

CO-OPS COUNT:  
BY THE NUMBERS

1918 PANDEMIC  
HIT OIL FIELDS

FINDING PORTRAITS  
IN EVERYDAY LIFE

# Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2020

## If the Shoe Fits

Farriers help build horse health from the ground up

**BLUEBONNET  
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18





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# October 2020



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The countless ways electric co-ops make a difference across Texas.

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Illustration by Shaw Nielsen

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Texas farriers truly know the way to a horse's heart.

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ON THE COVER

Farrier Jim Crawford at McManus Ranch in Irion County.

ABOVE

Crawford shapes a horseshoe.

Photos by Kristin Tyler

# Howdy, Pandowdy

**OUR RECIPES THEME** this month (Page 30) is Cobblers, Crisps, Buckles and Betties. Seems like a lot of names for a dish that is essentially fruit baked with batter, biscuits, dough or crumble.

Turns out those dishes, which have been around since colonists arrived in this country with their recipes from England, go by many other names, including crumbles, grunts, slumps, bird's nest pudding, sonkers and pandowdies.



## Lights Out

General Electric, co-founded by Thomas Edison, inventor of the modern lightbulb, recently sold its 129-year-old lighting business.

*The New York Times* compared this move to Kellogg abandoning cornflakes or Ford getting out of the auto industry.

## Worms in Space?

Absolutely.

NASA's red, sleek and wavy typographical logo from the 1980s returned to the heavens May 30, adorning the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket that launched two American astronauts aboard the Crew Dragon.

When the logo debuted in 1975, it became known as the worm, and the original NASA logo, which debuted in 1959 with the agency, was coined the meatball. The worm was NASA's official logo 1975–1992, then the agency went back to the meatball.

The minimalist worm was popular in the marketing industry but scorned by NASA insiders, who favored the round blue meatball with its white type, planets, stars and orbital path enhanced with a red chevron.



# \$30

That's the average weekly allowance, which about two-thirds of parents fork over to kids.

## FINISH THIS SENTENCE

### THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT I EVER GOT WAS ...

**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. Here are some of the responses to our August prompt: **When I think of Texas, I think of ...**

Mermaids in San Marcos, Big Tex in Dallas and Prada in Marfa.

WHITNEY OLDFATHER  
PEDERNALES EC  
SAN MARCOS

Blue skies, bluebonnets and Willie.

PJAE STANLEY  
COSERV  
LITTLE ELM

Home.

PAM SHORT ALFRED  
HOUSTON COUNTY EC  
KENNARD

Big sky and endless horizon.

AUTUMN VOGEL  
TRINITY VALLEY EC  
ELMO

Beaches, forests, mountains, two time zones, and taking two days to go north to south or east to west.

DEBBIE MOBLEY  
HEART OF TEXAS EC  
VALLEY MILLS

Windmills, sunsets, dirt roads, and cornbread and beans.

DONNA GENTRY WEEDEN  
VIA FACEBOOK

To see more responses, read Currents online.



## Now This Is a Selfie

**WE KNOW YOU LOVE** your selfies, our Focus on Texas theme this month (Page 37).

The selfie above might be the coolest of all—because it was the first.

Robert Cornelius, an amateur chemist and photography enthusiast in Philadelphia, made a daguerreotype of himself in 1839. He removed the camera's lens cap; ran into the frame, where he sat for several minutes; then covered the lens again.



### **TCP** *Contests and More*

**ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM**

**FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTO CONTEST**  
Saddles

**\$500 RECIPE CONTEST**  
Tacos

**FROM OUR ARCHIVE**

*More Than Electricity*, October 2018, tells how co-ops are "the fabric of the community."



WYATT MCSPADDEN

My TX

“My family told about bad luck superstitions. One was putting a hat on a bed, as was wearing more than one hat at a time.”

JANICE MARTIN  
CENTRAL TEXAS EC  
KINGSLAND

My TX Moment

My personal My TX [August 2020] moment was 30 years ago and half a world away. I was deployed to Operation Desert Shield/Storm in Saudi Arabia. Near our camp was a group of Mujahedeen fighters, and they always left a grizzled old man to guard their camp.

One day he flagged us down. He started talking and pointing up and to the rear of my vehicle. I asked my interpreter what he wanted, and he said, “Texas.” The man recognized the small Texas flag on my radio aerial.

Alfred W. Evans  
Hamilton County EC  
Gatesville



The canyon is so beautiful [Palo Duro Love Letters, July 2020]. Very cool to have this famous artist’s work and letters reflecting that beauty.

CINDI RAK MULCAHEY  
VIA FACEBOOK

Their TX

Congratulations, Pam LeBlanc, for declaring yourself a Texan [No Longer a Yankee, July 2020].

Without saying it, you seemed to echo Jay B Saucedo’s comment that Texas mystique is not built on small stuff or mediocrity or even above-average stuff but on the overwhelming.

J.K. Goode  
Fayette EC  
Weimar

Fixin’ To Learn

I didn’t realize the word fixin’ was Texan—as I’ve used it all my life having been born in Shreveport and raised in south Louisiana [Finish This Sentence, August 2020]. My husband has always asked me where I got it. Now I know how to answer him.

Paula Bonin  
Trinity Valley EC  
Gun Barrel City



COURTESY JACK CHASE

I am fortunate enough to own an SRV flat-top hat from Texas Hatters. I was a regional VP for Epic Records and helped launch Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble. I bought several of these hats from the Texas Hatters shop when the album *Texas Flood* was released in 1983.

Jack Chase  
CoServ  
Carrollton

TCP WRITE TO US

letters@TexasCoopPower.com

Editor, Texas Co-op Power  
1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor  
Austin, TX 78701

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

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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.

**But we don't stop there.** While supplies last, we'll include a pair of \$99 8x21 power compact binoculars *and* a genuine leather sheath **FREE** when you purchase the **Huntsman Blade**.

**Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed.** Feel the knife in your hands, wear it on your hip, inspect the impeccable craftsmanship. If you don't feel like we cut you a fair deal, send it back within 30 days for a complete refund of the item price.

**Limited Reserves.** A deal like this won't last long. We have only 1120 **Huntsman Blades** for this ad only. Don't let this beauty slip through your fingers. Call today!

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— J., La Crescent, MN



*"The feel of this knife is unbelievable...this is an incredibly fine instrument."*

— H., Arvada, CO



BY TOM WIDLANSKI  
ILLUSTRATION BY SHAW NIELSEN

# By the Numbers

The countless ways electric co-ops make a difference across Texas

**IN SOME WAYS**, the less you think about your electric cooperative, the better. That means your power has stayed on almost without fail, outages are quickly remedied, and your monthly bills are fair and reasonable.

