

OUTLANDISH CHARACTERS  
OF BYGONE RODEOS

WHEN THE QUEEN  
CAME TO TEXAS

CHET LOOKS AT  
BUDDY HOLLY'S LEGACY

# Texas Coop Power

FOR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 2022

## Esports Enters the Arena

Students play their way  
to scholarships and careers  
in video gaming





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At 100,000 square feet, Esports Stadium Arlington is the largest dedicated gaming facility in North America.

*Photo courtesy Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau*



## FINISH THIS SENTENCE THE BABY OF THE FAMILY ALWAYS ...

**TCP** Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to [letters@TexasCoopPower.com](mailto:letters@TexasCoopPower.com) or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town.

Below are some of the responses to our December prompt: **The hardest job in the world has to be ...**

A single mom.

TISH CORTINAS  
COSERV  
MCKINNEY

That's easy. Utility lineman.

GINA SCHULTE HALLE  
VIA FACEBOOK

Still being a rancher in Central Texas when you are 88 years old.

SCOTT SINGLETON  
PEDERNALES EC  
MARBLE FALLS

Taking care of your aging, ailing parents.

MARY DIAZ  
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC  
SHERMAN

The caretaker of a spouse with dementia.

SHARON MARTIN  
UNITED COOPERATIVE SERVICES  
GRANBURY

To see more responses, read Currents online.

# 'Dillo Day

THE FOLKS IN BEE CAVE, just west of Austin, don't pay much attention to Punxsutawney Phil on Groundhog Day. Instead, they rely on an armadillo named Bee Cave Bob on February 2 to prognosticate the arrival of spring. Bob has served the role since 2012.



## TWOSDAY

February flaunts a special Tuesday this year with a rare numerical alignment: 2/22/22. And twice that day, at 2:22, deuces are really wild.

(If you insist on using the 24-hour clock, the second instance of twos aligning that day will be 22:22.)

# Best Dressed

The nation's electric co-ops have deployed enough wind and solar power capacity to serve nearly

**2.7 million** homes.

A TEXAS A&M University professor has developed water-based nanocoatings that, when added to military uniforms, protect against fire and UV light and change color in the presence of certain chemicals.

The softness of cotton and the strength of nylon are typically compromised when a protective property is added, but Jaime Grunlan has come up with a nontoxic solution that can add protection without changing the structure of the fabric. He hopes this technology can also benefit nonmilitary protective clothing.



## 50 Years of Easy Joe

Mr. Coffee, the first automatic drip machine for home use, started making it a little easier to get going in the morning in 1972.



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**RECOMMENDED READING**  
Chet Garner visited another West Texas spot with keepsakes from a musical legend, Roy Orbison, in *Wink's Spectacle* from September 2019.



RKO PICTURES | GETTY IMAGES

**A Wonderful Flick**

“It is nice that this old black-and-white movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, is still a treasure. I bet it will be for another 75 years.”

STEPHANIE RIGGIN  
BLUEBONNET EC  
LOCKHART

**Looking Out for Bison**

I was born in the Ozarks at Evening Shade, Arkansas, but I got here as quickly as I could. I married a native Texas girl 20 years ago.

I am a true Texas history buff and love your monthly stories. I had never heard of the Texas State Bison Herd [*Last of Their Kind*, November 2021]. Please keep the stories coming.

J.D. Perkins III  
Bluebonnet EC  
Red Rock

What one animal said to another [*Safe Passage*, November 2021]: “Oh, let’s don’t cross here. Let’s go down to the land bridge, which is 5 miles south of here. It’s much safer.”

JOHN PERRIN  
VIA FACEBOOK

**Snowbird Love**

My husband and I are winter Texans. Your magazine teaches us about our winter home state and provides us with travel ideas while we are there.

Merlene S. DeZur  
NEC Co-op Energy  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**True to Her Word**

I live in the Maverick community [*Biography of a Word*, November 2021]. My house is near the old Maverick School, which I love to photograph. A roadside marker dedicated to Maverick is nearby. And, yes, I am a maverick.

Sherry York  
Via Facebook

**Reaching Readers**

*Carpe Diem, Mom* [December 2021] so aptly expressed Babs Rodriguez’s feelings in a clear and fun way. It also demonstrated her love of her parents and family, which is always nice to hear.

Greg Sethness  
Central Texas EC  
Sunrise Beach



ANNA GODEANSKI

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Austin, TX 78701

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

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Sincerely, A. Macon, Williamsburg, VA

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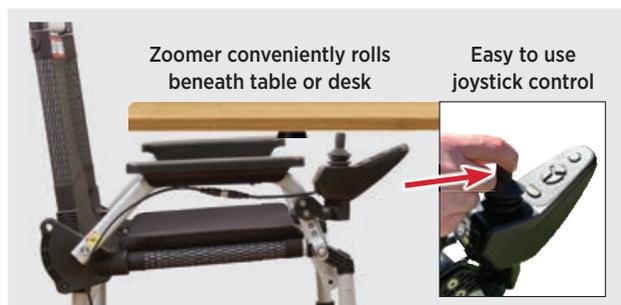
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# A Whole New Ballgame

**The booming business  
of esports finds eager  
participants in rural schools**

BY CHRIS BURROWS

## Ryan Conger thought his athletics career was over.

Rounding third base in a baseball game in 2017, the LeTourneau University sophomore hit an uneven spot in the field. He heard a pop in his knee and knew right away it was his ACL. He was gutted.

“I was like, man, if I don’t have baseball, I really don’t know what I’m going to do,” he said. “I make good grades, but it was only because I wanted to play baseball.”

Sidelined with what can be a career-ending injury, Conger channeled his competitive energy into a video game called NBA 2K. The native of Palmer, south of Dallas, worked his way up the basketball game’s rankings, playing against others from around the world, and was drafted in 2018 by a professional competitive gaming affiliate of the Dallas Mavericks NBA team.

In September, Conger and his team won their second straight championship on a virtual basketball court, marking Conger as one of the best NBA 2K players in the world and earning him a cut of a half-million-dollar prize. His competitive career wasn’t over; it just looks a whole lot different now.

Conger and his teammates occupy one of the many big and bright stages of competitive video gaming—known as esports—and their work and winnings are made possible by the booming new industry that attracts 26.6 million monthly viewers who watch gamers compete in a vast array of virtual venues. Beyond sports games, the online universe extends to strategy and battle arena games and even traditional board games, like chess.

Esports brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in 2021 and has given rise to a whole host of career paths for professionals in marketing, information



technology, game design, broadcasting and many other fields—in addition to the game-playing pros on arena stages and online. Now educators at schools are preparing students to take advantage.

“Esports is not the five professionals sitting on the stage,” said Matt Tarpley, a member of the Texas Scholastic Esports Federation board. “There’s 10 times more people behind the scenes doing all sorts of other work.”

In 2018, Tarpley approached the principal at the high school in Merkel, west of Abilene, where he worked in IT. He pitched a gaming team that would be managed by an esports-centered marketing class.

“I said, ‘Man, I don’t necessarily understand this, but I do understand that our kids are going to be into it, so let’s try it,’” Principal James Stevens said. Tarpley taught the class and coached the team, and more than two-thirds of the school’s students expressed interest in the class.

“We used to get in trouble for playing video games, but now it’s really cool because we see that video games help us develop our problem-solving skills, our critical-thinking skills,” said Jansen Wilhite, who took over for Tarpley in 2021. “These are all great skills to have for when we enter the job force.”

