

TEXAS CO-OP POWER

Howdy, **BARDNERS**

Why midsummer
nights in Texas
are perfect for
Shakespeare



BLUEBONNET NEWS
SEE PAGE 18





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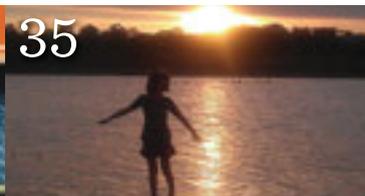
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Find these stories online if they don't appear in your edition of the magazine.

Texas USA
The Original Texas Songster
By Clay Coppedge

Observations
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By Lonni Taylor

NEXT MONTH

Hill Country Gems Scenic swath of Central Texas spotlights culture, history and natural wonders.



CANYON: E. DAN KLEPPER. CAIRN: JULIA ROBINSON

ON THE COVER *Camp Shakespeare youngsters perform The Winter's Tale at Winedale Theatre Barn.* Photo by Caroline Poe Photography

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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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46471

Planting the Seeds

I had just received a packet of milkweed seeds from Lands' End when the May issue of *Texas Co-op Power* [*Naturally Protective*] arrived. I immediately cleared a spot in my yard and planted the seeds.

JOEL MUCKLEROV | JOURDANTON KARNES EC

About MacArthur

Gen. Douglas MacArthur was commander in chief of the South Pacific, which was primarily New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand and eventually the Philippines [*Chain of Command?*, Letters, June 2018]. Adm. Chester W. Nimitz was commander in chief of the Pacific Ocean Areas. This included all of the island groups from the Solomon Islands through Okinawa and Iwo Jima.

HOWARD MAX | FAIRVIEW GRAYSON-COLLIN EC

What was Gen. MacArthur doing? He was cooperating with Adm. Nimitz, who was in charge of all Pacific operations.

D.J. BRUCE | WEATHERFORD TRI-COUNTY EC

Other Connections

Having had a "connected" home for the past 17 years, I was surprised there was no mention of X-10 or Z-Wave technology [*Connecting Your Home*, June 2018]. X-10 being a power line (the wires in your house) technology and Z-Wave being a radio frequency system of controls for lights, appliances, thermostats, TV and stereo, sprinkler systems, security systems integration,

Keep Texas, Texas

Every day we lose a little bit more of our lush countryside due to progress. Laura Bush has a big job on her hands, and I hope it's not too late [*Naturally Protective*, May 2018]. I hope we can keep Texas, Texas.

JAN ALSGARD | LEANDER | PEDERNALES EC



water valves, door locks, etc.

JIM NEUMANN | VICTORIA VICTORIA EC

East Texas Authors

I'd hoped the article on East Texas writer Joe R. Lansdale [*East Texas Mojo*, May 2018] would mention Caleb Pirtle III, a Kilgore native now writing out of Lindale. He has written over 75 books—among his more



recent is a prize-winning account of the Giddings oil strike of the 1970s, *Gamble in the Devil's Chalk*. He's now writing two fiction books on life in a small East Texas town in the 1930s.

JOHN NICKOLS | FORNEY TRINITY VALLEY EC

One of my favorite writers! For decades!

WILLIAM TROCINO | VIA FACEBOOK

I will be looking for him [Lansdale, left] on my next trip to the bookstore.

MARY JANE ZORN | VIA FACEBOOK

Spilled Jewels

Beautiful picture of the dedicated spider mom [*Doting Mother*, Letters, November 2017].

Try this: Shine a bright flashlight onto the grass at night, holding the light on your head so you can look down the beam.

When you find a wolf spider, follow the beam to get closer. Wolf spider eyes glow a most brilliant aqua, and so do the babies'. If disturbed, the babies scatter and look like spilled jewels.

SANDY GADSDEN | BANDERA BANDERA EC

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Texas Co-op Power

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HAPPENINGS

See What Real Cowboys Do

Working cowboys test their skills at the **BIG BEND RANCH RODEO, AUGUST 10-11** at Sul Ross State University in **ALPINE**.

The rodeo, sanctioned by the Working Ranch Cowboys Association, provides participating cattle workers an opportunity to educate the public about the everyday work of a ranch. The rodeo includes ranch bronc riding, cattle sorting, cattle doctoring, wild cow milking and calf branding.

The Big Bend winner advances to the WRCA World Championship Ranch Rodeo in November in Amarillo. Proceeds from the Big Bend Ranch Rodeo go toward scholarships at Sul Ross State.

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ALMANAC

Heck of a Comment

The words of Davy Crockett, the American folk hero who died defending the Alamo, live on as a pointed message on coffee mugs, T-shirts and other knickknacks: “You may all go to hell, and I will go to Texas.”

Consider the backstory of that comment on the anniversary of Crockett’s birth—August 17, 1786. Here’s an excerpt from the April 9, 1836, edition of *Niles’ Weekly Register* in Baltimore, which chronicled national history much as *The New York Times* does today:

“**A gentleman** from Nacogdoches, in Texas, informs us, that, whilst there, he dined in public with col. Crockett, who had just arrived from Tennessee. The old bear-hunter, on being toasted, made a speech to the Texians, replete with his usual dry humor. He began nearly in this style: ‘I am told, gentlemen, that, when a stranger, like myself, arrives among you, the first inquiry is—what brought you here? To satisfy your curiosity at once to myself, I will tell you all about it. I was, for some years, a member of congress. In my last canvass, I told the people of my district, that, if they saw fit to re-elect me, I would serve them as faithfully as I had done; but, if not, they might go to h___, and I would go to Texas. I was beaten, gentlemen, and here I am.’ The roar of applause was like a thunder-burst.”

RODEO & HARVEY: SHAW WELSEN. MUG: EYGENI MEYER | SHUTTERSTOCK.COM. BULL: VIA: MID-SOUTH SYNERGY

WORTH REPEATING

“Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow my footsteps and preside over the White House as the president’s spouse. I wish him well!”

—FORMER FIRST LADY BARBARA BUSH, who died April 17 in Houston



WEATHER WATCH

Never Again, Harvey

HARVEY HAS BEEN RETIRED from the rotating list of hurricane names by the World Meteorological Organization, as were Irma, Maria and Nate—all monster hurricanes in 2017. Harvey struck the Texas coast August 25 as a Category 4 storm with 132 mph winds, killing 68 people and dumping historic amounts of rain on the Houston area. It caused \$126 billion in damage, second only to Katrina in U.S. history.

THE RETIRED NAMES have been replaced with Harold, Idalia, Margot and Nigel. Nations hit hard by hurricanes can request the WMO retire names. Each hurricane season, which runs June 1–November 30, storms are named, in alphabetical order, based on lists that get recycled every six years.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Don't Be Left Out

August 13 is International Left-Handers Day. Roughly 10 percent of people are left-handed, according to Chris McManus, a University College London researcher who wrote a book chapter on the history and geography of left-handedness.

CO-OPS IN THE COMMUNITY

BRINGING LIGHT TO BOLIVIA

In November, 16 lineworkers from six Texas electric cooperatives—Bartlett, Bluebonnet and Pedernales ECs; CoServ; Mid-South Synergy; and United Cooperative Services—built 6 miles of power lines to bring electricity for the first time to 147 homes in the rural Bolivian villages of Batraja, Jerico and San Antonio de Maty.

To help fund the project, the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation presented a \$35,000 grant to the co-ops in February.

“It was an amazing adventure,” said Bo Williams, Mid-South operations VP, who led the expedition. “It was hot for sure. It rained every day—but the people there made it all worthwhile. They were very appreciative and wanted to help every way they could.”



United Cooperative Services linemen Brody Weems, left, and Chase Noland pose with a Bolivian child.

All the State's a Stage

BY CLAYTON STROMBERGER

If we could, like Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, “put a girdle round about the earth / In forty minutes,” and zip around the Lone Star State over summer and fall evenings, O, the Shakespeare we would hear and see!

*A dozen festivals, all alike in dignity,
In fair Texas, where we lay our scene,
From famous texts, break to new creativity ...*



We begin in the West Texas city of Odessa. As the heat waves rise, is that a shimmering vision of Shakespeare's Globe we see, sitting in the land of oil fields and Friday night lights? It is! The Globe of the Great Southwest, which, thanks to the vision and persistence of a brilliant high school teacher, appeared in the Llano Estacado a full 30 years before London put up its rebuilt Globe. Today, Odessa's Globe Theatre hosts performances by the Odessa Shakespeare Festival.

Next, we fly west to El Paso and spy a group of local actors performing outdoors at Chamizal National Memorial, within shouting distance of the Rio Grande. As the players strut and fret their hour upon the stage with a touch of twang in their iambic pentameter, we soar from thence over parks filled with families sitting on picnic blankets and watching Shakespeare festivals in Dallas, Houston and Austin.

We hear comic prose, stirring verse and laughter along the



Riverwalk in San Antonio, along the Concho in San Angelo and under a canopy of stars in the Hill Country nook of Wimberley, as well as on college campuses in Fort Worth and Kilgore. Last, above the gently rolling countryside of Winedale, we spy an old open-sided hay barn in the twilight, orange light spilling from inside, and we hear a voice cry out, in a timeless moment after the onstage murder of Julius Caesar:

*How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!*

MACBETH: MARY RATH. HENRY V: ROBERT HONIGLIEFF

THE HISTORY, MYTHS AND WILD SPIRIT OF TEXAS PROVIDE FERTILE GROUND FOR SHAKESPEARE PERFORMANCES



When it comes to the immortal Sweet Swan of Avon, all the state's a stage. This is remarkable when you consider that Shakespeare was born almost four decades after Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, shipwrecked near Galveston in 1528 like a character out of *The Tempest*, became the first European to travel into the interior of Texas and wander amid its indigenous people. How did this Londoner from the time of Queen Elizabeth become our favorite playwright for a Texas midsummer night?

