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IN THE FIELD

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CINCO DE MAYO

READER PHOTOS:
HISTORIC TEXAS

Texas Coop Power

FOR BLUEBONNET EC MEMBERS

MAY 2021

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**BLUEBONNET
EC NEWS**

SEE PAGE 18

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May 2021



08

Serendipity Spinners

Members of a San Angelo cooperative spin wool from their own flock.

*By Brenda Kisko
Photos by Kristin Tyler*

12 Listening to Texas

How folklorists saved the soundtrack of the Lone Star State.

By Gene Fowler

ON THE COVER

Colorful skeins of yarn created by the Serendipity Spinners.

ABOVE

Peggy Tharp, Ruth Jordan and Sandy Pederson of the spinning club.
Photos by Kristin Tyler

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Universal Appeal
By E. Dan Klepper

A Preponderance of Orthographers

YOUNG TEXANS have proven masterful at spelling words that seemingly come from a jostled Scrabble board. They have pretty much owned the Scripps National Spelling Bee in recent years.

Three of the eight co-champions in 2019 came from Texas. Sohum Sukhatankar of Dallas dazzled with his winning word, *pendeloque*. Abhijay Kodali of Flower Mound spelled *palama*. And Rohan Raja of Dallas aced *odylic*.

They followed in the footsteps of 2018 champion Karthik Nemmani of McKinney, who hoisted the trophy after spelling *koinonia*.

Nihar Janga of Austin shared the title in 2016 after spelling *Gesellschaft*.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of the 2020 bee. The 2021 finals are scheduled for July 8.

May 5

NATIONAL ASTRONAUT DAY

An etymology dictionary cites 1880 as the earliest use of the word "astronaut." That's when English writer Percy Greg coined it for a fictional spaceship.



FINISH THIS SENTENCE THIS MEMORIAL DAY, I HONOR ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Below are some of the responses to our March prompt: **The song that got me through a year of pandemic is ...**

If We Make It Through December by Merle Haggard.

INOCENCIA MARTINEZ
MAGIC VALLEY EC
MERCEDES

Texas Sun by Khruangbin and Leon Bridges.

MELANIE BURRIS
NUECES EC
PORTLAND

Still Not Dead by Willie Nelson.

FD HERMAN
HAMILTON COUNTY EC
BIG VALLEY

We Shall Overcome by Pete Seeger.

SANJAY SHAH
COSERV
CARROLLTON

This Little Light of Mine.

PEGGY HOWARD
VICTORIA EC
VICTORIA

Don't Let Me Down by the Beatles.

JERRY CHANDLER
PEDERNALES EC
CANYON LAKE

To see more responses, read Currents online.

“Motherhood is the greatest thing and the hardest thing.”

—RICKI LAKE



TCP *Contests and More*

ON TEXASCOOPPOWER.COM

\$500 RECIPE CONTEST
Cheese

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS
Rust and Decay

RECOMMENDED READING
Double Exposure (July 2018) revisits a couple's pose at Cadillac Ranch.

LBJ Archives at 50

The LBJ Presidential Library at the University of Texas at Austin turns 50 on May 22. It was the first presidential library to be located on a college campus and the first anywhere in Texas.

The First Five Presidential Libraries

Opened June 30, 1941

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Hyde Park, New York

July 6, 1957

Harry S. Truman

Independence, Missouri

May 1, 1962

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Abilene, Kansas

August 10, 1962

Herbert Hoover

West Branch, Iowa

May 22, 1971

Lyndon B. Johnson

Austin, Texas



TWIN SISTERS
DANCE HALL
NEAR BLANCO

Care To Dance?

TEXAS DANCE HALL PRESERVATION donated \$262,520 to assist 32 historic dance halls with expenses in 2020.

Dance halls across the state were shut down for most of 2020, unable to hold dances, weddings, festivals and fundraisers because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

More than 1,000 dance halls, built mostly by European immigrants, once dotted parts of Texas. Today, fewer than 400 remain. Read *Hail the Halls* from February 2019 to learn more.



LBJ PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY



ROB GREEBON

Flower Power

“Your March cover started my day with a happy smile. You all knocked it out of the ballpark with photos of Texas flowers in breathtaking colors.”

AUDNETTE CODY LARGENT
FAYETTE EC
EMORY

Family Roots

Some of the more interesting pass-along plants [*Putting Down Roots*, February 2021] were introduced by Lorenzo de Zavala when he was a minister to France when Texas was a republic. Roses were a gift from France and planted by Adina de Zavala, his granddaughter, in their Lynchburg homestead, eventually shared and spread into surrounding communities. These roses are still found in some of our older cemeteries.

Mike Shoup
Bluebonnet EC
Independence



Salsa was great during the snow-pocalypse [*Tacos*, March 2021]. Spicy food and soups for cold days and nights always seem to go good together.

DAVID NORTON
VIA FACEBOOK

A Flyer's Fate

Col. Carl Crane, my grandfather, and William Ocker were pioneers in instrumentation flying [*Flying Blind*, January 2021]. Had Crane not pursued this solution, I might not be here.

The story goes that he was flying a congressman's son in bad weather in Ohio when he became disoriented and almost crashed. Neon lights of a hotel that he saw at the last minute allowed Crane to get his bearings and correct his plane's direction, saving their lives.

Lisa Mittel
Southwest Texas EC
San Antonio

Bread and Butter

As a youngster in Boerne in the 1950s, one of my treats was simple well-buttered bread, and the butter was from either Falfurrias or the Comfort Creamery, depending on whether my parents shopped in San Antonio or at our local Boerne grocery [*A Name That Sticks*, February 2021]. Back then the butter was better than the bread.

Dell Hood
Pedernales EC
Wimberley



CHIARA VERCESI

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.

Texas Co-op Power

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TEXAS MINT

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

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

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



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BATTLE OF GONZALES

first in the series ● ● ● ●

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



BATTLE OF THE ALAMO

second in the series ● ● ● ●

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

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

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



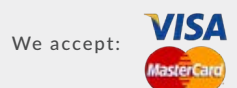
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Serendipity Spinners

**MEMBERS OF A SAN ANGELO
COOPERATIVE SPIN WOOL
FROM THEIR OWN FLOCK**

BY BRENDA KISSKO • PHOTOS BY KRISTIN TYLER

Yarn created by the
Serendipity Spinners gets
woven into a blanket.

Turning materials that nature provides into a handiwork can remind us of a simpler way of life and provide a reward beyond the finished product.

Such has been the experience of the Serendipity Spinners, who for 19 years have been starting from the ground up and spinning wool into yarn, which they then craft into prized possessions.

Although they come from varied backgrounds in and around San Angelo—doctors, businesswomen, retired teachers, certified public accountants—they share a common love for the spinning tradition. And they are members of their own co-op, which owns a flock of sheep, goats and alpacas whose wool, mohair and fiber they spin and blend into rugs, scarves, hats and other craft pieces. The group, which includes several members of Concho Valley Electric Cooperative, meets at Ruth Jordan’s property on the South Concho River near San Angelo, where their flock lives on 11 acres.

“Each spinner brings her special knowledge and talent to the group,” Jordan says. They share techniques, supplies and equipment, she explains. “Beginning spinners usually start with me as the teacher, with everyone pitching in for help and encouragement.”

Even though the members chose the name Serendipity because they liked the sound of the word, its meaning holds relevance for original member Peggy Tharp. She had given up weaving because there was no place to buy materials in West Texas. Serendipity Spinners changed that.

Being involved in the process from the beginning—starting with animals and through the finished product—offers creative satisfaction. “Spinning is fulfilling and elemental,” Tharp says. “This group got me to do something I’m not sure I could do otherwise.”

The Serendipity Spinners continue a tradition of spinning that dates back more than 10 centuries, to a time when fibers were hand spun on spindles. The spinning wheel was invented in India and introduced to Europe in the Middle Ages. The wheel sped up the yarn-making process, which became mechanized during the 18th century.

Crafters who crochet typically buy yarn from big-box stores and craft shops, which mostly supply acrylic wool. Yarn spun from natural fibers can be harder to come by and costs more. Purists buy raw fibers and spin them into their own yarn. The Serendipity Spinners take it a step further by



ABOVE, FROM TOP Alpacas owned by the Serendipity Spinners near San Angelo are one source of the group’s wool; unspun wool; Ruth Jordan spins wool into yarn.



LEFT Jordan feeds one of the Shetland sheep the Serendipity Spinners count on for the breed's desirable wool. BELOW The spinners gather in Jordan's home to enjoy their centuries-old craft.



Each spring, the group hires a local to shear their sheep and goats. The spinners shear the alpacas and do the skirting (the term for sorting and cleaning the wool) of all the fleeces themselves. The wool is then carded—combed—into roving so the fibers are lined up and ready to be spun into yarn.

When group members gather, they enjoy a potluck of food and fellowship. The room is filled with familiar smiles, the scent of fresh-baked treats and the gentle whirring of spinning wheels. The Serendipity Spinners are not in business to make a profit; they're in business to produce affordable fiber for members to use.

The group sells dryer balls made from their castoff scrap fiber at craft fairs and events at the Chicken Farm Art Center in San Angelo. The dryer balls are the one product the group sells collectively, and they use the proceeds to help with the cost of feeding and shearing their flock and processing their wool.

The Serendipity Spinners' flock came about during a spinning session when one of the ladies complained about the high cost of fiber. Jordan suggested the group invest in their own flock, so each member chipped in \$200, and they purchased four sheep.

They sought a variety of sheep breeds to produce a diversity of fibers. Their flock now includes Teeswater, Wensleydale, California variegated mutant, Jacob, merino and Rambouillet. Each breed has unique qualities in its fiber and yarn.