Wilhite grew up with video games, playing Donkey Kong as a child and World of Warcraft with her husband as an adult. Her degree is in microbiology, but she teaches physics and now Merkel’s gaming course, where her students learn all about the types of video games, how they’re developed and how to foster positive gameplay environments.

“I never anticipated a career in video games, but here we are,” Wilhite said. “It’s really cool for me to get to use both halves of myself at work.”

ABOVE Ryan Conger competes in the 2021 NBA 2K league playoffs four years after an ACL tear ended his college baseball career. Conger said he planned to use his winnings to help his father open a food truck.



Wilhite also runs Merkel’s after-school esports team, which competes in online chess and other video games against teams across Texas. Like the team at Sabine High School, in Upshur Rural Electric Cooperative’s territory in Northeast Texas, where technology director Randy Cox was surprised by the buy-in he received from the superintendent.

“When you tell someone you want to start a program where we do competitive video games, I expected to get a little bit of a laugh, but he was very supportive,” Cox said. “It’s one more thing that students can get involved in with our school.”

Merkel, Sabine and more than 400 other high schools across Texas now field esports teams, and even some middle schools are beginning to form clubs—part of a pipeline forming to feed some 250 colleges across the country that offer nearly \$15 million in scholarships to esports competitors and to feed the array of fields that support all of it.

Dallas public schools boast 60 esports clubs, but rural districts like Merkel and Sabine are making sure their students don’t get left behind. They’re working cooperatively to learn what’s working and what isn’t, how to get buy-in from administrators, where to get resources for

computers and equipment, and how to form leagues while the University Interscholastic League ponders official esports inclusion. Not every school has gamers on staff, fast internet or money for high-powered computers.

“Our rural schools in our area have always said, ‘Hey, we understand that we can’t do this by ourselves, but if we come together, we can get things done,’” said Shawn Schlueter, a

**Esports brought in more than \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in 2021.**

**Now educators at schools are preparing students to take advantage.**

technology consultant who works with educators in 13 counties. “We’re starting to see that where administrators and even interested teachers are calling us and saying, ‘You know, I see that [esports] could be valuable. How do I get going with it?’”

That value extends beyond the classroom. Esports can have profound benefits for students who aren’t interested in traditional sports, extending to them the positive effects of team building, communication and community support that have long been available to athletes.

“I always say that esports programs are primed for the kids who slip through the cracks of schools,” Schlueter said. “Even in a rural school where everybody has to do something, there are groups of

OPPOSITE PAGE The Mavs Gaming Hub in Dallas, site of last year's NBA 2K playoffs. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP The Merkel High School esports marketing class hosts a tournament. University of North Texas students celebrate at a national tournament. Texas Wesleyan University students compete.



**In Texas,** dozens of smaller and lower-profile colleges like McMurry are cashing in by enticing competitors with scholarship money. The University of North Texas and the University of Texas at Dallas field some of the most competitive esports programs in the nation, part of a burgeoning esports hotbed in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, where the \$10 million Esports Stadium Arlington—the largest such venue in North America—has space for 2,500 spectators.

But there are opportunities everywhere for esports professionals like Kyle Murto.

He was preparing for a college soccer career when a string of injuries put him in the hospital, where he cracked open his laptop and climbed the ranks. Pro teams didn't come calling, but Blinn College did. Now Murto helps coach the Brenham-based school's esports team, which competes against Division I giants—and wins.

"Smaller schools don't have that name recognition, so we have to go out and make a name for ourselves before the universities really get into the game," Murto said.

At McMurry, Tarpley is focused on education and personal growth, not wins and losses. He holds workshops for content creation, personal branding and livestreaming and finds graphic design, statistics, broadcasting and other work for students to master.

"Everybody wants to be in this space," he said. "It's going to be everywhere eventually. It's just a matter of time."

Tarpley's team meets regularly with a mental health coach—esports' version of an athletic trainer—and he strives to make sure women are included in an activity that's been dominated by men. He's not forming the next Ryan Conger but the next Jansen Wilhite—multiskilled gamers and leaders who can cultivate programs like Merkel's.

"I had several local schools call me, several local principals that know me. They're like, 'Hey, we hear y'all are doing esports. Can you tell me about it?'" Stevens said. "Of course, my first thing is, to be really successful you have to have a Matt Tarpley." ■

kids that do nothing, and this helps engage those kids."

Principal Stevens has seen it firsthand at Merkel.

"It's attracted a lot of the kids who showed up at 8 and left at 4," he said. "I've seen better participation, better grades, better attendance out of all those students, and it gave them something to be proud of involved with the school."

Some of those students followed Tarpley to McMurry University in Abilene, where he now coaches the esports program.

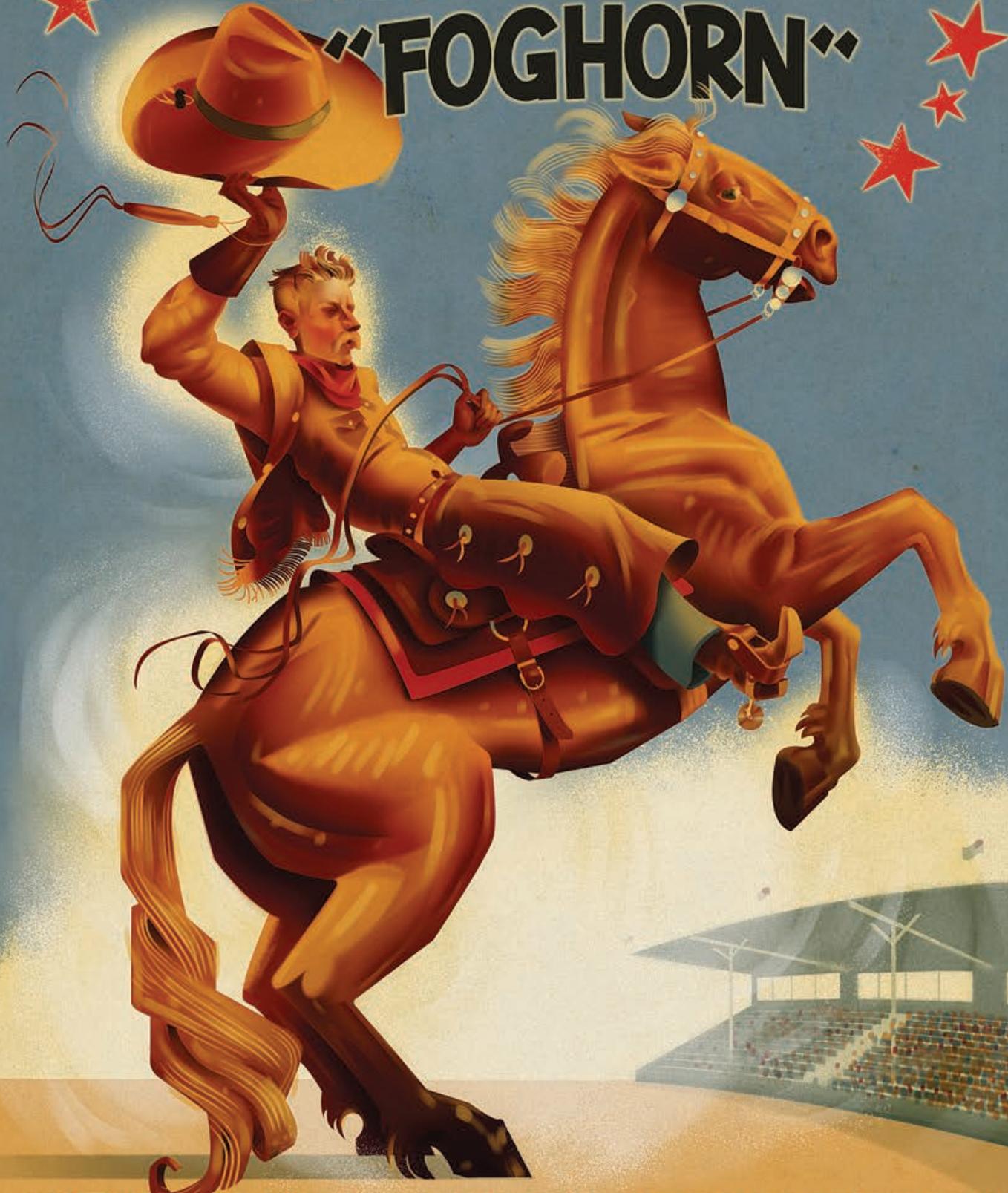
"They're on track to get a degree all because of esports," Stevens said.