Shakespeare likely arrived in Texas first in an adventurer's saddlebag or a settler's trunk. As improbable as it might seem today,

Opposite: *Macbeth* at EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens in Wimberley. Above: Shakespeare at Winedale presents *Henry V*.

Shakespeare was a favorite of all social classes as America entered the 19th century, according to eminent Shakespeare scholar James Shapiro.

"There is hardly a pioneer's hut which does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare," wrote French diplomat Alexis de Tocqueville after his travels through the United States in 1831. Children learned Shakespeare's verse from the ubiquitous McGuffey Readers, which began publication in 1836. Shake-

Shakespeare's plays—primarily the tragedies—were constantly in demand at theaters and opera houses and held their own against melodramas and farces. In October 1835, when James Butler Bonham organized a rally in Alabama to support Texas independence, he held it at the Shakespeare Theater in Mobile, a bustling town that held its first Shakespearean performance more than a decade earlier. Even Sam Houston knew his Shakespeare and quoted him often.

“Scholars and historians have now learned that language and dialect was very different during Shakespeare’s time than we thought,” says Bridget Farias Gates, artistic director of the EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens in Wimberley. “Many consider it to be closer to the Texas dialect than to British. So, in a romantic way, this means Texans deliver Shakespeare more closely to original practice than most would think.

Richard already had two Mexican wives in San Antonio. “Nothing daunted at this public accusation of polygamy,” Jefferson recalled decades later, “‘Pud’ pressed his suit with ardor.”

In Texas’ early days, even soldiers performed Shakespeare, partly to stave off boredom. In the winter of 1846, shortly after Texas had joined the union, 4,000 troops of the United States Army under the command of Gen. Zachary Taylor were stationed near the village of Corpus Christi in preparation for the conflict that would later become known as the Mexican-American War.

While waiting for orders, the soldiers assembled at the Union Theater, large enough to hold 800, and began rehearsals for

From left: *Romeo and Juliet* at Wimberley’s EmilyAnn Theatre & Gardens. *Richard III* at the Houston Shakespeare Festival. The Texas Shakespeare Festival Roadshow cast performs *Shakespeare’s Greatest Hits* at Odessa’s Globe Theatre with help from an audience member.



“Shakespeare would have loved Texas, both for its own

“I also like to think that the wide expanse of Texan land and the more laid-back nature of the Texan way of living is a closer representation to Shakespeare’s country folk characters,” she says.

The first notable professional performance of a Shakespeare play in Texas was held February 12, 1839, in Houston, when one Mr. Lewellen, who had scored a big hit in St. Louis with an equestrian melodrama co-starring his horse, Mazeppa, assayed the title role in *Othello*.

Competing theaters were built in Houston before the city’s first church; established actors arrived by boat from New Orleans. Theaters attracted a rough-and-tumble crowd looking for diversion—and not necessarily accustomed to the niceties of high culture. Touring actor Joseph Jefferson recalled in his autobiography that during one mid-1840s portrayal of *Richard III* by an aging local trouper named “Pudding” Stanley in Houston, a patron interrupted Richard’s wooing of Lady Anne to warn Anne that

Othello. Out of necessity, as in Shakespeare’s London, men often played the female roles. James Longstreet, later a leading general in the Confederate Army, was up for the part of Desdemona, young wife of the noble Moor, but was deemed too tall. Longstreet’s good friend, young Ulysses S. Grant, nicknamed “Little Beauty” for his feminine good looks, took over the role, but eventually a professional actress was hired and brought in because the soldier playing Othello, as Longstreet later recalled, just could not work up the “proper sentiment” while gazing upon Grant.

After the Civil War, as Texas’ cities and towns began to develop civic traditions, the next wave of interest in Shakespeare came not from touring actors but from local citizens, especially women, with a focus on the communal enlightenment of group reading and discussion rather than performance. During the first half of the 20th century, there were at least 27 Shakespeare clubs meet-

ing in the state, from Abilene and Calvert to Waxahachie and North Zulch; many continue proudly to this day. That same democratic impulse led to the spread of community theaters in the early 20th century as the touring system of the barnstorming-actor days faded. In the 1970s, the ripple effect from Joseph Papp's Free Shakespeare in the Park in New York City led to a wave of park-based festivals around the state.

"Shakespeare would have loved Texas, both for its own energy and spirit and as a setting," says Jon Mark Hogg, president of the board of directors of Be Theatre and producer for Shakespeare on the Concho. "So many of his works are set in historic or myth-

cal Center near Round Top and meet the legendary Miss Ima Hogg, who had restored the Winedale property, including a historic stage-coach inn, and donated it to UT in the late 1960s.

Hogg directed Ayres to peek into the property's old hay barn, with its clay floor and handcarved cedar beams. "I want you to do Shakespeare in that barn," Hogg informed him, and three weeks later, Ayres brought his first class. Now, the Shakespeare at Winedale program is one of the leading Shakespeare-through-performance programs in the country, with UT students studying and performing three plays each summer. Ayres, a professor emeritus, founded and continues to lead Camp Shakespeare,



energy and spirit and as a setting."

ical places. The history, myths and wild spirit of Texas, both past and present, would have been fertile ground for the Bard."

On the educational front, Texas scored a coup in 1946 when legendary British director B. Iden Payne, who previously had led the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Shakespeare's hometown, Stratford-upon-Avon, came to the University of Texas as a guest professor in one of the nation's first collegiate drama departments.

One of the country's more unique venues for Shakespeare, the Winedale Theatre Barn, came about through a Texas miracle. In the fall of 1970, James B. Ayres, then an associate professor of Shakespeare at the University of Texas, happened to visit the Winedale Histori-

residential summer camps for children ages 11-16 who perform an entire play at Winedale at the end of each session.

The Shakespeare at Winedale logo perfectly captures this long love affair between a poet and a place. Known as "Cowboy Willie," it depicts Shakespeare wearing a cowboy hat and a bandana, chewing a piece of straw, a wad of chewing tobacco bulging in his cheek. A few years back, the program printed T-shirts that read: "Rich History. Vast Countryside. Family Feuds. Shakespeare would have loved Texas."

No doubt. In the meantime, we remain grateful for the gift of his words and characters and the chance to bring them to life. To lift a line from the noble Moor Othello, who was likely the first Shakespearean tragic hero to grace a Texas stage: He hath done the state some service, and we know't.

Clayton Stromberger is the outreach program coordinator for Shakespeare at Winedale.

WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see a list of Shakespeare festivals and learn more about the Bard from the experts.

A black and white photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, several large, dark, rounded boulders are scattered across a sandy, sparsely vegetated plain. In the background, dark, layered mountains rise against a sky filled with heavy, dramatic clouds. The overall mood is somber and atmospheric.

WHY THE RAVEN
CALLS THE CANYON



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BOOK EXCERPT CAPTURES

LIFE OFF THE GRID IN BIG BEND

From 2006 to 2013, I divided my time between Marathon, 50 miles north of Big Bend National Park, and Fresno Ranch, an abandoned, off-grid, horse-and-mule operation located along the Rio Grande. Relatively uninhabited for almost a decade, the ranch encompassed more than 7,000 acres of springs, canyons and volcanic peaks. In 2006, absentee owners recruited Rodrigo Trevizo, a friend of mine and local state park superintendent, to keep an eye on the place. Two years later he moved into the ranch's adobe studio, determined to bring the rudimentary infrastructure of the ranch back to life. I joined him for weeks at a time, lending a hand to unearth the ranch's water system, repair livestock corrals and restore the solar power, all while adjusting to the day-to-day challenges of living off the grid. With Trevizo's help, Fresno became part of Big Bend Ranch State Park, at over 300,000 acres the largest state park in Texas.

Fresno Ranch was established in the 1900s as a 640-acre section bordered by the river at its confluence with Fresno Creek and present-day FM 170. During the 1980s, another 10 sections were added, including nine sections up Fresno Canyon and an additional mile of riverfront. At one point, Fresno also covered the Picachos, a 5,000-acre ranch directly across the river in Mexico.

Ancient campsites and historic ruins litter the desert terrain around Fresno, sharing a robust cultural history with defunct mercury mines and remnant candelilla wax camps. A collapsed magma dome, so large it can be detected from space, dominates much of

These boulders were placed in alignment at Fresno Ranch decades ago using a tractor.

the ranch's northeastern horizon. Among Fresno's hand-built attributes, a 2,000-square-foot adobe painting studio lies at its heart, constructed for the late Jeanne Norsworthy, Texas artist and granddaughter of George B. Dealey, publisher of the *Dallas Morning News*.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY E. DAN KLEPPER

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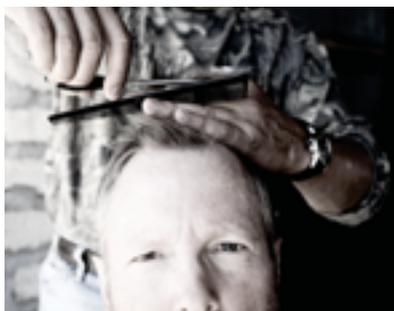
Left: Chupadera Spring in the Cienega Mountains. Below: The author gets a haircut at Fresno Ranch.