But a lot of thought goes into electric co-ops because they are so much more than power providers. They are united by a business model that values community over profits. They are locally owned and democratically controlled by their customers, called members. They work together to achieve goals and solve problems. Your cooperative is one of more than 900 electric co-ops in the U.S.

The co-op business model is used by a wide variety of organizations—not just electric utilities. Ace Hardware; REI, which specializes in outdoor clothing and gear; Ocean Spray; Sunkist; and Land O'Lakes operate as co-ops. In fact, there are more than 40,000 co-op businesses in the U.S., with 350 million members, according to a University of Wisconsin study.

October is National Cooperative Month, a good opportunity to show the reach, scope and numbers behind Texas' electric co-ops that, when added up, reveal the significant impact they have on rural and suburban communities. ■



**30–35**  
pounds of gear

weighs down lineworkers when climbing a pole—hooks, a belt, tools and more.

**9,300**  
people work at the  
**69**  
electric co-ops in the state.



**3.7**  
million readers

of Texas Co-op Power, which has been landing in mailboxes since 1944. That's like everybody in Houston and Dallas having the same favorite magazine as you.

**85**  
years

of co-ops in Texas. Bartlett EC, formed in 1935 as the first co-op in the country to receive a Rural Electrification Administration loan, turned on its first light March 7, 1936, at a farmhouse outside Bartlett.



# 3

## million Texans

enjoy co-op electric service, mostly in rural and suburban areas.



# 241

## of Texas' 254 counties are served by electric co-ops.



# 325,000

## miles of co-op power lines in Texas, enough to encircle Earth more than 13 times.



# \$1.6 million

in scholarships awarded annually to college students by co-ops. A stack of 1.6 million \$1 bills would reach 573 feet high—or nearly twice the height of the Texas Capitol.

# 1,338,828

## hours worked

without a lost-time incident at Bandera EC, which was honored in March for that long stretch of safety—remarkable considering the high voltage within arm's length of its lineworkers every day.

# 47 million lightning bolts

struck Texas in 2019—the most of any state by far. Not all of them knocked out power, but you can bet many of them put workers on edge.

# 5.5 million poles hold up power lines in Co-op Country in Texas.



Texas farriers truly know the way to a horse's heart

# Why Horses Wear Shoes

It's another sunny December day in West Texas, and Jim Crawford crosses the fifth and final cattle guard on his two-hour drive to the McManus Ranch from his home near Ballinger. Crawford is there to shoe horses, as he has been doing on this ranch since the early 1970s. He pulls his trailer to a convenient spot near the barn.

He wears denim, lace-up boots, suspenders and his signature red-and-white polka-dot welding cap. Last he ties on the leather farrier apron he stitched himself. Crawford is wearing the same outfit I remember him always wearing when he visited as I grew up on this ranch. My dad, Beaver McManus, a member of Concho Valley Electric Cooperative, says it's the same uniform young Crawford wore the day he met him as a junior high boy when he came out to the ranch with his great-uncle Houston Crawford.

When you live this far out, you look forward to visitors. The days that Crawford comes to the ranch to shoe horses are days filled with storytelling. More often than not, farriers become lifelong friends with horse owners. "I couldn't have gotten along without him the last 30 years," Dad says. "He's more than someone who just came out to shoe our horses. He's part of our extended family."

Farrier, derived from the Latin word *ferrarius*, meaning blacksmith, is the professional name given to horseshoers. Many prefer to be called farriers, but others, like Crawford, prefer the simpler term "horseshoer." No matter what they're called, they're necessary to the state's equine industry.

Crawford recalls first getting the horseshoeing gig at the ranch. Houston asked him to meet at the mailbox before dawn, and the young shoer beat him there. "I think that impressed him, that he didn't have to wait on me," says Crawford, a member of Coleman County Electric Coopera-

tive. Houston welcomed him to the house and made his signature extra-strong coffee. "It was boiling in the cup," Crawford laughs. "I thought, jeez, how does his system handle that? Must be cast iron." Nearly 50 years later, he still remembers the gray horse he shod that day.

Crawford loves his work, but he originally dreamed of becoming a calf roper.

"I had a lot of try, but I didn't have the talent," he jokes. "I could win fifth if they were paying four." The first horse Crawford shod was his own calf roping horse, Wimp, named after the horse's grandfather, Wimpy P-1, born on the King Ranch and the first horse registered with the American



OPPOSITE Farrier Jim Crawford has been fitting shoes onto horses for decades. ABOVE Crawford rasps one of Peanut's hooves for a final fit at McManus Ranch in Irion County.



## Originally, nearly 100% of his clients were ranchers with working horses. Now more than half are pleasure horses.

Quarter Horse Association. Crawford hoped a regular horseshoeing clientele would enable him to stay at the roping gig longer.

In the spring of 1972, Crawford used his GI Bill benefits to go to horseshoeing school. An outbreak of screwworms in the summer of '72 forced ranchers to ride their land daily to monitor their livestock. This created high demand for farriers. Crawford was getting calls to book his services before he'd completed the 10-week course. When he finished, he had a satisfying work schedule and a long list of clients. He became so busy shoeing horses he never returned to roping.

Crawford's customers come to him through word-of-mouth recommendations. A stack of spiral notebooks tell the stories and names of most horses he's shod through the decades.

"Showing up and having the shoe stay on made my career," Crawford says. "When I first started, guys used their horses hard." Originally, nearly 100% of his clients

were ranchers with working horses. Now more than half are pleasure horses.

Texas ranks No. 1 in the nation for its inventory of horses, ponies, mules, burros and donkeys. Though there's been a transition in the horse's function from work to pleasure, horses are still big business in Texas and create a constant demand for farriers.

**W**hy do horses need shoes? There's an old saying, "no foot, no horse," which speaks to the importance of a horse's feet to its overall health. Each horse's foot includes a mechanism that pumps blood back up to the heart, so each foot is like an auxiliary heart for the



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Crawford shapes a horse shoe at his anvil. The tools and nails he uses. Crawford explains how he gives horses a proper fit. A homemade tool used to nail shoes to hooves. Crawford shows up for jobs with racks of horse shoes in the bed of his pickup.

edgeable in the treatment of many hoof diseases, such as laminitis, navicular disease and thrush.

It's believed that the horse was domesticated around 3000 B.C., and Egyptians and Persians are credited with creating the first horseshoes from woven reeds and grass. The horseshoe has evolved through the ages, though the steel shoe has not changed much since the mid-1800s, when Henry Burden patented a machine that could mass-produce horseshoes. Although many synthetic shoes have come on the market in recent years, the majority of farriers still put on a steel shoe that's either hand-forged or ready-made and shaped either cold or hot and fitted to the animal.