**TCP** Go online to watch the University of North Texas take down LSU in a national playoff game.



MERKEL STUDENTS: COURTESY MATT TARPLEY

**"HACKBERRY SLIM"**  
**"FOGHORN"**



**"BUCK" ★ "MR RODEO"**



# STRETCHING THE BLANKET

Outlandish characters  
and hard-to-believe  
yarns defined the early  
days of Texas rodeo

**RODEO COWBOY** Hackberry Slim Johnson came clean in 1956 when he described the 1906 train-jumping accident near Dalhart that cost him half a leg. “I’ve told so many damned lies about losing that leg,” he told an interviewer. But soon after this brief walk on the straight and narrow path of truth, Johnson reverted to his usual yarn about losing the appendage in a “wreck with a wild horse.”

Even though lies might be too harsh a term for the tall tales whipped up by early rodeo cowboys, Johnson was simply following the Texas tradition of stretching the blanket. Even when characters like him, Buck Steiner, Milt Hinkle and Foghorn Clancy told the truth, the stories still sounded like whoppers.

In its beginnings in the late 19th century, mirroring the recently shuttered American frontier, rodeo presented a vast stage for self-invention. “For decades, rodeo was busy defining itself,” says W.K. Stratton, author of *Chasing the Rodeo* and other books. “The sport was based on the Mexican charreada tradition, which subsequently inspired ‘cowboy contests’ on ranches and in small cattle towns in the West. The advent of Wild West shows and their showbiz elements influenced rodeo as well.

“There was no national sanctioning organization, no set rule-book, so rodeos varied from town to town. People expected to be entertained, and cantankerous old-timers were always a big draw. While elements of showbiz remain, today rodeo is made up of sanctioned athletic contests with standardized events and judging.”

But in its wild and woolly days of old, characters ran the show.

## MR. RODEO

**MILT HINKLE**, aka Mr. Rodeo, first glimpsed daylight in 1881 on the patch of Texas Panhandle that became the town of Bovina, which grew from a camp that was part of the XIT Ranch. In 1904, he claimed, Hinkle became the second man to accomplish the act of bulldogging, first performed by the Black cowboy Bill Pickett and known today as steer wrestling. In another boast, Hinkle bragged that he was the first to apply the term “rodeo” to a roundup event.

In 1919 a *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent wrote about having seen Hinkle suffer a hip injury at a rodeo in Bovina. Three months later, having escaped from the hospital, Hinkle was spotted in Cheyenne, Wyoming, by the same reporter, who described him as “a howling, squawking maniac,” hobbling on crutches as he got ready to bulldog.

*The Laredo Times* credited Hinkle with the world record for bulldogging from an automobile traveling at 68 mph in 1931. That same year, he agreed to stand in for an “aerial bulldogger” in Nuevo Laredo during the annual Washington’s Birthday Celebration. As Mr. Rodeo prepared to leap onto the running bull, however, *el toro* turned and charged the aircraft, wrecking it. The border paper reported that Hinkle was not seriously injured.

Decades later, however, Hinkle repeatedly told scribes that he landed successfully on the bull, breaking its neck, and that he himself suffered a crippling hip displacement. Mr. Rodeo had become a promoter, and before his death at 91, he relived the wild old days, lugging his scrapbooks around to reporters and writing for *True West* and *Frontier Times Magazine*.

## FOGHORN

**ONE YEAR YOUNGER** than Hinkle, famed rodeo announcer Frederick Melton “Foghorn” Clancy tried his hand at bronc riding in an 1898 cowboy tournament in San Angelo. The contest was won by the great Samuel Thomas “Booger Red” Privett, the Erath County native whose legend says he was never thrown, no matter how “outlaw” a horse he drew. And while Foghorn didn’t fare so well in the saddle, the experience opened another career door.

Clancy was working as a hand on the Hittson Ranch in Palo Pinto County when the Spanish-American War broke out. He quit to join the Army but was turned down for being underweight, so he began selling newspapers in the health resort town of Mineral Wells, bellowing headlines to drive sales. Local press observed that he “sounded like a foghorn at sea,” which provided a nickname and a second job as town crier. “I would ride horseback through the little resort,” he wrote in his 1952 autobiography, *My 50 Years in Rodeo*, “singing out about the attractions at the summer opera house or pavilion.”

Clancy’s stentorian reputation had preceded him in San Angelo, and after his unceremonious buck-off, the folks hosting the ropin’ and ridin’ contest offered him a job as announcer. This was a time before public address systems, but Foghorn lived up to his name, announcing rodeos from one-horse Western towns to Madison Square Garden.

Shortly after he died in 1957, the *Hereford Brand* reported on a quest by Fort Worth’s Pioneer Days celebration, held at the historic stockyards, to find the loudest Texan. Clancy would have been a shoo-in, and organizers recalled how, in “the old days of the rodeo, the mighty voice of the late Foghorn Clancy rattled the windows.”

**“I would ride horseback through the little resort singing out about the attractions at the summer opera house or pavilion.”**

**“When I die, I want to go in style. With my boots on. Dancing, maybe, or maybe while riding a buffalo.”**

Dancing, maybe, or maybe while riding a buffalo.”

In 1979, shortly after appearing in the Willie Nelson film *Honeysuckle Rose*, the 91-year-old white-whiskered cowboy danced to Nelson’s band playing *Milk Cow Blues*, then sat back down and slipped into the sunset. ■

## BUCK

**BORN IN BASTROP** in 1899, T.C. “Buck” Steiner lived to see two centuries turn. But long before he died in 2001, the crusty cowpoke had packed several life-times into one.

He started early, leaving grade school to pursue the cowboy life. After driving cattle through the streets of Austin, he left home at age 12 to perform in rodeos and Wild West shows, sharing bills with the likes of Annie Oakley and Tom Mix. Steiner demonstrated proficiency at roping, wrestling and riding spirited stock, but he developed a specialty of riding bulls facing backward. As he recalled in endless press features, riding backward was far more lucrative than riding forward.

Around age 16 he worked for a time at the San Antonio Stockyards. Then at some point, according to the biography of Buck in the Handbook of Texas, a law enforcement career was cut short when he shot at a carload of politicians while working traffic management during a parade. While trailing cattle from Mexico to San Antonio, Steiner reportedly downed a few drinks with Pancho Villa. Later, it’s said, he bent elbows with Al Capone.