///

Fresno's natural world shares the allure of wild places found across the entire Big Bend region. The inscrutability of this West Texas country inspires life-long appreciation for its rare natural beauty as well as an unorthodox creativity, resulting in artistic endeavors like this one, and often rousing those who hail from gentler places to abandon creature comforts and move to the Big Bend for good. Here, adventurers, artists, and writers live in stone ruins, campers, and makeshift shelters, contending with extreme summer temperatures, winter freezes and venomous wildlife like scorpions and rattlesnakes, all in an attempt to understand the enigma possessed

by mountains and canyons scattered throughout hundreds of uninhabited miles. Much of the territory's draw may reside in the region's volcanic upheaval, conjured from the planet's bedrock, and a geography lit by an ever-changing light, as cryptic as the human psyche. With time and consideration, an artist can thrive here on conclusions that reveal as much about the land as our own internal landscapes.

Writer and photographer **E. Dan Klepper** works from Marathon. *Why the Raven Calls the Canyon* was published by Texas A&M University Press in 2017.



WEB EXTRAS

► Read this story on our website to see a slideshow of Fresno Ranch.

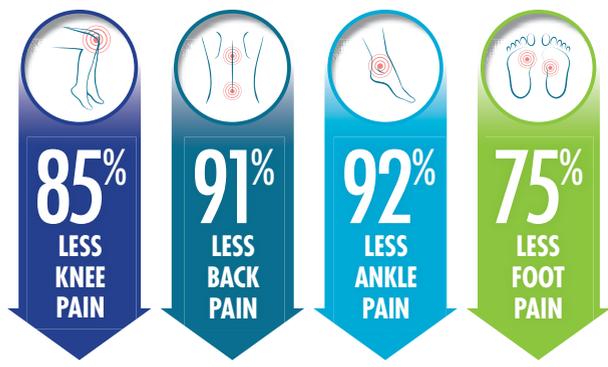


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FLIP FLIP HOORAY!

A perfect symbol of fun in the sun for only \$79

Here's a memorable beach moment: You're basking in the warm sun, toes in the sand, letting the gentle turn of the foam-capped waves lull you into a state of complete relaxation. As your eyes scan the endless horizon of blue on blue, you're rewarded with a school of dolphins making their way across the sea. There's no denying their signature shape as they leap from the water. If you don't see anything else extraordinary the rest of day, you can take solace knowing you've witnessed one of nature's most playful and intelligent creatures in their natural habitat.

Why not recreate that special toes-in-the-sand moment with our **Blue Topaz Dolphin Pendant**? The beloved sea mammal has been captured mid-jump in sterling silver. And, tucked into its fins is a full two carats of shimmering blue topaz.

Nothing captures the shimmering color of the ocean in the midday sun like blue topaz. With its sparkling clear blue color and high refractive index, blue topaz is one of the top-selling blue gemstones. And with our special price, you have quite the catch.

Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. Enjoy the **Blue Topaz Dolphin Pendant** for 30 days. If it doesn't pass the test swimmingly, send it back for a full refund of the item price.

Limited Reserves. A full two carats of genuine blue topaz set in sterling silver for this price is as rare as a dolphin sighting. We cannot guarantee availability for long. Call today!

Limited to the first 1900 responders to this ad only!



A full two carats of shimmering blue topaz set in sterling silver

To show exquisite details, pendant shown is not exact size. Chain sold separately.

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— Dolphins-World



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Sweet

Bluebonnet area hive-minders protect bees, pollinate crops and share the sweet honey of success

By Josefina Casati
Photos by Sarah Beal

Agriculture is getting sweeter in Central Texas — naturally. Beekeeping, in a backyard or on the farm, is growing in popularity in Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area. Local honey from small-scale beekeepers can be found at nearly every farmers' market or neighborhood grocer.

The Central Texas Beekeepers Association, based in Brenham, has more than 3,300 members via Facebook.

The Bluebonnet area is dripping in beehives. Bee classes and seasoned beekeepers stand ready to share Beekeeping 101 wisdom with novices. Just last March, the Brenham-based Central Texas Beekeepers Association's daylong beekeeping school drew 650 people, including someone from Canada.

The motivation to keep bees varies. Some want to protect them from pesticides or pests. For others, pollinating a garden or crop is the goal. Of course, gathering their honey and wax is a sweet reward.

Texas produced 7.9 million pounds of honey in 2017, the sixth largest producer behind North Dakota, South Dakota, California, Montana and Florida, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The United States had the highest consumption of honey per capita — around 1.3 pounds

Continued on page 20



Tastes like Texas

Ample land in the country gives keepers more control of what type of honey to expect. "My bees are eating a lot of mesquite, so I know what my honey will taste like when I begin to harvest in June," says Sarah Jones, above, who started the Elgin Beekeepers Association three years ago and currently has seven hives.

If beekeepers want to sell their honey, in Texas they can "as long as it's sold directly to consumers, face to face," explains Jones, which is how she sells her 1-pound honey jars. Last year, her sixth as a beekeeper, she

estimates she got about 240 pounds of honey from her seven hives.

"I developed a profound respect for the species and how they operate when I studied entomology" at Texas A&M University, Jones said. Scientists call the colony of bees a superorganism because each bee acts in the interest of the colony rather than the individual.

"Very few species function this way, where each member acts as a specific organ, and as a group they are the equivalent of a human body," explains Jones.

t ON Bees

Growing new beekeepers

For generations, children have helped raise large animals on family farms in Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area. Now they're learning to care for small honeybees, too.

"Beekeepers tend to be 60 to 70 years old, and cannot continue to keep bees forever," said Michael Kelling of Brenham, below, president of the Central Texas Beekeepers Association. "So we are trying to get the youth interested in beekeeping because of beekeeping's importance to our world."

Each year, 10 to 12 students meet monthly to learn about beekeeping in the association's two-year youth training program. In March, when they graduate, they receive a protective beekeeping suit, bee boxes and frames to assemble their first hives, and a 3-pound package of bees that contains a queen and around 10,000 worker bees. "This is about \$700 worth of equipment per student," Kelling said.

While designed for young people in 5th through 12th grade, the program is open to anyone. Tim Elliott is the association's youth program director. Get more information at centraltexasbeekeepers.org.





Darren Orsag, left, of LeeCo Honey and Josh Namken prepare to remove a hive that entered a Bluebonnet electrical box in the ShadowGlen subdivision in Manor. Namken is a Bluebonnet employee who enjoys beekeeping in his spare time.



Leave hive removal to the pros

Beekeepers may enjoy time with their buzzing buddies, but regular Central Texans aren't as fond of bees that take up residence in or around their homes, backyards or barns.

Take some advice from the experts: call a professional handler to get rid of unwanted bees. Home or business owners who try to exterminate a beehive can suffer injuries and leave behind honey that will just attract ants and other pests.

"The last removal I did, I recovered about 2 gallons of honey. But hives could have much more," said Darren Orsag, who runs LeeCo Honey in Lexington. "Imagine what would happen if you dumped a few gallons of honey in your home.

"A strong hive will have tens of thousands of bees. If all you bring is a can of wasp spray to kill the hive, at best you'll make them mad and at worst you or others in the area could be injured," Orsag said.

Orsag has been working with bees for a couple of years. Even though he removes offensive bees, he is a big bee proponent, with 11 hives of his own, and a supporter of local honey.

Get more information about beekeeping from the Texas Apiary Inspection Service, a state agency administered by Texas A&M University. Go to its website, txbeeinspection.tamu.edu, and click on the "bee removal" tab.

Continued from page 18

per person in 2016. Honey is the nectar of plants, which the bees collect, transform and dehydrate, leaving it in honeycombs to ripen and mature.

Commercial bee operations produce most of the honey in Texas. But there are many more small-scale beekeepers who may be your next-door neighbor such as Sarah Jones in Elgin, Mike Mathews in Warda, Darren Orsag in Lexington, Jesse McDaniel in Carmine, Wendy Rohan in La Grange or Michael Kelling in Brenham.

The honeybees that produce the thick, golden liquid you use at home are not native to Texas. "Honeybees were brought by European settlers in the 1600s to North and South America," said Juliana Rangel, lead researcher at the Texas A&M University Honey Bee Lab in the Department of

Entomology. These European honeybees, *Apis mellifera*, have provided humans with honey and wax for at least 9,000 years, and possibly as far back as the Stone Age.

Domesticated honeybees are just a fraction of the bees in Texas. An estimated 90 percent of Texas bees are native and are responsible for a substantial amount of pollination. Unlike honeybees, "endemic bees in the state lead a solitary lifestyle and raise their brood alone" rather than in large hives with a queen bee surrounded by many worker bees, Rangel said.

Rangel studies bee reproduction, feral Africanized honeybees, pest management to keep bees healthy, floral sources for honeybees and the impact of insecticides and pests (such as the Varroa mite) on honeybees. She keeps an eye on commercial beekeepers from Texas who carry their active boxes of bee colonies to pollinate different crops out

of state (such as almonds in California and cranberries in Wisconsin).

"These agricultural practices where huge acreage is dedicated to one crop is harmful to bees due to the lack of variety," Rangel said. Bees are limited to one single crop for up to three weeks but "require 10 essential amino acids for proper physical health, and no single plant contains them all," she said.

"Farmers are beginning to understand that healthier bees result in stronger crops, so they are beginning to plant other blooms along the orchards for bees to feed on."

Melons and other vine crops, cucumbers, pumpkins, blueberries in East Texas and onion seed are among the crops in Texas that depend most on honeybee pollination.

Nostalgia motivates some Central Texas beekeepers.

"My grandfather used to keep bees, and I remember going out with him to take care



Suiling up for bee duty

Safety suits for beekeepers look something like the bulky head-to-toe outfits worn by space-walking astronauts or hazardous materials clean-up crews. But the white, mummy-like ensembles are essential protection from a barrage of bee stings.