Before a shoe is placed, the farrier will clean and trim the hoof to ensure a level and balanced foot. Even hooves that go without shoes likely need to be trimmed on a regular basis. The farrier will then customize the shoe to mimic the shape of that horse's hoof wall. The shoe is nailed outside of the wall from the bottom, so the nails penetrate the portion of the hoof that has no feeling.

The Texas Professional Farriers Association comprises about 200 members that meet regularly for continuing education. Texas does not require farriers to have a license to practice, but the TPFA helps members achieve certification through the American Farrier's Association. Certification exams include a written and a practical

animal. A horse's hoof is a living, growing part of that anatomy. Most components of a horse's hoof are elastic, so they also act as shock absorbers.

When the growth of the hoof is balanced by equal wear and no disease or abnormalities are present, horseshoes are not necessary. Horseshoes are used for protection, traction and correction. Whether it is racing, ranching or rodeoing, a horse's work is rough on its feet. That's when shoes are necessary. Shoes also correct some problems with gait and lameness.

Horseshoeing is both art and science, and skilled farriers pride themselves on helping to keep horses sound. Farriers study the anatomy of a horse's entire leg and are knowl-

Crawford, who once dreamed of becoming a calf roper, found his calling in 1972.

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Learn more about alternative shoes and how to find or become a farrier, and read a proverb that puts a fine point on the value of horseshoes.

component. The TPFA also hosts clinics and competitions throughout the year.

“A shoe should be a complement to the horse, not an interruption,” says Danny Anderson, TPFA president. Anderson owns Indian Creek Forge in Whitesboro and is a member of PenTex Energy. He says the organization is growing, and there is an up-and-coming generation of farriers.

**V**eterans in the industry are passing along their knowledge of the trade to new members, and they don’t all look like Crawford. Women have gotten involved.

According to the 2019 Farrier Business Practices Report produced by *American Farriers Journal*, 18% of farriers are women, up from 8% reported three years prior. In 2018 Cornell University admitted its first all-female class to its farrier program.

Nichole Smith co-owns SS Horseshoeing in Wichita Falls with her husband, Stephen, and is leading the way in the growing sector of female farriers. She was the first woman in the world to achieve multiple farrier certifications and has mentored other women.

“I’m really excited that so many young ladies are getting involved and doing so well,” Smith says. “Some ladies are small-statured, and they need to be prepared to use their brain to overcome some of the challenges. I’ve always been welcomed in this industry, like family, and I appreci-



ate that.” Smith forges all the steel and aluminum shoes she sets.

Although technology like 3D printing is quickly advancing this industry, there’s no replacement for the friendly smile and personal care for horses a farrier brings.

Crawford smiles as he looks back at his career: “Having people know that I did a good job and knowing that I was appreciated—that’s the reward.” ■

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# HELPING AFTER HURRICANE LAURA

Bluebonnet crews aid in restoring power to thousands in East Texas

**WHEN HURRICANE** Laura made landfall in the early hours of Aug. 27, 2020, its devastating winds, rain and storm surge left hundreds of thousands of people without power across Louisiana and East Texas. Central Texans dodged damage from this storm, which enabled Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative to help out hard-hit utilities.

Two Bluebonnet crews with 10 line workers, equipped with bucket and digger trucks, tracked machines and all-terrain vehicles, replaced poles and repaired power lines across rain-soaked, swampy areas and lakes. They were among more than 200 line workers and support personnel helping restore power to members of Deep East Texas Cooperative near the Louisiana border. More than half of that cooperative's 40,000 meters across eight counties lost power.

"The work has been hot and humid. We've been picking up wire under massive pine trees," said crew supervisor Chris Rivera from the field. "But the experience has been good. We worked two days to get the town of Burkeville back on, and once we did, it was a very rewarding feeling. The members were very appreciative."

Bluebonnet also released 26 contractor crews — 12 four-person construction crews and 14 three-person tree trimming crews — to help utilities in the two states. ■



Sarah Beal photo

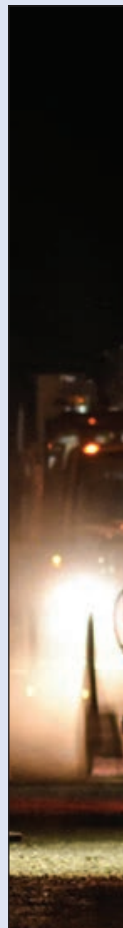
Bluebonnet crews traveled to Deep East Texas Electric Cooperative near the Louisiana border to help restore power to about 25,000 of its members after being hit by Hurricane Laura in late August. Above, from left, just before heading to East Texas, are Daniel Fritsche, Troy Moore, Eric Cobb, Chris



Chris Rivera photo



Heath Walden photo



Sarah Beal photo



Rivera, Michael Guajardo, John Horton, Nick Baker, Heath Walden, Joshua Gonzales and Derek Morgan. Below, from left: Bluebonnet crews use two bucket trucks and a digger truck to make repairs; Troy Moore, left, and Nick Baker make repairs to a pole in a heavily wooded area. The crews worked in hot,

swampy conditions for several days to restore power; a caravan of Bluebonnet trucks heads for East Texas in the early morning hours after the hurricane hit; Derek Morgan operates a track digger, which is used in areas inaccessible to standard trucks, while Eric Cobb works from a bucket.



Chris Rivera photo

# THE TALE OF MARY DACH



It's nearly Halloween — and time for a true story that ended in the Fayette County Jail in 1933. In the decades since, some have spoken of strange events there. Old buildings, it seems, may be slow to let go of the past.

*Mary Dach 1933 Acme Newspictures photo  
courtesy Fayette Heritage Museum & Archives*

By Denise Gamino

**NEARLY 90 YEARS AGO**, a widowed mother chose to starve to death in a Fayette County jail cell rather than die in the electric chair for the killing of a farmhand.

She lost 150 fatal pounds.

Before she died, Mary Dach wished aloud to someday be free, and to get a job in the jail that confined her.

Perhaps she did.

Can anyone say, beyond a reasonable doubt, whether Dach's spirit lingered and led to the many mysterious occurrences reported in the old 1883 Victorian Gothic stone jail in downtown La Grange? Eerie episodes over the decades

Ralph Barrera photo



Above, Henry Stoever, the murdered farmhand, in a photo taken years before the events related here. At left, Cathy Chaloupka in front of the historic old Fayette County Jail in La Grange, which now houses the Texas Heroes Museum. She recalls peculiar sights and sounds from the time she worked in the building as tourism director for La Grange's Chamber of Commerce. Others have reported unexplainable incidents, and more than a few locals say the building is haunted.