Back home in Austin, where a German immigrant ancestor had owned the town’s first harness and saddlery shop, Steiner bought and sold land, operated his own touring rodeos, rented his stock to other rodeos, and opened Capitol Saddlery in 1930. News reports say that he had as many as 96 saddle makers working for him and supplied Montgomery Ward and Sears, Roebuck and Company. In a 1950s rodeo tour of Cuba with Gene Autry, Autry and Steiner got caught up amid Fidel Castro’s revolution. An emergency call to Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson saved their bacon.

The Steiners have been called the royal family of rodeo. Son Tommy Steiner ran the rodeo business until closing it in 1984, and grandson Bobby Steiner won the bull riding world championship in 1973. Buck’s great-grandson, Sid Steiner, won the steer wrestling world championship in 2002.

## HACKBERRY SLIM

**TOWARD THE END** of his long life, Hugh “Hackberry Slim” Johnson II carried his scrapbooks around to newspaper offices in towns where he’d rodeoed in days gone by. Time and again the “only one-legged bronc buster, bulldogger, steer rider and calf roper” in rodeo told the story of his first prosthetic leg, made from a hackberry tree. He talked about working on the XIT and rodeoing with Hoot Gibson and Will Rogers, about the time he drove a bull through a Georgetown furniture store and about winning all-around cowboy in Harlingen in 1933.

He often talked about bison. Hackberry bought his first bison, named Chihuahua, in 1923 and was still producing his “buffalo rodeos” in his 80s. “When I die, I want to go in style,” he often said. “With my boots on.



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## Have a Plan for Potential Power Outages

**WINTER CAN BRING** beautiful days for brisk walks and snow angels. Winter's fury can also produce icy roads, subfreezing wind chills and power outages.

Unfortunately, heavy snow and accumulating ice can easily bring tree limbs down on power lines, cutting off power to homes and businesses.

Planning can make riding out a prolonged power outage much safer and a little more comfortable. How long it takes for your power to be restored depends on several factors: the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages in your area and when it becomes safe for co-op personnel to get to the affected areas.

Take steps to help keep your family safe and comfortable during a winter storm long before one is forecast. A good way to start is to put an emergency kit together. **Your electric cooperative suggests starting with these items.**

**Water:** Stock up on bottled water for consumption. The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends storing at least 1 gallon per person per day.

**Food:** Have enough food, including nonperishable packaged or canned foods, juices, special foods for infants or the elderly, and snack foods, for three to seven days.

**Utensils:** Be sure you have a manual can opener, paper plates and plastic utensils.

**Layers and added warmth:** Gather blankets, pillows and warm clothing.

**Medicine and other items:** Include a first-aid kit, common

over-the-counter drugs, prescriptions and any essential medical equipment.

**A phone charger:** Keep a fully charged power pack on hand.

**Also gather:**

- ▶ Toiletries, hygiene items and moist towelettes.
- ▶ A flashlight and extra batteries.
- ▶ A battery-operated radio or a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration weather radio.
- ▶ A list of emergency phone numbers.
- ▶ Toys, books and games.
- ▶ Pet food and other pet care items.
- ▶ Supplies for alternate heating methods, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove.

**Make sure your heating system is in proper working order and observe these safety tips:**

- ▶ Never use a portable generator indoors, in a garage, or anywhere near windows or doors because they emit deadly carbon monoxide.
- ▶ Never plug a portable generator into a wall outlet. Doing so can create deadly backfeeding, which occurs when electricity travels from the generator through the power lines.
- ▶ Monitor the temperature in your home. Infants and older people are more susceptible to the cold.
- ▶ Avoid going outside. Downed power lines could be hidden in snow and ice, making them difficult to identify. Assume all downed and hanging lines are energized and deadly. ■

# DIY: Hot Water Pipe Insulation

**INSULATING YOUR HOT** water pipes is a do-it-yourself project that might take only a few hours but can help you consume up to 4% less electricity annually.

Protected pipes reduce heat loss and can raise water temperature up to 4 degrees, allowing you to lower your water temperature setting, according to the Department of Energy.

Before you begin, determine what insulation material you want to use, how much you need and the size of the pipe. For electric water heaters, pipe sleeves made with polyethylene or neoprene foam are popular. On gas water heaters, insulation should be at least 6 inches away from the flue; otherwise, it is safest to use fiberglass pipe wrap without a facing and secured with aluminum foil tape.

Next, head to the hardware store and your garage to gather supplies:

- ▶ Tape measure.
- ▶ Pipe sleeves or strips of fiberglass insulation.
- ▶ Acrylic or duct tape, or cable ties, to secure the sleeves—or aluminum foil tape or wire to secure the fiberglass pipe wrap.
- ▶ Scissors, box cutter or utility knife.
- ▶ Headlamp or light.

Now you're ready to begin.

**1. Measure the pipes.** Starting at the water heater, measure lengths of insulation needed to cover all accessible hot water pipes, especially the first 3 feet of pipe from the water heater. It's also a good idea to insulate the cold-water inlet pipes for the first 3 feet.

**2. Cut the pipe sleeve** or insulation to the lengths needed.

**3. Place the insulation.** Position pipe sleeves so the seam will face down on the pipe.

**4. Secure the insulation** using tape, wire or clamps (with a cable tie) every 1–2 feet. ■



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## Stay Warm on the Coldest Days

**FEBRUARY CAN BE** one of the coldest months of the year. That doesn't mean you have to be cold all month, especially inside your own home.

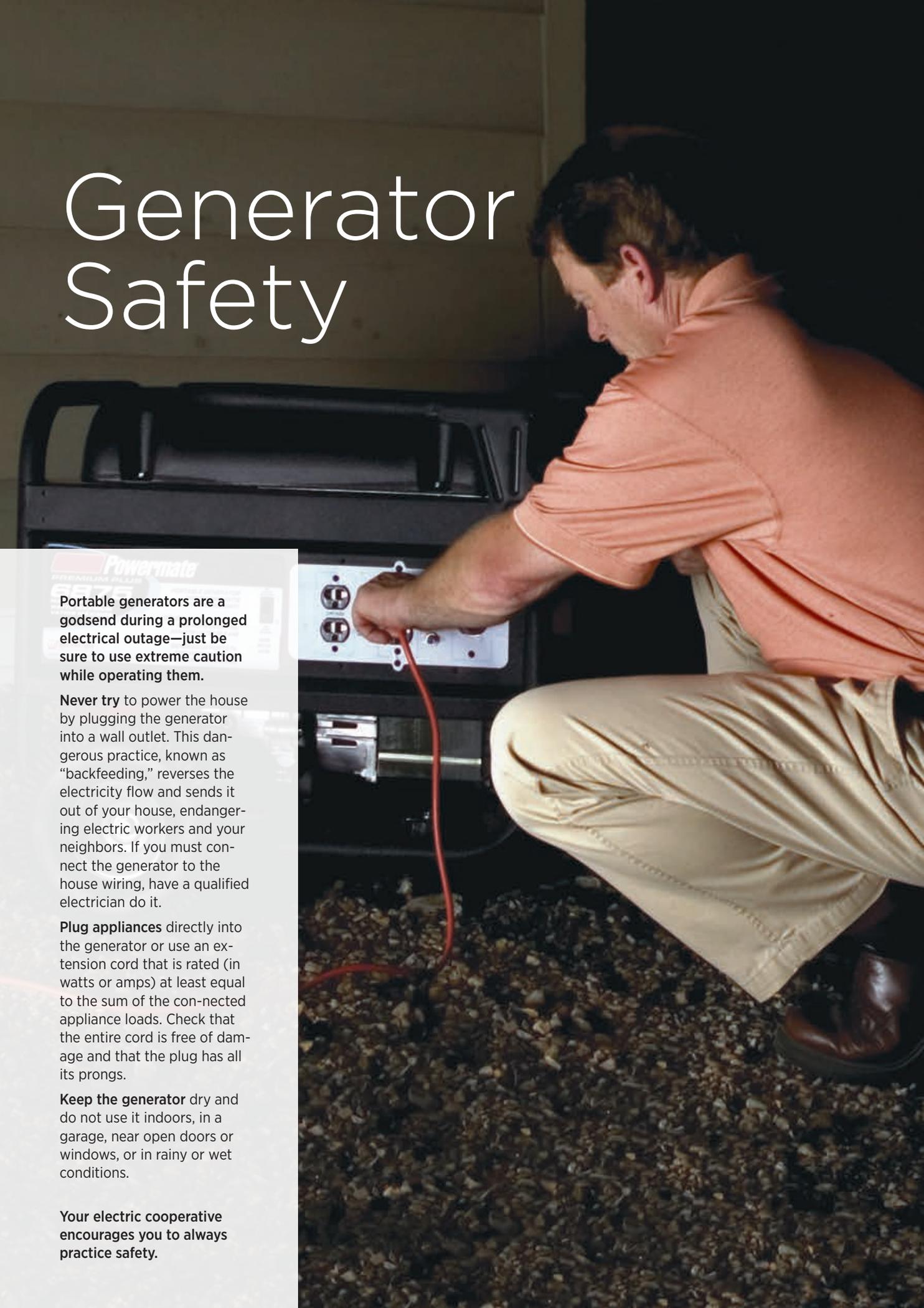
Dressing in layers, wearing socks with your slippers and staying active are no-cost, no-tech ways to stay cozy indoors even if all you can see for miles is snow and ice. Also:

