more.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE

YOU'RE NEVER
TOO OLD TO ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Here are some of the responses to our December prompt:
I wish I could ...

Find a cure for COVID-19.

SHERRYION LANE
MIDSOUTH EC
HUNTSVILLE

Have just one more day with my dad, Dixie Wheeler. I have so many questions I'd like to ask him.

RODNEY WHEELER
BLUEBONNET EC
LYTTON SPRINGS

Fit into the pants I wore before quarantine.

CARYL ZIMMERMAN
CENTRAL TEXAS EC
KINGSLAND

Figure out what my cats are thinking when they stare at me.

LAURIE L. REAGAN
BANDERA EC
LEAKEY

Give everyone a hug.

MARGARET FONTENOT
BLUEBONNET EC
SOMERVILLE

To see more responses, read Currents online.



Valor Carries On

THE NAME OF DORIS MILLER, a U.S. Navy mess attendant from Willow Grove, near Waco, who became a hero during the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, lives on in schools, roads and community centers around the country.

In 11 years the USS Doris Miller will take to the seas as the first supercarrier named for an African American and the first named for an enlisted sailor.

Miller fired an anti-aircraft gun at attacking Japanese aircraft and then pulled shipmates out of the burning water. He perished in 1943 aboard an escort carrier torpedoed in the Pacific Ocean.



TCP Contests and More

ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST

Ice Creams and Sorbets

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Manmade vs. Nature

WEB EXTRA

See writer Sheryl Smith-Rodgers divide lilies and prepare plants to pass along.



He Gave Us the Stars

“The generosity and vision of William McDonald and Violet Locke McIvor is a great story. Wouldn’t we all welcome an opportunity to go ‘mountain shopping’?”

GERALD BENNETT
COSERV
FRISCO

Alabama’s Role

While primary control of the International Space Station is in Houston, Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, also plays a vital role in its operation [*Out of This World*, November 2020].

Flight controllers in Huntsville schedule the astronauts’ daily activities and provide technical assistance as the astronauts do experiments and perform maintenance or handle emergencies related to the equipment inside the space station.

Linda Brower
Tri-County EC
Keller



Yep! And brought over some delicious food [*Burgs in a New Land*, December 2020].

KAYLA WALKER
VIA FACEBOOK



NASA.GOV

The Pinnacle

My husband and I took a week to explore the beaches and fishing villages of South Texas one year. We had heard about the Matagorda Island ferry and rented bicycles for the day [*Matagorda Island Lighthouse*, October 2020].

There were several others on the ferry, but we had all day exploring the island—hardly seeing a soul until returning to the dock. The view of the lighthouse was the pinnacle of that day.

Thank you for bringing that long-lost memory to life.

Joy Connery
Wood County EC
Lindale

Classic Cover

Huge kudos to photographer Kristin Tyler for the photo of the farrier on the October 2020 cover. It is a classic, reminiscent of the Dorothea Lange Depression photographs.

Merry Langlinais
Bandera EC
Medina

TCP WRITE TO US

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

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TEXAS MINT

We are excited to announce the release of the 2021 Texas Silver Round – Revolution Series. This is the second release of a four-year series commemorating the battles of the Texas Revolution. Each Texas Silver Round is one troy ounce .9999 fine silver.

The obverse of the high-quality mint strike features Texas' iconic lone star in the foreground. The smooth engraving of the star is framed by a textured topographical outline of the state of Texas. "TEXAS" arches proudly over the top of the round's obverse in large capital letters, with "Precious Metals" presented inversely along the opposite side. The round's mintage year is engraved in the bottom left of the round, just southwest of what would be the Rio Grande bordering Texas and Mexico.

The reverse of the 2021 release displays a scene from the famous Battle of the Alamo. It depicts two Texian soldiers including the American icon, Davy Crockett, attempting to fend off Mexican soldiers attempting to breach the walls of the Alamo.



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BATTLE OF GONZALES

first in the series ● ● ● ●

The stunning 2020 Texas Silver Round depicts a scene from the Battle of Gonzales, with three Texian revolutionaries defending the famous Gonzales cannon, while brandishing the Come And Take It Flag.

The Texas Silver Round can be purchased in a monster box produced exclusively for the Texas Mint. Packaged in 20 protective tubes of 25 rounds each, the monster box holds 500 1-ounce Texas Silver Rounds. Built from durable cold-rolled steel and finished with a matte black powder coat, the monster box lid features an orange cutout of the state of Texas. Each sealed monster box is secured with a unique serial number and a holographic seal to ensure maximum product protection.

The Texas Silver Round is also available to purchase in a similarly designed and secured mini-monster box, which contains 10 protective tubes of 25 rounds each for a total of 250 silver rounds.



BATTLE OF THE ALAMO

second in the series ● ● ● ●

The events of this famous battle took place on the days of February 23rd - March 6th, 1836. At the end of a 13-day siege, President General Antonio López de Santa Anna and his Mexican troops reclaimed the Alamo Mission, killing the Texian and immigrant occupiers.



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Doug Baum strides through the prickly Chihuahuan Desert of West Texas, a straw cowboy hat shading his face from the sun and a string of five camels sauntering behind him.

I'm perched high atop one of those camels, listening intently as Baum, owner of Texas Camel Corps, points out a canyon wren's nest, stops to inspect a rust-colored millipede marching across our path and then explains the role camels played in the Lone Star State's history.

"Texas is perfect for camels," says Baum, born in the West Texas town of Big Spring. "That point was not lost on the Army when they decided to use camels out here in the 1850s."

That's when the U.S. military imported 75 camels from Egypt, Turkey and Tunisia for use as pack animals. For nearly a decade, the heat-resistant creatures carried water and hauled supplies for the U.S. cavalry at Camp Verde, south of Kerrville.

When the program ended in 1866, the army sold the animals. Some wound up in California; others hauled freight between Texas and Mexico; a few ended up in traveling shows; and some made their way to Austin, where they were kept along Congress Avenue near the river and then sold off a few at a time.

Today Baum, who lives with his menagerie on a farm near Valley Mills, where he is a member of Heart of Texas Electric Cooperative, keeps the camels' history alive by introducing his cartoonish but affectionate creatures at events around the state. I've joined him at Cibolo Creek Ranch, south of Marfa, for an overnight camel-riding trek to learn more about the role they once played in the Big Bend.

I feel like I'm riding a rocking chair strapped to a stepladder that's being dragged down a gravel road. It's both rough and rolling, with the bonus that my camel, Cinco, swings his neck around to give me a big goofy smile now and then.

ABOVE Texas Camel Corps owner Doug Baum throws a saddle on Richard at his farm near Valley Mills.
RIGHT Richard greets the sunrise.



every
day is
hump
day



He leads treks each spring and fall at Cibolo Creek and delivers members of his eight-camel herd to museums, parks, schools and libraries. He also leads treks in Egypt, where he has a second home, and if you need a camel for a church Nativity, he's the guy to call.