*Henry Stoever photo from 'Famous Detective Cases' magazine, June 1935*

“There are unsettled spirits” in the old jail.

— CATHY CHALOUPKA  
Former director of tourism,  
La Grange Chamber of Commerce

include sightings of orbs and apparitions, doors slamming, lights swinging, objects moving and even the sounds of heavy chains toppling.

“There are unsettled spirits” in the old jail, said Cathy Chaloupka, who officed in the renovated jail as director of tourism for the La Grange Chamber of Commerce for nine years, until 2005. “They got used to me, and I got used to them.”

Could the phantom presence of Mary Dach, a towering woman with braided black hair wound around her head, have turned on darkened lights, opened drawers meant to be closed and creaked loudly on the wooden staircase?

Some say yes; others say no way.

But few can argue that the saga of Mary Dach — which

made international headlines at the time, but is little known or talked of today — has not lost its shock factor.

If someone's afterlife spirit really could be unsettled, hers would be a contender.

\*\*\*

Mary Dach, a woman of German heritage who spoke little English, confessed to fatally shooting the farm helper she hired after her husband died of cancer in 1929 or 1930, leaving her alone with three young children on a 168-acre farm 17 miles south of La Grange. According to period accounts, Dach claimed farmhand Henry Stoever had been abusive to her and

**Continued on page 22**

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the children, two girls and a boy, ages 8, 6 and 4 at the time.

Dach's oldest daughter, who is now deceased, finally broke the family's public silence about the case with the Fayette County Record when she was 89. The farmhand who was murdered was mean and abusive, regularly assaulting her mother and little brother, she said. She did not witness his murder but remembered circumstantial evidence that someone other than her mother killed Stoever. The grown daughter, Annie Polnick, remembered hearing someone tell her mother that she and her three children would be killed if the truth came out.

"Mama was real dumb as she could have told the truth and got her life safe," Polnick said in a 10-page, handwritten memoir dated 2001 — the year she told her own three children about their grandmother for the first time. By then, her oldest child was 55. "So to me as I understand it, she died for us kids."

The official version of the Mary Dach crime story began in mid-April 1933, when Fayette County law officers began searching for Stoever after his brother reported him missing. Dach gave conflicting accounts about Stoever's whereabouts each time law officers visited her farm during their first week of inquiry. On the seventh day, investigators found Stoever's body. It was burned and buried in an 8-by-16-foot hole filled with debris and dirt and topped by a new chicken coop, just 18 feet from Dach's farmhouse.

After being taken into custody and interrogated in German and English by four investigators for four hours, Dach admitted to shooting Stoever in the head with a shotgun as he slept to protect her family, according to press accounts.

The Austin Statesman, the capital city's afternoon newspaper at the time, reported that the "Widow Dach" admitted shooting her laborer "because he was cruel to her children and herself, threatened their lives and swore he would throw their bodies into a hole he had dug near the house for a flower pit."

Instead, the paper noted, "it was his body which finally rested in that grave he had dug with his own hands," per-

'Famous Detective Cases' magazine courtesy Fayette Heritage Museum & Archives



The June 1935 issue of 'Famous Detective Cases' magazine featured 'widow Dach' and details of her case, which had become a national media sensation. Below, Mary Dach with her three children. Her oldest daughter, Annie Polnick, broke the family's public silence about the case in 2014, when she was 89. She believed her mother did not kill Stoever. 'So to me as I understand it, she died for us kids,' she wrote in a private memoir.



haps as a planned cellar.

The sad case only turned more tragic when Dach refused to eat after her arrest. "I'll not eat until I know what they are going to do with me," she told jailers, according to a June 1935 Famous Detective Cases magazine article that recounts the case in an as-told-by format with then-Fayette County Chief Deputy Sheriff Jim Flournoy. (He later became sheriff and reluctantly shut down the infamous "Chicken House" brothel after an exposé by a Houston reporter.)

Dach lost 50 pounds in the five weeks between her arrest on April 18, 1933, and opening day of her four-day trial in La Grange on May 22. She had sipped little more than a bit of soup and some coffee. "She held out for thirteen days, then began to eat slowly. She cried constantly and asked to see her children," stated an Associated Press story in The Dallas Morning News.

It took two days of questioning two jury pools — 125 men — to find 12 qualified jurors. Women were not



Goose Creek Daily Sun photo, August 1933 (courtesy Sterling Municipal Library, via The Portal to Texas History)

allowed to sit on a jury in Texas until 1954. "Many of the talesmen [potential jurors] disqualified themselves because they said they were opposed to infliction of the death penalty on a woman," the AP reported.

"The court room is crowded and the heat is fierce but the spectators, men and women are not to be robbed of



The old Fayette County jail, home to the Texas Heroes Museum since 2016, features a replica of one of the old jail cells. At left, Charles Murray, museum manager, shows some of the items on display there. Below, Murray holds a replica of a key used to open the old jail. The museum is temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

## FROM INMATES TO GREATS: THE TEXAS HEROES MUSEUM

The Texas Heroes Museum opened in 2016 in the old jail building in La Grange. It is fully operated by volunteers and offers a variety of military-related exhibits. Key exhibits include:

- The historic 1883 jail building itself, including part of an original jail cell, bunk, washbasin and commode. Sheriffs' memorabilia include badges, handcuffs, a hanging rope, Sheriff Will Loessin's gun holster, Sheriff Jim Flournoy's white hat, photographs and more.
- Tribute exhibits to military veterans from Texas, including Sam Houston, Audie Murphy, Chester Nimitz and Chris Kyle. One display has artifacts from an F-100 fighter pilot who flew 287 combat missions in Vietnam and received a Silver Star and two Distinguished Flying Crosses.
- Bob Lain Memorial Library of more than 1,000 military and Texas history books. Lain, a Marine veteran who lost both legs in a land mine explosion in the Vietnam War, became a longtime history professor at Austin Community College. He donated his 868-book collection to start the library, which is open for on-site research.



Ralph Barrera photos

**ADDRESS:** 171 S. Main St. La Grange  
**HOURS:** Closed during COVID-19 pandemic. Keep checking Facebook for reopening information.  
**PHONE:** 361-210-7318  
**ADMISSION:** Free. Group tours by arrangement.  
**SOCIAL MEDIA:** <https://www.facebook.com/TexasHeroesMuseum/>

their curiosity and interest,” stated a May 25, 1933, article in the weekly La Grange Journal. Dach required an interpreter to translate the English dialogue. “She remains mute as she sits beside her attorney and regards the proceedings.”

When the verdict came at 9 p.m. on May 25, Dach couldn't understand much besides the word “death.”