**Block drafts.** If your windows are old or made from a single pane of glass, it's time to upgrade. Energy-efficient glass and windows with double panes will go a long way toward keeping cold air from blowing into your house. They also could reduce the amount you spend on winter energy bills.

**Seal leaks.** Also great draft-blockers, weatherstripping and caulk can plug holes around windows and doors and wherever the inside of an outdoor wall is penetrated by a cable or phone line.

**Make the bed.** An electric blanket, one with an automatic shut-off and the mark of a recognized testing laboratory like UL, can keep you cozy at bedtime even when you turn the whole-house thermostat down to save energy overnight. ■

# Generator Safety



Portable generators are a godsend during a prolonged electrical outage—just be sure to use extreme caution while operating them.

**Never try** to power the house by plugging the generator into a wall outlet. This dangerous practice, known as “backfeeding,” reverses the electricity flow and sends it out of your house, endangering electric workers and your neighbors. If you must connect the generator to the house wiring, have a qualified electrician do it.

**Plug appliances** directly into the generator or use an extension cord that is rated (in watts or amps) at least equal to the sum of the connected appliance loads. Check that the entire cord is free of damage and that the plug has all its prongs.

**Keep the generator** dry and do not use it indoors, in a garage, near open doors or windows, or in rainy or wet conditions.

Your electric cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.

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prevent back and muscle pain. The overstuffed, oversized biscuit style back and unique seat design will cradle you in comfort. Generously filled, wide armrests provide enhanced arm support when sitting or reclining. **It even has a battery backup in case of a power outage.**

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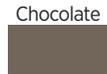
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# It's the Law: Move Over or Slow Down

Lineworkers dedicate long hours to ensuring affordable and reliable electric power. The “move over/slow down” law reminds us to do our part to keep our utility workers safe.

## Look for flashing lights.

When you see a utility vehicle on the side of the road with its amber lights flashing, move over a lane. When you move over, you're giving workers the room they need to safely complete their work.

## Slower is safer.

If you do not have an extra lane to move into, the law requires you to slow down 20 mph below the posted speed limit. A slower-moving vehicle is a safer vehicle.

And keep in mind, significant fines give this law teeth.

**Your electric cooperative encourages you to always practice safety.**



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Throughout the ages, there have been many important advances in mobility. Canes, walkers, rollators, and scooters were created to help people with mobility issues get around and retain their independence. Lately, however, there haven't been any new improvements to these existing products or developments in this field. Until now. Recently, an innovative design engineer who's developed one of the world's most popular products created a completely new breakthrough . . . a personal electric vehicle. It's called the **Zinger**, and there is nothing out there quite like it.

---

***"What my wife especially loves is it gives her back feelings of safety and independence which has given a real boost to her confidence and happiness! Thank You!"***

***—Kent C., California***

---

The first thing you'll notice about the **Zinger** is its unique look. It doesn't look like a scooter. Its sleek, lightweight yet durable frame is made with aircraft grade aluminum. It weighs only 47.2 lbs but can handle a passenger that's up to 275 lbs! It features one-touch



Available in Green, Black (shown) and Blue



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

folding and unfolding – when folded it can be wheeled around like a suitcase and fits easily into a backseat or trunk. Then, there are the steering levers. They enable the **Zinger** to move forward, backward, turn on a dime and even pull right up to a table or desk. With its compact yet powerful motor it can go up to 6 miles an hour and its rechargeable battery can go up to 8 miles on a single charge. With its low center of gravity and inflatable tires it can handle rugged terrain and is virtually tip-proof. Think about it, you can take your **Zinger** almost anywhere, so you don't have to let mobility issues rule your life.

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# Courthouse Proceedings

Mason County rallies to rebuild courthouse gutted by nighttime blaze

BY SHERYL SMITH-RODGERS • ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

**MOST NIGHTS PASS QUIETLY** in Mason, a Hill Country community of about 2,300 residents. So when sirens wailed after 10 p.m. last February 4, Misty Martin texted a friend and learned a house had caught fire. Then more sirens blared. Curious, Martin stepped outside in her pajamas. What she saw from her front yard made her gasp.

“Flames were coming out of our courthouse,” she recalls. In a flash Martin jumped into her car and picked up her friend. On the square the women joined other distressed onlookers, many dressed in pajamas and robes, as massive flames engulfed their historic courthouse.

“We knew that county records and some furnishings had been moved out around Christmas for renovations,” says Martin, a fourth-generation Mason native. “We wondered if maybe it was an electrical fire.”

Within minutes the roof and its octagonal dome with a bell and four clock faces collapsed. Firefighters from nearby communities also responded to the scene, but the inferno was too intense. Once the smoke cleared, only the building’s charred outer sandstone walls, concrete second floor, concrete columns and seven chimneys remained.

Heartbroken but resilient, residents that night vowed they’d rebuild their grand centerpiece. Built in 1909, the Classical Revival-style edifice designed by architect Edward C. Hosford was the third Mason County courthouse (fire destroyed the first one in 1877).

For generations it housed the comings and goings of residents. Within its walls, attorneys argued court cases, couples signed marriage licenses (and divorce decrees), parents celebrated adoptions and properties exchanged hands. Children played on its grassy lawn beneath towering pecan trees, and families lined up along the low stone fence that encircles the courthouse to watch parades pass.

“The county originally paid nearly \$40,000 to build our courthouse,” says Jerry Bearden, the Mason County judge of nearly two decades and a Central Texas Electric Cooperative member. “We’re looking at a projected \$21 million to rebuild it.”