Fortunately, “most beekeepers are not allergic to bee stings,” said Jesse McDaniel, left, who keeps bees on his farm in Carmine and sells his honey at his Electric Motor Service shop in La Grange. “I get stung almost every time I work my bees, three or four times per week, so 10 to 15 times per week,” he said. “Most of the time I get stung when I take the suit off, and the bees are still crawling around.”

The best solution for a sting is to remove the stinger as soon as possible “because it continues to pump poison into you, like a beating heart, even after the bee has been removed,” McDaniel said. He uses honey on the injury, but other beekeepers prefer ice, ointment or antihistamines.

“Beekeeping is not a gentle hobby,” said Mike Mathews, president of the Fayette County Beekeepers Association.

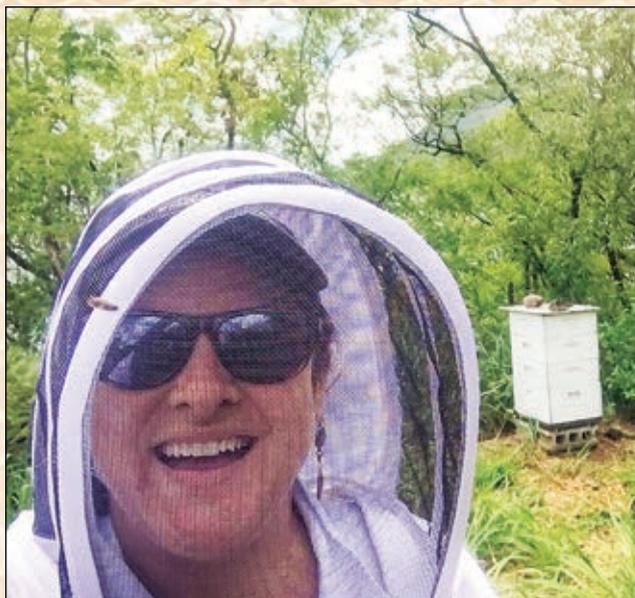
Mike Kelling, president of the Central Texas Beekeepers Association, offered a description of a suit that’s new to the market: It has two layers of cloth like tulle, a fine mesh. “The wind blows through this new suit, but it’s so thick that the bees can’t sting through,” he said. “It makes it easier for (beekeepers) because it’s so hot out there. The regular cloth suit costs about \$75, and these new ones are a bit more expensive, around \$200.

“But it makes beekeeping a lot nicer, especially in the Texas heat,” Kelling said.

of them,” McDaniel said. When he and his wife retired from airline careers to take over her family’s farm in Carmine, starting an apiary was a natural next step. McDaniel heads out to his hives on weekends and finds it relaxing. “I can watch those bees for hours,” he says.

Wendy Rohan fell in love with the insect during her Peace Corps stint in West Africa, and returned home to become a beekeeper. “They are really fascinating creatures — their whole social systems and networks,” Rohan said. She and her husband, John, own Rohan Meadery in La Grange and are committed to using mostly Texas honey to make meads that are sold throughout the state. Mead is an ancient alcoholic drink made of fermented honey, water and yeast. It’s sometimes called honey wine.

“We make wines and ciders as well as meads, and we decided that we were only going to use



Juliana Rangel, left, lead researcher at the Texas A&M University Honey Bee Lab in the Department of Entomology, keeps an eye on commercial beekeepers from Texas who carry their active boxes of bee colonies to pollinate different out-of-state crops such as almonds in California and cranberries in Wisconsin. *Photo courtesy of Juliana Rangel*

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

U.S. honey, and about 95 percent of the honey that we use comes from Texas,” Wendy Rohan said. “Since we made this choice, our supply is limited, and we make very small batches of meads.”

Another reason to keep bees: You may qualify for an agriculture exemption on property taxes. Do your research, though, because rules and regulations vary from county to county. It doesn’t have to be a pricey hobby: beginners can start at about \$500 for honeybees and the equipment required to raise them.

Expect to make mistakes, said Mike Mathews, president of the Fayette Beekeepers Association, but his group and others are ready to help. The Fayette group has members from eight counties. Mathews and his wife started keeping bees seven years ago on their 11-acre property in Warda between La Grange and Giddings. Today, they have nine hives that help pollinate the sea of wildflowers on their land.

Among honeybees’ favorite Central Texas plants are rosemary, agarita, Texas redbud, bluebonnets, pink evening primroses, giant spiderwort, Hinckley’s golden columbine, lantana, butterflyweed, aromatic aster and gray goldenrod.

Buying local honey is a good way to ensure the honey is raw and has not been



Beekeeper Wendy Rohan and her husband, John, of Rohan Meadery in La Grange specialize in recreating humanity’s oldest fermented libation — mead, also known as honey wine. Most of the honey they use to make the drink comes from Texas. Sarah Beal photos

heated or filtered to remove pollen, which can destroy some of honey’s beneficial properties. Pure honey doesn’t need an expiration date because it keeps indefinitely. Archeologists found 3,000-year-old pots of honey in Egyptian pyramids that were deemed perfectly edible.

Nearly 70 percent of the honey sold in the United States is imported. So buying local honey supports small-scale beekeepers, helps protect local agriculture and pollinators, and provides consumers with a product that is all honey rather than a

blend of syrups.

Some small-scale beekeepers have a “Real Texas Honey” campaign, which operates under the auspices of the Texas Beekeepers Association, to promote Texas beekeepers and their honey. The group’s website, texasbeekeepers.org, offers a “Honey Locator” map showing where to buy local honey around Texas. Small-scale beekeepers make up 95 percent of the statewide group’s membership.

“Know your beekeeper — know your honey,” the group reminds consumers. ■

Want to learn more about beekeeping?

■ Central Texas Beekeepers Association in Brenham, centraltexasbeekeepers.org; email centraltexasbeekeepers@gmail.com or call Michael Kelling at 979-277-0411

■ Fayette County Beekeepers Association, email mmathews324@gmail.com or call Mike Mathews at 713-805-9673

■ Elgin Beekeepers Association, email sarah@campsunflower.com or call Sarah Jones at 512-567-1410

■ Brazos Valley Beekeepers Association in Bryan, bvbeeks.org; email info@bvbeeks.org or call Ashley Ralph at 979-777-2529



■ Travis County Beekeepers Association, tcbeeks.org; email contact@tcbeeks.org or call president John Swan at 512-677-7404.

■ Texas Beekeepers Association, texasbeekeepers.org

■ Texas Apiary Inspection Service, txbeeinspection.tamu.edu

Six bee facts

- 1 European settlers first brought Italian bees to North America in the 1600s.
- 2 The USDA says one third of the world’s food crops are derived from insect-pollinated plants, and honeybees are responsible for most of that.
- 3 A single bee produces less than a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime.
- 4 Varroa mites are bees’ biggest blight and affect almost one-fifth of the national bee population. Bees also face hive loss, Colony Collapse Disorder and shrinking foraging areas.
- 5 Five or more bee colonies qualify as a farm in the U.S., and those beekeepers have almost 2.7 million honey-producing colonies (Texas has 120,000 of the colonies.)
- 6 Hail to the queen bee, whose sole function is to make new bees. She lays her own weight in eggs every couple of hours, up to 3,000 eggs per day.

Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Texas Apiary Inspection Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Texas Beekeepers Association, National Honey Board

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SERVICE CENTER OPENS



Operating from the service center adjacent to the Bastrop member service center on Texas 71 West has improved outage response times. *Ray Bitzkie photo*

Facility serves members in Bastrop, Travis counties

By Will Holford

To improve response time and reduce the length of power outages in rapidly growing Bastrop and Travis counties, Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative is operating construction and service crews out of the Bastrop service center.

The facility is adjacent to the Bluebonnet member service center at 690 Texas 71 West.

The Bastrop facility was used as a service center until October 2005, when Bluebonnet consolidated the Bastrop and Lockhart service centers into the newly built Red Rock service center to serve members in the co-op's western area. Crews from the Red Rock service center and the co-op's Giddings service center are also available to respond to members' needs in Bastrop and Travis counties.

The Bastrop operation has reduced the time needed to build electric systems for newly constructed homes and businesses, too, according to David Tobola, Bluebonnet manager of operations.

"We are definitely seeing efficiencies by operating out of the Bastrop facility," he said.

Two Bluebonnet construction crews and one contractor crew that work on new jobs and two to three service crews that respond to member requests and power outages are staging out of the Bastrop center.

On average, Bluebonnet crews from the Bastrop facility are building 12 to 15 new construction jobs and responding to about 170 service calls per week.

Decreasing the distance to jobs also reduces costs for vehicle maintenance and fuel. ■

Lessons from

Ha



Top takeaway: Prepare for flooding to s

By Patrick Beach

August is prime season for hurricanes, and Hurricane Harvey is still fresh on many Texans' minds. Plenty of people in South Central Texas are still putting their lives back together after the devastating 2017 storm.

But we learned lessons from Harvey. Among them:

■ Inland flooding is often worse than where a storm makes landfall. People many miles from the Gulf coast may have a false sense of security because they think they're out of harm's way. In fact, storms can cause significant flooding far inland, even after the storm has come ashore and weakened. There was flooding across Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area, and Harvey's winds and rain led to 396 outages that impacted 12,760 members.

■ Similarly, the National Hurricane Center cautions against focusing on the center of the storm. Several Florida counties along the Atlantic Coast evacuated ahead of another major 2017 hurricane, Irma, citing projections thought to be reliable at the time. But the hurricane changed track from the east to the west coast of the Sunshine State, catching residents along its Gulf Coast unprepared. Even a couple of days from landfall, storm projections can be off by as much as 80 miles.