Baum first fell in love with camels while working as a professional musician in Nashville in the 1990s, when he played drums for country music star Trace Adkins. He took a day job working at the Nashville Zoo.

"I had zero experience with camels," he says. "Within a week I was absolutely smitten. They're sweet, affectionate, playful and so, so gentle."

They've also got leathery, pie-sized feet; spindly, stiltlike legs; nostrils that squeeze shut to keep out blowing sand; and peach-sized eyes fringed in lush, 3-inch lashes.

Baum stuck with music for a while, but eventually "the camel thing just won," he says. "It was an obvious choice to me."

He moved back to Texas and in 1998 bought four camels, with the idea of using them for educational programs. Two of those camels—Richard and Cinco—are with us on this cool September afternoon, slowing periodically to munch on creosote bushes.

"They teach me what I should be—patient, observant, methodical," Baum says of his camels. "These are things I recognize I lack in myself."

He leads treks each spring and fall at Cibolo Creek and delivers members of his eight-camel herd to museums, parks, schools and libraries. He also leads treks in Egypt, where he has a second home, and if you need a camel for a church Nativity, he's the guy to call.

Part of Baum's mission is to dispel myths about camels. They're not, he says, ornery, smelly beasts that spit at people. Their humps aren't filled with water, either, though a camel can go 10 days or more without a drink. Camel humps—one for dromedaries, two for Bactrians—are filled with fat. (If you're riding a single-humper, you'll sit on a padded seat behind the hump. For a two-humper, you ride between the bumps.) Camels can be downright cuddly, and they don't spit—although llamas, which are closely related, do.

I learn, when Cinco exhales on me, that the stinky part of the stereotype rings true. Camels' awful breath is both



sweet and pungent, like grass clippings mixed with syrup—in part because they chew their cud. They are ruminants and employ three stomachs to process their food. Stand next to one for a few minutes, and you'll hear that digestive system in action, gurgling and glugging like a clogged drain. Also, they fart—loudly and potently.

Two other guests on the trek, Sue and Randy Howerter, Guadalupe Valley EC members, are equally taken by the animals. Randy, who makes musical instruments, met Baum at a festival in New Braunfels. Sue, a blacksmith, was intrigued, too, and the Seguin couple visited Baum's farm, where he lives with his family, the camels, five miniature donkeys, a pair of dogs, a flock of chickens, assorted sheep and goats, one horse, and "too many" kittens.

After that the Howerters needed no convincing. They headed to Cibolo Creek Ranch, where we all loaded sleeping bags and pajamas into large canvas saddlebags; climbed aboard our kneeling, straw-colored steeds; and hung on as the animals rose to full height.

ABOVE Doug Baum, walking behind the first camel, leads a trek through the desert at Cibolo Creek Ranch, south of Marfa. OPPOSITE Author Pam LeBlanc perched atop Richard.

"Sometimes you get an attachment to animals," Sue Howerter says. "It's the same with camels. They have so much personality and character."

Before our two-day trip ends, we've lumbered a dozen miles across a stark landscape that looks like the backdrop of a John Wayne movie, soaked in a spring-fed creek, eaten a traditional Moroccan meal, sung around the campfire, watched shooting stars streak across the sky and listened to coyotes yip as we snuggled in our tents.

But it's the camels that get top billing. And that's just how Baum likes it. ■

Putting Down Roots

PASS-ALONG PLANTS SPREAD JOY, FRIENDSHIP AND LEGACIES AMONG GARDENERS

Paige Eaton faced a bare yard when she and her family moved into their rural home in Wood County in 2006. After hand-prepping her first garden bed, she planted several varieties of daylilies dug up from her sister-in-law's yard down the road. Today those daylilies and many other pass-along plants are the foundation of Eaton's diversified gardens that support pollinators and other wildlife. Now she passes along plants from her yard, too.

"I love to give daylilies to friends and co-workers," says Eaton, an employee and member of Wood County Electric Cooperative. "I've even mailed them to Mississippi and Georgia. I feel good about sharing daylilies because they're hardy and can make anyone a successful gardener."

Sharing plants also saves lives—of the green kind, that is. In a yard or garden, plants multiply, often where they're not wanted. Instead of tossing extras, most gardeners prefer to give away what they've thinned out. Are those pass-along plants? Maybe. Maybe not. Definitions vary, depending on the gardener you ask. Traditionally, the term refers to plants that are easy to grow, propagate and pass on as seeds, transplants, divisions, bulbs or cuttings. They're often fragrant and rarely sold in commercial nurseries. They may also bring back fond memories of the giver or places tied to the past.

"Without pass-along plants, most of us would have lost touch with our childhoods," says Neil Sperry, a Texas gardening expert and Grayson-Collin EC member. "There's something special about being given a cutting, division or seed from your grandmother's favorite plant and then sharing it with a young person who's important to you. Some of my favorite pass-alongs are tulips, oxblood lilies, autumn daffodils, resurrection lilies and hardy amaryllis."

According to many sources, the phrase "pass-along plants" was coined by the late Allen Lacy, a gardening columnist and author. However, Lacy, who grew up around Dallas, declined the credit when he wrote in a foreword to *Passalong Plants* that the expression



"is not by any means my creation. I have heard it most of my life, possibly at my grandmother's knee."

Another custom among some Southern gardeners also goes back for generations. "When you receive a pass-along, you're not supposed to say thank you or it won't grow," says Marcia Coffman, president of the Mountain Laurel Garden Club in Bracketville and a Rio Grande EC member. "I've actually found the custom to be true. Instead, you should tell the giver, 'Oh, this makes me so happy.'"

If one pass-along can bring happiness, imagine being surrounded by them. Tables covered with pass-alongs can be found at plant sales and swaps, such as seasonal fundraisers jointly hosted by the Denton County Master Gardener Association and the Native Plant Society of Texas in Denton.



“We pot up extra plants from our gardens, like white avens, mealy blue sage and fall asters, and label them,” says Liz Moyer, a member of both organizations. “When I go to plant sales, I always look for pass-alongs because I know they’ll do well in our climate and soils.”

In the Rio Grande Valley, members of the Driftwood Garden Club in Port Isabel give away small potted plants in exchange for donations at a monthly market. Their pass-alongs usually include palms, plumerias and succulents.

“We have a lot of winter Texans who like to take home something unique from Texas that they can show their friends,” says Mary Gorbell, club president and an NEC Co-op Energy member. “One Iowa couple had a Washingtonia palm they got from us. Every summer after they

arrived here, they’d set it under their motor home’s awning. Then they’d take it back home and keep it in their garage over winter.”

Roses also rank among beloved pass-along plants. Becky Smith of Hungerford and fellow members of the Texas Rose Rustlers preserve and share old garden roses that were planted by Anglo settlers at their homesteads and cemeteries. “We host a cutting exchange three times a year,” says Smith, the group’s chairperson. “Our mission is to encourage others to grow these old roses, which have been time-tested to survive and require no spraying or fertilizers.”