Mohair, produced by Angora goats, is glossy and strong and dyes beautifully. Merino is soft. Jacob is strong and ideal for rugs and handbags. Teeswater is lustrous. CVM offers larger fleece that's easy to spin and is often blended with other fibers. Alpaca fleece comes in a variety of shades and colors. Shetlands produce an especially desirable fiber for hand spinning in many colors.

San Angelo, well-known as one of the largest sheep, wool and mohair markets in the U.S., makes a fitting home for the Serendipity Spinners. The Texas Sheep and Goat

raising their own sheep to produce their own wool.

The group spins the wool into yarn on varied styles of spinning wheels: some Saxony, some Castle, some electric, some antique heirlooms.

"If only these wheels could tell us their stories," says Jordan, who owns several. She purchased one from northern Europe at a secondhand shop in Mason, concluding it probably came to Texas with the German pioneers who settled the Hill Country. Her Schacht Matchless wheel came from an estate sale, and she learned that its former owner, whose initials are painted on the wheel, traveled from New York to Mexico to teach spinning there.

Through her experience with different wheels, Jordan has become the mechanic of the Serendipity Spinners, troubleshooting occasional problems.

Though there are faster ways of acquiring a scarf nowadays, the machine-made one you select from the shelf at the department store won't be imbued with the same love a handmade scarf offers. The Serendipity Spinners take the wool from a sheep they've cared for and work it through every step of the process to become a warm wrap.



The spinners' livestock range on 11 acres along the South Concho River.

Raisers Association and the Mohair Council of America are headquartered in the city.

The Serendipity Spinners observe Roc Day, or St. Distaff's Day, each January 7, the traditional date that the cottage industry spinners in Europe resumed spinning the day after Epiphany. The San Angelo women celebrate with

a weekend spinning retreat at the Jordan Ranch near Menard. On that weekend they exchange handmade items.

"Fiber friends are the finest," Jordan says, smiling as she reflects upon her time with her fellow spinners. ■

3-12-51

Ramsey Farm

Capt. McAdams
Capt. Bedford

Carter Falk quartette leader

Retrieve Farm

Alonso Curlee - (knew L.S.)
Howard Byater - (knew Iron Head)
Freddy Long
Drover Pickles → 3 others (Alvin Johnson, Andrew P. Crane, ^{C. James} Abner Baker)



11



if no more
turning down

Been gone looking
nd
rs

with The Son of God.

aa Big Day in Dallas
ma, David McMill
Jacob, Winters, Bartlett
(M.C.)

ey
- Percy
Wilson

Look at Em Curlee to the hole in the wall

John Avery Lomax records Richard Amerson at a home in Alabama. Ruby Terrill Lomax, at top, accompanied Lomax on many trips through the South and kept meticulous notes of the field recordings.

Listening To Texas

The late Blanche Inez “Aunt Tootsie” Bell Simmons of Pflugerville had never heard the fiddle music of her great-uncle, Peter Tumlinson Bell of Carrizo Springs, until she was nearly a century old.

In 2008, Austinite Dan Foster, who researches old-time fiddlers and fiddle music, brought Tootsie copies of a compact disc, *P.T. Bell—Master Texas Fiddler*.

The fiddle tunes on the CD were captured on an ancient Vibromaster recording machine by folklorist William A. Owens in Carrizo Springs in 1941, when the musician Bell was 74. The Vibromaster recorded directly to aluminum discs. Verner Lee Bell said that among his first memories was sitting on the floor while his grandfather fiddled into the recorder as little curls of aluminum twisted away and fell under the table as the recording was made. Owens wrote that the audio on the aluminum discs was played back with a cactus needle.

Owens was following a tradition begun by John Avery Lomax, among the best known of all field recorders. Originally funded by Harvard University, Lomax traveled through Texas with his son Alan and wife, Ruby Terrill Lomax, recording authentic, undocumented folk songs until his death in 1948.

One man Lomax recorded, whose name was only given as Blue, at the Smither Farm in Walker County concluded his singing by addressing President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and urging him to come to Texas and do something for the poor folks on tenant farms. Alan Lomax later wrote that his experience at the farm changed his life and the mission for his work. From that point forward, he believed he needed to record the views of the unheard people in rural America.

A similar drive to preserve rural cultural traditions motivated other field recorders. Though some recordings were made in urban settings, these traditions were largely rural, and they continue to influence Texas music and lifeways in the 21st century.

Others who took on this mission include Américo Paredes and Tary Owens (no relation to William Owens). Field

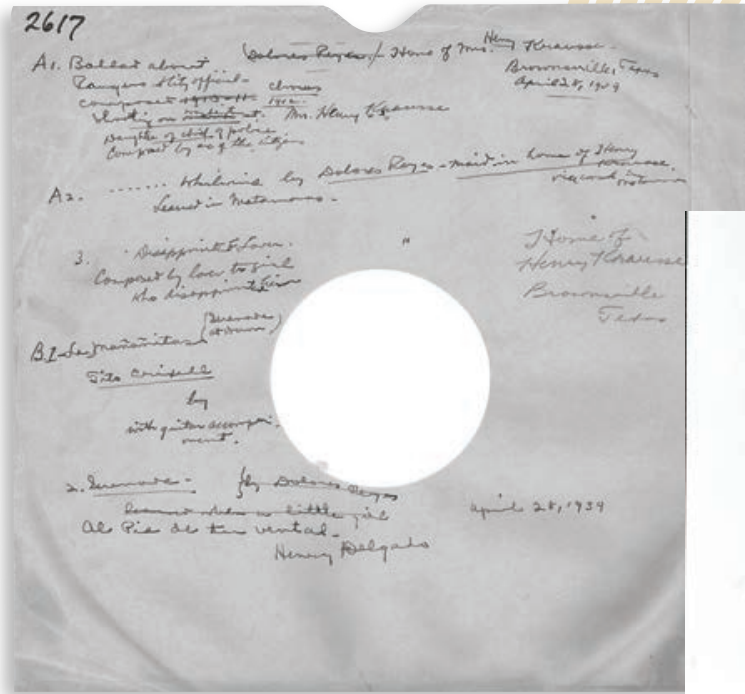


Jack Thorp was a pioneer in collecting and preserving homespun ballads.

recorders preserved cowboy songs, Old World ballads, Appalachian reels, Black spirituals, *corridos* and *canciones* that had been handed down through families from pioneer days. If not for the work of the field recorders—those truly listening to Texas—these musical traditions might well have disappeared.

Some of these recorded traditions became part of American culture. Cowboy Jack Thorp collected sagebrush songs in Texas in 1889 and produced a booklet titled *Songs of the Cowboys* in 1908. Based on that publication and John Lomax’s 1910 publication, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, the oral history of Western music seeped into mainstream American culture. As a direct result, the 1920s saw the creation of an archetype, the singing cowboy, on radio and records. And with the advent of “talkies,” motion pictures with sound, in the 1930s, the crooning caballero was firmly established as an American icon.

William A. Owens spent much of the 1930s and early ’40s trekking the state in search of songs. Born in Lamar County



Américo Paredes studied the stories, humor and border ballads—*corridos*—of the Rio Grande Valley for decades after becoming the first Mexican American to receive a doctorate in English from the University of Texas.



Corrido de Kiansis, about the famed trail drives from South Texas. “Many of the trail drivers were Mexicans,” he writes, “some taking their own herds, others working with Anglo outfits.”

Other border songs collected by Paredes include the stories of Texas journalist Catarino Garza, who led a revolt against Mexican dictator

in 1905, he returned home to Pin Hook to record singers in the early days of rural electrification. “A mystery, at times a superstition about electricity penetrated folk minds,” he wrote in his 1983 book, *Tell Me a Story, Sing Me a Song*.

Owens’ quest took him from the streets of Dallas’ Deep Ellum to the King Ranch to the woods of Texas’ deepest east. In East Texas he was often guided by Irvin “Cocky” Thompson of Silsbee, who, Owens wrote, “knew the paved roads ... the wagon roads, the trails that led to lonely cabins or became lost in the rootings of hogs hunting for mast.”

In the unincorporated Houston County community of Austonio, Lemuel Jeffus—who could reportedly “make people grin like possums with his crazy old songs”—gathered locals and families from Bug Hill to record sacred harp singing for Owens. Marveling at the aluminum disc on the folklorist’s machine, they testified quietly, “I ain’t never heered my own voice.”

In Brownsville and Matamoros, Owens recorded a young Paredes and his then-wife, the future Queen of the Bolero, Chelo Silva. One performance seems especially emblematic of listening to Texas. “Chelo sang a version of the traditional Spanish *Cielito Lindo*,” Owens wrote, “that progressed from the original, through a *guapango* [huapango], a Negro blues, and ended as a cowboy yodel. To them, such a mixture seemed natural on the border.”

Though authorities did not allow Owens to take his Vibromaster into Mexico, a Matamoros cantina singer taught Paredes the words and melody to another song, the story of Gregorio Cortez, a ranch hand who fled Texas after a tragic struggle with the sheriff of Karnes County. Paredes’ dissertation on the story and its corrido, published as the 1958 book, *With His Pistol in His Hand*, has become a bedrock text in Mexican American studies.

Paredes rounded up a lifetime of border music in his 1976 book, *A Texas Mexican Cancionero*.