■ Even if you're not near a river or creek, you're not always safe from a slow-moving disaster. The National Flood Insurance Program (run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA) has said that 20 percent of the claims it pays have happened in places considered "low-risk" for flooding. Remember, Harvey dropped a record 60.58 inches of rain on Nederland, just southeast of Beaumont. There's simply no place for that much water to go, especially if the terrain in your area is as flat as a pool table.

■ If you're not sure whether you have

flooding insurance, you probably don't. Homeowners' policies usually include coverage for rain and wind damage, but not flooding. That requires a separate policy, often purchased through the national program (although it is also available through a few private insurers). The FEMA program covers damage up to \$250,000 to homes and up to \$100,000 for belongings. Keep in mind, there is often a monthlong waiting period before a new policy goes into effect. Policies aren't cheap (the Texas Department of Insurance says an average policy is \$700 a year, but that varies based on your location). If you take steps to protect your property, premiums can cost less. Get information at fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program.

■ Even though flooding can happen anytime, anywhere, FEMA has a flood map service center that lets you find your location and any relevant flood hazard information in your neighborhood. It also has other flood hazard tools to help you understand flooding risks. Go to msc.fema.gov/portal.

Jeannie Ralph carries belongings from her house on NE Seventh Street in Smithville on Aug. 27, 2017, after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas. Flooding from the storm created havoc throughout Central Texas. Jay Janner photo/Austin American-Statesman

Harvey

spread far inland



THE 2018 HURRICANE FORECAST

Each year the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center releases a general hurricane outlook guide for the North Atlantic to the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. It does not make landfall predictions because those are impossible to predict until a storm is only days away — if then.

NOAA looks at climate factors known to have an effect on hurricanes and climate models that “directly predict seasonal hurricane activity.” In May, its outlook for this year predicted a 40 percent chance of a normal or near-normal hurricane season, followed by a 35 percent chance of above-normal activity and a 25 percent chance of a below-normal season. That means there is a 70 percent

probability for 10 to 16 named storms, including five to nine hurricanes, up to four of them major.

When NOAA issued that outlook in May it reported little or no El Niño (unusually warm water) or La Niña (unusually cool water) activity in the Pacific, which can be a variable in Atlantic storm activity. The agency will update its outlook this month, typically the peak of hurricane season, when sea air and water are warmest.

On July 2, Colorado State University's tropical weather project lowered its predicted number of hurricanes to only four in 2018, with a 22 percent probability of a direct hit to the eastern U.S. The project's forecasters cited cooler Atlantic waters and a likely Pacific

El Niño that can lessen the impact of tropical cyclones.

Where storms will hit and how severe they'll be is, of course, unknowable because of the vagaries of daily weather patterns. That's why there are no longer-range hurricane projections. What NOAA can predict with some confidence is a continuation of increased hurricane activity in the Atlantic that began in 1995.

By early July this year, tropical storms Alberto and Chris and Category 1 hurricane Beryl had made an appearance. Alberto caused more than \$50 million in damage and at least 12 deaths in Cuba and the U.S.

Hurricane season lasts until Nov. 30.

Evacuating: What to do before and during the storm

There's plenty you can do to prepare before a storm threat nears. Have a "go bag" for each family member. It should include personal ID, insurance and medical information in waterproof covering; clothes; personal hygiene items; first aid; prescription medicines; and prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses, lens case and fluid.

Be sure to include a flashlight, batteries and enough food and water to last for three days. And don't forget to get a kennel for your pets. Secure your home and turn off

electricity and gas on your way out. (Save the list below for emergency preparedness resources).

Keep important paperwork together and at the ready if facing a flood. Among FEMA's recommendations are: personal IDs, insurance and medical information, vital records (birth certificates, Social Security cards, passports), property records, estate planning documents, financial records (such as first two pages of previous years' federal tax returns, investment records, credit card/checking/savings account numbers), ad-

BE PREPARED FOR HURRICANES AND FLOODS: CLIP & SAVE

Don't wait until a hurricane or flood is looming to develop plans. These websites provide useful information on advance planning, evacuation, emergency updates and more.

NATIONAL

ready.gov and **ready.gov/kids** Lots of tips on preparedness from the Department of Homeland Security on all manner of emergencies

floodsmart.gov FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program site

weather.gov/wrn/hurricane-preparedness National Weather Service hurricane preparedness page

usa.gov/disasters-and-emergencies The government's guide for those impacted

by events such as hurricanes

fema.gov The nation's incident management system; the FEMA mobile app for smartphones provides weather alerts, safety reminders, shelter locations, contacts

redcross.org The American Red Cross' site (look for red Get Help link)

nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php

The National Hurricane Center's preparedness page

emergency.cdc.gov The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's pages for emergency preparedness and response

STATE AND REGIONAL

texasprepares.org and **emergency.portal.texas.gov**

Information about disaster preparedness and awareness as

well as current information

gov.texas.gov/hurricane Texas Hurricane Center includes instructions on building an emergency supply kit and a family communication plan

dps.texas.gov/dem The state's Division of Emergency Management

stear.dps.texas.gov People with disabilities/functional needs can sign up for State of Texas Emergency Assistance Registry

drivetexas.org Department of Transportation's detailed map showing road conditions and travel-related information

warncentraltexas.org Register your cell phone number and email addresses for Code Red alerts from the Capital Area Council of Governments, which includes

DON'T GET COMPLACENT

People living in hurricane-susceptible areas are vulnerable to evacuation fatigue, which might build the longer they live there. Many residents have stories about evacuating their homes ahead of a storm only to see the storm change course.

In late 2005, roughly a million Houstonians hit the historically clogged roads ahead of Hurricane Rita after evacuation orders were issued for low-lying areas.

That was just after Hurricane Katrina had ravaged New Orleans, and many of those residents who had fled to Houston found themselves on the run again. In the end, Rita made landfall near Sabine Pass on the Texas-Louisiana border after weakening from a Category 5 hurricane to a

Category 3. Houston saw mostly downed tree limbs and isolated power outages.

Perhaps partially as a result of Hurricane Rita's reduced damage to Houston, most Houstonians chose to ride out Hurricane Harvey despite its devastating strength.

Just remember: The one you don't run from might be the one that gets you.

In the Bluebonnet area, a similar danger is complacency about floods. Memorial Day 2015, for example, brought devastating floods to much of Central Texas; more followed at Halloween that year and again in mid-April 2016. Heavy rainfall can be particularly hazardous when the ground is already saturated — or very dry.



Galveston's economy never fully recovered from the 1900 hurricane. Commerce shifted toward Houston, which was benefiting from an oil boom. (Library of Congress photo)

dress book, usernames/passwords for on-line accounts, safe deposit box key, utilities contact information and more.

Register with your county's emergency management office to get emergency warnings via text, email or voice mail. Many counties also update critical information as needed on social media. Sign up and follow affected counties on Facebook and Twitter.

Know your destination and how you intend to get there, including alternate routes because road conditions can change rapidly. If an official evacuation is ordered, design-

nated evacuation routes will be activated and all southbound and eastbound lanes will become north and west routes away from the storm. This move, known as contraflow, is intended to move the most number of vehicles to safety in the shortest time.

Even with traffic moving in one direction you could be sitting on an evacuation route for hours. Have a full tank of gas. If you have extra fuel containers and the means to transport them safely — in the bed of a pickup, for example — fill those, too.

One major highway that could be affected

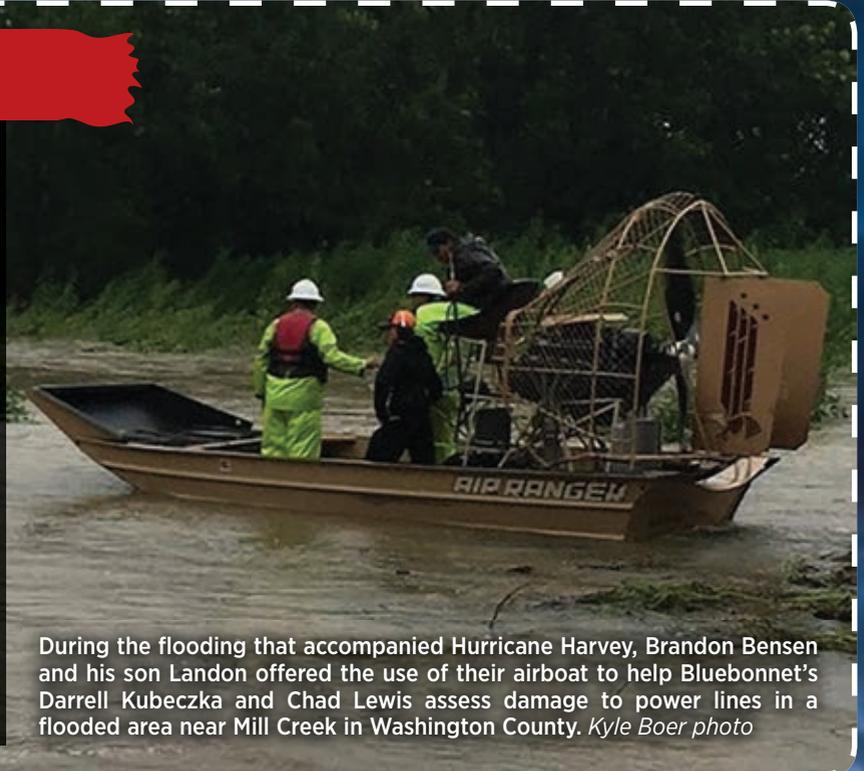
by contraflow — U.S. 290 — runs through much of Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative's service area. If Houston evacuates, hundreds of thousands of people would be on the roads — many of them on U.S. 290. If you live north of Houston and plan to evacuate to Austin, San Antonio, Dallas or beyond, get a head start before traffic becomes bad and, potentially, gas supplies dwindle. U.S. 77 is also a major evacuation route. That highway runs through La Grange, which had significant flooding after Hurricane Harvey last year. ■

Bastrop, Caldwell, Lee, Fayette, Travis, Williamson, Hays, Blanco, Burnet and Llano counties. (A CodeRED mobile app for smartphones is available. Also: co.washington.tx.us to sign up for alerts from Washington County's emergency notification system and co.burleson.tx.us for Burleson County's Code Red Emergency Alert System

FOR OUR MEMBERS

bluebonnet.coop/outages Learn about reporting and tracking outages, sign up for alerts, get tips on severe weather safety.

