

AGGIES' 12TH MAN
TURNS 100

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Texas Coop Power

FOR SAM HOUSTON EC MEMBERS

JANUARY 2022

In the Care of Canines

How rescue dogs
are learning
to help people

**RENAISSANCE
MAN OF THE
BIG THICKET**

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Peter Slush, a firefighter and paramedic with Bexar County District 7 Fire & Rescue, shares affection with Rudy.
Photo by Laura Jenkins

ABOVE

Members of the 12th Man on the sidelines in the 1980s.
Cushing Memorial Library | Courtesy TAMU Press

High Alert

DON'T SAY THEY didn't warn you.

It's long been known that rattlesnakes rattle their tails to alert aggressors or distract prey. But researchers recently reported in *Current Biology* that when a perceived enemy ignores the initial warning, the snakes switch from a low- to a high-frequency rattle to give the impression they are much closer than they actually are. When the initial slow, steady rattling rate of 12 hertz is ignored, rattlers will dial it up to as high as 100 hertz.



TCP Listen to a rattler's rattle with this story online.

FINISH THIS SENTENCE THIS YEAR, I'M FINALLY GOING TO ...

TCP Tell us how you would finish that sentence. Email your short responses to letters@TexasCoopPower.com or comment on our Facebook post. Include your co-op and town. Below are some of the responses to our November prompt: **A Texan Would Never ...**

Squat with their spurs on.

JULIE BAKER
BLUEBONNET EC
CALDWELL

Pick a bluebonnet.

TRACEY POWELL
TRI-COUNTY EC
ALEDO

Miss a chance to brag about Texas (and rightly so).

DONNA FALDYN
VIA FACEBOOK

Turn down barbecue.

THELMA BEASLE
LIGHTHOUSE EC
MEMPHIS

Ask someone else to finish their sentence.

JAY GEIS
HEART OF TEXAS EC
MOFFAT

To see more responses, read Currents online.

A COLD, HARD FACT

A fridge made 30 years ago uses almost four times as much electricity as a modern one.

66

distribution co-ops operate in Texas, from as far north as North Plains EC in Perryton and as far south as Magic Valley EC in Mercedes, and as far west as Rio Grande EC in Dell City and as far east as Jasper-Newton EC in Kirbyville. Co-ops power most of the state's landmass.



TCP Contests and More

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Weeknight Dinners

FOCUS ON TEXAS PHOTOS

Feathered Friends

RECOMMENDED READING

Where Birders Perch from April 2018 took readers to the World Birding Center, which spans nine sites in the Rio Grande Valley with ideal photographing opportunities.



What's New, Chet?

TCP's website! The redesigned TexasCoopPower.com is easier to use and more mobile-friendly. Check out the latest in travel, history, recipes and personalities. Point your smartphone at the code below—and throughout the magazine—to get there pronto.



A Farsighted Mission

MOST ASTRONAUTS who spend at least a month in space return to Earth with impaired vision. And as NASA gears up for an eventual mission to Mars, which would require astronauts to spend at least 1½ years in space, the agency is turning to the Texas A&M University College of Medicine to study the effect of long-term spaceflight on the eyes and on the arteries, veins and lymphatic vessels that serve them and maintain vision.





DAVID MOORE

The Tormenting Cries

I am thankful that Mary Ann Goodnight had a kind heart for animals [*Last of Their Kind*, November 2021]. It must have been tormenting to hear the cries of the bison calves whose mothers were slaughtered for their hides.

The U.S. government came up with the idea of killing off the bison to subjugate the Indians, and what a slaughter of immense proportions the idea produced.

The bison are as much a part of Texas' and this country's heritage as any other living thing. They have earned their right to survive.

Roberta McLaughlin
Heart of Texas EC
Lorena

My mom made meringue where it had little sugar tears [*The Alchemy of Egg Whites*, November 2021]. I could never get it right. She baked it on top of banana pudding. Fond memories.

LETA MASSEY
VIA FACEBOOK



EARL NOTTINGHAM | TPWD

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Dad's Service Station

"I too changed lots of tires and melted lots of hot patches on tires at Red's service station on the side of the hill."

EDDIE BOLCH
BRYAN TEXAS UTILITIES
BRYAN

Our Old House

I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed Sheryl Smith-Rodgers' article on the Bendele family house [*Not About To Fixate*, October 2021]. My kids all got a kick out of remembering the details you wrote about. It made us all smile.

Kathy Bendele
Pedernales EC
Hye

Agree—we don't need to make everything new and shiny.

Roberta Dunn Dobie
Via Facebook

Meaningful Learning

I enjoyed the article about the Comstock high school kids doing research on Indigenous rock art with the Shumla Archaeological Research and Education Center [*Learning Rocks*, October 2021]. It sounds like a great way to engage kids in meaningful learning.

Felicity Hannay
Central Texas EC
Golden, Colorado

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

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TEXAS CO-OP POWER Volume 78, Number 7 (USPS 540-560). *Texas Co-op Power* is published monthly by Texas Electric Cooperatives (TEC). Periodical postage paid at Austin, TX, and at additional offices. TEC is the statewide association representing 75 electric cooperatives. *Texas Co-op Power's* website is TexasCoopPower.com. Call (512) 454-0311 or email editor@TexasCoopPower.com.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Subscription price is \$4.44 per year for individual members of subscribing cooperatives and is paid from equity accruing to the member. If you are not a member of a subscribing cooperative, you can purchase an annual subscription at the nonmember rate of \$7.50. Individual copies and back issues for the previous 12 months are available for \$3 each.

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The Invention of the Year

The world's lightest and most portable mobility device

Once in a lifetime, a product comes along that truly moves people. Introducing the future of battery-powered personal transportation . . . The Zinger.

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

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

—Kent C., California

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



Available in Green,
Black (shown) and Blue



The Zinger folds to a mere 10 inches.

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

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POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

Furred Responders

A Texas organization trains rescue dogs to help people overcome challenges



FROM TOP Trainees at Service Dogs Inc. near Dripping Springs. First responders with Bexar County District 7 Fire & Rescue with Rudy. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP Sheri Soltes, president and founder of Service Dogs, with Poppy, a trainee. Austin Meredith, a senior computer science student at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and his service dog, Peaches, live on campus.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY LAURA JENKINS

The room was grim and silent, save for the rustling of papers. Lady, Rudy and Chanel—two yellow Labs and a golden retriever mix—slipped in as police officers studied security camera footage, surveying the aftermath of the shooting that left 23 people dead at an El Paso Walmart in 2019. The dogs knew what to do.

“Lady started making herself known to those who were going through security footage,” says Frankie Trifilio, Lady’s handler and one of three emergency medical services managers who flew to El Paso with the dogs from Methodist Healthcare in San Antonio to support first responders. “When Lady rolled on her back, a tall, muscular guy who looked like a member of a SWAT team asked me, ‘What is she doing?’

“I said, ‘She’s making herself available. She likes belly rubs.’”

The officer went back to what he was doing. But within a matter of minutes, he succumbed.

“He knelt down and started rubbing her belly, saying, ‘Oh come here. Who’s a good girl? Who’s a good girl?’” says Trifilio. “That was the catalyst for others to interact with the dogs, and suddenly everything came alive. Everyone started talking. There was laughter. When we left, people were communicating and collaborating. I can only speculate that it helped with the investigation. But I know firsthand that it helped those officers personally and emotionally.”

Providing trained dogs for people in need is nothing new to Sheri Soltes, founder and president of Service Dogs Inc., the organization that trained and placed Lady, Rudy and Chanel. An attorney by trade, Soltes was headlong into a successful career more than 30 years ago when she realized that the stress of the job was taking a toll on her health. She was living in Houston when she started thinking about a career change. At the time she had no idea what was next.

“One day I was at the eye doctor and picked up a maga-



zine that had an article about dogs helping people with disabilities,” says Soltes. “At the end it said that some of the groups used dogs from animal shelters, and that appealed to me because I’ve always been drawn to animals, especially those in need.”

Soltes saved the article and contacted organizations mentioned to find information that would help her build a nonprofit. She conducted a survey in Houston to see how many hearing-impaired people might be interested in a hearing dog; 75% answered affirmatively. Then she found a local dog trainer who agreed to visit shelters with her and help her find dogs best suited for service.