She was found guilty and sentenced to be executed. She would have been the first woman in Texas to be put to death in the electric chair at the state penitentiary in Huntsville.

“She received the verdict without a word,” according to the La Grange Journal. “Her face blanched when the word ‘death’ was pronounced, but she made

no effort to speak. She was entirely alone in the courtroom, no relatives were there to comfort her. She was lead (sic) slowly away to her cell, where she gave way to a burst of weeping, but still refused to say anything about the sentence.”

Even though her attorney immediately filed a motion for a new trial, Dach told a jailer, in German, “I will not eat,” according to a media report. “It is no use to live any longer,” she reportedly said. “It is about all over with me, I fear.”

She sought comfort from a German bible. And she reportedly hung the chair in her jail cell from the ceiling to place the “the electric chair out of reach,” the La Grange Journal reported.

News accounts of the day often gave varying ages and first names for Dach. Public records and christening documents show her name inconsistently as Maria, Marrie, Marie and Mary. Conflicting reports varied her age from 34 to 43. Her 1933 death certificate states she was 43.

Officials did not try to force feed Dach. Days before her death on Aug. 23, 1933, “she was unconscious on the cot in her jail cell. A physician watched her closely and then began to treat her for a stomach ailment,” according to an AP story. Dach's three children were reported to be present at the time of their mother's death.

Continued on page 24

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On her death certificate, the cause of death was “voluntary starvation.”

She weighed 100 pounds.

Dach’s children were raised by their maternal grandmother. The family — and the community — was tight-lipped about the entire ghastly episode. Even today, not everyone in Fayette County feels comfortable talking about the 1933 event.

In her memoir, Dach’s oldest daughter, Polnick, wrote about then-Fayette County Sheriff Will Loessin and deputy Flournoy accompanying the young Dach children to school after their mother’s death: “They both talked to all the kids in school and then they took us in and introduced us to the children and (there was) not a one time that one of the children would mention anything about us.”

That silent community pact kept Mary Dach’s grandchildren from knowing what had happened.

“It was mind-boggling to the entire family” when Polnick revealed the story to her own children in 2001, said her oldest son, Sonny Polnick of Houston, the oldest grandchild of Mary Dach. She decided to open up after a writer sought her out, he said.

Suddenly, he said, it made sense “why people looked at me kind of weird” during childhood when he was introduced as Annie Polnick’s son.

Annie Polnick raised her family in Houston, where she worked for the National Biscuit Co. and volunteered for 13 years at the Harris County Sheriff’s Office to help children in need. It is not known whether Annie Polnick knew that her mother had a similar aspiration to work with law enforcement.

Mary Dach had told the Austin Statesman after her conviction: “I tell myself sometimes, if I get out of my trouble maybe I could get a job at the jail doing some kind of work.”

Sonny Polnick has visited the old jail in La Grange, where just a remnant of a jail cell remains. He said “it was eerie” to see the cell and couldn’t imagine his grandmother “being cooped up in there and starving herself to death.” He wonders whether his grandmother would be convicted if her trial were held in today’s criminal justice system — with modern forensics, a diverse jury, accommoda-



The Mary Dach story made a name for the county’s Chief Deputy Sheriff Jim Flournoy, above right, who provided the details to ‘Famous Detective Cases’ magazine. Beside him in the photo is then-Fayette County Sheriff Will Loessin.

Photo from ‘Famous Detective Cases’ magazine, June 1935

tions for language barriers and the rights afforded today’s criminal suspects.

\*\*\*

Although Sonny Polnick never felt his grandmother’s presence in the old jail, others say they have. “I did see her image one Saturday morning,” Chaloupka said. “It was just a fleeting kind of thing for me.” But one of Chaloupka’s colleagues worked in the area where the women’s jail cell had been, on the second floor, and saw a figure watching him one day. “It made the hair stand up

on the back of my neck,” that worker told the Houston Chronicle in 2002.

When unsettling things happened to Chaloupka — such as the sound of heavy chains dropping to the ground behind her chair or a light bulb flying out of its socket toward her — she tried to tell the spirits that she needed to work. After the light bulb incident, “I would sing ‘Amazing Grace’ in the mornings, and it never happened again,” she said. “They got used to me, and I got used to them.”

However, “sometimes the toilet lid would fly up with a loud bang. I think that was Sheriff Jim’s joke,” she said, referring to Flournoy.

The old jail now houses the Texas Heroes Museum, which honors Texas veterans. At least one otherworldly episode has occurred since the museum opened in 2016. A no-nonsense, all-business volunteer was surprised to see a second-floor security camera pick up the image of a large white orb floating in the air. “It was about the size of a basketball,” the volunteer said. “I watched it for about 10 minutes.”

Paranormal activity by definition cannot be explained.

Today, the museum simply displays a visitor information sheet about deaths in the old jail. It concludes: “You’ll need to come visit and decide for yourself if there are any unhappy souls still not at peace in the old jail.” ■



File photo by Sarah Beal

## STORIES FROM A CEMETERY

The event is canceled this year, but the stories live on. Every October for 16 years, the Lockhart City Cemetery has been the site of a spooky event, ‘Speaking of the Dead: Night Ramblings in a Texas Cemetery.’ Volunteers wearing period costumes stand by headstones and tell the stories of people buried there. The 2020 event is cancelled due to COVID-19, but you can still get a chill by reading some of those stories on the Caldwell County Historical Commission’s website, [bit.ly/2EUtPAB](http://bit.ly/2EUtPAB). Want to see the gravesites? The cemetery, 705 Wichita St. in Lockhart, is open to the public every day from 6 a.m. to sunset. Did we mention the haunted old jail built in 1909? The Caldwell County Museum is in that building, at 315 E. Market St., and it is said to have a few ghosts of its own. As of September, it was closed due to COVID-19, but check the historical commission’s website for updates on reopening.



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Sarah Beal photo



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## Time to go pink

**BLUEBONNET IS** passionate about community and supports worthy causes, such as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Since 2012, during October, our member service centers glow with pink light at night, field crews wear pink hard hats and service trucks sport pink ribbon decals.

Members can stop by the drive-through lane of a member service center – in Bastrop, Brenham, Giddings, Lockhart or Manor – to pick up a self-exam reminder card, a pink ribbon pin or a paper pink-ribbon that's embedded with flower seeds to support the cause. Business hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.