Unlike old garden roses, not all plants make suitable pass-alongs. “Years ago someone gave me a Chinese tallow,” recalls Greg Grant, a Smith County extension agent with

“Later I divided the cacti into 15 pots and passed them along to my children and my sister’s children. It was all we had left of the land that our family had owned since 1889.”



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Tyler. “It had lovely fall color, but then I learned how invasive it is. Fortunately, the tree later froze and died. So be careful when people pass along something to you. Check it out before you plant it. Mexican petunias can choke out other plants, but they don’t take over an ecosystem and spread ad nauseam like Chinese privets do.”

Grant, a Deep East Texas EC member, also cautions against scooping up plants from public parks and private property. “If you don’t own the land, then you shouldn’t dig up a plant unless you have the owner’s permission,” he says. “In my hunts for plants, I’ve been known to knock on doors and offer cash.”

When is the best time to plant pass-alongs? “Most are forgiving about being dug up or divided,” Grant says. “So even if you do it at the wrong time of year, they don’t mind because pass-alongs are tough.”

Occasional losses in her gardens motivate Lin Grado, a Wood County master gardener and Wood County EC member, to share some of her plants. “For instance, if something destroys my fall obedient plant, I know I can go to a friend that I gave some to and get more,” she explains. “I know that’s a little selfish, but it’s nice to know I’ve got backups.”

Mention pass-alongs, and potted plants may come up. “I treasure my peperomia, a tropical houseplant that was given to me by the late Ralph Pinkus,” Sperry says. “He’s one of my heroes and was the founder of North Haven Gardens in Dallas. I’ve had that plant for 35 years.”

Though small, a potted cactus matters greatly to Moyer, a member of CoServ, an electric cooperative in Corinth. “Before my grandfather’s farm sold near East Sweden, I dug up some barrel cacti,” she recalls. “Later I divided the cacti into 15 pots and passed them along to my children and my sister’s children. It was all we had left of the land that our family had owned since 1889.

“Sometimes,” she adds, “a pass-along plant is the only thing you have left of someone or something that you held dear.” ■

TCP WEB EXTRA Our video shows writer Sheryl Smith-Rodgers dividing lilies and preparing plants to pass along.

SHARING CACTUSES, SUCCULENTS AND NATIVES

YEARS AGO, a friend gave my husband, James, and me a variegated agave with green and gold leaves. I planted it in our adjoining vacant lot that we call the Meadow, and it produced dozens of pups. Along the way many other pass-alongs, including Texas natives, have found homes in our gardens.

Because they’re easy to grow and share, succulents, cactuses and most native plants make ideal pass-alongs. Sedums, succulents also called stonecrops, flourish and spread in gardens. Just break off a stem and stick it in a pot or in the ground. Voilà! You’ve got a new plant. Aloe veras also make good pass-alongs.

Through the years we’ve received a Texas buckeye, Lindheimer’s crownbeard, heartleaf hibiscus, pink mint and bracted passionflower, to name only a few pass-along natives. In turn we’ve gifted Gregg’s mistflower, fragrant mistflower, flame acanthus, Turk’s cap and pearl milkweed vine. I’ve also shared seeds with friends.

As for that agave and its *many* pups, those aggressive spreaders are gone. Lesson learned: Always read up on your pass-along’s growing habits. —SSR



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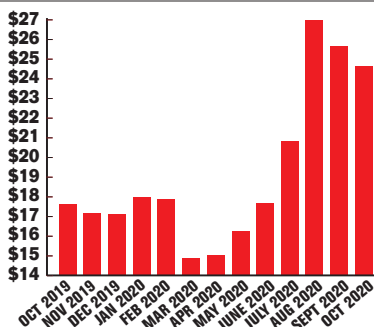
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Get the Most Life Out of Lightbulbs

DOES IT SEEM LIKE your lightbulbs are not lasting as long as they should? After all, CFLs and LEDs are supposed to last longer than incandescent bulbs, right?

Not always.

Many conditions affect the life span of a lightbulb, and some situations can cause lightbulbs to burn out prematurely.

Here are nine ways to get the most life out of your bulbs.

1. Ensure that your voltage is at the right level. Residential voltage is typically 125 volts. Anything higher can cause your lightbulbs to burn brighter and die sooner.

2. Reduce vibrations in light fixtures. Ceiling fans with lights can become off balance, causing them to shake and put strain on the delicate filaments in incandescent bulbs. Fixing the imbalance should improve the life of the lights.

3. Make sure lightbulbs are tight in their sockets and that wire connections are well fitted to the fixture. Loose connections can cause lights to flicker and eventually burn out.

4. Consider a change of bulb. CFLs claim to have long life spans but will burn out more quickly if they are switched on and off frequently. Switching to an LED is optimal.

5. Check the socket tab. There is a metal tab at the bottom of a light socket that delivers electrical current to the lightbulb. If the tab is tamped down, a good connection might not be possible anymore. To fix it, unplug the light fixture or turn off the power and bend the tab upward again with a utensil

such as a wooden popsicle stick.

6. Make sure it's not a short circuit. If a light goes out suddenly but not because of a burned-out bulb, there could be a short circuit in the wiring. A short occurs when electricity flows outside the wiring path, causing excess current. The sudden flow of current can make the breaker trip. The fix is to check for bad wiring or defective parts on the fixture.

7. Use the right bulb. Check the fixture for instructions on what wattage bulb to use. Especially with incandescent lights, it can be easy to insert a bulb with higher wattage than the fixture requires, generating excess heat that can wear a bulb out faster—and possibly start a fire.

8. Don't let fixtures overheat. When it comes to recessed lights, check the manufacturer's directions to determine whether insulation can be used above them. Using attic insulation can cause some recessed lights to overheat. This not only wears out the bulb but could also start a fire.

9. Verify that dimmers are right for the job. Older dimmer switches were designed to work with incandescent lightbulbs and may not function with LEDs or CFLs. If the bulbs on a dimmer switch burn out quickly, consider upgrading the rheostat to a modern design that accommodates newer bulbs. ■

Be My Safe Valentine

NOTHING TAKES THE ROMANCE out of Valentine's Day quite like a trip to the emergency room, so take care to avoid some common holiday hazards.

Be extra careful with Mylar helium balloons. Although they come in adorable shapes and colors to help you declare your love, Mylar balloons can be trouble. The material these balloons are made from conducts electricity, so if they're set adrift and contact overhead power lines, they could cause an explosion, fire or power outage. When finished with Mylar balloons, be sure to puncture or deflate them to release the helium.

Be sure candles are placed away from flammable materials. Candles might help set a romantic mood, but open flames near curtains or decorations like confetti and papers can light the wrong kind of fire. Only light them in fireproof areas and when clear of children and pets. Flameless LED candles offer a safe alternative.

Be wary of wax warmers, too. The trendy scent and light emitters use lightbulbs to melt wax in a tray. Although they might create an aromatic ambiance, they could catch fire if electrical connections go awry. Always monitor scented wax warmers for a few moments after plugging them in.