What began in 1988 as a home-based, one-dog-at-a-time endeavor has grown into a 6-acre campus near Dripping Springs, complete with a training facility, kennel and devoted team of trainers and caregivers. Even though SDI, a member of Pedernales Electric Cooperative, has placed more than 750 assistance dogs over the years, the operation is no assembly line. Soltes says they’ve developed an “artisan” approach to training because they select, train and match dogs to meet each client’s specific needs.

RIGHT Methodist Healthcare EMS relations managers and their dogs. BELOW Becky Kier, a former trainer at SDI, leaves the Humane Society of the New Braunfels Area with Lily, who is now in hearing dog training.

It might seem like any dog could be trained to mitigate any disability, but Becky Kier, former director of training at SDI, explains that when it comes to assistance dogs, one size definitely does not fit all.

“What they all have in common,” says Kier, “is that they’re all super sociable, obedient and have really good temperaments as far as loving and accepting all humans and animals. They’re not rattled by anything. But beyond that it comes down to the disposition of each individual dog. A hearing dog, for example, must take cues from the environment. We teach them what to do at first, but at some point, they have to take ownership of that.”

Kier says guide dogs for the visually impaired are hardest to find because they must be obedient and proactive without a lot of redirection. Even though SDI does not train animals to serve people with visual impairments, it does get a lot of “career-change” dogs from Guide Dogs for the Blind, the largest guide dog school in North America. Career-change dogs can have an excellent temperament, but they can also have qualities and traits that disqualify them from guide dog service.

“One of our recent graduates, Sensi, was released from GDB for not liking to work in the rain,” says Kier. “She didn’t want to guide through puddles. But she’s an ideal hearing dog.” Kier notes other examples of career-change dogs, such as Artist, who needed more supervision in the home than a blind person could provide, and Tootsie, who didn’t like the guide harness. “Dogs have idiosyncrasies just like people do,” she says.

Before the partnership with GDB provided career-change animals, all of SDI’s dogs came from rescue organizations. Many still do. For more than three decades, Soltes and her team have been searching animal shelters, offering a life of love and service to abandoned and unwanted dogs. Kier found Sherlock, a terrier mix, on a routine visit to the Humane Society of Central Texas. After his training, he was partnered with Megan Harris of Austin, who’s had a hearing impairment since she was 15 months old.

“Before he entered my life, I didn’t feel comfortable being left at home by myself,” says Harris, who has been partnered with Sherlock for more than eight years. “Anybody could enter the house at any moment, and I wouldn’t hear them. I worried about hearing smoke alarms, the doorbell and timers. Once Sherlock became my hearing dog, I felt more relaxed and at ease at home and in public.”

In the beginning Soltes was focused solely on the need for hearing dogs. But before long others began asking if she could train dogs to meet other specific needs, and SDI expanded its programs.



LEFT Patty Maginnis, a district court judge in Montgomery County, with Sumi, who provides victim support in the courtroom. BELOW Sherlock has been assisting Megan Harris of Austin for eight years.



“A couple of years into it, a young man who had become paralyzed from the shoulders down asked if we could train a service dog for him,” says Soltes. “Another woman with paraplegia did too. We weren’t sure, so we did two as a test run, and it was successful.”

Soltes thrives on the challenge of innovating new programs to meet the needs of those who seek help.

“A few years ago, we were at a Texas Medical Association conference in Houston and a battalion chief said to me, ‘Our suicide rate is approaching that of veterans. Can you help us?’” Soltes says. “I took that information, did some research, and we created a program that provides dogs to support first responders.”

Lady, Rudy and Chanel are a result of that initiative.

Soltes says it takes approximately \$50,000 to adopt, train and provide lifelong follow-ups for one dog. Despite that cost, SDI provides each one at no cost beyond nominal application fees and personal travel expenses. They rely on donors, sponsors, grants and fundraisers to operate. But Glenda Ann Kea says you can’t put a price tag on the profound difference SDI is making in the lives of Texans with disabilities. When her systemic lupus became debilitating, she got so depressed she

stayed in bed for nearly two years.

“At that time the doctors were prescribing me tons of narcotics because I was in so much pain,” says Kea, who lives in Allen, north of Dallas. “I couldn’t get up on my own and I didn’t want to. I didn’t see the point. If I dropped something, my day was over because there was nobody there to help me pick it up. Seriously, I wanted to die.

“But when I got DaVinci, I had to brush him and feed him, so I’m moving and breathing and going outside, even if it’s only my back-yard. When I’m in my bedroom, he can hear if something drops on the tile. He’ll get up, come in here and look at me like, ‘Do you need me to get that?’ Now I genuinely want to get up every day. In a very real sense, DaVinci saved my life.” ■

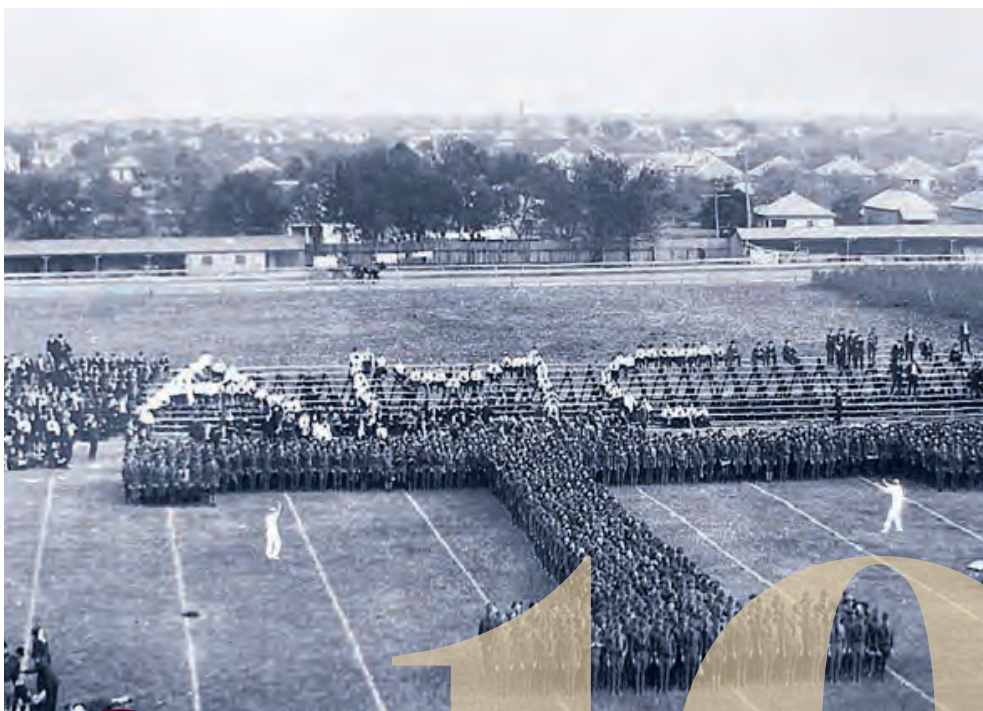


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TCP POWER OF OUR PEOPLE

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AGGIE

STANDOUTS

BY RHONDA REINHART

There are long shots—and then there are long shots. On January 2, 1922, at the inaugural Dixie Classic bowl game in Dallas, few fans thought the Texas A&M University football team had even a sliver of a chance at victory. The Aggies' opponents, after all, were the top-ranked Praying Colonels from Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. Centre included three All-Americans and had just knocked previously unbeaten Harvard out of the No. 1 national ranking.

The outlook was grim for the Aggies. "We were absolutely the unmitigated underdog," says author and historian John Adams, a member of A&M's class of 1973. "The papers all had A&M losing 40 to nothing, 30 to nothing, 20 to nothing."

Then came the bumps, bruises and fractures. A&M's captain and quarterback, Heine Weir, broke his leg on the third play of the game, and that started a domino effect of injuries, including at least one concussion. "At that time—and I think it's still a rule—if you can't have 11 players out there, you have to forfeit the game," says Adams, a Bluebonnet Electric Cooperative member. "So it's getting close to halftime, and they have 11 players, but they've got five of them that are injured."

What happens next is the stuff of legend and the beginning of one of Texas A&M's most revered traditions. With things looking bleak, Aggies coach Dana X. Bible remembered a kid named E. King Gill, class of 1924.

Though Gill was a member of the football team, he wasn't

part of the squad traveling to the bowl game. He did, however, hitchhike from College Station to Dallas to see his buddies play at Fair Park, and he was up in the press box helping Waco sports writer Jinx Turner identify players on the field. But as the number of injured players quickly swelled, Bible had other ideas for the unsuspecting sophomore.