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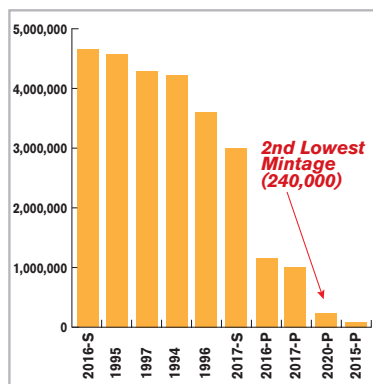
### Philadelphia Steps Up

For just 13 days, the U.S. Mint struck an “Emergency Production” run of U.S. Silver Dollars at the Philadelphia Mint. This was great for silver buyers, and *really* great for collectors. Here’s why:

### The Mystery of Silver Bullion

A coin’s value is often tied to its rarity. One way to determine a coin’s rarity is by its mint mark—a small letter indicating where a coin was struck. Since Silver Eagles are almost always produced solely in West Point, the coins don’t feature one of these mint marks. But this year’s Silver

Eagles were also produced in Philly—so few (a scant 240,000) that they are now the second smallest mintage of Silver Eagles ever struck! So how do we tell a 2020(W) Silver Eagle from a 2020(P)?



### Certified “Struck at” Coins

Numismatic Guaranty Corporation (NGC) is one of the world’s leading third-party coin grading services. Thanks to some skilled detective work, they have certified these coins as being struck at the Philadelphia Mint during this special Emergency Production run. What’s more, a number of these coins have been graded as near-flawless Mint State-69 (MS69) condition—just one point away from absolute perfection!

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Date:	2020
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Weight:	1oz (31.101 grams)
Purity:	99.9% Silver
Diameter:	40.6 mm
Mintage:	240,000
Condition:	Mint State-69 (MS69)
Certified:	Emergency Production

### 2020(P) Emergency Production American Eagle Silver Dollar

NGC MS69 Early Releases — ~~\$79~~

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Main Street in Desdemona at the height of the oil boom in 1918, which was also when the flu pandemic struck.

# Boomtown Pandemic

The deadly flu outbreak of 1918 hit oil fields hard

BY GENE FOWLER

**THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC** has drawn comparisons to the influenza outbreak of 1918, what became known as the Spanish flu, which was the 20th century's deadliest pandemic. The Spanish flu infected about 500 million people, or one-third of the world's population, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates. Tens of millions died worldwide, including approximately 675,000 Americans.

Of the 5,000 Texans killed in World War I, a third are believed to have died from influenza. While the battlefield, with soldiers crowded in makeshift ramparts, provided a natural incubator for the virus, social conditions during

Texas' early 20th-century oil boom also allowed the disease to spread unchecked. The lack of suitable housing and access to fresh water, and poor sanitation in towns besieged by thousands of boomers — as Ranger, Burkburnett and Desdemona were in 1918 — created an environment in which infection flourished.

Researcher Ben Wright found evidence of the boomtown epidemic in the Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry, an archive of recordings held by the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin. "Part of my job is to work out ways the center's collections inform current issues," said Wright. "The past is never lacking in its

warnings, lessons and reassurances."

The interviews and other materials in the archive were gathered in the 1950s and include direct testimony about the 1918 flu pandemic.

Interviewee Walter Cline, who later became mayor of Burkburnett, served as field director for the Red Cross at Call Field near Wichita Falls when the flu hit. Cline headed into the Burkburnett oil field with doctors and nurses as well as food, clothing, medicine and other donated resources. His team found people "suffering from flu and exposed in covered wagons and under these tarpaulins," he said. "In one place, you'd find a mother dead, with a little 6- or 8-months-old baby crawling around over her breast, trying to open her dress. ... I think on our first trip west of Burkburnett, we gathered up some six or eight dead men, women and children, and they continued to die until we found temporary shelter for them."

Fred Jennings, a rig manager at Goose Creek Oil Field near Baytown, recalled, "The people died, and they just died so fast here till they didn't have no undertakers. You'd just have to put them in pickup trucks and haul them to Houston. Just put them in a pine box and bury them any way you could. ... I saw one man working and walk home and was dead in 30 minutes."

Don Carleton, Briscoe Center executive director, says we don't know the full impact of the 1918 pandemic, but the disease reached Texas' highest office. Researching his forthcoming biography of Gov. William P. Hobby, Carleton learned that Hobby fought the deadly contagion just as desperately as the roughnecks of the oil fields.

"I was quite surprised to learn that even our state's governor was afflicted with the disease," Carleton said. ■

# Buckles, Betties, Cobblers and Crisps

Lots of names for turning fruit and a crunchy topping into irresistible treats

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Buckles and betties and cobblers and crisps—whatever you call them—are the essence of comforting, down-home cooking. Everyone has their favorite recipe in their back pocket, no matter the season. Our family is partial to crisps. That buttery, crunchy topping is tempting enough to eat on its own, and pairing it with juicy fruits (and a scoop of ice cream) makes it difficult to resist. Another bonus: These dishes are easy to make, so dessert can happen any night of the week.



## Mixed Berry Pistachio Crisp

**5 tablespoons cold butter, plus more for greasing the dish**  
**4 cups frozen mixed berries**  
**1 tablespoon lemon juice**  
**¼ cup sugar**  
**4 tablespoons flour, divided use**  
**1 cup rolled oats**  
**¼ cup chopped pistachios**  
**⅓ cup brown sugar**  
**¼ teaspoon salt**  
**¼ teaspoon cinnamon**

**COOK'S TIP** To make this recipe gluten free, use oat flour, almond flour or your favorite gluten-free blend.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a 9-inch pie dish or oven-safe skillet with butter.
2. In a large bowl, add berries, then sprinkle lemon juice over the top. Combine sugar and 2 tablespoons flour and sprinkle over berries; mix well. Pour into the prepared pan.
3. In a small bowl, combine oats, pistachios, brown sugar, 2 tablespoons flour, salt and cinnamon. Cut in butter using a pastry blender or two forks until large clumps are formed and no dry bits remain. Sprinkle topping evenly over fruit mixture.
4. Bake 45–50 minutes, until browned and bubbly.

**SERVES 6**

**TCP WEB EXTRA** Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at [stetted.com](http://stetted.com), where she features a recipe for Blackberry Basil Crumble.