More than half that amount had been earmarked by June. As part of its Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, the Texas Historical Commission in 2020 awarded Mason County a \$4.1 million restoration grant, Bearden says. Some funds

had already gone toward architectural work, leaving \$3.7 million for rebuilding. Additionally, the Texas Legislature allocated \$6 million for the courthouse, and insurance money from the Texas Association of Counties could contribute up to \$12.7 million. For its part, Mason County will be responsible for more than \$3.3 million.

Providing those funds is the mission of Friends of the Courthouse, a nonprofit founded in April 2021. Contributions may be made via the group’s website and three local banks. This spring the organization will host a benefit concert and live auction on the courthouse square.

“Raising enough money will be a marathon, not a sprint,” says Curtis Donaldson, board vice president and vice president of lending and business development at the Commercial Bank. “We’ll also be applying for private grants and hosting more fundraisers.”

Structural engineers examined the courthouse’s surviving walls and second-level floor soon after the fire. Their analysis found the century-old bones to be structurally sound for use in rebuilding. From there, demolition crews cleaned up debris and hauled off hazardous materials. CPM Texas, which oversaw the 1990s restoration of the Texas Capitol, was hired to manage the reconstruction project.

“We’re hoping to have construction complete by March 2023,” says Bearden, who’s been officing with county staff in a nearby annex. “It’s real hard to understand why this happened to our courthouse.”

What happened was a suspected arsonist allegedly first set fire to a family member’s house that night. Then he allegedly broke into the courthouse through the north doors, and on the second floor, it’s believed he poured gasoline in the courtroom and offices of the district judge and adult probation officer. Nicholas Miller of Mason was caught the next day after a chase south of Waco. Felony charges against him include two for arson.

Meanwhile, townspeople in Mason held fundraisers to help the family rebuild their burned home.

“We take care of each other here in Mason,” Martin says. “They’re a good family, and it’s not their fault. It still hurts that we lost our courthouse. She was the heart of our town. But really, it’s the people who are the true heart. We will rebuild and move on.” ■



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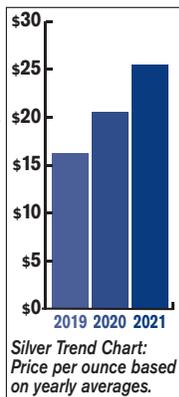
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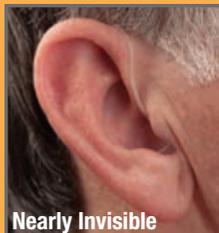
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Queen Elizabeth II walks with Gov. Ann Richards.

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Houston. She even took a ride on the San Antonio River on a beautifully decorated barge.

When Elizabeth arrived at Dallas' Love Field, she was greeted with strains of *The Yellow Rose of Texas*. The words to *God Save the Queen*, the British national anthem, were recited before the playing of the song so that the mostly Texan audience wouldn't sing *My Country 'Tis of Thee* to the familiar tune.

While in Dallas, she knighted Cecil Howard Green, an honorary title for the British-born founder of Texas Instruments and co-founder of the University of Texas campus there.

Prince Philip, the duke of Edinburgh, accompanied Elizabeth on the visit, part of their 13-day trip to the United States. Sitting next to him at the dinner commemorating the 150th anniversary of Dallas' founding was Louise Caldwell, president of the Dallas Historical Society. She remarked, "It was very hard to find anything that he didn't know more about than me, including Texas history."

The queen recounted the story in which a man tells his son: "Never ask a man where he's from. If he's from Texas, he'll tell you. Otherwise no use embarrassing him by asking."

At the Capitol, Gov. Ann Richards hosted the queen, and 8,000 people gathered to catch a glimpse. The queen declared, "No state commands such fierce pride and loyalty. Lesser mortals are pitied for their misfortune in not being born Texans." And she, the most traveled monarch in the world, knows what she's talking about. ■

# Her Majesty's Visit

Queen Elizabeth II's 1991 trip to Texas was a momentous occasion

BY W.F. STRONG AND LUPITA STRONG

**DURING HER 70-YEAR** reign, Queen Elizabeth II has witnessed many of the world's pivotal events, and one honorable mention where she became the event is her 1991 two-day visit to the Lone Star State.

Elizabeth was the first British monarch to visit Texas, and Texans gave her an impressive tip of the Stetson. She loved it. She asked her U.S. chief of protocol, "Why didn't I come here sooner?"

Texas has long had a special relationship with Great Britain, one of the first nations to recognize the Republic of Texas. Texans even flirted with the notion of becoming part of the British Empire in the 1840s, but the U.S. had other plans.

Five years before the queen was here, her majesty's son, Charles, the Prince of Wales, came to Texas to help celebrate

the Texas sesquicentennial. He cut into the 45-ton world's largest birthday cake with a 3-foot sword. I mean, it was Texas; what else was he supposed to use?

At the Capitol, the prince was given a giant gavel. He laughed and said that it was the biggest he had ever had and "extremely appropriate coming from Texas." While touring San Jacinto later that week—it was February but warm—he remarked, "If it's this hot in the winter, I'd like to see what it's like in the summer."

Texas has had 14 kings, but it was a queen who was most celebrated by Texans. In May 1991, Elizabeth visited Austin, San Antonio, Dallas and Houston with an itinerary that included visits to the River Walk, the Alamo, NASA and Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in

# Pasta

This most flexible staple anchors a variety of dishes and flavors

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Pasta has been a staple in our home for as long as I can remember. And why not? It's economical, filling and can be made into so many different dishes. Whether you have hungry kids in the house or just need something hearty on a cold night, there are plenty of options. This Pesto-Baked Penne is perfect for transforming leftover chicken and pesto into something new. You can easily make this recipe vegetarian by swapping in mushrooms or roasted winter squash for the chicken.

## Pesto-Baked Penne

**16 ounces penne pasta**  
**1 tablespoon olive oil**  
**1 cup ricotta cheese**  
**1/3 cup pesto**  
**2 tablespoons heavy cream or half-and-half**  
**1/4 cup chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes**  
**2 cups diced chicken**  
**1/2 cup shredded mozzarella**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and coat a 9-by-13-inch casserole dish with cooking spray. Cook penne just to al dente, according to package directions. Reserve 1/4 cup pasta water, drain and transfer to a large bowl. Toss pasta with olive oil and set aside.
2. In another bowl, stir together ricotta, pesto and cream until blended. Add reserved pasta water to thin, if desired. Pour sauce over pasta and stir well to coat. Stir in the tomatoes and chicken, then transfer to prepared dish. Sprinkle mozzarella on evenly.
3. Cover with foil and bake 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 5–10 minutes, until cheese on top is melted, if preferred.

SERVES 8

**TCP** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Roasted Butternut Squash Lasagna.





## Gleason Family Goulash

SAMANTHA GLEASON  
BANDERA EC

This recipe is a great option for a make-ahead meal, as the flavors are even better the next day. In a clever trick, Gleason adds baking soda to help reduce the acidity from the tomatoes.

- 2 cups uncooked pasta (rotini, elbow or bow tie)**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic**
- 1 pound ground beef or turkey**
- 1 pound yellow squash or zucchini, diced**
- ½ sweet onion, chopped**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 1 teaspoon dried sweet basil**
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning**
- ¾ teaspoon garlic powder**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 cans (14.5 ounces each) fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained**
- ¾ cup ketchup**
- 1 tablespoon sun-dried tomato paste**
- 1 can (8 ounces) tomato sauce**
- ½ cup water or beef broth**
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce**
- ½ teaspoon baking soda**
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar**

1. Cook pasta in lightly salted water according to package directions. Drain and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan or deep-sided skillet over medium heat, add olive oil and garlic and cook 2 minutes, stirring to prevent burning. Add ground beef and cook 5 minutes, then add squash and onion. Continue to cook until beef is browned, stirring as needed.