Also: Find out how to get information from your county's emergency management office, law enforcement agencies, city or regional government offices, area fire/rescue organizations, hospitals, utilities, TV and radio stations and other news media. Many have helpful Facebook and Twitter pages with real-time updates.



During the flooding that accompanied Hurricane Harvey, Brandon Bensen and his son Landon offered the use of their airboat to help Bluebonnet's Darrell Kubeczka and Chad Lewis assess damage to power lines in a flooded area near Mill Creek in Washington County. *Kyle Boer photo*

WORST OF THE WORST: THE 10 DEADLIEST U.S. HURRICANES

Scientific advances make predicting and tracking tropical storms more reliable, even as more Americans flock to live near a coast. Hurricane Harvey, which made landfall at Rockport-Fulton, caused at least 107 deaths. Nine of the 10 deadliest hurricanes hit the U.S. mainland before 2000. Most were in the 1800s and early 1900s, when there was little warning of an approaching storm. Most death tolls are estimated, including offshore deaths.

1. Great Galveston Storm, 1900. The deadliest natural disaster in U.S. history, this hurricane took at least 8,000 lives with its estimated winds of 135 mph and storm surge of more than 15 feet.

2. Okeechobee Hurricane, 1928, Palm Beach County, Fla. Some 2,500-3,000 killed.

3. Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, 2005. Some 1,200 deaths.

4. Cheniere Caminada Hurricane off Louisiana, 1893. Almost 2,000 deaths, some offshore in boats.

5. Sea Islands Hurricane near Savannah, Ga., 1893. As many as 2,000 deaths, most from storm surge.

6. Georgia-South Carolina Hurricane, 1881. An estimated 700 deaths.

7. Atlantic-Gulf Hurricane, 1919. Passed near the Florida Keys before hitting the Texas Gulf Coast, causing some 600 deaths, including many offshore.

8. Great New England Hurricane, 1938. Made landfall on Long Island and in Connecticut, causing 600 deaths, many offshore.

9. Hurricane Audrey, 1957, Texas-Louisiana border. At least 416 deaths.

10. Florida Keys Labor Day Hurricane, 1935. Believed to be a Category 5 storm that killed an estimated 408.

Source: Report, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, August 2011

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Funds help volunteer fire departments, nonprofit group

Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative and the Lower Colorado River Authority have provided grants to volunteer fire departments and one nonprofit organization in the co-op's service area, part of the LCRA's Community Development Partnership Program, which

works with Bluebonnet to provide the grants. The funds will help pay for new air tanks for the Meyersville VFD, new emergency helpads for the New Ulm VFD and the Birch Creek Area VFD, and upgrades to the Maxwell Social Club meeting place. *(LCRA photos)*

Bluebonnet



A \$19,518 grant to the Maxwell Social Club will help make improvements to its building. Pictured, front row, left to right, are Sue Smith, club member; Johnny Sanders and Joyce Buckner, Bluebonnet representatives; Lori A. Berger, LCRA board member; Susan Ohlendorf, club secretary; Kirk Smith, club treasurer; Rick Arnic, LCRA representative; and Liz Kristynik, member. Second row, left to right, are Daniel Note, club member; Ed Theriot, Caldwell County commissioner and club member; Richard Schmidt, Bluebonnet board member; Milton Shaw, Bluebonnet board member; Joe Kelly, club member; Darrell Hess, club member; David Kristynik, club first vice president; and John Buckner, club supporter.



A \$25,000 grant from LCRA and Bluebonnet will pay for the construction of a new emergency helpad for the New Ulm Volunteer Fire Department. Pictured, from left, are Kate Holman, LCRA governmental affairs representative; Bruce Luedke, VFD second vice president/assistant chief; Kayble Luedke, firefighter; Lori A. Berger, LCRA board member; Bryan Haevischer, VFD vice president; Byron Balke, Bluebonnet board member; Hondo Powell, Bluebonnet representative; Douglas Luedke, firefighter; Brent Boyce, VFD president; and Johnny Schupak, firefighter.



LCRA and Bluebonnet representatives presented a \$19,990 grant to the Meyersville Volunteer Fire Department for new air tanks. Pictured, from left, are Hondo Powell, Bluebonnet representative; Ken Mutscher, Bluebonnet board member; Kate Holman, LCRA governmental affairs representative; Justin Bosse, assistant chief; Darreck Kenjura, VFD president; John McKee, firefighter; Lori A. Berger, LCRA board member; John Roman, VFD treasurer; John Brieden, Washington County judge; and Robert Mikeska, Bluebonnet board member.



A new emergency helpad will be built with the help of a \$19,856 grant to the Birch Creek Area Volunteer Fire Department. Pictured, from left, are Kate Holman, LCRA governmental affairs representative; Hondo Powell, Bluebonnet representative; Greg Wolf, Bluebonnet assistant superintendent; Donald Shockey, VFD president; Jimmy Hindman, fire chief; Leroy Haby, VFD treasurer; Lori A. Berger, LCRA board member; and Bob Ware, assistant fire chief.

GOVERNMENT-IN-ACTION YOUTH TOUR

Bluebonnet-area graduates visit nation's capital



Recent Giddings High School graduate Gillian Nietzsche, above left, and recent Lexington High graduate Madison Iselt, above right, at the U.S. Capitol. They joined 147 other Texas teens to tour the state capital and historical sites in Washington, D.C., from June 6-15 during the Government-in-Action Youth Tour. The pair enjoyed touring the Newseum, Smithsonian Institution museums and National Archives Museum, saw national monuments such as the Lincoln Memorial (Iselt, above center), visited the White House (at right) and met with lawmakers. Visit bluebonnet.coop in the fall for 2019 application forms. *Photos from Travis Hill, Texas Electric Cooperatives, Nietzsche and Iselt*



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BOARD MEETING

Bluebonnet's Board of Directors will meet at 9 a.m. Aug. 21 at Bluebonnet's Headquarters, 155 Electric Ave. (formerly 650 Texas Hwy. 21 East), Bastrop.

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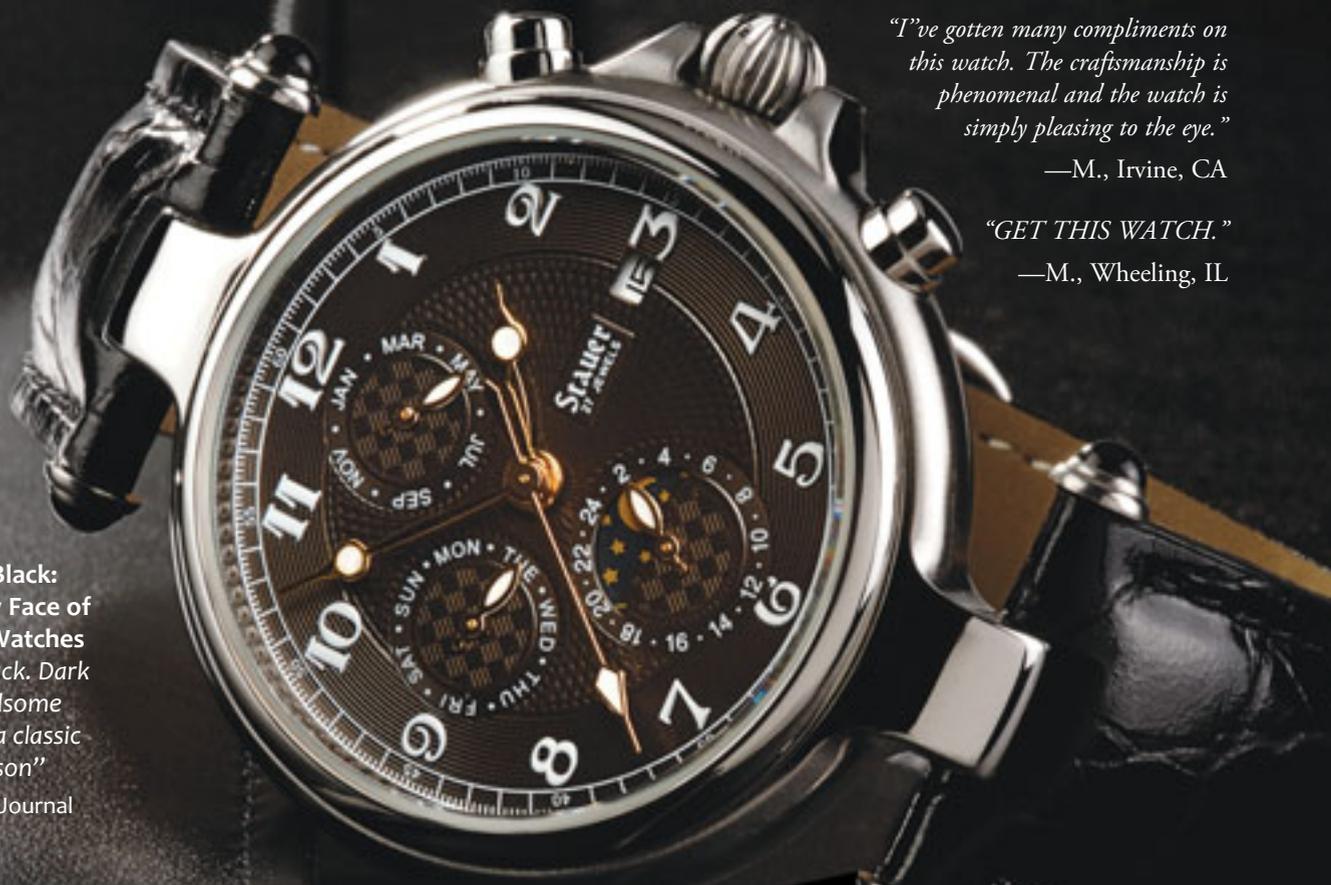
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In the early 1930s watch manufacturers took a clue from Henry Ford's favorite quote concerning his automobiles, "You can have any color as long as it is black." Black dialed watches became the rage especially with pilots and race drivers. Of course, since the black dial went well with a black tuxedo, the adventurer's black dial watch easily moved from the airplane hangar to dancing at the nightclub. Now, Stauer brings back the "Noire", a design based on an elegant timepiece built in 1936. Black dialed, complex automatics from the 1930s have recently hit new heights at auction. One was sold for in excess of \$600,000. We thought that you might like to have an affordable version that will be much more accurate than the original.