## Cherry Blueberry Buckle

BECKEY BROWN  
NAVASOTA VALLEY EC

### BUCKLE

**½ cup (1 stick) salted butter, softened,  
plus more for greasing the dish**

**½ cup sour cream**

**½ cup sugar**

**1 egg**

**1 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**Zest and juice of 1 orange**

**¼ teaspoon salt**

**¾ cup heavy whipping cream**

**2 cups pancake and waffle mix**

**1¼ cups frozen pitted cherries**

**¾ cup frozen blueberries**

**2 tablespoons brown sugar**

### TOPPING

**1¼ cups heavy whipping cream**

**¼ cup powdered sugar**

**Zest and juice of 1 orange**

**Mint leaves, for garnish**

- 1. BUCKLE** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a 9-by-13-inch baking dish with butter or cooking spray and set aside.
- Using a stand mixer, cream butter, sour cream and sugar. Add egg, vanilla, orange zest and juice, salt, and whipping cream, mixing on low to combine.
- Slowly add pancake and waffle mix, scraping down sides as needed while mixing.
- Spread batter into prepared pan and top with cherries and blueberries. Sprinkle top with brown sugar.
- Bake 30–35 minutes, until toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean and buckle is puffed and brown. Let cool slightly before serving.
- 6. TOPPING** While the buckle bakes, whip the cream, powdered sugar, zest and juice

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

## PB&J Peach Cobbler

CHUCK BURGESS  
HEART OF TEXAS EC



The unexpected addition of peanut butter makes this cobbler a dish reminiscent of your favorite childhood lunch. To make the mixing easier, warm the peanut butter and preserves in the microwave for 10–15 seconds.

SERVES 12

**½ cup (1 stick) butter, plus more  
for greasing the dish**

**¾ cup crunchy peanut butter**

**¾ cup milk**

**1 cup sugar**

**1 cup flour**

**1 tablespoon baking powder**

**½ teaspoon salt**

**1 can (29 ounces) sliced peaches  
in juice, drained**

**¾ cup peach preserves**

**½ cup brown sugar**

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 13-by-9-inch glass baking dish with butter.
- Melt remaining butter in a medium bowl. Whisk in peanut butter then milk until blended.
- In another bowl, mix the sugar, flour, baking powder and salt. Add the butter mixture and stir until blended. Pour into baking dish and spread evenly.
- In a medium bowl, mix peaches, preserves and brown sugar. Then spoon evenly over batter. Bake 40–50 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and juices are bubbly.

## TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

TACOS DUE OCT 10

Whether you love them soft, crunchy or puffy, tell us what makes your tacos the best. Enter at [TexasCoopPower.com/Contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/Contests) by October 10.

RECIPES CONTINUED

together until soft peaks are formed. Chill until ready to serve. Serve buckle with a dollop of whipped cream and a mint leaf.

SERVES 12



## Spiced Apple Cobbler

C. PAIGE YOUNG-CANNON  
PEDERNALES EC

You don't need to peel the apples, making the prep easy enough for kids like Sylvia Cannon, who submitted this recipe with the help of her mom.

FILLING

- 1 tablespoon butter, melted, plus more to grease baking dish
- 5 small sweet apples, cut into chunks
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt

TOPPING

- ½ cup (1 stick) butter, softened
- ¾ cup plus ⅓ cup sugar, divided use
- 1½ cups self-rising flour
- 5 teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¾ cup milk

**COOK'S TIP** If you don't have self-rising flour, you can make your own. For each cup of all-purpose flour, add in 1½ teaspoons baking powder and ½ teaspoon salt.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9-by-9-inch ceramic baking dish with butter and set aside.

2. **FILLING** In a large bowl, pour melted butter over cut apples. Add sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, vanilla and salt. Stir and set aside.

3. **TOPPING** In a separate bowl, cream butter and ¾ cup sugar until pale and fluffy. Add flour and toss to coat the butter, then cut coated butter into the flour using a pastry blender or two forks. The mixture should resemble sandy crumbs.

4. Add remaining sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and milk. Mix until smooth; it will be very thick.

5. Pour filling into prepared dish, making sure to include any accumulated juices. Dollop the topping evenly over the apples.

6. Bake until topping is golden and puffed, and filling is bubbling, about 45 minutes.

SERVES 8

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# holiday GIFT GUIDE

In the magazine and on [TexasCoopPower.com](http://TexasCoopPower.com), we make it easy to shop for friends and family.



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COURTESY CHET GARNER

## Matagorda Island Lighthouse

Ancient tower once guided ships to Indianola

BY CHET GARNER

IF THE HEAT DIDN'T TAKE ME, the mosquitoes would, so I pedaled as fast as I could through the grass and sand, hoping I was rolling in the right direction. I was committed to seeing the Matagorda Island lighthouse, and the price of admission is a 2.5-mile trek across this desolate island.

The barrier island is 38 miles long and uninhabited, save for a small outpost used by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. TPWD ran a daily ferry to the island until 2003, when a fire destroyed the state's boat, and the ferry service was lost in the flames. If you want to visit Matagorda Island now, you either float your own boat across Espiritu Santo Bay or enlist a fishing guide in Port O'Connor. I reached the island with the help of guide Mike Bohac, who delivered me to Matagorda, pointed toward the lighthouse and said, "Head that way."

After an hour of pedaling, I could see the lighthouse. It was built in 1852 to guide ships through Pass Cavallo on their way to Indianola. Numerous renovations and a relocation raised the structure to where it now sits, 91 feet above sea level. The Confederate States army tried to blow up the lighthouse to keep it from falling into Union hands, but the cast-iron structure survived.

I peered into a small glass window at the bottom of the lighthouse and wondered what the view was like from the top. Volunteers open it up on special occasions, but my trip was not one of those. Near the lighthouse, I inspected the foundation for the lightkeeper's home and a small cemetery where deceased keepers lie in rest, still guarding the tower.

It was easy to imagine the isolation they must have felt here on the edge of Texas. ■

ABOVE Chet takes a selfie with the 1852 Matagorda Island lighthouse.

**TCP WEB EXTRA** See Chet's video from the Matagorda lighthouse 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.

## OCTOBER

03

**Alvarado [3-4, 10-11, 17-18, 24-25, 31] Sunset Hill Tree Farm Pumpkin Patch**, (817) 713-6114, [sunsethilltreefarm.com](http://sunsethilltreefarm.com)

08

**Tyler [8-11] Fall Fun—Hunter/Jumper Horse Show**, (903) 882-8696, [texasrosehorsepark.com](http://texasrosehorsepark.com)

09

**Ingram [9-10, 16-17, 23-24] Count Dracula**, (830) 367-5121, [hcaf.com](http://hcaf.com)

10

**Jacksonville Cherokee Craft & Trade Fair**, (903) 268-1598

**Kerrville Kerr County Market Days and Hill Country Swap Meet**, (830) 459-6198, [kerrmarketdays.org](http://kerrmarketdays.org)

**Brenham [10, 16-17, 24] Hot Nights, Cool Tunes**, (979) 337-7580, [downtownbrenham.com](http://downtownbrenham.com)

11

**Dallas Prism Health North Texas Virtual LifeWalk 2020**, (214) 521-5191, [lifewalk.org/event/lifewalk](http://lifewalk.org/event/lifewalk)