CONTINUED >

\$500 WINNER

## Seafood Manicotti Alfredo

ANECIA HERO  
COSERV



This seafood manicotti feels fancy but is easy enough to put together on a weeknight. It's important to not overcook the pasta and handle it gently so it doesn't tear, so consider cooking a few extra shells just in case.

SERVES 4



PASTA

- 8 manicotti shells**
- 8 ounces cooked shrimp, tails removed, diced**
- 4 ounces cooked crabmeat, flaked**
- 1 egg, lightly beaten**
- 1 cup ricotta cheese**
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese**
- ¼ cup shredded mozzarella cheese**
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice**
- 1 teaspoon Creole seasoning**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**

SAUCE

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter**
- 1 cup heavy cream**
- 1¼ cups shredded Parmesan cheese**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

1. **PASTA** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a 2-quart baking dish with cooking spray and set aside. Cook pasta in lightly salted boiling water for 7 minutes. Drain and transfer to a lightly greased baking sheet to cool.

2. In a large bowl, combine shrimp, crab, egg, ricotta, Parmesan, mozzarella, lemon juice, Creole seasoning and garlic powder. Stir until uniformly combined, then transfer to a piping bag or large zip-close bag. Cut off the bag tip and carefully pipe filling into cooked shells; fill one end of the shell, then the other. Transfer shells to prepared baking dish.

3. **SAUCE** In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, melt butter. Add heavy cream and Parmesan and cook, whisking often, until cheese is melted and sauce is thickened and smooth. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

4. Pour half of the sauce over the pasta, reserving the remaining sauce for serving. Cover dish with foil and bake 20 minutes. Serve with additional warmed sauce on top.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

STONE FRUITS DUE FEBRUARY 10

How do you turn peaches, plums, cherries and apricots into the stars of your kitchen? Submit your recipes online by February 10 for a chance to win \$500.



RECIPES CONTINUED

3. Stir in oregano, basil, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt and pepper, then stir in diced tomatoes with their juices, ketchup and tomato paste.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together tomato sauce, water, Worcestershire sauce and baking soda. Slowly add the mixture to the pan, stirring until foaming stops. Cover and simmer 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
5. Add cooked pasta and balsamic vinegar and stir well. Cover again and simmer another 10–15 minutes.

SERVES 8

### Meaty Mexican Mac and Cheese

CHUCK BURGESS  
HEART OF TEXAS EC

Perfect for those who love their mac and cheese fully loaded, Burgess' "3MC" gets its kick from a medley of favorite taco flavors. Make it as mild or as spicy as you like, with hot sauce and tortilla chips served on the side.



- 2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
- 1½ pounds lean ground beef
- 1 pound ground pork sausage
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 can (10 ounces) Ro-Tel tomatoes, mild (or to taste)
- ½ cup salsa, mild (or to taste)
- 1 can (4 ounces) diced green chiles, mild (or to taste)
- 1 pound uncooked macaroni pasta
- 1 pound Queso Blanco Velveeta
- 10 ounces queso fresco, crumbled

- 1 cup Mexican crema or heavy cream
- Pepper jack cheese, shredded

1. In a large pot with a lid over medium-high heat, heat oil, then add meats and onion. Cover and cook until meat is browned, stirring occasionally. Add salt, chili powder, tomatoes, salsa and chiles. Stir well and cook 10–15 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Meanwhile, cook pasta to al dente according to package directions. Drain and return to original cooking pot; set aside.
3. In a microwave-safe bowl, add Velveeta, queso fresco and cream and microwave 3 minutes. Stir well and continue to cook in the microwave in 30-second increments, stirring after each time, until melted and smooth. (Or combine ingredients in a saucepan and melt over medium heat.)
4. Stir cheese sauce into macaroni to coat, then pour pasta into the meat mixture. Heat on low 5 minutes or until heated through, stirring to blend well. Serve with pepper jack cheese on top.

SERVES 8–10

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## A Glimpse of Buddy Holly

Lubbock museum honors native son's enduring musical legacy

BY CHET GARNER

I REMEMBER THE first time I heard Buddy Holly. My older brother bought the soundtrack from the film *Stand by Me*, and for weeks the song *Everyday* was stuck in my head. Soon I discovered *Peggy Sue*, *Rave On* and other classic hits. My feet have been tapping ever since.

It wasn't until decades later that I learned Holly was born and raised in Lubbock and that the world's best Buddy Holly museum sits in the heart of the Hub City.

The first thing I noticed as I turned off Crickets Avenue was a larger-than-life set of Holly's signature black-rimmed glasses. Holly once considered wearing contact lenses to help his rock star image, but contacts hurt his eyes and he needed glasses to see the crowd. That's a good thing, as the glasses became as much a part of his timeless look as the electric guitar in his hands. This is just one of many facts I learned inside Lubbock's Buddy Holly Center.

The museum is full of artifacts and a complete timeline of how a kid from Lubbock forged a new rock 'n' roll sound that changed the world. One display shows mementos from Holly's high school days, including his baseball mitt and Converse high-tops. Another display holds items from Buddy's rise to fame, including a tweed sports coat he wore on tour and a pair of super-hip suede shoes.

It's hard to believe that Holly's career lasted only a few years, cut short by a plane crash in Iowa. His black-rimmed glasses recovered from the wreckage now sit silently in a case at the end of the museum's timeline.

The center gives every generation a connection to the man and his music. As the title of one of his hit songs says, his legacy will *Not Fade Away*. ■

ABOVE Chet visits the Buddy Holly Center in Lubbock.

**TCP** Check out the Buddy Holly Center through Chet's eyes on our website. You'll want to see all his Explorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



## Know Before You Go

Call ahead or check an event's website for scheduling details.

## FEBRUARY

10

**Lufkin My Funny Valentine**, (936) 633-5454, [angelinaarts.org](http://angelinaarts.org)

**Port Aransas Chocolate Crawl**, (361) 749-5919, [portaransas.org](http://portaransas.org)

**Round Rock [10-13] Texas Basket Weavers Association Annual Conference**, (512) 925-3596, [texasbasketweavers.com](http://texasbasketweavers.com)

11

**Fredericksburg [11-12] Luckenbach Hug-In & Valentine Ball**, (830) 997-3224, [luckenbachtexas.com](http://luckenbachtexas.com)

**Port Lavaca [11-12] South Texas Square and Round Dance Association February Frenzy**, (361) 575-2665, [stsrda.org](http://stsrda.org)

**Fredericksburg [11-13, 18-20, 25-27] Clue: The Musical**, (830) 997-3588, [fredericksburgtheater.org](http://fredericksburgtheater.org)

12

**Jefferson Queen Mab Ball**, (903) 742-1405, [mardigrasupriver.com](http://mardigrasupriver.com)

**New Braunfels Love the Run You're With 5K**, (830) 626-8786, [athleteguild.com](http://athleteguild.com)

**Dallas [12, 19, 26] The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Dinner Show**, 1-866-496-0535, [thedinnerdetective.com](http://thedinnerdetective.com)

15

**Gladewater [15-March 15] Helen Lee Estate Daffodil Gardens**, (903) 845-5180

17

**West Tawakoni [17-19] Catmasters Classic on Lake Tawakoni**, (325) 998-2191, thecatmasters.com

18

**Brenham The Funniest Night of Your Life With Todd Oliver**, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com

**Brenham [18-19] Hearth and Home Quilt Show**, (979) 661-4761, friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com