He included the oldest complete Tex-Mex corrido, *El*

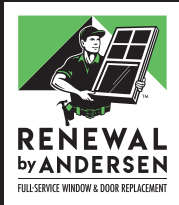
Porfirio Díaz, and Goliad native Ignacio Zaragoza, who led a Mexican force that defeated the French at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862—a victory celebrated today as Cinco de Mayo. The song *A. Zaragoza* was sung at 1867 Cinco de Mayo festivities in San Ygnacio by a local *guitarrero* named Onofre Cárdenas and remained in the borderlands’ oral tradition until Paredes learned it from the Zapata County singer Mercurio Martinez in 1950.

Tary Owens became one of Paredes’ students at the University of Texas in the 1960s and earned a Lomax Foundation grant to record such artists as country bluesmen Mance Lipscomb and Bill Neely as well as piano legends Robert Shaw and Roosevelt Williams, also known as Grey Ghost. As Ruth K. Sullivan wrote in the *Journal of Texas Music History*, Owens documented a wide range of styles in Texas and “helped provide ... a much more complete understanding of the unique and complex musical heritage of the Lone Star State.”

Some of Owens’ 1965 tapes were recently released on CD as *Teodar Jackson With T. J. Jackson: African-American Fiddling From Texas*. Foster explains that this music is “something rare and old as yet unheard in the familiar sound of old-time fiddling today. Teodar’s recordings have much to teach us about the sound of African American music in its own right.”

Thanks to Owens’ field recordings and the discovery of Teodar Jackson by young audiences, the fiddler was slated to play the Newport Folk Festival in 1966, where an even greater audience awaited his music—but he died before that happened. Listen to Jackson’s fiddle, and you’re truly listening to Texas. ■

TCP WEB EXTRA Experience John Avery Lomax’s East Texas Tour virtually.



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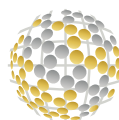
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“White Buffalo Stone is stunning with its striking black & white contrast, and to our knowledge, this is the only unique vein in the world.”

— Tony Otteson, 2019

To show exquisite details, jewelry shown is not exact size.

A RARE MEETING OF THE MINES

The American Southwest is steeped in legend. From untamed deserts to Wild West towns, its stories are as rich and mysterious as its beautiful expansive vistas. So we made the trek to two remote mines in this captivating region to join two of the Southwest’s most legendary stones into one epic collection.

First we went to the only source of the illusive White Buffalo stone in the world—the Otteson Mine located in Tonopah, Nevada. White Buffalo has a bold, captivating presence with a distinctive white background and black matrix and is named after the white buffalo—a symbol of sacred life and abundance to Native Americans.

Then we went to one of the few places on earth that produce rare, natural turquoise—the Kingman Turquoise Mine nestled in the Acerbate Mountains of Arizona. Kingman is one of the oldest and largest turquoise mines in the world. It was mined by prehistoric Native American tribes dating back over a thousand years. The beautiful, high-quality stones from this mine feature an array of green and blue shades with exquisite veining and marbled patterns.

The *Two Legends Collection* celebrates the unique and rare beauty of these legendary stones with generous cabochons of White Buffalo accented with rounds of the coveted Kingman turquoise. The antiqued silver-finished settings showcase these rare desert gems beautifully.

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- White Buffalo from the Otteson Mine in Nevada & turquoise from the Kingman Turquoise Mine in Arizona
- Antiqued silver-finished settings • Ring: whole sizes 5-10

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for the

2021

drive-through

ANNUAL MEETING

MAY 11
 The Silos on 77
 1031 County Road 223
 Giddings, Texas

1:30-3:30 P.M.

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Dear Member:

Pursuant to the Bylaws of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative, Inc., the Cooperative's Annual Membership Meeting will be held on May 11, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. at The Silos on 77, 1031 County Road 223, Giddings, Texas. In observance of state and federal guidelines in place to protect the health of our great nation from COVID-19 and to protect the health and well-being of Bluebonnet's members, employees and communities, the Board of Directors at its March regular meeting resolved to hold the Annual Meeting as a drive-through event, affording members the opportunity to receive Cooperative information, ask questions and receive refreshments. No in-person voting will take place at the Annual Meeting. Business coming before the meeting will be conducted by the Board on behalf of Bluebonnet's members via proxies directed to the Board and the Proxy Committee and registered with the Cooperative on or before May 4, 2021.

Two director seats, representing District 2 and District 3, were up for election. The incumbent directors, Shana Whiteley, District 2, and Bryan Bracewell, District 3, filed nominations by the deadline, qualified and were not opposed. The incumbent directors will be elected by general consent in accordance with Article II, Section 6 of the cooperative's Bylaws. Other business that may come before the meeting will also be addressed.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Mikeska
 Secretary/Treasurer
 Bluebonnet Board of Directors

BRING YOUR APRIL BILL with the QR code to the Annual Meeting to BREEZE THROUGH REGISTRATION!

WIN THIS TRUCK!

Members have two ways to enter drawings for door prizes and a truck. They can submit a completed proxy form (by mail postmarked by May 4, 2021, or in person at a member service center by 5:30 p.m. May 4, 2021) or register at the drive-through Annual Meeting. This 2008 Chevrolet 1500 extended cab with 2-wheel drive, which has about 140,000 miles, is being retired from Bluebonnet's fleet.



Drawings for the door prizes and truck will be Wednesday, May 12, 2021.*

*Bluebonnet employees, members of the Board of Directors and spouses are ineligible to win.

2021 ANNUAL MEETING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is it important to attend the Annual Meeting?

Bluebonnet's Annual Meeting, held each year in May, is one of the many benefits of being a member of an electric cooperative. In a normal year, members can meet the Board of Directors, the general manager and the co-op's executive staff, elect directors and attend to any business that may come before the membership. However, this year, due to COVID-19, the 2021 meeting will be different. It will be a drive-through event, and members will have the opportunity to receive co-op information, get refreshments and ask questions.

What information do I need to bring with me to register at the Annual Meeting?

If you bring your April bill with the QR code on it, you'll breeze through the drive-through registration tent. If you misplaced your paper bill, you can use a computer to log in at bluebonnet.coop, go to the Billing & Payments tab, then Billing History to find the April bill and print a copy to bring to the meeting. On our mobile app, log in, go to the Bill & Pay tab, then Billing History to pull up your April bill. Otherwise, you'll go through the same account verification process as the one performed any time members transact business on their accounts. The member service representative will ask for any two of the following pieces of information about your account: the name(s) listed on the account, your Bluebonnet account number, your birthday, last four digits of your Social Security number, your driver's license number or your mailing address.

Could there be a vote?

No voting will take place at the Annual Meeting this year, and there were no ballot items to be voted on at the time this material was printed. Proxy designations submitted by the deadline will be used to vote on any items that are added to the Annual Meeting agenda on or before May 4, 2021.

If there is a vote, who administers the election?

Election Services Co., which is a third-party, independent vendor that specializes in administering corporate elections nationwide. It has the

2021 Annual Meeting Agenda

1:30 p.m.- 3:30 p.m.: **Drive-through registration & materials distribution, refreshments**

Material distributed to members during the drive-through Annual Meeting include:

- Secretary-Treasurer's Report
- Chairman/President's Report
- General Manager's Report
- New Business if necessary

skills, experience and equipment to efficiently and accurately tally proxies and votes while adhering to the Federal Trade Commission's Red Flag requirements that protect members' confidential account information.

Can I change my address or do other business at the Annual Meeting?

Representatives will be able to help members with most of their co-op business and answer some of the simple questions they would normally handle at a member service center or by phone. If your question would take some time to answer, they will record it and have someone contact you later that week.

Get more information at bluebonnet.coop/annualmeeting, email memberservices@bluebonnet.coop or call **800-842-7708** (7:30a-5:30p, M-F).

Masks
strongly encouraged
at this event



Shana Whiteley
District 2,
Travis County



Bryan Bracewell
District 3,
Bastrop
County

Which Board of Director seats were up for election?

The Board of Director seats up for election were for District 2, Travis County, and District 3, Bastrop County. Because the two incumbent directors were unopposed, they will be elected by general consent in accordance with Bluebonnet's bylaws. The incumbent for District 2 is Shana Whiteley, who joined the Board in 2018 and owns the Good Luck Grill in Manor and the Lucky Duck Cafe in Taylor. The incumbent for District 3 is Bryan Bracewell, who also joined the Board in 2018. Bracewell owns Southside Market & Barbeque, with locations in Elgin, Bastrop, Austin and Hutto.

With the right gear, careful planning and an accommodating park, you can backpack into the nearby wilds

Sarah Beal photo



the *Zen* of primitive camping

By Pam LeBlanc

NEVER MIND the snake I nearly stepped on, or the feral hog that came crashing out of the underbrush. I chalk up my recent backpacking trip at Lake Somerville State Park as a smashing success.

Most nights, I'd rather sleep in a tent, listening to coyotes yip or catching the stale perfume of a passing skunk, than snooze between high thread-count sheets at an exclusive resort. The outdoors works like a salve on my soul — plus, carrying everything I need on my back for a night in the wilderness makes me feel empowered and capable. And in these days of stress and uncertainty, who doesn't need a little dose of nature to set our psyche straight? Backpacking can seem daunting if you're new to it, and the thought of hiking down a trail hauling only the bare minimum can conjure up images of blisters, animal invasions and sleepless nights.

That's why I always suggest that people new to backpacking try a shakeout run at a state park that offers a variation on backcountry or "primitive" camping, which means campsites aren't near roads or parking lots and usually lack nearby amenities such as bathrooms and running water.

I enlisted the help of friend Joe Stafford, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative employee who designs pages in this magazine, for my recent overnight adventure at Lake Somerville State Park.