"All of a sudden, the coach turns and looks at the press box and waves at Gill," Adams says. "So he comes out of the press box during halftime, goes under the stands—there's no dressing room—and changes clothes with Heine Weir, the guy who broke his leg, and puts on his uniform. Gill comes out and stands on the sideline ready to go play. And then, little did they know, there is the beginning of the 12th Man."

In Adams' newest book—*Standing Ready: The Golden Era of Texas Aggie Football and the Beginning of the 12th Man Tradition*, published in December by Texas A&M University Press—he recounts the tale of the history-making bowl game, which was replaced by the Cotton Bowl Classic. Along with historical photos and little-known details from the game, *Standing Ready* features interviews with most of the major figures involved in the 1922 outing, including the bowl game's founder, Joe Utag, class of 1908 and captain of the 1907 A&M football team, as well as Gill himself. "I spent five years working on this book, but I've been interviewing these guys for over 40 years," Adams says. He interviewed Utag and Gill in the mid-1970s, before Gill died in 1976 and Utag in 1977.



OPPOSITE The block Aggie T formed at halftime by the Corps of Cadets at Kyle Field in 1920. LEFT E. King Gill, the original 12th Man. BELOW The Aggies make a goal-line stand in the 1922 Dixie Classic.



TEXAS A&M'S 12TH MAN TRADITION, A SPIRIT THAT 'ENGULFS YOU,' TURNS 100

One hundred years later, in honor of Gill and his willingness to stand up for his team, the A&M student section stands for the entirety of every football and basketball game. And what a student section it is. At every home game at Kyle Field, an average of 38,000 students decked out in maroon and white stand ready, cheering for their team and waving white flags emblazoned with "12th Man." A&M set an NCAA record for largest student section attendance in 2014 when 40,032 students watched the Aggies play Ole Miss.

Annie McGinnis, class of 2017 and director of communications at Tri-County Electric Cooperative, has attended A&M football games since she was a child. "I was born on Thanksgiving Day, so rumor has it I watched the first Aggie game with my dad the day I was born," she says. Her father, David McGinnis, class of 1990 and general manager and CEO at Grayson-Collin Electric Cooperative, confirms the tale. "She came at lunchtime, like 11-ish in the morning," David McGinnis says. "We played TCU that year, and she and I watched that game while Mom slept, sitting in the hospital."

Annie McGinnis describes the A&M student section as having a "spirit that pretty much engulfs you" and says that any potential discomfort from standing for four hours is no issue for Aggie fans. "There's so much adrenaline and camaraderie amongst the students who are standing with the 12th Man that you don't even think about your feet hurting because you're standing on wobbly bleachers," she says.

Cameron Smallwood, class of 1996 and CEO and general

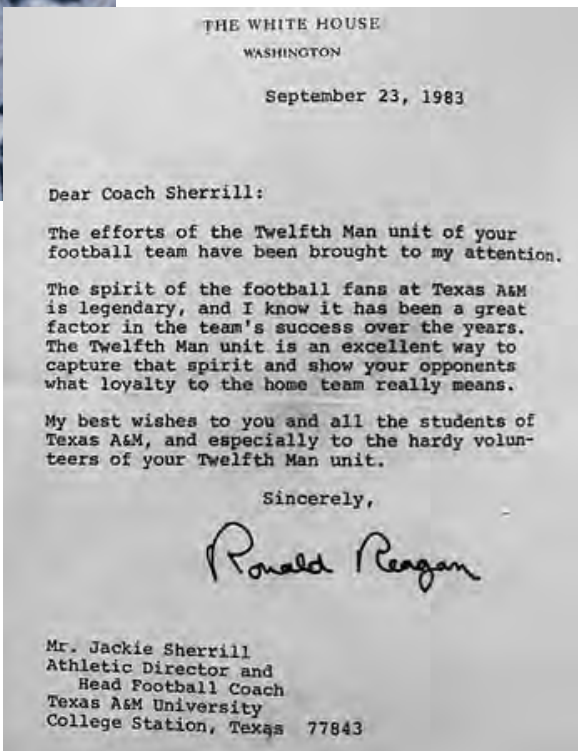


Aggies captain Heine Weir, left, whose injury paved the way for the 12th Man, with coach Dana X. Bible.



LEFT The first A&M football team, organized in the fall of 1894. BELOW A letter from President Ronald Reagan to coach Jackie Sherrill recognizes the 12th Man.

TCP WEB EXTRA Enter online to win a copy of *Standing Ready: The Golden Era of Texas Aggie Football and the Beginning of the 12th Man Tradition*.



manager at United Cooperative Services, attended games as a student and has held season tickets for football and basketball games for many years since. “It’s like being part of a big family there cheering on the team,” he says. He likens the student spirit at A&M—and that eagerness to pitch in when needed—to working with an electric cooperative. “It’s a job with purpose,” he says, “so it fits our training pretty well.”

Like the McGinnises and Smallwood—and so many students before and after them—Gill never had to go on the field that winter day in 1922. The team didn’t need him to play after all. In fact, the banged-up country boys from College Station went on to win 22-14, accomplishing one of the biggest upsets college football has ever seen. The game made newspapers nationwide and, by Adams’ estimation, put Texas football—and Texas sports in general—on the map.

“It put a spotlight on sports in the state of Texas. That’s what the Dixie Classic did,” Adams says. “There had been some great SMU teams during that time. There had been some good TCU teams. University of Texas had a good team in 1919. But none of them got any attention—no All-Americans, no recognition, no ranking.”

While attention and accolades are, of course, welcomed with open arms, those aren’t what propel Aggie students to show up on game day, 12th Man towels in hand, and stand for their team. Gill, a longtime Corpus Christi physician, possibly said it best. In a 1964 campus speech, without even

a whiff of self-aggrandizement, he talked about that day at Fair Park and his role as the original 12th Man: “I’ve never thought that the 12th Man really belonged to a personality. It belongs to the A&M student body,” he said. “And every one of you can be a 12th Man. You stand up—stand up for what’s right and be ready to serve.” ■

#1 RANKED
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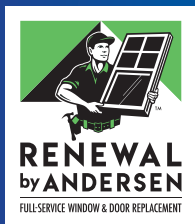


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Joel Colston



Jeff Slone

Management Program Helps Co-op Employees Improve Member Experience

SAM HOUSTON ELECTRIC Cooperative employees Jeff Slone and Joel Colston recently completed the Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Slone, a branch office supervisor, and Colston, an engineer, took the course with 22 other attendees from 20 co-ops throughout the country. The comprehensive six-week program is divided into three blended learning units and provides in-depth analysis of the functions and processes of co-op management. Most importantly, it emphasizes practical applications of these key competencies.

The course also brought Colston and Slone closer as co-workers. Slone said he knew Colston was an engineer, but their paths really never crossed much at work, so they didn't know each other well before attending the course.

The program is designed for co-op employees who are—or aspire to be—in leadership roles, from supervisors to new CEOs and general managers.

“There was a big focus on the financial side of the Cooperative,” Colston said. “I was not very familiar with that side since I am in the engineering department, so it was really helpful to really learn about capital credits and the equity balance.”

Slone also learned more about capital credits, and he feels he will be a better supervisor now that he can better explain the complicated program to member service representatives.

Course participants apply what they've learned to a small-group project, usually completed during the course, and a longer individual project, designed to benefit the individual and his or her organization.

“Our small group project was transfer of knowledge,” Colston said. “We focused on succession planning and preparing someone to take over a role before the other person is gone. Even if someone isn't leaving, you can still have people cross-train.”

Colston's individual project centered around the Co-op's sales and installation of meter poles for new services. Slone's project was the Co-op's new online application program, which is now available on SamHouston.net.

“In today's society our members want everything quick and easy,” Slone said. “Now people can go to a computer or their phone and get new service in about 10 minutes. It will save our [member service representatives] a lot of time not having to assist members to do it.”

“It currently takes about 20 minutes for a member service representative to complete a new service request, not including the time it takes members to fill out their portion of the application,” Slone said. “In some test runs, new members have been able to complete the online service application in less than three minutes. The new online service will save the Co-op an immeasurable amount of time when considering the expected growth in parts of the Co-op's service territory, such as the Santa Fe subdivision in Liberty County and Republic Grand Ranch in Montgomery County.”

Colston and Slone encourage any Co-op employee who may want to get promoted to attend the challenging but beneficial course.