**Kerrville [18-19] Hill Country Quilt Guild Winter Quilt Show**, (281) 974-6220, hillcountryquiltguild.com

**Ozona [18-19] Ozona Land Stewardship Blowout**, (325) 392-3737

**Fredericksburg [18-20] Trade Days**, (210) 846-4094, fbgradedays.com

**Galveston [18-20, 25-27, March 1] Mardi Gras! Galveston**, (409) 763-8676, galveston.com

**Victoria [18-20, 24-27] Ring of Fire**, (361) 570-8587, theatrevictoria.org

19

**Lake Jackson Bird Banding**, (979) 480-0999, gcbo.org

**Mesquite Daddy-Daughter Dance**, (972) 204-4925, visitmesquitetx.com

**Palacios African American Heritage Day**, (310) 650-9352, citybytheseamuseum.org

**West Columbia Market Day**, (979) 345-4656, visitvarnerhogplantation.com

**Nocona [19-26] Mardi Gras Nocona Style**, (940) 825-3526, nocona.org

MORE EVENTS >

### TCP Submit Your Event

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

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## Pick of the Month

### Texas Independence Day Celebration

Huntsville, March 2  
(936) 291-9726  
huntsvilletexas.com

March 2 is Texas Independence Day and Sam Houston's birthday. Huntsville, where the Texas statesman is buried, and Sam Houston State University hold annual celebrations for the occasions, including a graveside ceremony.

25

**La Grange [25-26] Best Little Quilt Show in Texas,** (979) 242-3514, coloradovalleyqqg.com

**Lubbock [25-26] Friends of the Lubbock Library Last Friday BookStore,** (806) 775-2852, lubbockfol.org

26

**Granbury JazzFest,** (650) 265-1193, granburyjazzfest.com

**Henderson Mardi Gras Gumbo Cook-Off,** (903) 392-0691, visithendersontx.com

**Irving Irving Symphony Orchestra: Musical Treasures From the World,** (972) 831-8818, irvingsymphony.org

27

**Lufkin Croce Plays Croce,** (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

## MARCH

FEBRUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

20

**Fredericksburg Lone Star Brass,** (830) 997-6523, fredericksburgmusicclub.com

23

**Lufkin [23-24] Rob Schneider,** (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

24

**Corsicana The Magic of Bill Blagg,** (903) 874-7792, corsicanapalace.com

**Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Heart of the Strings,** (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

**Port Aransas [24-27] Whooping Crane Festival,** (361) 749-5919, portaransas.org/whooping-crane-festival

04

**Fredericksburg Texas A&M Singing Cadets,** (830) 997-3588, fredericksburgtheater.org

**Lubbock [4-5] Lubbock Area Square and Round Dance Federation Conclave Dance,** (806) 786-8589, squaredancelubbocktx.com

05

**Kerrville Looking Back with John Moore,** (830) 896-8976, lookingbackjm22@gmail.com

06

**Lufkin Bella Gaia,** (936) 633-5454, angelinaarts.org

**Orange Fiddler on the Roof,** (409) 886-5535, lutchter.org

# Public Art

"A true work of art takes at least an hour."  
—Charles Schulz, creator of the *Peanuts* comic strip

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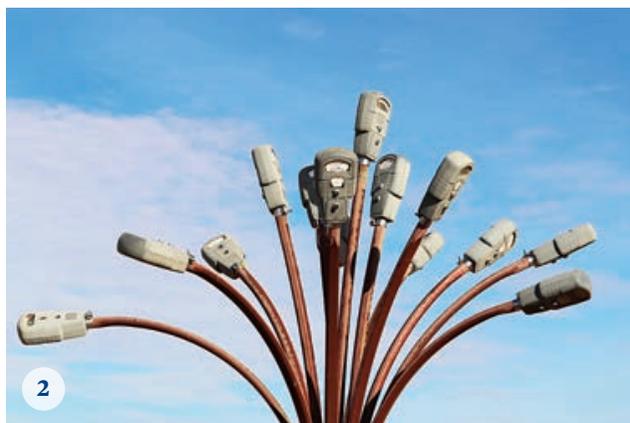


**1** STEPHANIE EHLERT  
GREENBELT EC  
"I found this beauty driving through Brady."

**2** GLENN TIMMONS  
SOUTH PLAINS EC  
Parking meter art east of Lubbock.

**3** DEBRA CZERNY  
BLUEBONNET EC  
Tom Besson painted this mural in downtown Elgin.

**4** CARMEN GALLO  
PEDERNALES EC  
A recycled bicycle at Yellow Bike Project in Austin.



## Upcoming Contests

- DUE FEB 10** Industrial
- DUE MAR 10** Morning Glory
- DUE APR 10** Motorsports



Enter online at [TexasCoopPower.com/contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/contests).

**TCP** See Focus on Texas on our website for more Public Art photos from readers.



## The Muse in Museum

Artistic inspiration abounds in the comfort of the Kimbell Café

BY BABS RODRIGUEZ  
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA LIEDO

**WHEN I TRAVEL,** I seek out museums. As a writer always in search of a quiet place where my laptop is welcome, museum cafés help me meet deadlines and recharge in ways coffeehouse clatter never could.

The atmosphere of a good museum café pulls me out of time and settles me in a world—my chair, stool or booth—literally surrounded by artistic inspiration. Masterpieces a glance away, these settling-in spots are elevated musing favorites for any number of reasons: They are sure to be more subdued than the average coffee shop; the people-watching is stellar; and there’s a hum in the atmosphere that inspires some of my best thinking.

Why it took me decades of courting the creativity muse in distant cafés only to discover I could have coffee with her

in my hometown of Fort Worth, I do not know. I do remember the moment it occurred to me that I had too long overlooked such a prime location for contemplation. Just before Christmas one year, I stopped at the Kimbell Art Museum for a gift shop run. I plodded up the broad limestone steps to the gallery level, overwhelmed by obligations, my head full of deadlines.

Drawn into the light that fills Louis I. Kahn’s vaulted masterpiece, I headed straight for the Kimbell Café. From my seat I could see Aristide Maillol’s *L’Air*, a bronze female figure, floating in a courtyard. European masterworks beckoned from across the corridor. Immediately I was transported. That’s the other bonus that comes from stopping into a hometown museum: There is a sense of excitement that I associate with travel. Without planes or trains, I can step out of the workaday world and feel I am on a journey—even when I’m less than a mile from home.

Seated beneath fragments of a sixth-century mosaic, cupping my warm coffee mug, I realized I was steps away from Michelangelo’s first known painting. And just like that, I lay my burdens down.

Now I return regularly to the Kimbell’s café for creative therapy. I can energize myself in 10 minutes or 20, view one painting or a dozen, before or after my coffee. Or I can simply sit quietly. No entrance fee and no passport required.

And while the soup-and-sandwich lunch options are dependably tasty, a post-pandemic offering of an afternoon tea service takes me to happy memories served up abroad. It also offers up my favorite sort of nibbling—scones with housemade jam, finger sandwiches, cookies—and because it’s served as “tea for two,” I’m sometimes inspired to share with a friend.

That is, of course, when I’m not meeting my muse. ■



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Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 4/13/22. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee at \$64.99 advertised price: America's Top 120 programming package, local channels, HD service fees, and Hopper Duo Smart DVR for 1 TV. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$79.99 for AT120+, \$89.99 for AT200, \$99.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D Reg. No. - 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.