If you go

Advance reservations are not accepted for the primitive camping sites at Lake Somerville State Park, but you can get a same-day reservation by calling either the Nails Creek Unit at 979-289-2392 or the Birch Creek Unit at 979-535-7763. We stayed at the Newman Bottom site, but two other primitive sites are open — Flag Pond and Wolf Pond, on the Birch Unit side. A primitive camping permit costs \$10; park admission is an additional \$4 per adult (free for ages 12 and younger).

He's no camping newbie so was game to explore the place, which I haven't visited since I was a college student at Texas A&M University 35 years ago.

The park, which is divided into the Nails Creek Unit, the Birch Creek Unit, a connecting 13-mile trailway, and an adjacent public hunting ground, covers nearly 9,000 acres and is just north of U.S. 290 between Brenham and Giddings.

It's the only state park in the Bluebonnet service area with primitive camping sites that are miles from the car or conveniences.

Reservations are not accepted for primitive camping sites, but you can call the day of your trip to find out if one is available, and they'll hold it for you. That's what I did.

Continued on page 20B



Get Going

WITH

Pam LeBlanc

One in a series of stories on fitness, recreation and outdoor adventure in the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative region.



Pam LeBlanc prepares to hike on the Somerville Trailway at Lake Somerville State Park near Brenham. Inset above, Pam and Bluebonnet employee Joe Stafford are loaded with camping gear as they make their way down the trail.

Continued from page 20

On the designated day, we stopped by the Nails Creek Unit headquarters to pick up our permit. Office manager Lauren Kubica let us know that two pedestrian bridges in the park were washed out by flooding in recent years, meaning we couldn't hike directly to our destination.

To increase our time on the trail, she suggested we park at the Nails Creek access point on County Road 125, a 7-minute drive from the unit headquarters. From there we'd have about a 3.5-mile hike to the Newman Bottom primitive camping site, where we would pitch our tents. (If you want a shorter walk, you can park at an access point west of Flag Pond and walk a mile to reach the same spot.) Kubica said a pair of bald eagles and their juvenile offspring were nesting in a tree on a stretch of trail called Waldo's Loop.

"We're known for hiking, and fishing is a big deal especially during the white bass run in spring," Kubica said of the park, which opened in 1970. "We get a lot of equestrian users as well."

Flag Pond, near where we were headed, draws an assortment of birds, which lures eager tourists adorned with binoculars. Even alligators have been spotted in Lake Somerville State Park.

"Seeing all the eagles, the different hawks, and even white pelicans, that's one of the big things here," Kubica said. "I think it's unique here. It's great for physical and mental health."

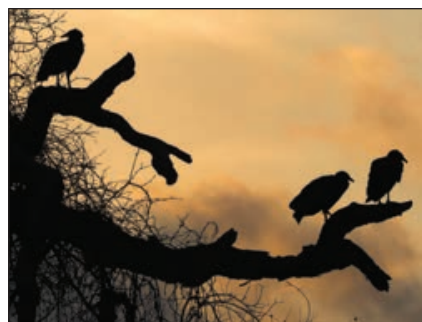
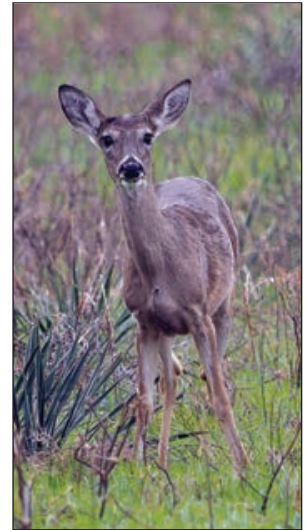
Lake Somerville was built as a flood control project to protect homes downstream on the Brazos River. It did its job when flooding hit every year from 2015 to 2018, but high waters killed off swaths of trees in the park, inundated the boat ramp pavilion at the Rocky Point area and washed out stretches of trail. Some facilities are still closed, including the Cedar Creek camping area.

At the Nails Creek trail access site, Joe and I locked the truck, made a few last-minute gear adjustments, slung our packs — which weighed about 30 pounds, including our water — over our shoulders and started moving.

It felt a little like walking down the Yellow Brick Road to Oz at first, only our road was made of bright green grass set against a gray-brown background of brush. As we trudged past groves of elm and oak and listened to chirping birds, I could feel my heartbeat slow as we retreated from the sounds of civilization. After about half a mile, we reached Flag Pond, a 350-acre oval of silver water with marshy edges. We curved around it, detouring onto Waldo's

Continued on next page

Close encounters



Among the wildlife encountered at Lake Somerville State Park: From top, a bald eagle, a white-tailed deer, a red-winged blackbird, an armadillo, a green anole, a wild boar, turkey vultures and a Texas rat snake.

All photos by Pam LeBlanc, except photo of green anole by Sarah Beal



Pam LeBlanc points out some native wildlife to hiking companion and Bluebonnet employee Joe Stafford during a recent overnight hike at Lake Somerville State Park. Their packs weigh about 30 pounds.

Continued from previous page

Loop to look for the bald eagles.

It wasn't hard to spot their nest. Eagles build them big — an average of 4 to 5 feet across and 2 to 4 feet deep, according to the National Eagle Center. This one looked like a sofa-sized bundle of sticks resting in the fork of some branches in the tallest dead tree in a field of dead trees. Then we spotted two adult eagles, circling majestically overhead.

We ogled the big, white-faced birds for 20 minutes, then pressed on, following the flat trail for a mile around the north end of the pond.

I came to a screeching halt when Joe hollered a warning just a nanosecond before I planted my foot atop a 3-foot snake stretched across the path. There went my heart rate! After I caught my breath, I whipped out my camera and snapped some photos, which clearly show I wasn't in danger. The slow-moving reptile was a rat snake, not a dangerous pit viper, though they both have triangular-shaped heads. Venomous pit vipers have catlike, vertical pupils, by the way. Nonetheless, watch where you step; plenty of cottonmouths and rattlesnakes inhabit the area.

The wildlife show continued for the next 24 hours. White-tailed deer popped up their heads to gawk at us from a field of tall grass, an armadillo rustled and scratched its way through the scrub, and the next morning, a mud-covered feral hog that must have weighed at least 150 pounds barged through the brambles just behind us. We saw hawks and drag-

What to eat

FREEZE-DRIED backpacking food doesn't have to taste like heavily salted cardboard. A few years ago, while working on a newspaper article, I discovered Packit Gourmet, an Austin-based company that makes the best backpacking meals I've tried. And I've tried a lot of them.

Sarah Mullins Welton, who grew up canoe camping with her parents, Jeff and Debbie Mullins, created the company as a class project while she was working on her graduate business degree at the University of Colorado Boulder. She missed the meals her mother had made out of fruits and vegetables she had dehydrated at home.

Welton and her mother worked together to come up with a product line of meals. Backpacker magazine tried them and awarded the company an editor's choice award for its tortilla soup. Today the company makes a line of pre-packaged meals with dinners like Texas State Fair Chili to Dottie's Chicken and Dumplings, breakfasts such as West Memphis Grits Soufflé and desserts like banana pudding.



onflies, and a great blue heron that caught a fish so big it gave up and dropped it back in the water like it was returning a purchase from the Piggly Wiggly.

Remember to keep your distance from any animals: Harassing wildlife is against park rules.

We set up camp at the Newman Bottom primitive site, a keyhole-shaped clearing in the thick brush. That's where we got another surprise that rookie backpackers might appreciate — two picnic tables and a firepit. (There was also a chemical toilet not too far from the site). We also had a cell signal at our campsite, which could be considered a benefit or a bad thing, depending on how much of an escape from the world you want.

Tents up and sleeping pads inflated, we lit our Snickers-sized portable camp stoves to heat water for dinner. A nearby clearing would make for great stargazing on a cloudless night. Joe made a fire (most state parks allow ground fires only in designated pits like the one we found), and we swapped stories until we couldn't stay awake any longer. I crawled into my tent, zipped myself into my lightweight sleeping bag, rated for temperatures as cold as 15 degrees, and laid my head on a pillow of wadded up hiking clothes. I woke up once, briefly, to the screech of an unknown critter but slept soundly otherwise.

The next morning, I boiled a pot of water for hot tea, then struck out solo to

Continued on page 21

What to put in your pack

MODERN INNOVATIONS

and lightweight materials make it possible to keep your pack as light as possible. Here's a look at a setup for a one- or two-night mild-weather backpacking trip.

A: Baseball cap

Head protection is essential gear. In cool weather, a merino wool cap is lightweight and warm.

B: Buff gaiter

These stretchy fabric tubes can be used to keep your neck warm, as a head covering or even an emergency towel.

C: Camp shoes

Giving your feet a chance to rest and dry after a long day's hike, camp shoes should be comfortable and lightweight. Shower shoes, flip-flops and classic Croc clogs are popular budget choices.

D: Camp clothes

A clean T-shirt and bottoms reserved for camp and sleeping.

E: Backpack

This Osprey Aura 50-liter pack is one of hundreds of designs to choose from. Newcomers might want to try out a borrowed pack before purchasing. Among considerations for choosing are price, weight, volume and comfort.

F: Tent

These days, technology has made tents smaller and lighter than ever. Shown is a Big Agnes Copper Spur that's easy to put up and fits two. It weighs 3 pounds, 2 ounces.

G: Lighter

A mini lighter is a lightweight way to start fires and to light stoves that lack built-in ignition.

H: Stove

Shown: BRS 3000; plus a can of fuel (a 110-gram container works for just one or two nights). This version requires a small lighter or match to spark; some tiny stoves come with push-button igniters. Popular brand names are Jetboil and Pocketrocket.



I: Cooking pot

For re-hydrating freeze-fried meals and, of course, for morning coffee or tea.