“I would encourage anyone who wants to go to go,” Slone said. “You will come back a better employee and a better representative for the members.” ■

Cost of Heating Expected To Rise This Winter

HOUSEHOLDS THAT HEAT their homes primarily with electricity can expect to spend approximately 6% more on energy this winter, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The increase comes as prices for energy are at or near multiyear highs in the U.S. after changes to energy supply and demand patterns because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the expectation of a colder winter, the EIA writes in its winter fuels outlook. The EIA considers the winter heating season to last through March.

The increase in electricity prices is still expected to be lower than other energy sources for heating. Natural gas prices are expected to rise 30%, propane 54% and heating oil 43%. Depending on the severity of the cold and other factors, those percentages could rise or fall. However, the high natural gas prices have driven an increase in electricity prices across Texas, since natural gas is the primary fuel source for electricity generation in the state.

“Fuel expenditures for individual households depend on the size and energy efficiency of individual homes and their heating equipment, along with thermostat settings and weather conditions,” the EIA reports.

Cold weather can affect expenditures for heating in two ways, the EIA says. It raises the amount of energy required to keep a room at a certain temperature and it raises demand, which could cause supply disruptions.

In the South, the rising price of electricity might not be as noticeable as in other parts of the country. Even though two-thirds of Southern homes are all-electric, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is forecasting winter temperatures in the South to be comparable to last year, so states in that region might see an increase in electricity prices of about 5% compared to last winter, according to the EIA.

Homeowners could also use more electricity in their homes this heating season because social patterns have changed. Many people continue to work from home because of the pandemic, increasing their power bills by 3%, the administration reports. ■



Sam Houston EC Scholarships Available

EDUCATION, TRAINING and Information is one of the seven principles that guide all cooperatives. One of the main ways Sam Houston Electric Cooperative lives up to that principle is by awarding scholarships to local students.

The Co-op is currently accepting scholarship applications for the 2022–2023 school year. High school seniors, including public, private and home-schooled students, whose parents or legal guardians are active members of Sam Houston EC may apply.

Applications are available to download at samhouston.net. Click on the Community tab, then select Scholarships. Students can also request an application from their high school counselor.

Completed applications must be received by Sam Houston EC no later than February 4.

Scholarships in the amount of \$3,000 and \$1,500 will be awarded in May.

Since 1992, Sam Houston EC has awarded more than \$1 million in scholarships to more than 700 local students. Last year, the Co-op awarded a combined \$82,500 to 31 graduating seniors.

The scholarship program is reserved solely for students whose parents or legal guardians are Sam Houston EC members. Scholarships are funded by unclaimed capital credits payments returned to the Cooperative by the state of Texas. ■

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

New Year's Day

Saturday, January 1

Our office will be closed Friday, December 31, for the holiday.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Monday, January 17

Our office lobbies will be closed Monday for the holiday.

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Thursday, January 27





Guests at the November 12, 2021, dedication ceremony for the R.C. Thomas Hydroelectric Project, from left, Carol E. Haddock, director of Houston Public Works; state Rep. Trent Ashby; Claude Thomas; U.S.

Rep. Brian Babin; David Leonard, TRA executive committee chairman; Greg Jones, ETEC board president; Kathleen Jackson, Texas Water Development Board director; and Jerry F. House, TRA director.

Co-op 'Flips the Switch' on Clean Energy at Lake Livingston Dam

EAST TEXAS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, the Trinity River Authority, and the city of Houston officially flipped the switch at the R.C. Thomas Hydroelectric Project on Friday, November 12, 2021, during the facility's dedication ceremony.

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative partners with other electric cooperatives to form East Texas Electric Cooperative. ETEC's member cooperatives work together to build electricity generation facilities like the R.C. Thomas Hydroelectric Project, as well as to purchase power on the open market. The project was named after longtime Sam Houston EC board member R.C. Thomas.

The dedication celebration featured guests such as U.S. Rep. Brian Babin, representatives from the city of Houston, and elected officials representing areas in and around the facility's footprint.

"We've all been very excited about what this plant will mean to the local economy," Rep. Babin said. "The completion of this hydroelectric plant is an outstanding accomplishment for East Texas and confirms our commitment to a long-term energy strategy that maximizes domestic energy production to ensure that the United States is energy independent."

Situated on Lake Livingston in Polk County, the hydroelectric project was brought online in early 2021 after eight years of planning, designing and construction. The facility generates enough clean energy to serve approximately 12,000 households in East Texas and has the potential to offset approximately 64,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel-powered generating plants each year.

"It's been many years in the making, but we're honored to see the plant operating, aiding community growth and sus-

tainability," said Greg Jones, ETEC board president. "This project is another firm step towards a diversified power mix and continuing to offer affordable and reliable power to our members."

The plant generates electricity by harnessing the power of water flowing from Lake Livingston into the Trinity River below the dam. Water that TRA would otherwise release through the dam's spillway gates is diverted through the plant's powerhouse, turning three 8-megawatt turbine-driven generators. The electricity generated goes immediately into the power grid serving the region. The plant is uniquely designed to meet water demands downstream and to maintain a relatively constant reservoir level.

The R.C. Thomas Hydroelectric Project was developed by ETEC in cooperation with TRA, which owns and operates the dam and reservoir, and the city of Houston, which funded the construction of the existing facilities in the 1960s and owns water rights to 70% of the lake's storage.

ETEC is a not-for-profit generation and transmission cooperative headquartered in Nacogdoches whose mission is to provide low-cost, reliable power to its seven not-for-profit electric distribution cooperatives and another generation and transmission cooperative serving three additional distribution co-ops. ETEC provides power to 330,000 households and businesses across 46 counties in East Texas.

The TRA was created by the Texas Legislature in 1955 as a conservation and reclamation district. The agency provides water and wastewater treatment, along with recreation and reservoir facilities, for municipalities within the nearly 18,000-square-mile Trinity River basin. ■

Common Questions About Rooftop Solar Maintenance

BY THE TIME you finish reading this article, a new solar power project will go online somewhere in the U.S. With the increasing financial and technological accessibility of rooftop solar, or photovoltaic, systems, it's important to have a good understanding of what's involved in maintaining a system. Sam Houston Electric Cooperative's trained staff is available to help you decide if a solar system is right for your unique situation. Before signing a contract, call the Co-op at 1-800-458-0381.

Here are some questions to ask before you put solar panels on your roof.

What is the life expectancy of a photovoltaic system?

The life span of a PV system depends not just on the panels but on the inverter as well. Solar panels typically have a life expectancy of about 30 years, but the power rating—or efficiency—of panels tends to degrade slowly over time due to factors including extreme heat and the aging of materials.

For crystalline silicon panels, the loss in power is typically 0.5%–1% per year. Inverters have a life expectancy of about 15 years but occasionally must be repaired or replaced sooner.

The life expectancy of a given PV system is also greatly affected by the initial quality of the products and installation.

How reliable are PV systems?

Certified solar power products and systems generally are reliable. Manufacturers test panels for hail impact, high wind and freeze-thaw cycles that approximate year-round weather conditions.

Unless your PV system uses a tracking device, it has no moving parts, but be sure to pay attention to the warranty. Many manufacturers offer 25-year warranties for their panels, and most offer at least a 20-year warranty. Inverters usually have warranties of between five and 10 years, with extended warranties of 15–20 years available at an extra cost. The warranty should cover all parts and labor, including the cost of removing any defective components, shipping them to the manufacturer,

and reinstalling the components after they are repaired or replaced.

What kind of maintenance is required?

In most regions, solar power modules require little maintenance. If regular rainfall is not sufficient to eliminate accumulated dirt, owners may occasionally need to rinse the modules off with water. In some conditions, such as the dry areas of West Texas, soil accumulation on the module surface has been observed to reduce energy generation by up to 25%, but in most locations, the effect will be much smaller.