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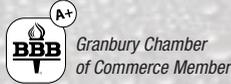



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Texas' OPEC

The story of the strangely named and powerful Texas Railroad Commission

BY ROBERT SPRINGER

FOR A THREE-PERSON AGENCY ORIGINALLY tasked with overseeing intrastate railways, the Railroad Commission of Texas has exerted an outsized impact on an unexpected market: oil. The commission's story is one of power and influence that spans more than a century.

In the late 1800s, railroads were a dominant economic force, analogous to what the tech industry is today, according to David Prindle, professor of government at the University of Texas at Austin and author of the book *Petroleum Politics and the Texas Railroad Commission*. The industry was abusing its power, and a nationwide movement caused Congress to create the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887 to regulate railroads. Texas followed suit by creating the Railroad Commission of Texas in 1891 to regulate railroads that did not cross the state line.

The story behind the curiously named commission getting into the oil regulating business begins in 1901 with the Spindletop oil strike, which made Texas one of the world's top oil-producing areas. (The well was so prolific that it soon produced "more oil in one day than all the rest of the world's oil fields combined," says the American Oil & Gas Historical Society.)

This sudden oil wealth made Texans wary of Standard Oil, which had dominated the oil business in Ohio and Pennsylvania "by basically monopolizing transportation in the pipelines and then running the little guys out of business," Prindle says.

After trying and failing to pre-emptively outlaw Standard Oil, the Texas Legislature hatched an innovative plan to protect Texas' small oil producers. "Well, what are pipelines? Pipelines are transportation," Prindle explains. "Well, we already have a commission regulating



An oil gusher in Port Arthur, circa 1901

transportation, the railroad commission, so let's let the railroad commission regulate oil and gas pipelines."

When the East Texas oil field was discovered in 1930, chaos ensued because of the oversupply of crude that field produced, Prindle says. This oversupply caused prices to plunge, scaring producers. Prindle says there was a "huge fight" over whether the government would be able to regulate production from the wells.

The government won out over the oil producers. By 1935, the commission "had been given the authority to regulate production—that is, not just regulate pipelines but regulate the amount that each well could produce," Prindle says. Railroad regulation was out, and oil and natural gas regulation was in.

From the early 1930s to the early 1970s, the commission's goal was to stabilize the price of oil, as price volatility made it challenging for oilmen to plan. And by controlling how much a well could produce and where producers could drill, the commission achieved the price stability goal for about 40 years.

Texas wasn't the only place in the world

with oil, of course, so the commission's influence began to wane as large reserves were discovered in the Middle East, Venezuela and Nigeria, causing Texas' share of global production to decline.

Yet even as the railroad commission's influence diminished, its price control model was being studied by another group interested in regulating its production to control prices—the group that became the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. The proto-OPEC hired the railroad commission's chief engineer to show them how. That action helped set in motion the oil embargoes and gas wars of the 1970s.

Today, the commission has the same mandate and structure as in its heyday, albeit with less global influence. Periodically, lawmakers try to rename the commission to reflect its current mission, but the effort invariably fails. "I've twice been called to testify before a hearing of the Legislature," Prindle says. "I put on my suit and I go down there—I'm the guy who wrote the book, and I say, 'Well, yeah, if you want truth in advertising, change the name.' And of course, then nothing ever happens."

Robert Springer is a freelance writer who loves Tex-Mex and armadillos.

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GONZALO GUZMÁN

The Secret to Salsa

WHETHER SPOONED ONTO BREAKFAST tacos, devoured with chips or served with grilled red snapper, salsa's addictive heat elevates everything on the plate. This month's reader recipes serve up a delicious mix of charred, smoky and fiery flavors. To get a salsa fix without cooking, try the following from Gonzalo Guzmán, chef at Nopalito in San Francisco (and author of the eponymous cookbook, with Stacy Adimando). "Unlike a cooked tomatillo salsa, this version retains all the bracing freshness and acidity of its raw ingredients," he says. He suggests serving Salsa Cruda with meaty appetizers or entrées, like carnitas, or robust vegetables, like grilled portobello mushrooms.

PAULA DISBROWE, FOOD EDITOR

Salsa Cruda

- 1-2 jalapeño peppers, coarsely chopped
- 7 medium tomatillos, husked and rinsed
- 1 large clove garlic
- Leaves from ¼ bunch cilantro
- Salt

1. In a food processor, combine the jalapeños, tomatillos, garlic, cilantro and a generous pinch of salt. Pulse until ingredients are well-blended but the salsa is slightly chunky.
2. Taste and adjust the amount of chiles and salt as desired.
 - ▶ Makes 2 cups.

Reprinted from *Nopalito: A Mexican Kitchen* (Ten Speed Press, 2017)



SALSA CRUDA

EVA KOLENKO | TEN SPEED PRESS

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine the jalapeños, half of the onion, the tomato halves and garlic in a mixing bowl, drizzle with enough oil to lightly coat and toss to combine. Place on a baking sheet and roast 20 minutes, or until softened, then allow to cool.
3. Combine the canned tomatoes, roasted onion, Roma tomatoes and garlic in a blender and process to combine. Add the remaining raw onion, 1–2 of the jalapeños, salt and fresh cilantro, if using. Purée the mixture, taste and adjust the heat (adding jalapeños as desired) and salt. ▶ Makes about 2 quarts.

COOK'S TIP Don't skimp on oil for roasting vegetables—you'll want to use enough to lightly coat the ingredients—and be sure to scrape the flavorful juices into the blender. The delicious roasting oil will add flavor and help pull all the ingredients together.

WEB EXTRAS ▶ Read this story on our website to see a recipe for Hatch Green Chile Salsa from a Bartlett EC member.

Playing With Fire

Making salsa at home is often an intuitive process that incorporates garden ingredients, heat proclivities and whatever else you have on hand. Whether you're following a recipe or creating your own, remember that the heat level of fresh peppers can vary widely. One week they might be scorching and the next, mild, leaving fire-lovers wanting more excitement. To create more flavor and/or fire in your salsa, consider the following ideas.

Allow chopped onion to macerate with a squeeze of fresh lime juice and a pinch of salt before combining with other ingredients (this will soften the onion's sharp, raw taste and help balance overall flavors).

Toast dried chiles (in a dry skillet or on the grill) until puffed and lightly toasted before soaking.

For a spicier salsa, leave the seeds in a few of the peppers. When jalapeños and serranos don't add enough fire, add a blistering habanero, chile pequin, Thai bird chiles or ground cayenne pepper to the mix.

Vinegar-based pepper sauces like Cholula (my favorite), Crystal or Tabasco add heat and help make the other ingredients pop. Use them—in addition to salt—to finish and “brighten” your salsa if it needs more flavor. —PD



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School's Out

NOT TO TELL TALES OUT OF SCHOOL, but we reckon these reader photos are sweeter than Texas tea. Can you hear it? Summer is calling Texans, old school and new, to ditch the work and hightail it to the creek for some fun in the sun. **GRACE ARSIAGA**

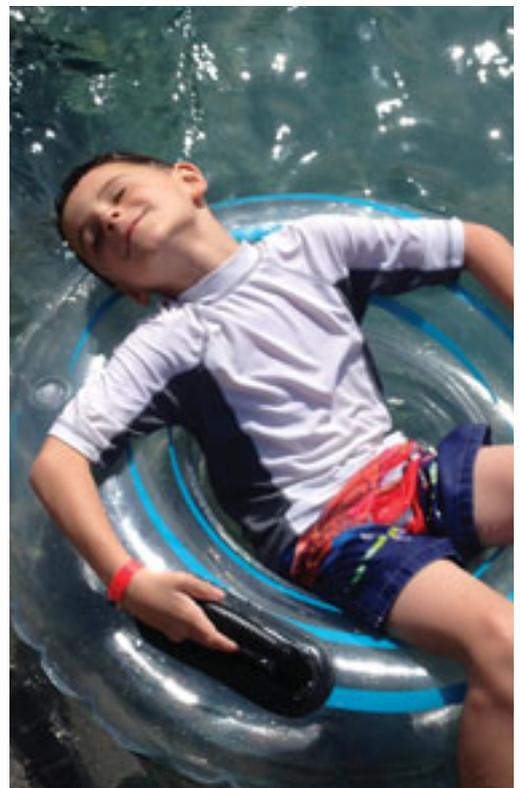
WEB EXTRAS ▶ See Focus on Texas on our website for more photos from readers.