J: Sleeping bag

Serious backpackers own more than one, providing weather-appropriate options.

K: Sit pad

Small accordion cushions are light and can be stuffed in an outer pocket of your pack.

L: Inflatable sleeping pad

Shown is a Sea to Summit Ether Light XT. Makes the ground more comfortable and provides insulation.

M: First aid kit

This DIY kit includes bandages, gauze, tape, aspirin, small scissors, Benadryl for allergic reactions and antibacterial ointment. Don't forget tweezers for close encounters with cacti.

N: Water bottles

One that fits in a pocket of your backpack for easy access, plus a plastic water reservoir (shown: Platypus) filled with water — and a water filtration system (Sawyer Squeeze, a UV light purifier, or chlorine dioxide drops or pills all work well.)

O: Tiny multi-tool

The mini pliers can come in handy for making repairs in the field. A small folding knife is another popular option.

P: Whistle/compass combo

A whistle for emergencies and a compass for navigation in one small item.

Q: Toiletries

Small bag with toothbrush, toothpaste, eye care, sunscreen, toilet paper and any personal medicines.

R: Headlamp

S: Sunglasses

T: Freeze-dried meals

The market has been filled in recent years with these extremely lightweight, tasty meals. Mountain House is a popular, affordable option, and the Packit Gourmet brand is made in Austin.

U: Titanium spoon

V: Ditty bag

Handy access to trail map and snacks to clip around waist

W: Snacks

High energy treats like trail mix and Kind bars

Infographic by Pam LeBlanc and Joe Stafford; Photo by Sarah Beal



Pam LeBlanc quickly pitched her Big Agnes Copper Spur HV UL2 tent, which cleverhiker.com ranks as its favorite lightweight tent for 2021 for weight, space and quality. Other popular brands include ZPacks, MSR and REI Co-op.

Ready for some backcountry camping?

TEXAS SERVES UP good backpacking terrain if you don't mind some driving. Big Bend National Park, Big Bend Ranch State Park and Davis Mountains State Park in West Texas all have backcountry campsites. Just to the north of those parks, Guadalupe Mountains National Park is home of the tallest peak in Texas (8,751 feet) and has good backpacking. Closer to Central Texas, remote sites can be found at Enchanted Rock State Natural Area, Pedernales Falls State Park and Colorado Bend State Park. The state's longest footpath, the Lone Star Hiking Trail, extends 92 continuous miles; if you take all the side loops, it's 129 miles long. The trail is in the Sam Houston National Forest, near Conroe in East Texas.

Continued from page 20C

explore. I tromped past a quarter mile of marshy terrain to get to Flag Pond at dawn. When I got there, I found dozens of turkey buzzards roosting in dead trees, gazing at the mist-covered body of water, all lit in the pink of a Texas sunrise.

I'd have been happy to climb up a tree and join them, but Joe and I wanted to get back to see the eagles again. We spent 15 minutes gathering our headlamps and toothbrushes, deflating our sandwich-thick sleeping pads and breaking down our tents, then hit the trail again, trying to remember where the snake had slithered out of our way. We breathed in lungfuls of fresh air. When we reached the big nest, we got another surprise: A juvenile eagle sat patiently in its treetop home, with no parents in sight. We spotted one of them later, scanning a nearby creek for breakfast to deliver to the family.

In another hour, we were back at our truck.

Here's the thing: Lake Somerville State Park isn't far from most anyone in the Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative service area. It's not exotic, but even nearby places like this state park serve up a respite from the ordinary, and inject a little adventure in everyday life.

And that's something I'll never turn down. ■

Pam LeBlanc has written about fitness, adventure and recreation in Central Texas publications for decades. Her work has appeared in Texas Monthly, Texas Highways and other magazines, and she recently co-founded a new online travel magazine, Austin Travels.

Eight tips for backpackers

1. Choose a good backpack. Be sure the waistband sits comfortably on your hips, where you'll carry most of the weight, and look for padded shoulder straps. Backpacks come in a range of sizes and styles, but for a multi-day trip, you'll probably want one with at least 50 liters of capacity. Make sure your pack is compatible with your water system: some come with pouches to hold water reservoirs. Consider features like separate compartments, outer mesh pockets, bottle holders and multiple access points. And pack with the heavier items at the bottom.

2. Pack light. For a nine-day trip, my fully loaded Osprey pack, minus water, weighs about 28 pounds. Extra ounces add up. To shave weight, use a lightweight tent and sleeping system and carry dehydrated food. (You'll pay more for lighter gear, but Austin-based Gossamer Gear makes an array of whisper-light tents, packs and sleeping pads). Get rid of packaging and use the smallest of portable stoves. My teeny BRS stove cost less than \$20.

3. Take care of your feet. Trail runners make magnificent backpacking shoes because they're lighter than boots.

Make sure they're broken in before hitting the trail.

4. Prevent blisters. Injinji makes socks that encase each toe, stopping them from rubbing each other. Or try the line of blister-prevention products from 2Toms. Carry moleskin in case you develop a hot spot.

5. Stay in touch. If you're going somewhere remote, carry a GPS tracking device like Garmin InReach or SPOT tracking device in case you need an emergency rescue. Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to return.

6. Get in shape. Prepare for a backpacking trip by loading books or filled water bladders into your pack and hiking around your neighborhood.

7. Bring enough water. A good rule of thumb is to drink a liter of water for every two hours of hiking; more if it's hot and sunny. If you can't carry enough, be sure you'll have access to water you can filter or treat. Lake Somerville State Park has no potable water on the trail.

8. "Pack it in, pack it out." Take all of your trash with you when you leave.

Devices to purify air, sanitize surfaces and monitor use of energy, water

NEW TECH

FOR CLEANER, SMARTER HOMES

By Sharon Jayson

MORE THAN A YEAR of living in a pandemic means we've never thought so much about health and hygiene. Being mindful of everything from the air we breathe to the surfaces we touch (or don't touch) has turned many of our homes into safe and sanitary sanctuaries.

The technology industry has noticed. Innovations in electronic devices and other tech items are streaming into the marketplace, with an emphasis on cutting-edge solutions to purify the air, clean our surroundings and refine touchless technology.

Every January, tech innovations and thousands of new products with the potential to transform lives are presented at the massive CES (formally called the Consumer Electronics Show), usually held in Las Vegas. This year's CES, produced by the Consumer Technology Association, occurred completely online. Nearly 2,000 companies unveiled products.

The first-ever digital CES showcased large and small air purifiers, voice-activated and touchless appliances with ultraviolet light sanitizers, and anti-germ gadgets galore, as well as items to monitor household water and electric use.



The Brondell Pro sanitizing air purifier is a size that can work in an office or home.

Clearing the air

Individuals with allergies or asthma are well acquainted with air purifiers, which remove particles and pollutants to improve indoor air quality. But the COVID-19 virus made air quality an obsession and purifiers are having a moment — especially ones that are more mobile, energy-efficient and effective at air filtration. HEPA air filters — long considered the industry standard — have been joined in the purifier arena by UV light and other forms of virus-disinfecting technology.

Many new air purifiers are not cheap or small and are more suited for businesses. One purifier in the in-between size and price range is the **Brondell Pro**, which lists five types of protection, including a UV disinfection lamp and a “plasma generator,” which generates negative ions to eliminate microorganisms. It cleans a 538-square-foot area and is \$650.

You've probably seen **3M's Filtrete** air filters for home HVAC units. The company rolled out two air purifiers — one for smaller spaces (150 square feet) for \$275 and a second for larger areas (310 square feet) for \$329.

Other new air purifiers are smaller and mobile. The **LG PuriCare** mini air purifier weighs in at a little over 1 pound and quietly runs for up to 8 hours on a



The small LG PuriCare air purifier can run for up to 8 hours.



FrescheAir's portable air purifier/deodorizer can fit into a vehicle's cupholder.

rechargeable battery. It can be operated via a smartphone app and costs \$150. At the same price and weight is the new **Luft Duo** portable air purifier. It doesn't require a filter, cleans about 120 square feet and costs \$150. The **FrescheAir** purifier fits in your your vehicle's cup holder, is motion-activated, plugs into a USB car charger and costs \$100.

Touch-free appliances and disinfecting devices

Many of the top touch-free devices at CES for the kitchen and bath are pricey, such as **Kohler's Konnect touchless kitchen faucet** (voice- and motion-activated, \$950), which monitors water use. It's more costly cousin, a Kohler hands-free "no-touch flush" toilet, opens and closes automatically and flushes with a wave of the hand. **Moen** has a similar "smart faucet."



Kohler touchless and voice-activated kitchen faucets respond to commands like 'fill my pot.'

Remaining in the very expensive but interesting category is an **LG refrigerator** that automatically opens and closes with voice commands, complete with UV light built into the water dispenser, at about \$3,000.

A more practically priced home device from Kohler and powered by Phyn is a DIY home water monitor that can detect leaks and tell you how much water each fixture uses. It is expected to cost about \$300.

The **2Office Antimicrobial Backpack by Targus** can hold a laptop and has an antimicrobial-infused protective finish on major touch points that creates a cleaner surface to help prevent microorganism growth. There's no guarantee that it will stop the COVID-19 virus, though. It will cost about \$120.

Numerous gadgets touting germ-killing UV light sanitizers showed up at CES, but consumers should read the fine print.

These gentler versions of high-intensity UV-C lights used in hospitals usually require extended shine time to eliminate germs and some viruses from a surface, and there's no promise they will kill the COVID-19 virus.

While these purifying products are taking center stage, cleaner indoor air and germ-free surfaces will probably remain in demand long after pandemic fears subside.