Be barbecue smart. If firing up the grill for a romantic Valentine's dinner, remember to use cooking oils and sprays sparingly. Excess oils from food can cause the barbecue to flare up.

Be meticulous when deep-frying. Stay out of deep trouble by ensuring that all foods are completely thawed and dry before immersing them in the fryer. Any ice on frozen food quickly becomes steam and can cause the oil to spring from the pan. The escaped oil could cause burns and ignite on exposed heating elements.

Be careful when decorating a fireplace hearth. Your heart might be in the right place, but the hearth is no place for flammable cards, flags, decorations or wrapping paper. A clutter-free area around the fireplace is the best way to prevent unwanted flames. ■



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Promote safety. Gas appliances such as water heaters, dryers and furnaces release combustion gases like carbon monoxide through their venting systems. Leaky ductwork in your system can cause "back drafting," which draws gases back into the living space rather than expelling them outdoors. Sealing leaks reduces this risk.

Save money. Leaky ducts decrease heating and cooling system efficiency by as much as 20%. Sealing and insulating ducts increases efficiency, lowers bills and eventually pays for itself in energy savings. ■



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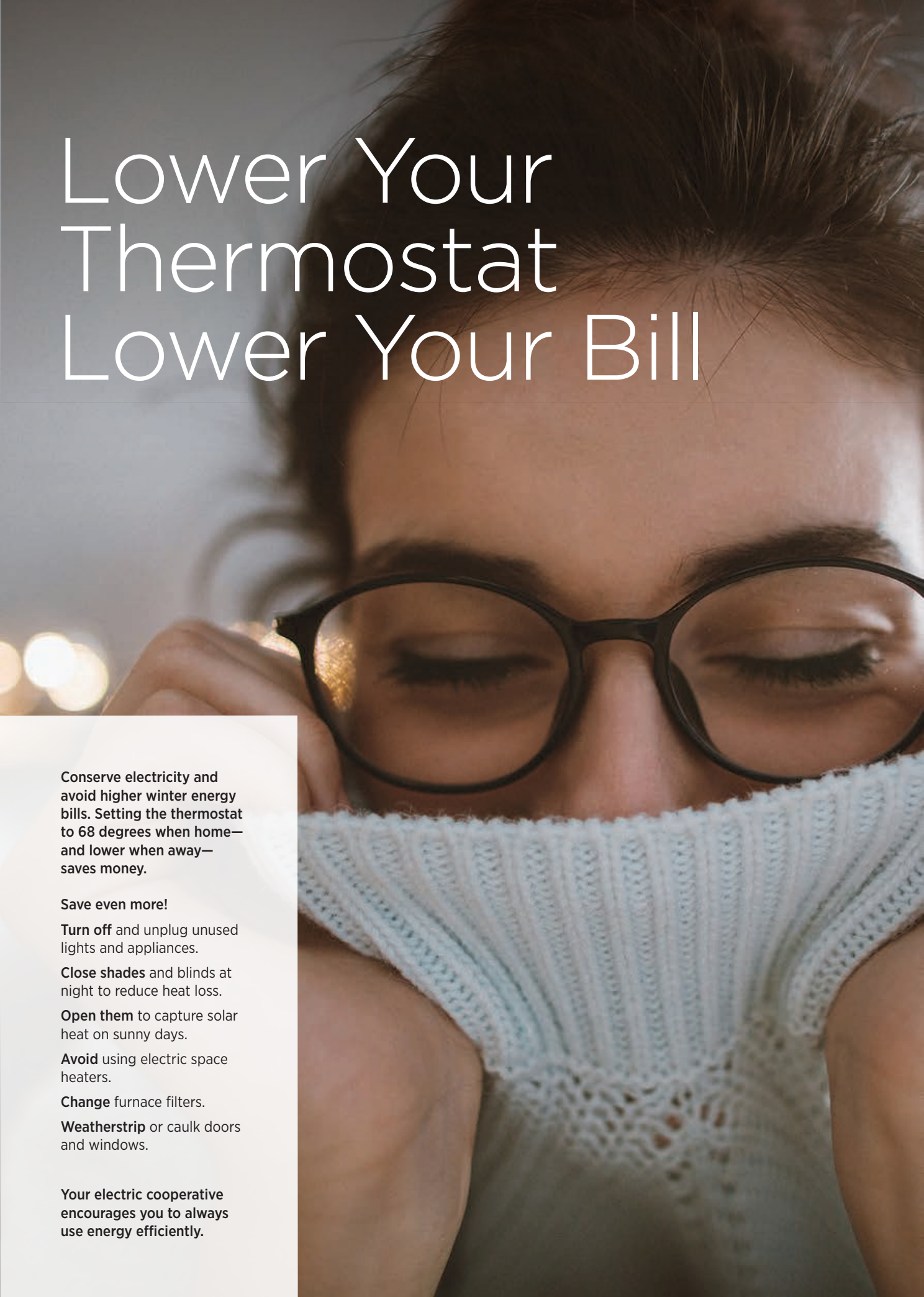
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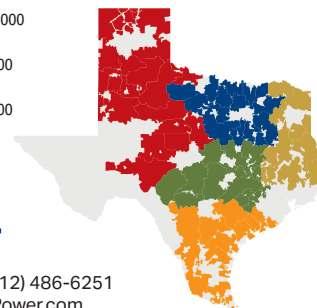
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A Spectacle, by George

Washington's Birthday Celebration in Laredo has bridged cultures since 1898

BY ELAINE PEÑA • ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL COX

EVEN THOUGH I WAS BORN and raised in Laredo, I did not know the background of what actually transpired during the boisterous Washington's Birthday Celebration on the Juarez-Lincoln International Bridge each February. This birthday party, the largest of its kind in the U.S., drawing as many as 400,000 partygoers, had taken place annually since 1898—though it is canceled in 2021 for the first time.

During my early years, I would watch and work, selling bottles of water or cans of soda from an ice chest to make easy money. My family would go to popular events like the carnival and the Jalapeño Festival. The smell of deep-fried corndogs made me dizzy, and watching contestants eat jalapeños hand over fist troubled me, but I still looked forward to going. It gave us the same fun and novelty you find with hometown fairs everywhere.

When I began my academic career, I decided to study the spectacle surrounding Washington's Birthday as a research project. I wanted to know more about the true meaning of this celebration. I wanted to find an explanation for why residents in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, continued to celebrate the birthday of George Washington, the first U.S. president, why that tradition persisted and why representatives from both countries hold on to the ritual of meeting on the international bridge. Out of that research came my book, *¡Viva George!: Celebrating Washington's Birthday at the U.S.-Mexico Border*.

One of the most challenging aspects of my years of research on both sides of the border was the search for the deeper significance of the idiosyncratic aspects of the celebration. I learned about the months of behind-the-scenes preparation and even participated in a horseback ride-along with Border Patrol agents to understand the origins of the event.