▼ **RUDY SEPOLIO**, Navasota Valley EC: Granddaughter Olivia keeps cool during summer break in Prairie.



▲ **PATRICIA GARCIA**, Medina EC: "Ariella is taking advantage of her preschool spring break and taking her little lamb for afternoon walks."

▼ **VIOLA MURRAY**, Pedernales EC: Evening at Canyon Lake in August



UPCOMING CONTESTS

DECEMBER **HIGH CONTRAST** DUE **AUGUST 10**

JANUARY **HARVEST** DUE **SEPTEMBER 10**

FEBRUARY **TWO OF A KIND** DUE **OCTOBER 10**

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

ONLINE: Submit highest-resolution digital images at TexasCoopPower.com/contests. We do not accept entries via email. **MAIL:** Focus on Texas, 1122 Colorado St., 24th Floor, Austin, TX 78701. A stamped, self-addressed envelope must be included if you want your entry returned (approximately six weeks). Please do not submit irreplaceable photographs—send a copy or duplicate. We regret that *Texas Co-op Power* cannot be responsible for photos that are lost in the mail or not received by the deadline.

▲ **BOBBY NORRIS**, Pedernales EC: A little girl plays on the low-water crossing at Blue Hole Park in Georgetown.

▶ **LORI SONNIER**, Pedernales EC: "My son Kyle loves floating in the lazy river. We usually go to several different water parks each summer, and he makes a beeline for the lazy river."

Pick of the Month Quilt Show: Rhapsody in Blue

Fredericksburg August 31–September 1
(830) 997-7802, vereinsquiltguild.org

When Fredericksburg turned 150 in 1996, part of the celebration included a quilt show so successful it spurred the formation of the Vereins Quilt Guild, which this month holds its 10th biennial quilt show. The event includes bed turning, a boutique, donation quilt, silent auction, tearoom and vendors.



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August

7
Bandera Cowboy Capital Opry,
(830) 796-3045, banderacowboycapital.com

8
Levelland [8–12] SPOTC Dog Agility Trials,
(806) 894-4161, malleteventcenter.com/events

9
Stephenville Texstar Ford Lincoln Summer
Nights Concert Series: Moe Bandy With Terri
Hendrix and Lloyd Maines, 1-800-481-9345,
stephenvilletexas.org

10
Junction [10–11] Hill Country Fair Associa-
tion Summer Classic Rodeo, (254) 212-9160,
facebook.com/hcfajunctiontx

11
Palestine Dogwood Jamboree: Forever
Country, (903) 729-7080,
dogwoodjamboree.com

August 23–26
Wichita Falls
Hotter 'N Hell Hundred



Henderson [11–12] East Texas Sacred Harp
Convention, (903) 863-5379, texasfasola.org

14
Beaumont [14–15] Paw Patrol Live: Race to
the Rescue, (409) 951-5400,
pawpatrollive.com



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18

El Paso Magoffin Home Victorian Sci-Fi Book and Tea Club, (915) 533-5147, thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/magoffin-home-state-historic-site

23

Fort Davis [23-26] Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration, (432) 426-3015, fortDavis.com

Wichita Falls [23-26] Hotter 'N Hell Hundred, (940) 322-3223, hh100.org

24

Tyler [24-26] Texas Rose Breed Show, (903) 882-8696, texasrosehorsepark.com

25

Big Spring Comanche Warrior Triathlon, (432) 263-8235, visitbigspring.com

Galveston An Evening With Robert Earl Keen, 1-800-821-1894, thegrand.com

Victoria Dueling Pianos, (361) 576-6277, theatrevictoria.org

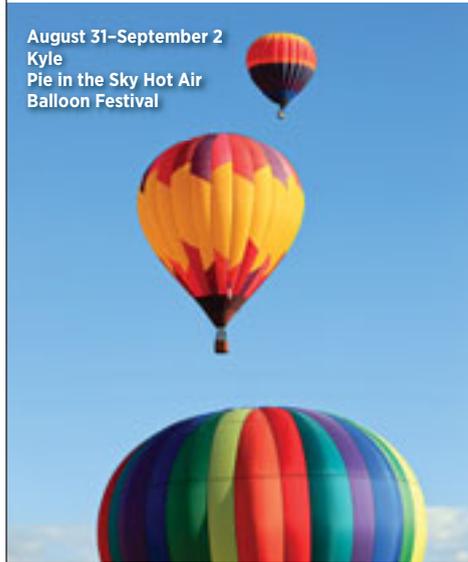
Crockett [25-26] Marine Corps League 1433 Gun Show, (936) 229-2023, facebook.com/marinecorpleague1433

27

Stonewall Commemoration of Lyndon Johnson's Birthday, (830) 868-7128, nps.gov/lyjo

30

La Grange [30-Sept. 2] Fayette County Fair, (979) 968-3911, fayettecountyfair.org



August 31-September 2
Kyle
Pie in the Sky Hot Air
Balloon Festival

31

Bedford [31-Sept. 2] Blues & BBQ Festival, (817) 952-2128, bedfordbluesfest.com

Kyle [31-Sept. 2] Pie in the Sky Hot Air Balloon Festival, (512) 262-1010, kyletxpieinthesky.com

September

1

Amarillo Yellow City Sounds Music Festival, (806) 371-5224, panhandlepbs.org

Fort Stockton Wizarding World of Fort Stockton, (432) 701-0588, thegaragetx.com

7

Corsicana Show and Dance With the Others, (903) 872-6779, corsicanaopry.com

Lubbock [7-9] National Cowboy Symposium & Celebration, (806) 798-7825, cowboy.org

Submit Your Event!

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

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www.vereqsquiltinguild.org

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Lolling Around Luling

Town with tough reputation still basks in benevolence of its oil history

BY GENE FOWLER

WHEN YOU DRIVE INTO LULING, NESTLED along the San Marcos River about 24 miles southeast of the river's headwaters at San Marcos Springs, you notice right away that oil plays a major role there. A monumental faux derrick soars beside a visitors center at a major intersection on U.S. Highway 183. And around town, nearly 200 pump jacks—some adorned with bright cartoon figures—summon black gold.

Luling also is known for its annual **Watermelon Thump** festival held the last full weekend in June. And two of its eateries—**City Market** and **Luling Bar-B-Q**—are renowned destinations for barbecue pilgrims.

From 1874 to 1876, when Luling served as the end of the Galveston, Harrisburg and San Antonio Railway, Austin newspapers said Luling was “given over to the devil” and that everyone in town “goes armed at night.” Hence, “toughest town in Texas” became a common descriptor.

I learned about the town's drilling history at the **Luling Oil Museum**, housed in the 19th-century Walker Brothers building, one of the oldest mercantiles in Texas.

A colorful wildcatter with mystical inclinations named Edgar B. Davis brought in the original discovery well. Folklore recounts that the Massachusetts native drilled where he found the prettiest wildflowers, and the facts of his share-the-wealth binges are better than fiction. Davis, feeling that his gushers were gifts from God and that he needed to give back, funded enormous Luling picnics, a country club, hospitals, wildflower painting contests, a Broadway play about reincarnation and an agricultural demonstration farm called the **Luling Foundation**.

“Mr. Davis saw local farmers and ranchers struggling and wanted to help them develop diversified ag practices,”



A whimsical pumpjack in front of a passing freight train in Luling

explained Bonnie Dredla, Luling Foundation office manager, as she gave me a tour of the 1,123-acre site.

“One of our primary programs today is the Foundation Angus Alliance,” she continued. “We have over 200 head of bulls, and we practice freeze branding—that’s a process that uses liquid nitrogen or dry ice and denatured alcohol. It doesn’t burn the animal but turns the branded hair white.”

At the branding pen, I watched as Dredla’s brother-in-law, Jason Dredla, applied the more humane process to cattle in a chute designed by animal behavior expert Temple Grandin to be less stressful on the animals.

Foundation acreage is bordered on the west by the San Marcos River, and a few miles downriver stands the restored **Zedler Mill**. Its grist mill was built in 1874 as Luling sprang up with the railroad; a cotton gin soon was added, followed by a saw mill and feed mill. Tools and equipment on display at the mill museum include a quadruplex pump made in Brenham that pressed cotton into bales. The Zedler family began

producing electricity from the river as early as 1894.

Due to the setting’s natural beauty and a newly constructed pavilion, a couple gets married there just about every weekend.

Not even the rattling trains passing in the night could wake me at Luling’s **Ainsworth House Inn**, named for the commander who led the 36th Infantry Division ashore at Salerno, Italy, in advance of the Normandy landings of World War II. The inn’s Audie Murphy room is named for the war-hero-turned-film-star, who visited frequently.

Before leaving town, I stepped across Bowie Street from the inn to examine an ancient oak tree. There, according to Luling historian Riley Froh, Old West outlaws had carved directions to a buried treasure of stolen gold.

I couldn’t discern the map, but I still felt a living link to the days when Luling was known as the toughest town in Texas.

Gene Fowler is an Austin writer who specializes in history.

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