LG's InstaView refrigerator touts 'UVnano' technology to remove bacteria from the water dispenser. Photos courtesy of manufacturers



The 2Office antimicrobial backpack by Targus has a protective finish to fend off germs.

It's in the details: tracking home energy use

Working and learning from home may become part of the post-pandemic lifestyle. So much home-based activity has led to increased electric use in many households, according to multiple studies. One study released earlier this year by Sense, a home energy monitoring company, found that average electric use in U.S. homes increased 9.3 percent between April and August 2020, compared with the same period in pre-pandemic 2019.

Parks Associates, a Dallas-area market research and consulting company specializing in emerging technology solutions, found 45 percent of more than 10,000 households surveyed in early 2021 adjusted their thermostats to save energy and money, and 42 percent had switched from incandescent light bulbs to CFL or LED bulbs, both more energy efficient.

One product shown at CES — the **Square D Wiser Energy smart home monitor system by Schneider Electric** — lets you track and manage home energy use. Installed (by an electrician)



into the house's electrical or breaker panel, the smart device provides (via an app) real-time energy use information for your appliances, notifications to tell you when devices are on or off, and solar panel generation (if you get an add-on). It starts at \$200.

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Safety

Move over for line workers — it's the law!

Most motorists know to move over a lane or slow down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit if a law enforcement vehicle has stopped another motorist on the side of a road or highway. But did you know that Texas lawmakers passed a bill in 2019 requiring the same protection for utility workers?

The state's Move Over/Slow Down law was expanded from police, fire, medical emergency, Texas Department of Transportation vehicles and tow trucks to include utility vehicles that are

stationary with flashing amber or blue lights.

“Our crews in the field really appreciate members and other drivers abiding by this important law that helps keep line workers safe and able to focus on restoring power as quickly and safely as possible,” said Heath Siegmund, Bluebonnet’s manager of safety. “We still see motorists failing to move over or slow down, so we want to make sure they are aware of this law and why it’s in place.”



If possible, motorists must get out of the lane nearest any stationary vehicle with flashing blue or amber lights, or slow down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit. Photo by Sarah Beal

Bluebonnet

CAPITAL CREDITS

Bluebonnet returns excess revenue to members

Most Bluebonnet members will see a credit on their bill in May. It's called “capital credits,” and it is one of the benefits of being a member of an electric cooperative.

The co-op shares with its members money it collects above what is required to run the business. The amount that members receive depends on how much electricity they used in the previous years



and how long they have been Bluebonnet members. Questions? Contact a member service representative at memberservices@bluebonnet.coop or 800-842-7708.

CO-OP INFORMATION

Member service center lobbies remain closed, but drive-through lanes are open during regular business hours, between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Report outages by texting OUT to 85700 (to register, text BBOUTAGE to that number) or via 800-949-4414, bluebonnet.coop or our mobile app. Pay your bill any time online, on our mobile app or by calling 800-842-7708.



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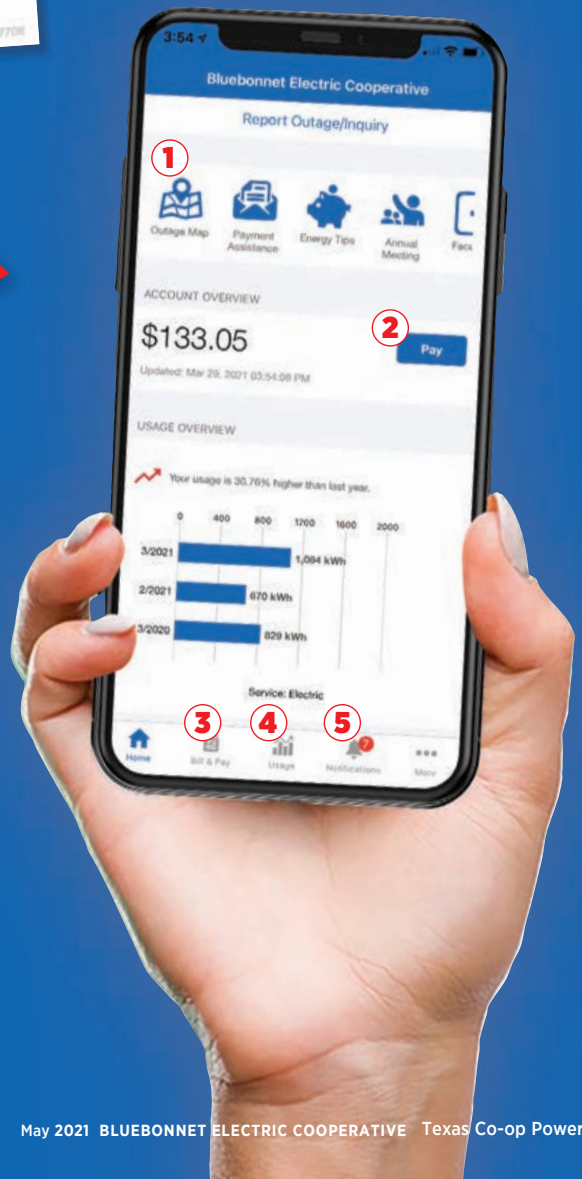
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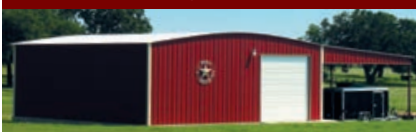
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Our Aussie friend would approve of our rendition of his "knife." Forged of high grade 420 surgical stainless steel, this knife is an impressive 16" from pommel to point. And, the blade is full tang, meaning it runs the entirety of the knife, even though part of it is under wraps in the natural bone and wood handle.

Secured in a tooled leather sheath, this is one impressive knife, with an equally impressive price.

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

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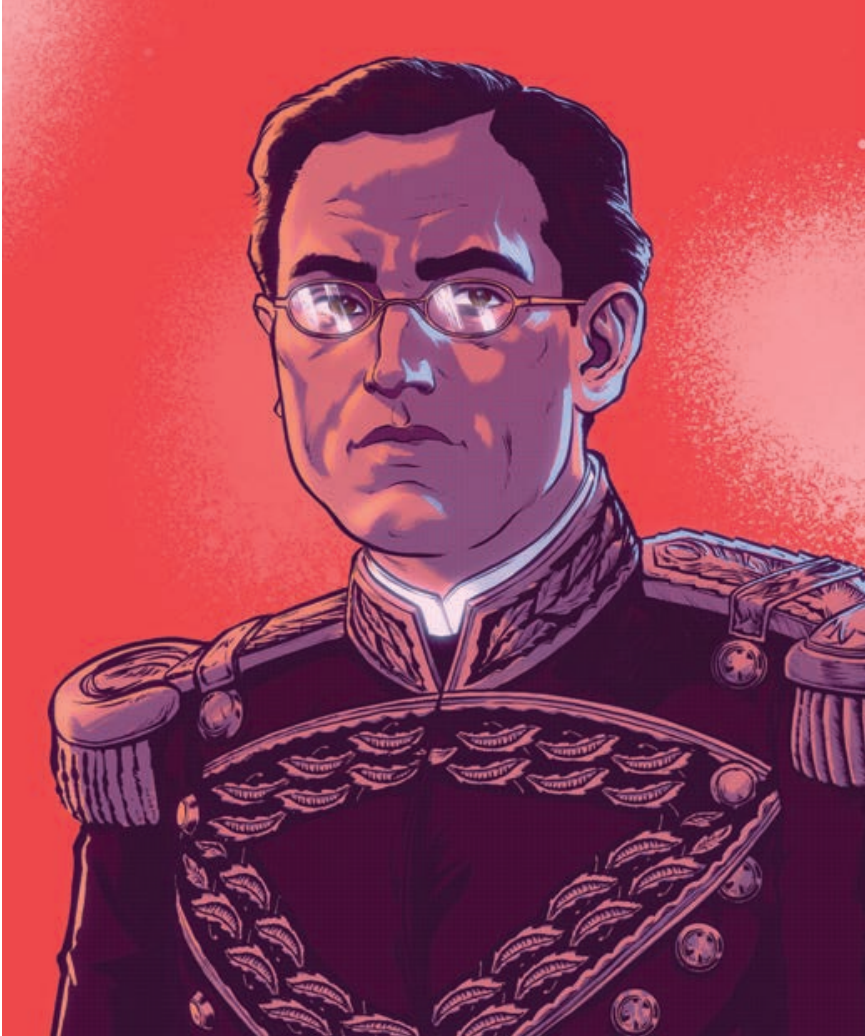
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The Hero of Cinco de Mayo

A Texan named Zaragoza led the battle against the French in Mexico

BY W.F. STRONG • ILLUSTRATION BY RAUL ALLEN

I HAVE LONG KNOWN that 19th-century Mexican general Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín was a Texan, but I didn't know how deep his Texas roots went until I did some digging—pun intended. I learned that he was born in Goliad in 1829, when Texas was still part of Mexico. My research told me that his mother, María de Jesús Seguín, was from San Antonio and a cousin of Tejano hero Juan Seguín, who fought Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna in the Texas Revolution and for whom the city of Seguin is named.

Zaragoza's father owned 11 leagues, or just under 50,000 acres, along the Red River in Northeast Texas, according to the Texas General Land Office. He

bought it for 100 pesos a league in 1830. That's mind-blowing. You couldn't even buy a square foot of that land today for 100 pesos. All this proves Gen. Zaragoza's Texas bona fides.

When Zaragoza was in his early 20s, he joined the revolutionary army of Benito Juárez and eventually led an army of volunteers in defeating Santa Anna. Yes, that same Santa Anna. Zaragoza's victory effectively removed Santa Anna as dictator of Mexico. That's another reason we should recognize Zaragoza. Like all good Texans, he despised the dictator and wanted him dead so democracy could live.