Originally organized and promoted by members of a white fraternity who impersonated Native Americans, the two-day festival included a reception in the middle of the international bridge, a reenactment of the Boston Tea Party, a grand parade culminating with Pocahontas receiving a key to the city and a pyrotechnic show advertised as “the greatest display ever seen in the State of Texas.” This cross-border tradition has changed over time, but the grand parade and the international bridge ceremony continue, and the event is still unabashedly ostentatious.

I had learned about the history and culture of Native Americans in school, but those lessons did not match up with the spectacle presented in Washington's Birthday. “Playing Indian” is not appropriate. Rather than disparage those activities, I decided to use my research to understand the broader impact of the events.

Now the festivities include more than two dozen events in February, but the bridge ceremony is still the highlight. It includes *abrazos*—hugs—between celebrities and high-profile U.S. and Mexican politicians as well as actors portraying Washington and Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the priest known as the “father of Mexican independence.”

These embraces are presented as evidence of how *los dos Laredos*, the two Laredos, have maintained cross-border ties, even during times of crisis.

In one important sense, the celebration is purely promotional, confirming the significance of international trade. As a researcher, I started asking basic questions about the legitimacy of the celebration. My research told me that it is less important to question the validity of the ideas behind the festivities. I wondered if the ritualistic mythologizing of history could lead to any conclusion other than evidence that communities invent traditions.

Reading up on critical studies of nation and nationalism helped me take a big step back and figure out how to piece together the puzzle without expecting this border tradition to conform to any familiar national narrative.

In the course of more than a decade of research for my book, I learned that Washington's Birthday Celebration has ensured positive media coverage for Laredo, solidified cross-border political and economic connections between the U.S. and Mexico, and even provided free and clear border crossing privileges to festivalgoers.

Studying the meaning behind celebrations changes how we think about national history and national heroes and helps us consider which heroes are worthy of veneration. Border enactments such as Washington's Birthday are more than goodwill gestures because they challenge the perception of the border as a place only of violence and illegality. ■



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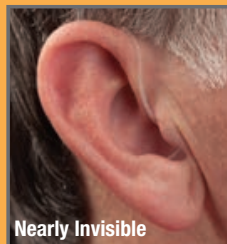
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BY W.F. STRONG

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In 1895, Richard King’s ranching partner, Mifflin Kenedy, sold 7,000 cows to South Texas neighbor Ed Lasater. Dairy cows, Lasater knew, would deliver five times the return on investment as beef cattle. He started with Durham short-horns because that breed could support either a beef or dairy operation. It would be more than a dozen years before he raised the herd of Jersey cattle with

which he created the dairy that launched Falfurrias Butter.

Falfurrias butter was first made in Falfurrias, southwest of Corpus Christi, in 1909, five years after Lasater founded the town. People have wondered whether the butter is named for the town or the town for the butter, but they were both named after Lasater’s ranch, which was named for a grove of trees called *La Mota de Falfurrias*. Lasater claimed Falfurrias came from the Lipan Apache language and, loosely translated, meant “land of heart’s delight.” The truth of the word’s origin could not be confirmed, or absolutely refuted, by a Lipan Apache linguist.

The butter was the town’s best-known export in those early days, and likely remains so today. Even the town’s high school mascot, the Jerseys, was named after the butter’s real creators. Indeed, at one point, Falfurrias was home to the largest Jersey cattle herd in the world.

That gave special meaning to the once-popular bumper sticker there: “Watch Your Step, You’re in Jersey Country.” I’m not sure the author intended the double meaning, but it certainly provided a good deal of local levity until it was discontinued.

Falfurrias remains a popular niche brand of butter. In Texas it is sold at all major grocery stores and some smaller ones, too. It has been quite popular in northern Mexico for generations.

A friend tells me that as a child in Saltillo, he remembers his mother bringing back the *mantequilla dulce de Falfurrias*—sweet butter from Falfurrias—as a special treat for the kids anytime she traveled to Texas.

A Texas Marine in World War II recalled that as he was wading ashore in the battle for Okinawa, a Falfurrias Butter crate bumped up against his leg in the surf, a comforting reminder of home.

Falfurrias Butter outgrew Falfurrias. It became so popular that it was eventually bought by the Dairy Farmers of America, but it is still made in Texas, and sales over the past year have grown 20%. It is made by Keller’s Creamery in Winnsboro and has grown at a Texas-sized pace of 40% in recent years.

When you drive through Falfurrias today, on state Highway 285, you can still see the vintage Falfurrias Butter sign on the side of the old creamery. The town newspaper, *Falfurrias Facts*, occupies the building today.

In the interest of full disclosure and ethical transparency, I have to reveal that I am also an export of Falfurrias, and even though I know on which side my bread is buttered, I assure you that it does not affect the veracity of this commentary. ■

Quick Breads and Muffins

Fruit and chocolate together reward a baking itch

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Some of the first recipes I learned how to make as a child were quick breads and muffins, sourced from a splattered red Betty Crocker cookbook. Their simple preparation makes them easy enough for a baking novice, but they're also dependable, making them a food I turn to again and again whenever I get a baking itch. These muffins are of the big, bakery-size variety, but you can make them in a standard muffin tin if you like.