16

**Austin [16-19] American Institute of Architects Austin Homes Tour**, (512) 452-4332, [aiaaustin.org/homes-tour/2020](http://aiaaustin.org/homes-tour/2020)

**Terlingua [16-17] Ride 4 Trails**, (432) 371-3382, [ride4trails.com](http://ride4trails.com)

17

**Tyler [17-18] North Texas Hunter Jumper Club Fall Horse Show**, (903) 882-8696, [texasrosehorsepark.com](http://texasrosehorsepark.com)

20

**Edinburg [20-24] Virtual Los Muertos Bailan,** (956) 383-6246, edinburgarts.com/ losmuertosbailan

22

**Canton [22-24] Classic Country & Honky Tonk Halloween Party,** (903) 245-6300, visitcantontx.com

24

**Grand Saline Goody Trail & Trunk or Treat on Main,** (903) 962-5631, grandsalinemainstreet.com

**New Braunfels Simpson Texas Car and Bike Show,** (830) 625-1774, playinnewbraunfels.com

**Kerrville [24-25] Haunted Ghoul Pool,** (830) 257-7300, kerrvilletx.gov

**Rusk [24-25] Pumpkin Patch Train Ride,** (855) 632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

**Buffalo Gap [24-Nov. 7] Scarecrow Festival,** (325) 572-3365, taylorcountyhistorycenter.org/ scarecrow-festival

26

**Jacksonville Trunk or Treat,** (903) 586-2217, jacksonvilletexas.com

28

**Rosanky Christmas in October Toy Drive,** (512) 360-3968, rosankybaptistchurch.com

30

**Tyler [30-Nov. 1] Texas Rose Autumn Breed Show,** (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

MORE EVENTS >

### TCP *Submit Your Event*

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

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TRISH RAWLS

## Fredericksburg

### Getaway Contest

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COURTESY CHISHOLM TRAIL HERITAGE MUSEUM



*Pick of the Month*

**Two Women Look West**

Cuero, Oct. 8–Nov. 1  
(361) 277-2866,  
[chisholmtrailmuseum.org](http://chisholmtrailmuseum.org)

The Chisholm Trail Heritage Museum features photographs of the King Ranch by Helen C. Kleberg and Toni Frissell. Kleberg was a self-taught photographer and wife of the longtime CEO of the King Ranch. Frissell was a New York fashion photographer. They photographed the King Ranch from the 1930s to the 1950s.

OCTOBER EVENTS CONTINUED

31

**Kerrville Family Fright Night**, (830) 257-7300,  
[kerrvilletx.gov](http://kerrvilletx.gov)

**Kerrville Pumpkin Run/Walk and Harvest Festival**, (830) 315-5762,  
[kerrvillekroc.org](http://kerrvillekroc.org)

**Austin [Oct. 31–Nov. 15] Virtual Texas Book Festival**, (512) 477-4055,  
[texasbookfestival.org](http://texasbookfestival.org)

NOVEMBER

01

**Houston Rockin' Resiliency Virtual Luncheon**, (713) 623-6543,  
[thewomensfund.org/events](http://thewomensfund.org/events)

**Lubbock West Texas Latino Artist Día De Los Muertos Celebración**, (806) 792-1212,  
[loshermanosfamilia.org](http://loshermanosfamilia.org)

07

**George West A Day of Stories**, (361) 436-1098,  
[dobie-westtheatre.com](http://dobie-westtheatre.com)



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# Selfies

The modern self-portrait, a selfie captures Texas life in a personal way. Now, thanks to technology, it's easier than ever to put ourselves in someone else's boots.

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

**GAIL WISE**  
TRI-COUNTY EC

This little fella "came over any time we worked the cows."

**VIRGINIA GARCIA**  
KARNES EC

Cinnamon, a new chick on the farm, loves taking selfies.

**DOUGLAS RATCHFORD**  
BLUEBONNET EC

"An early morning flight in a good friend's 1930 Waco biplane."

**DOLLY HOLLINGSWORTH**  
SAN PATRICIO EC

"I said smile for the camera, and she sure did."



## Upcoming Contests

**DUE OCT 10** Saddles

**DUE NOV 10** Diners

**DUE DEC 10** Storms

Enter online and review submission rules at [TexasCoopPower.com/Contests](https://TexasCoopPower.com/Contests).

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



Francisco “Panchito” Flores of San Antonio is a third-generation *charro*—Spanish for cowboy—learning the Mexican rodeo tradition of *charreada*.

## Memorable Moment

Look for striking portraits in your everyday life

STORY AND PHOTO  
BY JULIA ROBINSON

**WHEN I BECAME** a photojournalist, portraits were a dreaded assignment. I wanted to document real people living real lives, not direct them like a studio photographer.

Initially I hid behind my documentarian role to avoid the hard work of corralling light. But as I learned more about portraiture, I wanted to get better—so I consumed the lavish sets of Annie Leibovitz; the sculpted light of Martin Schoeller; the whimsical, dark vision of Dan Winters; the dynamism of Robert Seale.

Making an emotional connection with a subject to tell a story with an image is a skill I find more valuable than slick lighting, perfect hair and teeth, or a celebrity face. The portraits made by Dorothea Lange, Diane Arbus, Robert Frank, Walker Evans and Sally Mann

have helped me tell the story of a person, a place or a moment in history.

I’ve gotten better at lighting and directing people who begin a photo session with, “I hate photos of myself.” The most meaningful portraits I have made are not those for a newspaper or a business client. They’ve been grandparents at someone’s wedding, my nieces as they grow, my family at ease. The portraits I value the most are the environmental and the informal.

Looking back through my family photos, it’s the candid portraits that stand out. A moment of connection between family members, the peak action of a laugh, the details of a bedroom or a set of toys that add to the nostalgia. Portraits don’t always need to be taken in a studio or in our best clothes. They can be “found” in our everyday lives.

The class photo on the mantel has an official purpose—to pause the march of time from grade to grade. The same is true for the annual family Christmas card and the child in bluebonnets. The images that stop me in my tracks, however, are the laughter, the quiet connection, the unaware expressions of self.

The only secret is practice. Try bringing your camera everywhere for a day. If you make picture-taking a seamless part of everyday life, the people you photograph won’t think twice when you point the lens in their direction.

Hunt the good light in your house, your backyard or on the walk to the park. If you want to make a noncandid portrait, the window light from a north- or south-facing window will be the most flattering, along with the golden hours just before dusk and just after dawn.

Observe the moments that spark your connection and joy. Think about what makes a person light up, and see if you can capture it. One fleeting and hard-won image like this is worth a thousand studio sessions. ■

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