It is astonishing that Santa Anna was once again in power 20 years after his

humiliating loss to Sam Houston's army at San Jacinto. But Santa Anna had more political lives than a cat and was president of Mexico 11 times. No one ever failed so often and so badly and still managed to claw his way back into power.

In 1862 the French, under Napoleon III, wanted to make Mexico their own colony. They sent an impressive force of 8,000 crack troops to take the country by storm. Juárez directed Zaragoza to Puebla to defend Mexico from the French invasion. This was Mexico's San Jacinto moment because Zaragoza commanded half as many men as the French and was definitely the underdog in the battle to defend Puebla.

The French army's commander, Gen. Charles Latrille de Lorencez, held the same haughty attitude toward his Mexican opponents that Santa Anna had about the Texians in 1836. Latrille wrote that the Mexicans he faced "were of a lower race, poorly organized, poorly disciplined, of low morals," and in a uniquely French insult of a military force, said that they "lacked good taste."

Despite their poor taste, Zaragoza and his army achieved a stunning victory May 5, 1862, over those French troops. The French lost 500 men, while the Mexicans lost only 100 and sent the French back to the coast, licking their wounds. The French hadn't lost a battle in 50 years, so this was a demoralizing defeat, and the contribution of the victory to Mexico's national pride cannot be overstated. Sadly, Zaragoza died four months later of typhoid fever. He was just 33.

So we raise our glasses on Cinco de Mayo to salute native Texan Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín for his San Jacinto-like victory at Puebla and for helping to remove Santa Anna from power. Again. ■

TCP WEB EXTRA

Listen to W.F. Strong read this story.

Potluck Dishes

It's all about sharing, including these family favorites

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Though they're on hold for now, potlucks have historically been a large part of gatherings, especially across the South. Author and journalist Toni Tipton-Martin brings this to light beautifully with her award-winning cookbook *Jubilee*. Here's her recipe for baked beans, which is sure to become your new go-to.



TONI
TIPTON-
MARTIN



Baked (Barbecued) Beans

6 slices bacon, divided use
1 cup minced onion
½ cup minced green bell pepper
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup packed dark brown sugar
½ cup molasses
½ cup ketchup or tomato sauce
2 tablespoons mustard
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon liquid hickory smoke (optional)
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
¼ teaspoon pepper
2 teaspoons salt, or to taste
1 pound cooked navy beans, plus 3 cups cooking liquid; or 3 cans (15.5 ounces each), undrained

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cut 3 slices of the bacon into 1-inch strips. In a skillet, cook the cut bacon until browned and crisp. Use a slotted spoon to remove to paper towels to drain.
3. In the same pan, sauté the onion, bell pepper and garlic over medium heat until tender and the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in the brown sugar, molasses, ketchup, mustard, vinegar, liquid smoke (if using), red pepper flakes, pepper and salt. Mix well. Cook over medium-low heat until the sugar is dissolved, about 1½ minutes.
4. In a large bowl, combine the beans, their liquid, the sauce and the cooked bacon. Pour into a 9-by-13-inch baking dish or a 3-quart casserole dish. Place the remaining 3 slices of bacon on top of the beans. Cover and bake 45 minutes. Uncover, increase the oven temperature to 425 degrees, and bake 15 minutes more to brown the bacon slices.

SERVES 6-8

Reprinted with permission from *Jubilee: Recipes From Two Centuries of African American Cooking* by Toni Tipton-Martin (Clarkson Potter, 2019).

TCP WEB EXTRA Follow along with Megan Myers and her adventures in the kitchen at stetted.com, where she features a recipe for Tortellini Pasta Salad.



Hawaiian Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

DEBORAH ANDERSON
COSERV

Coconut and pecans make this cake even more special. Anderson shares her grandmother's secret recipe, which is a crowd-pleaser.

- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter**
- 1 can (20 ounces) sliced pineapple**
- Maraschino cherries**
- 1 cup unpacked brown sugar**
- 1 cup pecan halves**
- 1 cup shredded, sweetened coconut**
- 3 cups Bisquick**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 2 eggs**
- 1 cup milk**
- 4 tablespoons shortening**
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract**

COOK'S TIP In place of Bisquick, you can substitute 3 cups flour, 1½ tablespoons baking powder and 1½ teaspoons salt, and increase the shortening to 6 tablespoons.

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Melt butter in a 10- or 12-inch cast-iron skillet on a stovetop. Remove from heat. Add pineapple in a circular design and insert a cherry into the center of each pineapple ring. Sprinkle brown sugar, pecans and coconut on top and in between the pineapple rings.
- 2.** In a large bowl, beat Bisquick, sugar, eggs, milk, shortening and vanilla using an electric mixer, scraping the bowl as needed, until batter is smooth. Pour on top of the fruit and nuts in the skillet, making sure to cover completely.
- 3.** Bake 40–50 minutes or until toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake's surface is golden brown. To prevent sticking, immediately flip cake

CONTINUED >



\$500 WINNER

Arroz con Pollo Estilo Panameño

SUZANNE FULTON
BLUEBONNET EC



A hit at family meals, this recipe was passed down to Fulton from her mother, who learned it while living in Panama. Don't skimp on the olive juice, which adds a unique briny flavor to the dish.

SERVES 8

- Olive oil or vegetable oil**
- Salt and pepper**
- 8 chicken thighs**
- 2 onions, diced**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 3 tablespoons paprika**
- 2 large carrots, sliced thinly**
- 1 can (28 ounces) crushed tomatoes**
- 7 cups water**
- 3 cups basmati rice, uncooked**
- 1 bag (10 ounces) frozen petite green peas, thawed**
- 1 bunch fresh parsley, chopped**
- 1 jar (5.75 ounces) sliced salad olives, juice reserved**

- 1.** Heat the olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed stock pot. Salt and pepper the chicken, and brown on all sides, working in batches so as not to crowd the pot. Set chicken aside.
- 2.** Using the same pot, sauté onions and garlic with paprika, scraping the bottom as you stir. Add carrots and cook 2 minutes, stirring often. Add tomatoes and water and bring to a boil. Add chicken and cook 5 minutes.
- 3.** Stir in rice and cook over low heat, covered, until rice has absorbed most of the liquid, about 15 minutes.
- 4.** Remove lid and add peas, then continue cooking until rice begins to stick to the bottom and chicken is falling apart, about 10 minutes more. Stir in parsley and olives. Add olive juice to taste. Adjust salt if needed.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

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Ooey gooey, savory and even sweet, cheese enhances a wide range of recipes. What's your favorite? Enter at TexasCoopPower.com/contests by May 10.

RECIPES CONTINUED

onto a serving dish, holding plate firmly to the cake while flipping.

SERVES 8-10



Kickin' Chicken Spaghetti

JAMIE MUNIZ
GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

There are probably as many chicken spaghetti variations as there are Texan families—and for good reason. This creamy, cheesy dish is a favorite for Sunday dinners.

- 1 pound spaghetti
- 3 cups shredded chicken
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) cream of chicken soup
- 1 can (10.5 ounces) cream of mushroom soup
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 orange bell pepper, diced
- 1 jar (4 ounces) diced pimiento peppers
- 2 cans (4 ounces each) diced green chiles
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup shredded pepper jack cheese

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Boil spaghetti until it's al dente. Drain noodles and pour into a large bowl.
2. Mix in shredded chicken, soups, cheddar cheese, bell pepper, pimientos, green chiles, seasoned salt and cayenne pepper.
3. Pour into a lightly greased 9-by-13-inch casserole dish. Sprinkle on pepper jack cheese. Bake 45 minutes, until bubbly.

SERVES 8

Potluck Safety Tips

BY MEGAN MYERS

- ▶ Don't reuse marinades from raw meats. If you need to baste while cooking, set aside some marinade ahead of time.
- ▶ Use a meat thermometer to ensure dishes are fully cooked.
- ▶ Set cold foods over a bowl or shallow baking dish filled with ice. For hot foods, use a chafing dish or serve in a slow cooker.
- ▶ Cream cheese- or whipped cream-based desserts will melt in warm temperatures. Keep them in the fridge or cooler until serving time.
- ▶ Discard food that has been out of the refrigerator or off the grill for more than two hours. If it's above 90 degrees where the food is, discard after one hour.

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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Used Cars

Visit Amarillo's Cadillac Ranch to leave your mark on an art shrine

BY CHET GARNER

IF YOU USED a can of spray paint in an art museum, you'd be escorted out immediately. If you visit Amarillo's most iconic art installation without paint, you will be left out, with no way to leave your mark on the ever-changing sculpture known as the Cadillac Ranch.

Fueled by steak and eggs from the stockyard cafe inside the Amarillo Livestock Auction, I set out in search of cattle—cattle-acks. That is, the 10 Cadillac sedans half-buried nose down in the Texas prairie in 1974 by the art collective known as the Ant Farm. This automotive Stonehenge has become a must-stop destination for travelers on historic Route 66.

The Cadillac Ranch is unmissable. The distinctive tail fins are the only thing taller than a fence post on the southern horizon just west of town. A dozen vehicles parked nearby confirm that this is my stop. Since painting the Cadillacs is encouraged, I grab my spray paint and head into the field to see this High Plains anomaly firsthand.

Vibrant coats of fresh paint cover every inch of the classic Caddies. The cars are so beat up that the layers of paint might be the only thing holding them together. I felt like I was exploring a junkyard and a holy shrine, a sensation possibly caused by the fact that the cars are buried at the same angle as the sides of the Great Pyramid of Giza.