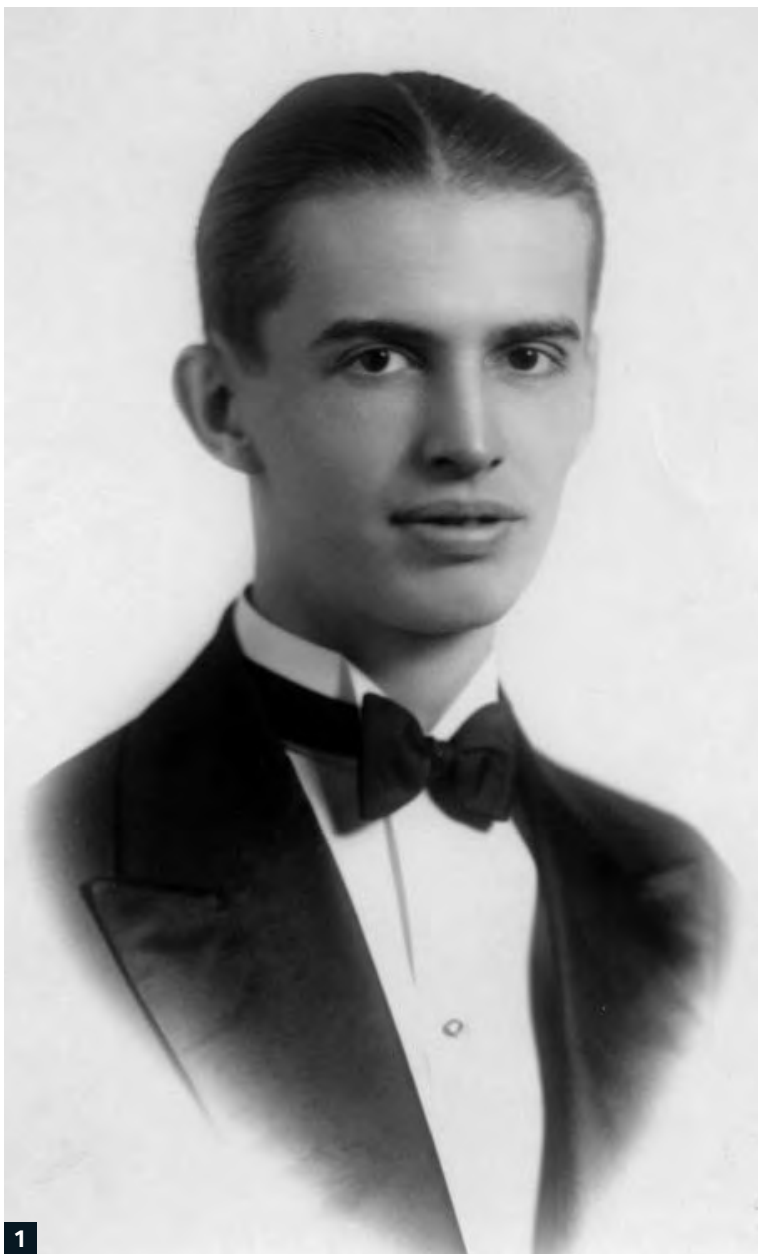
Experts suggest periodic maintenance checks of system components (such as tightening physical connections) and completion of any preventive maintenance as needed. Talk with your system installer about maintenance requirements.

Although inverter reliability has improved dramatically since the 1990s, inverters still require more frequent maintenance and have a shorter projected life span than solar panels. Microinverters—a new style of inverter so named because there is one on every module, instead of one inverter for the whole system—typically have a longer life span and warranties of 20–25 years.

Although some fault modes can be cleared by simply cycling the AC power to the inverter, maintenance usually requires the services of a trained electrician and involves replacement or repair at an authorized service facility. This limits the maintenance role of the system owner to regularly monitoring the status indicators on the inverter or identifying a sharp decline in system output. Several software packages are available that allow homeowners to monitor their system's output and identify problems.

Rooftop solar can be a great way to help the environment and possibly reduce your monthly energy bill, but be aware of the costs and responsibilities involved. Recouping the initial installation expense in energy savings will likely take the life of the system. ■





PHOTOS COURTESY LARRY JENE FISHER COLLECTION, LAMAR UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Larry Jene Fisher: Renaissance Man of the Big Thicket

BY RANDY MALLORY

THE TERM “Renaissance man” is used to describe a highly cultivated man (or woman) who is skilled and well-versed in many fields of knowledge. The idea is that the person embodies the idealized qualities of celebrated Renaissance thinkers and artists like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci. During the first half of the 20th century, a Southeast Texan named Larry Jene Fisher seemed to fit that bill, earning him the moniker “Renaissance Man of the Big Thicket.”

A photographer and filmmaker. An organist and music teacher. A playwright and newspaper columnist. An aviator and firefighter. A theater director and environmentalist. Fisher

stood out during his half-century of life as a man of vision in a place barely rising from its frontier past.

His accomplishments grew from his extreme self-confidence, insatiable curiosity and, as a man of modest means, economic necessity, explains Penny Clark, special collections librarian at Lamar University in Beaumont. Clark maintains the Larry Jene Fisher Collection, a repository of 8,000 scanned images of Fisher’s work, 800 of which are available online (by searching “Larry Jene Fisher” at lamar.edu).

Fisher was born Lawrence Orsino Fisher in 1902, just as an oil boom erupted in the tiny North Texas town of Petrolia,



3

1. Larry Jene Fisher as a young organist.
2. The Big Thicket.
3. The hideout of Big Thicket outlaw Thomas J. "Red" Goleman, a simple wooden building, in 1940.
4. Fisher directs the play *The Keyser Burnout*.
5. A family photographed by Fisher.
6. The children of a woman identified as Mrs. Bill Cotten play with a top on the porch of a house in 1940.



5



6

where his mother operated a boardinghouse. A devout German Catholic, his mother moved to Dallas, where she enrolled her son in parochial school. He proved a musical prodigy, learning to play the pipe organ by age 5. At 15 he started working for Warner Brothers and Publix Theatres, traveling the American heartland playing organ music to accompany silent motion pictures, as was the custom before "talkies" brought sound to the silver screen.

He billed himself as Larry Jean Fisher (later spelled "Jene") and organized vaudeville shows while also playing live on radio stations in several states. When not in Texas, he went by "the Texas Organist" and dressed in Western clothes, playing cowboy tunes.

Fisher studied music under well-known organists and composers and began teaching organ at East Texas State Teachers College (now Texas A&M University-Commerce) by 1930. Fisher soon moved to Southeast Texas, signing on to play a remarkable

Robert Morton Organ Company-made organ at the Jefferson Theater in Beaumont, where an oil boom was underway.

For years Fisher played the organ daily for silent films and stage shows while also hosting an organ club for kids. During the 1930s, he operated several music studios in Texas and Louisiana, teaching the accordion, which was very popular at the time. He even formed a group of top students called the Accordionaires, which performed across the region.

"It was music that paid the bills," Clark says. "But it always seemed like he had 20 other things going at once."

Two of Fisher's favorite activities were photography and aviation. As president of Beaumont's camera club, he introduced members to color film just as it was being introduced by Kodak. After earning his pilot's license, Fisher left the Jefferson Theater and opened Larry Fisher Aviation Service. There he gave flying lessons, took aerial photos and took passengers on charter trips and pleasure tours.



Fisher became intrigued by the vast forestland known as the Big Thicket on regular flights from Beaumont to Dallas as he visited his mother. On the ground he quickly learned about its biodiversity and the ancestral traditions of its residents, both of which were disappearing. He met former railroad conductor R.E. Jackson and self-taught naturalist Lance Rosier, joining them in the work of the East Texas Big Thicket Association. The group brought in respected biologists to chronicle the area's flora and fauna.

Cameras in hand, Fisher joined their field trips. He showed his treasure trove of photos to community groups, scientists and politicians to drum up interest in creating what is now the Big Thicket National Preserve.

To facilitate his Big Thicket outings, Fisher moved to Saratoga in Hardin County, where he lived for 15 years. At his humble farmhouse, he opened a photography business for taking portraits and recording family funerals, anniversaries, weddings and graduations. He also photographed the waning

frontier traditions of the Big Thicket—from syrup making and chimney daubing to free-range cattle raising and stave making. He used his theatrical talents to write and direct a musical drama called *The Keyser Burnout* about locals who hid out in the Big Thicket during the Civil War to evade Confederate Army service. He also wrote and staged a play about the local oil boom.

During World War II, Fisher combined his love of photography and aviation. He joined the Civil Air Patrol, a military aviation auxiliary of civilian pilots. Supporting the U.S. war effort, he flew more than 300 hours on missions over the Gulf of Mexico, watching for Nazi submarines.

As archivist and historian for the CAP, Fisher chronicled, in photos, station life at Base 10 in Beaumont. "Whether it was the Big Thicket or the CAP, Fisher understood the need to record what was going on," says Clark, who used Fisher's photos to illustrate her book, *Beaumont Civil Air Patrol in World War II*.