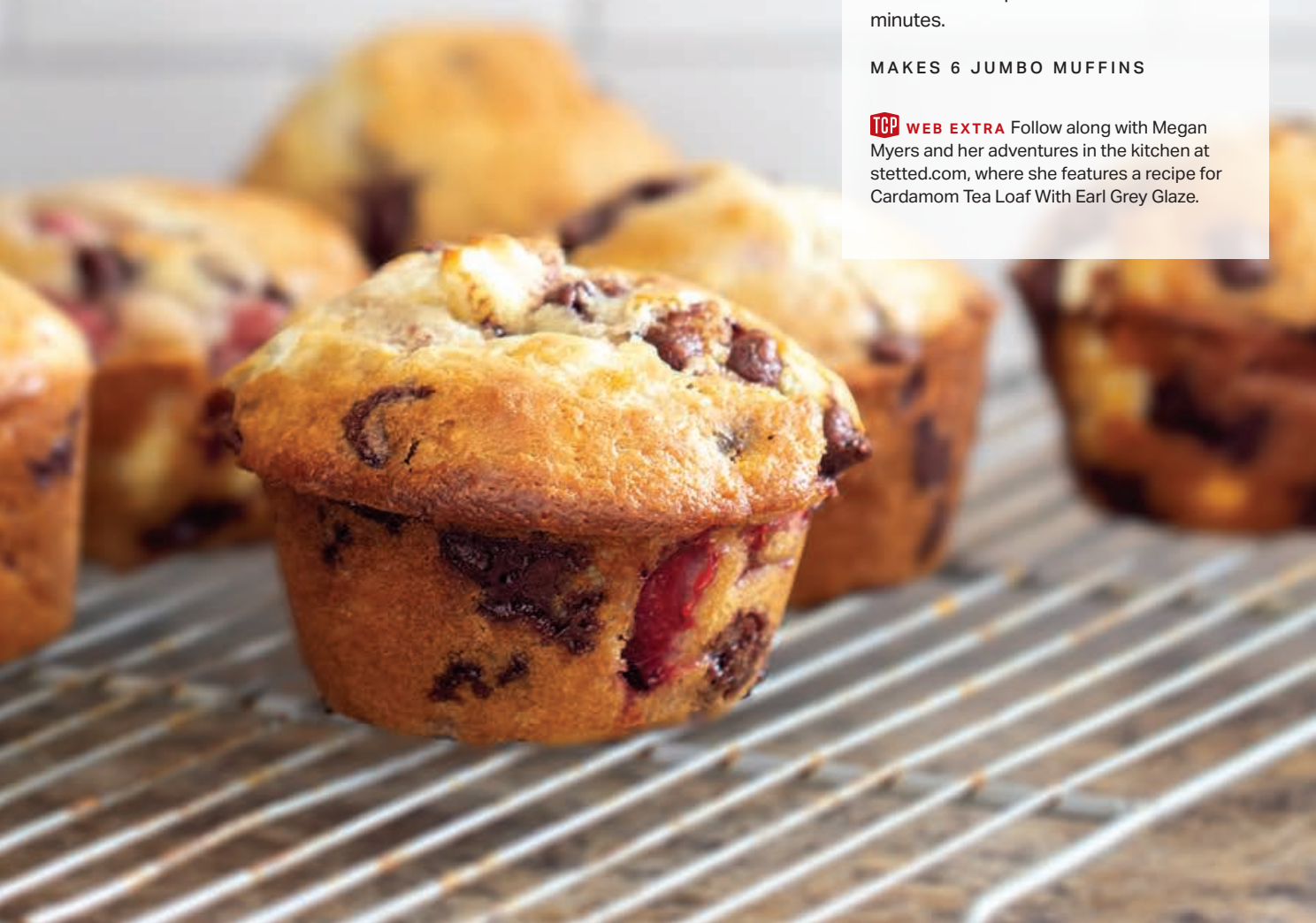
Strawberry Cheesecake Muffins

2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup sugar
2 eggs
¼ cup (½ stick) butter, melted and cooled, plus more for the pan
¾ cup milk
1 cup diced strawberries
3 ounces cream cheese, cut into chunks
1 cup milk chocolate chunks

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Coat a jumbo (Texas-size) muffin tin with butter and set aside.
2. In a small bowl, stir together flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together sugar and eggs until blended. Whisk in melted butter, then add milk.
4. Stir in flour mixture until just mixed. Gently fold in strawberries, cream cheese and chocolate chunks.
5. Fill muffin cups ¾ full and bake 20–24 minutes.

MAKES 6 JUMBO MUFFINS

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Cardamom Tea Loaf With Earl Grey Glaze.





Blackberry Muffins

JANET STEPHENS
BOWIE-CASS EC

Sour cream makes these blackberry muffins wonderfully tender. Fresh or frozen fruit works equally well, but Stephens recommends letting frozen berries thaw and drain overnight to remove excess moisture.

- 2½ cups flour**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 tablespoon baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon baking soda**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon**
- 2 eggs**
- 1 cup sour cream**
- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, melted and cooled**
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract**
- 1 teaspoon milk**
- 1½ cups (5–6 ounces) blackberries, fresh or frozen**

COOK'S TIP If using fresh berries, cut them in half vertically. If using frozen berries, thaw, drain excess liquid and pat dry, then toss in 1 tablespoon flour before adding to batter.

- 1.** Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line 18 muffin cups with paper liners or coat with nonstick spray and set aside.
- 2.** In a small bowl, whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon. In a large bowl, combine eggs, sour cream, butter, vanilla and milk and stir until smooth. Mix in flour mixture until just combined. Fold in blackberries, taking care not to crush the fruit.
- 3.** Divide batter among muffin cups and bake 17–20 minutes. Let cool in pan 5 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely or enjoy warm.

MAKES 18 MUFFINS

[MORE RECIPES >](#)

\$500 WINNER

Chocolate Banana Bread

BECKY YOUNG
COSERV



This banana bread variation has a delightful swirl of chocolate running through it. Don't skip the pecans and sugar on top, which caramelize and pair well with the banana flavor. If the nuts brown too quickly during baking, tent the bread with foil during the last 20 minutes to prevent burning.

MAKES 1 LOAF



- 2 cups flour**
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- 1 cup sugar**
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter, softened, plus more for the pan**
- 1½ cups mashed banana (about 4 bananas)**
- 2 eggs**
- ⅓ cup plain yogurt**
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips**
- ½ cup chopped pecans**
- 1 tablespoon raw sugar or brown sugar**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat an 8.5-by-4.5-inch loaf pan with butter and set aside.
- 2.** In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda and salt. In a large bowl, beat sugar and butter together until smooth. Mix in mashed banana, eggs, yogurt and vanilla. Add flour mixture to wet ingredients, stirring until just combined.
- 3.** Place chocolate chips in a small bowl and melt in the microwave for 1 minute, then whisk the chocolate smooth. Cool slightly and stir in 1 cup of batter, mixing until no streaks remain.
- 4.** Spoon batters alternately into prepared pan, then swirl with a knife to marble. Top with chopped pecans and sugar.
- 5.** Bake 60–70 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes, then remove from pan to a wire rack to cool completely.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

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Almond Poppy Seed Bread

LEAH MERCER
CECA

Fragrant, moist and perfect for teatime, this bread is a cinch to make. It keeps well, so you can enjoy slices throughout the week and freeze the second loaf for later—or wrap it up for a pretty housewarming gift.

COOK'S TIP If you want a topping, whisk together ¼ cup orange juice, ¾ cup powdered sugar, ½ teaspoon vanilla extract, ½ teaspoon butter extract and ½ teaspoon almond extract until smooth. Pour glaze over cooled bread.

Shortening, butter or nonstick spray, for the pans

3 eggs

2½ cups sugar

1½ teaspoons salt

3 cups flour, plus more for the pans

1½ teaspoons baking powder

1½ cups milk

1⅞ cups vegetable oil

1½ tablespoons poppy seeds

1½ tablespoons vanilla extract

1½ tablespoons almond extract

1½ tablespoons butter extract

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour two loaf pans and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, beat eggs lightly, then whisk in sugar and salt. In a small bowl, combine flour and baking powder. Add alternately with milk and oil to egg mixture.
3. Stir in poppy seeds and vanilla, almond and butter extracts. Pour into prepared pans and bake 60 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

MAKES 2 LOAVES

Great Balls of Fire Cornbread

GINGER CLARDY
BANDERA EC

Cornbread qualifies as a quick bread, and this version adds cheese and jalapeño pepper for the perfect dinner accompaniment.