After a few minutes of contemplation, I pondered what timeless contribution I could add to the sculpture. Knowing that anything I sprayed would soon be covered by another pilgrim's paint, I wrote my name and reveled in the knowledge that once it does get covered, it will be forever entombed in one of Texas' most famous sculptures. That alone was worth the trip. ■

ABOVE Chet tagged Cadillac Ranch, as many visitors do.

TCP WEB EXTRA See Chet's video from Cadillac Ranch 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.

MAY

01

Denton [1-8] Materials: Hard and Soft, (940) 382-2787, dentonarts.com

Corpus Christi [1-9] Buccaneer Days, (361) 882-3242, buccdays.com

Brenham [1-2, 6-9, 13-16] Ben Butler, (979) 830-8358, unitybrenham.org

06

Mesquite [6-Aug. 5] Courtyard Concert Series, (972) 216-8132, mesquiteartscenter.org

07

New Braunfels John Conlee, (830) 627-0808, brauntex.org

Palestine Texas State Railroad: Wines in the Pines, 1-855-632-7729, texasstaterailroad.net

Weimar [7-8] Gedenke!, (979) 725-9511, weimartexas.net

Fredericksburg [7-9] 175th Anniversary Opening Weekend Ceremonies, (830) 998-4738, 175th.org

Ingram [7-8, 14-15] I Ought To Be in Pictures, (830) 367-5121, hcaf.com

08

Fredericksburg Texas Flower Country Women's 5K/10K Run, info@runintexas.com, runintexas.com/flower

Huntsville Wine Down Shop Small Street Fair, (469) 853-0425, huntsvilledba.com

Irving Las Colinas Symphony Orchestra:
Daniela Liebman, (972) 252-4800,
lascolinassymphony.org

Lufkin Winter Dance Party,
(936) 633-5454,
angelinaarts.org

Bulverde [8, 15, 22, 29] Saturday Night Rodeo,
(830) 980-2226,
tejasrodeo.com

Waxahachie [8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-31] Scarborough Renaissance Festival,
(972) 938-3247,
srfestival.com

14

Columbus [14-15] Magnolia Days Festival, (979) 732-8385,
magnoliadays.org

15

Jefferson [15-16] Historic Jefferson Train Show,
(903) 665-3733, historicjeffersontrainshow.com

New Braunfels [15-16] Old Gruene Market Days,
(830) 832-1721,
gruenemarketdays.com

20

New Braunfels Come and Taste It: Virtual Wine Tasting, (830) 629-5077,
grapevineingruene.com

21

Georgetown Cory Morrow Live at Reunion Ranch,
(512) 868-9544,
faithinactiongt.org/events

Del Rio [21-22] George Paul Memorial Xtreme Bull Riding, (830) 775-9595,
georgepaulmemorialbullriding.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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

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ELAINE THOMAS

Fayette County author and columnist has shared veterans' stories for several years.
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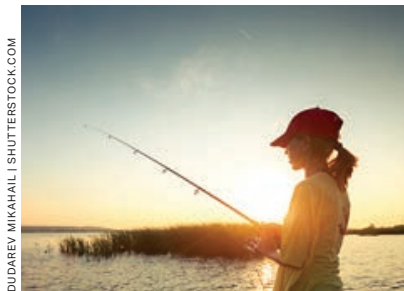



Hit the Road
Event Calendar

Fairs, festivals, food and family fun! Pick your region. Pick your month. Pick your event.

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Pick of the Month

Babes on the Bay

Fulton, May 14-15
 (361) 205-0182
 babesonthebay.com

This fishing tournament describes itself as the largest women's angling event in the country. The Coastal Conservation Association created the tournament in 2000 to make the sport more inclusive and teach conservation-minded approaches to saltwater fishing. The event includes live music, vendors and educational outreach by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and other conservation organizations.

29

Belton ASCO Spartacus Dash, (254) 340-4577, ascospartacusdash.com

Hunt Jack Nelson, (830) 238-4441, cridersrandd.com

Kerrville Family Free Day, (830) 896-2553, museumofwesternart.com

Seguin Lone Star Book Festival, (512) 554-9560, lonestar.bookfestival.network

Abilene [29-30] Kristen Hertenberg and Her All-Star Band, (325) 677-6710, abilenephilharmonic.org

JUNE

03

Stephenville [3-5] Moo-La Fest, (254) 552-1222, visitstephenville.com

04

New Braunfels Aaron Watson, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

Amarillo [4-5] Coors Cowboy Club Ranch Rodeo, (806) 376-7767, coorsranchrodeo.com

Hearne [4-5] Crossroads Home Town Festival, (979) 402-1337

05

Jacksonville All Smiles Tomato Fest 5K Run and 1 Mile Fun Run, (903) 586-0741, jacksonvilletexas.com

Leander Old Town Street Festival, (512) 259-1907, oldtownstreetfestival.com

Sherman [5-7, 11-14, 18-21, 25-28], Mamma Mia, (903) 893-8525, scptheater.com

06

New Braunfels Travis Tritt, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

MAY EVENTS CONTINUED

22

New Braunfels Jon Wolfe, (830) 964-3800, whitewaterrocks.com

27

Kerrville [27-July 2] Southwest Gourd Fine Art Show, (830) 895-2911, kerrvilletexascvb.com

28

Brenham Bob Wills' Texas Playboys Starring Jason Roberts, (979) 337-7240, thebarnhillcenter.com/events

Groesbeck [28-30] Heritage Festival, (254) 729-6123, groesbeckchamber.com

Kerrville [28-30] Texas Masters of Fine Art and Craft Invitational Exhibition, (469) 223-4162, texasmasters.com

Jacksonville [28-31] Memorial Day Mudbug Ride, (903) 724-4100, riverrunpark.com

Historic Texas

From the somber to the spectacular, we Texans have a lot of history under our boots. Photographs give us a look into the lives of our forebears like no other medium, and what a story they continue to tell today!

GRACE FULTZ



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT
DAVID WHITTLE
 DEEP EAST TEXAS EC
 San Felipe United Methodist Church in San Felipe.

CHRISTENA STEPHENS
 LYNTEGAR EC
 The chapel at the World War II prisoner-of-war camp near Hereford.

CYNTHIA BANDA
 MAGIC VALLEY EC
 San Antonio Missions National Historical Park.

SHERRI JEFFERY
 GRAYSON-COLLIN EC
 "Before huge signs and banners, companies painted their logos on their buildings."



Upcoming Contests

- DUE MAY 10** Rust and Decay
- DUE JUN 10** Fillin' Stations
- DUE JUL 10** Funny Signs

Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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


TCP WEB EXTRA

Find places in Texas with official Dark Sky status.

and easier to lure away from reason. These darkest moments provide the wily universe with a chance to perform atmospheric phenomena unlike those that ever inhabit our waking hours.

As a lifelong astronomy enthusiast with only a basic understanding of how the universe actually works, my lack of knowledge about the science of stars and planets means I am astonished every time I look through a telescope—a sort of blessing disguised as ignorant bliss. The first time I peered at the spiraling Andromeda galaxy through professional optics, in Fort Davis at one of the McDonald Observatory's star parties, it made my head spin. I couldn't look away, irritating the other visitors in line behind me who were waiting for a turn at the eyepiece. But each time I would begin to draw back, I was pulled in again, as if the galaxy's spiraling movement—eons in the turning—could be felt as well as seen.

When I was a kid growing up in South Texas, I had my own telescope—an inexpensive junior scientist scope my parents gave me for Christmas one year. By today's standards, it was a toy. But the optics were good enough to extend my visible reach skyward, much farther than I had ever experienced, and I spent hours outside, just staring into the craters of the moon. Fifty years later my enthusiasm for the universe survives in the Big Bend, beneath one of the darkest skies in Texas. Waking from a deep sleep to pull on a pair of boots and lumber outside to witness meteor showers, comets and lunar eclipses never disappoints. Many of these astronomical events occur overhead for just a moment each year, or once in a lifetime, and sometimes only once in a millennium, but they are fleeting proof of the mythic fires in the sky, highlighting a short list of events that have yet to feel the compromise of a human-made world. ■

Universal Appeal

The night skies of far West Texas bring celestial wonders to light

STORY AND PHOTO
BY E. DAN KLEPPER

I AM OFTEN SURPRISED by the way the night skies of far West Texas remind me of scenes in science fiction movies. Above the silhouette of a mountain horizon, nighttime skies are at their most dramatic, offering unobstructed views of comets, satellites, meteors and galaxies, all unraveling in a dreamlike firmament.

Long past sunset, in the late hours after midnight, the sky seems particularly otherworldly. Perhaps it's because in these later hours the sky's recognizable touchstones—Orion, Sirius, the dipper—are hanging askew rather than in their accustomed places or, in concert with the Earth's rotation, have disappeared altogether. Or maybe it's the mischievous temperament of the sky itself, aware that the few who glance up into deep night are bleary and disoriented

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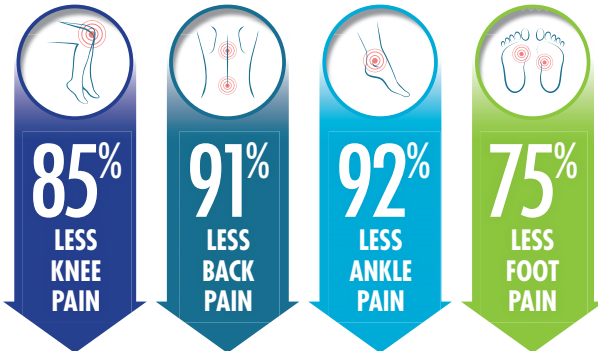


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