1. A man offers bread to Civil Air Patrol members sitting at a table in 1942.
2. A crowd gathers in downtown Beaumont around a Japanese minisub that was captured at Pearl Harbor and used in a fundraising campaign.
3. Civil Air Patrol members examine a flight plan in 1942.
4. A man stands in a field at Lucas Gusher with many oil derricks behind him in 1939.
5. Fisher's house in Saratoga.
6. Fisher on horseback.

New opportunities caused Fisher to leave his Saratoga photo studio. He moved to College Station to work for the Texas Forest Service, setting up forest fire patrols. Fisher also headed up an audio-visual department where he produced, filmed and edited topical films.

One project integrated biblical quotes and ideas about forest protection. The short color movie, called *Which He Hath Planted*, gained high praise in *MovieMaker* magazine as a top noncommercial film for 1946. (Several of his films can be viewed at texasarchive.org by searching for Larry Jene Fisher.) Fisher continued his film career in Denton in 1949, turning his attention to producing movies and shows for the new medium of television.

Fisher died in 1953 in Nashville, Tennessee, at the young age of 51.

In the early 1970s, well-known Big Thicket activist Maxine Watson of Batson arranged for the Fisher collection of negatives and documents to be archived at what is now Lamar Uni-

versity. The collection had been kept in less-than-ideal conditions near the residence of naturalist Lance Rosier, to whom Fisher gave his works.

Watson summed up Fisher's importance in the foreword of the 2008 book *Big Thicket People: Larry Jene Fisher's Photographs of the Last Southern Frontier*, by Thad Sitton and C.E. Hunt. "Everything that Larry did attracted friends and attention," she wrote. "He was interested in virtually everything that people did for their livelihoods and for their amusement. He seemed compelled to record every living thing that grew."

More than 50 years after the collection arrived at Lamar University, Watson added, "Fisher's photos and his plays provide an exceptional record of the Big Thicket region—its folklife, its nature, its history, etc. The opportunity to save the record in the Lamar Library was one of the most outstanding and significant acquisitions." ■

SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



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

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

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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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Joined by a Fence

How rural America turned barbed wire into telephone lines

BY W.F. STRONG

HISTORIAN J. EVETTS HALEY noted that the XIT Ranch was probably the largest fenced range in the world, and its barbed wire enclosed more than 3 million acres. The huge enclosure helped manage enormous cattle herds and deterred rustlers but also gave rise to the creative use of a new technology: the telephone.

Consider these reports from other parts of the West. In 1897, *The Electrical Review* reported that “on a ranch in California, telephone communication had been established between the various camps ... by means of barbed wire fences.” Also in 1897, the *New England Journal of Agriculture* observed that two Kansas farmers, a mile apart, had attached phone instruments to a barbed wire fence that connected their farms and established easy communication.

The Butte Inter Mountain included this notice in 1902: “Fort Benton’s latest development is a barbed wire telephone communication.” The article points out that people of that part of Montana were not happy with barbed wire, but they had decided to look at its practical side and created a telephone exchange that would connect all the ranches to Fort Benton.

On the XIT, given that the ranch covered more than 4,500 square miles, there was interest in creating a communication system that would be more efficient than sending out fast riders to distant camps. “In the early 1900s,” Haley wrote in his 1929 history of the XIT, “a great many telephones were placed upon the ranch. Where possible, the top line of the fences was used as a telephone line, though the ‘service’ was atrocious. It did allow for

quick communication concerning emergencies such as grassfires that required all cowboys immediately.” There was even talk among technology geeks of the era that cowboys could carry phones wherever they went and clip on to the fence to report problems.

The rudimentary use of barbed wire on the ranches led to more creative thinking about rural phone systems. Historian Don Anderson, who earned a doctorate in electrical engineering from Stanford University, told me that barbed wire phone systems led to the conclusion that “using whatever is already in place is smart planning.”

So when rural Texas wanted to extend phone service from town to town, engineers decided they could use the existing rural power lines, already installed by electric cooperatives through the Rural Electrification Administration, and run the phone signal through the electric lines at a different frequency. That saved a lot of money and brought phone service along with electricity to rural areas.

Still, many ranches liked their barbed wire systems and kept them, even though the voice quality wasn’t very good. As late as the early 1970s, a dairy farmer I knew had a barbed wire phone running a half-mile from his house to the barn. He said it was good for talking to his wife about what time to come in for supper. But most of all, he said, “It’s free. I don’t have to pay Ma Bell nothing for that phone, and I enjoy thinking that it’s a burr in their saddle.”

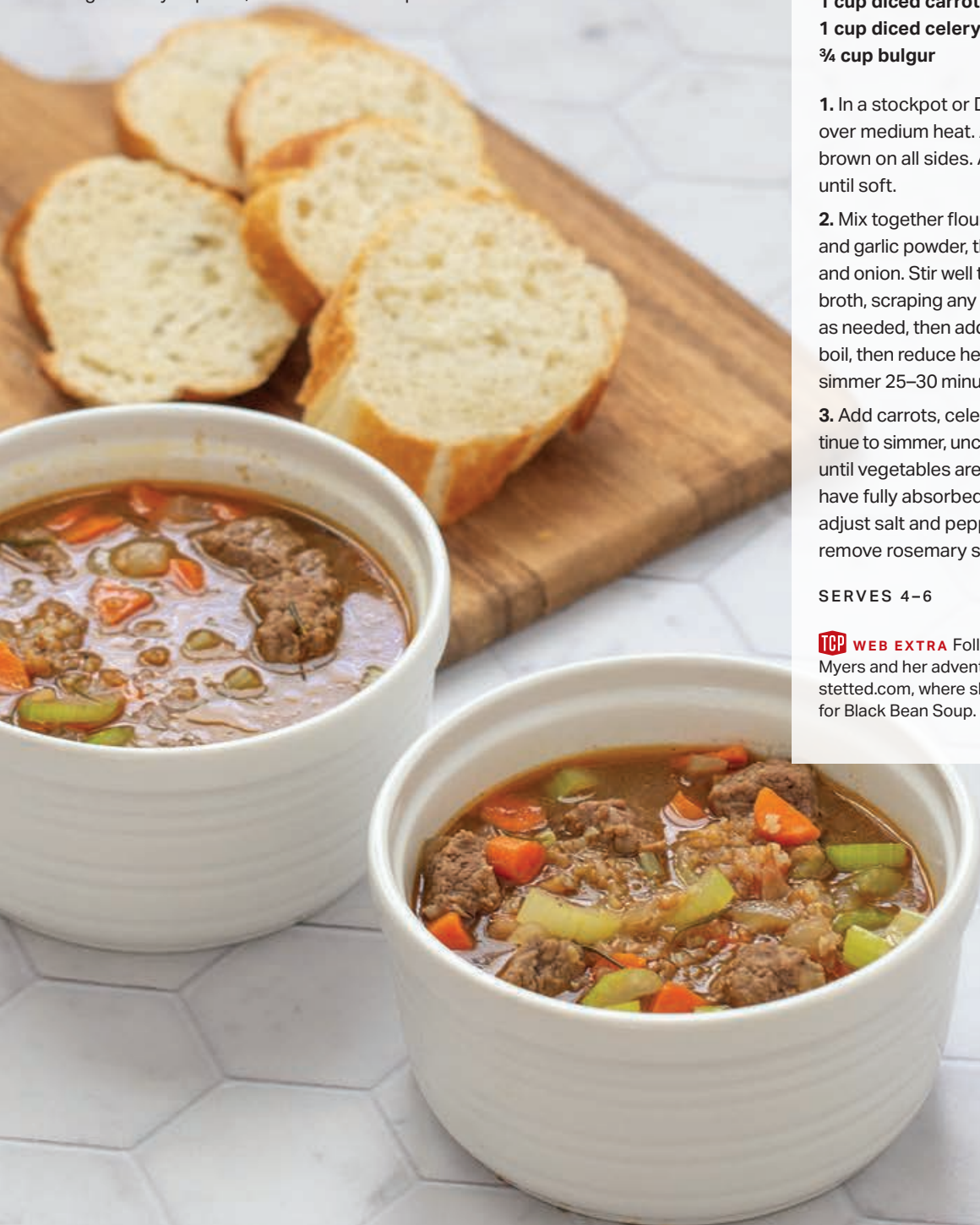
It is fascinating, Anderson said, to consider that what started as a fence system on the XIT evolved into what is XIT Communications, a co-op that provides phone service and high-speed internet to rural communities—some in the footprint of the original ranch. ■

Soups and Stews

Stir up satisfying comfort food with a variety of ingredients

BY MEGAN MYERS, FOOD EDITOR

Soups have always been a go-to dish in my house. Virtually anything can be turned into a soup, so even when I haven't been to the grocery store in a while, I know I can still throw something together. This Beef Bulgur Soup is an economical option, thanks to the tenderized round steak. Bulgur is a parcooked wheat grain that can be found alongside rice, quinoa and other grains. If you prefer, substitute a small pasta such as orzo or ditalini.