Butter, for the pan

1 cup cornmeal

¾ cup flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

½ teaspoon salt

2 eggs

1 cup whole kernel corn

1 cup buttermilk

1 cup grated cheddar cheese

¼ cup seeded, chopped jalapeño pepper

3 tablespoons olive oil

1. Butter an 8- or 10-inch cast-iron skillet and place it in the oven as it preheats to 400 degrees.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the cornmeal, flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, lightly beat eggs, then stir in corn, buttermilk, cheese, jalapeño and oil. Add to dry mixture and stir until just barely combined.
3. Remove hot skillet from oven, pour in batter, then bake cornbread 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

SERVES 8



TCP WEB EXTRA So many options for baking bread—and breaking bread—online. Visit our website for more than 100 bread and muffin recipes.

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



Centuries ago, Persians, Tibetans and Mayans considered turquoise a gemstone of the heavens, believing the striking blue stones were sacred pieces of sky. Today, the rarest and most valuable turquoise is found in the American Southwest—but the future of the blue beauty is unclear.

On a recent trip to Tucson, we spoke with fourth generation turquoise traders who explained that less than five percent of turquoise mined worldwide can be set into jewelry and only about twenty mines in the Southwest supply gem-quality turquoise. Once a thriving industry, many Southwest mines have run dry and are now closed.

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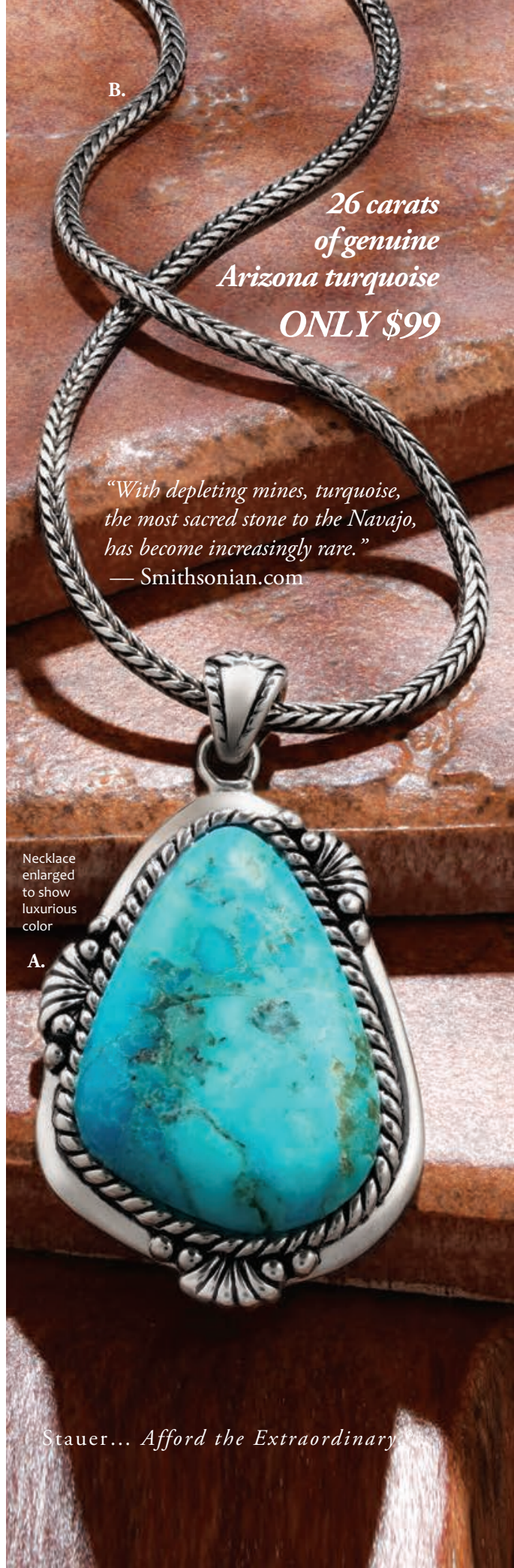
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Caddo Monuments

Centuries-old sacred mounds remain from a Native American culture that thrived near Nacogdoches

BY CHET GARNER

EVEN THOUGH DETAILS of some events in Texas history are always debated, the origin of the state's name not so much. Native Americans called the Caddos have a word, *Taysha*, that means friend, which the Spanish translated into *tejas* as the name for the region and the people.

The Caddo Nation once stretched from Northeast Texas to Missouri. Roughly 25 miles west of Nacogdoches, the Pineywoods open onto a grassy field marked by three earthen mounds. Twelve hundred years earlier, I might have encountered a Caddo community of up to 150 grass houses and 900 people. Now a visit to Caddo Mounds State Historic Site there allows a glimpse into this ancient and sophisticated community. A tornado destroyed the site's permanent visitor center in 2019, but a temporary headquarters offers tours.

A tour guide brought the entire site to life. The first mound is the burial mound, where Caddo leaders were interred with supplies for the six-day journey into the afterlife, where they became stars—in the celestial sense. The second mound is a ceremonial, low platform that served originally as a stage. Across Texas Highway 21 is the temple mound, which was the largest and site of religious ceremonies and worship. I felt like I was looking at the Texas version of the pyramids of Giza. These mounds were the ceremonial center of the region.

Archaeologists have excavated parts of the site and learned details about the farming and trading the Caddos practiced centuries ago. The Caddos followed sophisticated social, religious and political systems that helped them thrive for 500 years. The site inspires present-day Caddo people to bring ancient practices back to life and preserve the culture that gave Texas its name. ■

ABOVE Chet at the temple mound, the largest at Caddo Mounds State Historic Site.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from Caddo Mounds State Historic Site and check out his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.

Know Before You Go

Some events may have been affected by COVID-19. Call or check an event's website for scheduling details.

FEBRUARY

04

Frisco [4–7] World Olympic Gymnastics Academy Classic and Liukin Invitational, (972) 497-4800, woga.net

San Angelo [4–21] Stock Show, (325) 653-7785, sanangelorodeo.com

05

Kerrville [5–6, 12–14, 19–21] Villainous Company, (830) 896-9393, caillouxperformingarts.com

06

Kerrville [6–March 19] America the Beautiful: Women Artists of the West National Exhibition, (830) 896-2553, museumofwesternart.com

07

San Marcos Half Marathon, 10K and 5K, (210) 722-4548, toursanmarcos.com

11

Nocona [11–13] Mardi Gras Nocona Style, (940) 825-3526, nocona.org

Beaumont [11–14] Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas, (409) 721-8717, mardigrastx.com

12

Lufkin Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus Live!, (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org/performing-arts-series

Luckenbach [12–13] Hug-In and Valentine Ball, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Port Lavaca [12–13] February Frenzy, (361) 726-5126, stsda.org

13

McKinney [12-14] Third Monday Trade Days, (972) 562-5466, thirdmondaytradedays.com

Fredericksburg [12-14, 19-21, 26-28] 9 to 5, (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