Beef Bulgur Soup

1 tablespoon butter
16 ounces tenderized round steak,
cut into ½-inch chunks
½ cup diced onion
2 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon paprika
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
4 cups beef broth
2 sprigs fresh rosemary
1 cup diced carrots
1 cup diced celery
¾ cup bulgur

1. In a stockpot or Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Add beef, stirring to brown on all sides. Add onion and cook until soft.

2. Mix together flour, salt, pepper, paprika and garlic powder, then sprinkle over beef and onion. Stir well to coat. Stir in beef broth, scraping any stuck bits in the pot as needed, then add rosemary. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover and let simmer 25–30 minutes, until beef is tender.

3. Add carrots, celery and bulgur and continue to simmer, uncovered, 15–20 minutes, until vegetables are softened and grains have fully absorbed liquid. Taste and adjust salt and pepper as needed, and remove rosemary sprigs before serving.

SERVES 4–6

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



Chicken and Ginger Soup

JENNIFER BRANNEN
BLUEBONNET EC

This Asian-inspired soup is heavy on ginger, livening up the senses whether you enjoy it for dinner or as breakfast leftovers, as Brannen recommends. Keep in mind that fish sauce is very salty, so add according to your taste.

- 12 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cubed**
- 3 ribs celery, chopped**
- 1½ ounces peeled ginger root, minced (about ⅓ cup)**
- ½ cup finely chopped cilantro**
- 7–8 cups low-sodium chicken broth, divided use**
- 3–4 tablespoons fish sauce**
- 2 cups cooked long-grain white rice**
- Green onions, thinly sliced**
- 1 serrano pepper, thinly sliced**
- Fried garlic chips**

COOK'S TIP Make fried garlic chips by frying ¼ cup of thinly sliced garlic cloves in ⅓ cup of canola oil until golden. Strain the garlic through a sieve but keep the garlic-infused oil for other uses.

1. In a large stockpot or Dutch oven set over medium-high heat, combine chicken, celery, ginger, cilantro, 6 cups broth and fish sauce and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer 30–45 minutes.
2. Stir in cooked rice and continue to simmer until the rice has absorbed the broth. Add the remaining broth if needed. Serve with green onions, serrano pepper and garlic chips on the side.

SERVES 4–6

MORE RECIPES >

\$500 WINNER

Chicken and Dumplings Soup

AMANDA DECESARO
TRINITY VALLEY EC



Perfect for chilly nights, chicken and dumplings are the ultimate comfort food. Mix the dumpling batter just before adding to the soup to retain the best texture.

SERVES 6



SOUP

- 1½–2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs**
- 3 tablespoons butter**
- 1 yellow onion, diced**
- 1 teaspoon pepper**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**
- 1 teaspoon celery salt**
- 4 cups unsalted chicken stock**
- 1 cup water**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 3 cups baby carrots or chopped carrots**

DUMPLINGS

- 1½ cups flour**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ⅓ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ⅔ cup milk**
- 1 egg, slightly beaten**
- ⅓ cup (¼ stick) butter, melted and cooled**

1. SOUP In a large stockpot or Dutch oven set over medium-high heat, brown chicken with butter. Once browned, cut into small strips, then return to pot and add onion. Sprinkle in pepper, salt and celery salt. Sauté until onions are slightly cooked but not soft.

2. Add chicken stock, water and bay leaves. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and cover. Let simmer 10 minutes. Add carrots and simmer, covered, for an additional 15 minutes.

3. DUMPLINGS Mix together the dry ingredients. Add milk, egg and butter and stir until just blended.

4. When ready to add dumplings, remove bay leaves from soup, taste, and adjust salt and pepper as needed. Drop spoonfuls of dumpling batter into pot, spacing as much as possible. Cover and simmer 15 minutes, until dumplings are no longer doughy. Serve soup with a few dumplings in each bowl.

TCP \$500 Recipe Contest

WEEKNIGHT DINNERS DUE JANUARY 10

We're looking for go-to recipes for busy weeknights. Submit yours at TexasCoopPower.com/ contests by January 10 for a chance to win \$500.





Potato Leek Soup With Dill

REXANNE MEAUX
PEDERNALES EC

Potato soup always hits the spot, and dill adds bright flavor to Meaux's version. To wash the leeks completely, slice and add them to a bowl of cold water, swirling to dislodge any dirt between the layers.

1 tablespoon butter

3 large leeks, thinly sliced and washed (white and light green parts only)

2 large russet potatoes, peeled and cubed

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup white wine, divided use

4 cups chicken broth

1 cup heavy cream

2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, plus more to taste

$\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper

Fresh dill sprigs, for garnish

1. In a stockpot or Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Add leeks and sauté 10 minutes or until tender. Add the potatoes, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup wine and broth. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low and simmer, uncovered, 1 hour and 15 minutes or until the potatoes are very tender.

2. Transfer soup in batches to a blender and blend until smooth. Return the soup to the pot and add remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup wine, heavy cream, dill, salt and pepper. Heat through and serve, garnishing bowls with fresh dill.

SERVES 4–6

Soup Improv

BY MEGAN MYERS

Looking for ways to riff on your soup recipe? Try one (or a few) of these ideas:

Add a cheese rind. Parmesan rinds add umami, which enhances the other flavors in your soup.

Finish with lemon to brighten the flavor. This works especially well in chicken soups.

Serve with a dollop of sour cream or yogurt for tang.

Chopped fresh herbs are a great finish to any soup.

Thicken soups without cream by puréeing beans or vegetables from the soup and adding them back in.

Brown the meat for full flavor, and deglaze the pan with a small amount of white or red wine, depending on the recipe. The alcohol will cook off, leaving only the flavor behind.

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² Based on datasheet review of websites of top 20 manufacturers per IHS, as of April 2021.

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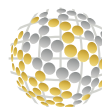
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COURTESY CHET GARNER

Faux Chic, for Sure

Like a desert mirage, Prada Marfa perplexes

BY CHET GARNER

I'M NOT A SHOPPER and never have been. So I was having an internal struggle when I found myself driving more than seven hours from my Central Texas home to visit a high-end designer retail store in the desert.

Why was I dedicating so much time to this quest when I don't even know Versace from Vuitton? Those are different, right?

But once I arrived at the remote outpost known as Prada Marfa, the answer became clear.

I reached Marfa in record time but was disappointed to learn that my destination was still 36 miles west. I cruised U.S. 90 parallel to a set of train tracks for what seemed like hours, past the crumbling set of the movie *Giant* and through the tiny town of Valentine. I was about to turn around thinking I had missed my destination when I spied a boxy building up the road on my left. I pulled over and stepped into the Texas heat.

This was Prada Marfa, a stark white building that looks like an honest-to-goodness boutique storefront beside an empty highway. It's as if anyone could walk in, slap down some cash and leave with the fanciest footwear in West Texas. However, at this Prada store there is no staff. They don't accept credit cards. In fact, the front door doesn't even open. Because even though it looks authentic, Prada Marfa is a permanent work of art constructed in 2005 by the Swedish duo Elmgreen & Dragset as a comment on consumerism.

I peered through the window at displays of thousand-dollar purses and a wall of elegantly lit high-heeled shoes. I chuckled, wondering if anyone ever trekked out here expecting to buy designer items and left disappointed. I was happy to only window-shop, but even that cost me 14 hours on the road. ■

ABOVE Chet visits the art installation called Prada Marfa, along U.S. 90, about halfway between Marfa and Van Horn.

TCP WEB EXTRA Watch Chet's dispatch from Marfa at TexasCoopPower.com/travel. And to see the front doors Chet does make it through, watch his Texplorations on *The Daytripper* on PBS.