14

Mesquite Be Mine at the Ranch, (972) 216-6468, visitmescquitetx.com

El Paso Marathon, (915) 534-0600, elpasomarathon.org

McKinney Krewe of Barkus Virtual Dog Parade, (972) 547-2660, artinstituteofmckinney.com

19

Fredericksburg [19-21] Trade Days, (210) 846-4094, fbgtradedays.com

20

Houston Creole Heritage Festival, (281) 888-4153, houstoncreolefest.com

Gruene [20-21] Old Gruene Market Days, (830) 832-1721, gruenemarketdays.com

26

Junction [26-27] Freezer Disc Golf Tourney, (512) 557-2482, junctiontexas.com/disc-golf

27

Mesquite [27-28] Texas Fly Fishing and Brew Festival, 1-800-541-2355, txflyfishingfestival.org

MARCH

05

Grapevine First Friday at the Farm, (817) 410-3185, nashfarm.org

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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Event Calendar

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Bad to the Bone

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The blade is full tang, meaning it doesn't stop at the handle but extends to the length of the grip for the ultimate in strength. The blade is made from 420 surgical steel, famed for its sharpness and its resistance to corrosion.

The handle is made from genuine natural bone, and features decorative wood spacers and a hand-carved motif of two overlapping feathers—a reminder for you to respect and connect with the natural world.

This fusion of substance and style can garner a high price tag out in the marketplace. In fact, we found full tang, stainless steel blades with bone handles in excess of \$2,000. Well, that won't cut it around here. We have mastered the hunt for the best deal, and in turn pass the spoils on to our customers.

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Saddles

Saddle up, and let's hit the trail. This month our readers show off their well-worn and well-loved riding gear. Made of traditional leather or lighter-weight synthetics, saddles are passed down through families and remind us of hard work and the spirit of the Old West.

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

**JODY BRODHECKER
PEDERNALES EC**
Saddles too dear to part with.

**TERRY SUELTMAN
PEDERNALES EC**
"This was the 'little partner' of a cowgirl who rode up to us with her dog in the pouch."

**BEATRICE LUSK
CHEROKEE COUNTY EC**
"Debra riding Freckles."

**ANNE BARCAK
SAN PATRICIO EC**
The Glasscock brothers water their horses while working cattle, circa 1960.



Upcoming Contests

- DUE FEB 10** Manmade vs. Nature
- DUE MAR 10** Night Life
- DUE APR 10** Portraits

Enter online and review submission rules at TexasCoopPower.com/Contests.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.



Time To Talk About *That*

Black History Month takes on a sense of urgency this year

BY MICHAEL HURD
ILLUSTRATION BY TRACI DABERKO

BLACK HISTORY MONTH is a singular, isolated observance drawn out through February to recognize African American contributions to America's formation and image. For generations the great majority of those feats were ignored by the writers of history texts, but now the recognition comes through literature and several weeks of ceremonies, seminars, marches, parades and assorted TV programs.

Even so, the prevailing feel can be obligatory and condescending—as though the subject dare not be broached during the other 11 months of the year. “Oh, we can talk about *THAT* in February!”

So, here we are again, time to talk about *THAT*, but Black History Month 2021 has a different feel from its 95 predecessors, even a sense of urgency given the social upheaval of 2020. There is an

increased interest in Black history as a way of understanding how and why we have arrived at this point of social reckoning, as a country, through an examination of the evolution of the African American community.

Historian Carter G. Woodson created Black History Week in 1926 as a natural extension of the cultural and intellectual Harlem Renaissance, with its cast of exceptional creative talents—Alain Locke, Langston Hughes and others—pushing for racial equality by extolling the realities of post-slavery African American life in the U.S. Woodson emphasized a need to recognize the achievements of African Americans.

Woodson chose February because of the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and Frederick Douglass (February 14), two men who were revered and celebrated in Black communities. By the 1970s the annual celebration had gained widespread popularity and was nudged to cover the entire month. Black History Month has been both hailed as an uplifting force and maligned as racially polarizing, a phenomenon that is currently more pronounced than the desegregation efforts of the 1960s.

Woodson never thought the study of Black history should be confined to one week. He established Black history education programs that would cover a full year of study, a “Black History Year.” Further, he welcomed the future when a designation of any kind regarding the study of Black history was no longer necessary.

So it was heartening last year when the Texas Education Agency OK'd high schools providing African American Studies as an elective course, a major positive step.

Welcome to the contemporary “New Negro” movement with more diverse voices and a new iteration of Black History Month for wider, rapt audiences acknowledging that Black history is American history.

Let's talk about *THAT* ... every day. ■

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24680104 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 3/1/21

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PREDATOR ★★★★★ (4357)

3500w Super Quiet
Inverter Generator

\$769.99
~~\$799.99~~

Save \$1,329

Compare to
Honda EU3000IS1A
\$2,099

ITEM 56720/63584 shown

24687695 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

PREDATOR ★★★★★ (4094)

6.5 HP (212 cc) OHV
Horizontal Shaft Gas Engine

\$99.99
~~\$124.99~~

Save \$230

Compare to
Honda
GX200UT20X2
\$329.99

ITEM 60363/69730 shown

24691106 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

PITTSBURGH ★★★★★ (2126)

4" Ratcheting Bar Clamp/Spread

99¢
~~\$1.99~~

Save 84%

Compare to
Irwin 1964747
\$6.49

ITEM 64805/62242/68974 shown

24722819 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

CENTECH ★★★★★ (4130)

2/10/50 AMP, 12v Battery Charger
and Engine Starter

\$34.99
~~\$54.99~~

Save 38%

Compare to
Schumacher
SE-1250
\$56.93

ITEM 60581/60653 shown

24729585 LIMIT 2 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

drillmaster ★★★★★ (7151)

4-1/2" Angle Grinder

\$9.99
~~\$13.99~~

Save 56%

Compare to
Ironlon
61451
\$22.99

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

24733091 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

THUNDERBOLT ★★★★★ (4166)

Alkaline Batteries
AA, AAA - 24 PACK

\$4.99
~~\$6.99~~

Save 61%

Compare to
Energizer 551413526
\$12.99

ITEM 92404 shown

24737735 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC ★★★★★ (1856)

3/8" x 50 ft.
Retractable Air Hose Reel

\$59.99
~~\$79.99~~

Save \$46

Compare to
Kobalt
SGY-AIR184
\$106

ITEM 64685/93897 shown

24760373 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

Solar Rope Light ★★★★★ (4572)

\$7.99
~~\$12.99~~

Save 75%

Compare to
Hampson Bay
61330
\$32.97

ITEM 63941/44625/64353 shown

24774585 LIMIT 4 - Exp. 3/1/21

Use Online & In-Store

COVERPRO ★★★★★ (2259)

10 ft. x 17 ft. Portable Garage

\$174.99
~~\$199.99~~

Save \$115

Compare to
ShelterLogic
76377
\$290.75

ITEM 62859/63055/62860 shown

24781299 LIMIT 1 - Exp. 3/1/21

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Internet**

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