Know Before You Go

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

JANUARY

08

Frisco NCAA Division I FCS Football Championship, (972) 292-5250, visitfrisco.com

Kerrville Symphony of the Hills: Outlaws and Heroes, (830) 792-7469, symphonyofthehills.org

Monahans Sandhills Resolution Run, (432) 943-2187, monahans.org

San Marcos Purgatory Trail Run, (877) 806-3987, athletguild.com

Temple Family Day—Cabin Fever: Stargazing, (254) 298-5690, templeparks.com

Boerne [8–9] Market Days, (210) 844-8193, boernemarketdays.com

Dallas [8, 15, 22] The Dinner Detective Murder Mystery Dinner Show, 1-866-496-0535, thedinnerdetective.com

15

Fredericksburg Luckenbach Blues Festival, (830) 997-3224, luckenbachtexas.com

Granbury 7 Bridges: The Ultimate Eagles Experience, (817) 573-5548, thenewgranburylive.com

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

McKinney Night Hike, (972) 562-5566, heardmuseum.org

Mesquite Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration,
(972) 204-4925,
visitmesquitetx.com

Fredericksburg [15-16]
Hill Country Gem & Mineral Show, (325) 248-1067,
fredericksburgrockhounds.org

16

Fredericksburg Agarita Chamber Players,
(830) 997-6523,
fredericksburgmusicclub.com

17

Elgin Martin Luther King Jr. Walk, (512) 281-5724,
elgintx.com

Houston MLK Grande Parade, (713) 560-8328,
mlkgrandeparade.org

20

Corpus Christi Third Thursdays, (361) 825-3500,
artmuseumofsouthtexas.org

22

Fredericksburg Hill Country Indian Artifact Show,
(830) 329-2636,
hillcountryindianartifacts.com

Irving Fela in Concert: A Tribute to Whitney Houston, (972) 831-8818,
irvingsymphony.org

Orange CeCe Winans,
(409) 886-5535, lutchet.org

Surfside Beach Food and Art Festival, (979) 233-1531,
surfsidetx.org

Victoria Victoria Symphony: José Feliciano,
(361) 576-4500,
victoriasymphony.com

MORE EVENTS >

TCP Submit Your Event

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



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yagaschiliquest.com

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JANUARY EVENTS CONTINUED

22 Belton [22–23] Sami Show Marketplace,
(512) 441-7133,
samishow.com

23 Lufkin Popovich Comedy Pet Theater,
(936) 633-5454,
angelinaarts.org

27 Corsicana Asia,
(903) 874-7792,
corsicanapalace.com

29 Bay City Wild Game and Wine Camofest,
(979) 245-8081,
facebook.com/
baycitycamofest

Grand Prairie Tom Segura,
(972) 854-5076,
texastrustcutheatre.com

Lufkin Brit Beat,
(936) 633-5454,
angelinaarts.org/
pines-series

Port Aransas Home Tour, (254) 289-4510,
portaransasgardenclub.org

Tyler Charles Yang, Violin Rock Star, (903) 566-7424,
cowancenter.org

FEBRUARY 03

Tyler Beautiful: The Carole King Musical,
(903) 566-7424,
cowancenter.org

San Angelo [3–20] Livestock Show,
(325) 653-7785,
sanangelorodeo.com

05 Abilene Abilene Philharmonic: The Wonderfully Wicked Music of Oz,
(325) 677-6710,
abilenephilharmonic.org

Bellville Market Day,
(979) 865-3407,
discoverbellville.com

El Paso Shen Yun,
1-877-663-7469,
shenyun.com/el-paso

Huntsville Sam Houston Square and Round Dance Association Presidents Ball, (936) 494-8402,
shsrda.weebly.com/
events.html

McKinney McKinney Philharmonic Orchestra: Music in Motion,
(469) 633-9104,
mckinneyphilharmonic.org

Sweetwater Lift Every Voice Art Show and Concert, (325) 235-5488,
sweetwaterauditorium.org

Fired Up!

Whether getting the grill ready for a barbecue or watching the big game, Texans love to get fired up. So put another log on the fire and gather 'round because these offerings are smokin'.

BY GRACE FULTZ

1 TONYA CARLIN
CECA

"Being a mother of a firefighter, this photo represents the brotherhood shared between these individuals."

2 PATTY DISHMAN
PEDERNALES EC

"The hot air balloon festival in Horseshoe Bay always fires me up for great photo opportunities."

3 BROOKE WILLIAMS
TRINITY VALLEY EC

Homecoming parade in Forney.

4 CADEN WILSON
UNITED COOPERATIVE
SERVICES

Cowtown rodeo.



1



2



4



3

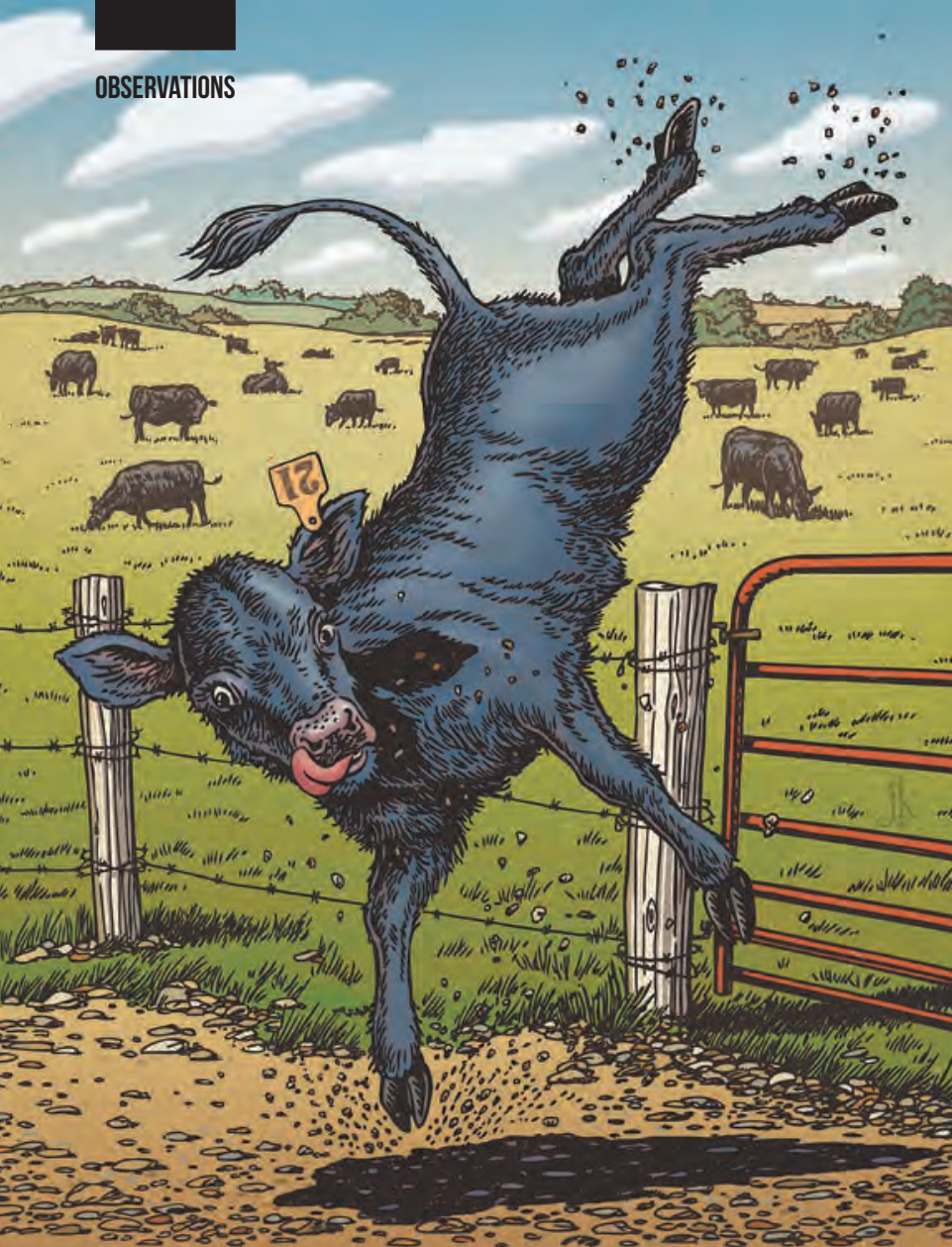
Upcoming Contests

DUE JAN 10 Feathered Friends
DUE FEB 10 Industrial
DUE MAR 10 Morning Glory



Enter online at TexasCoopPower.com/contests.

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



Buck's Pluck

What we learned from a spunky calf

BY MARTHA DEERING

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN KACHIK

LIFE LESSONS can crop up in the oddest places. Such was the case when an undersized black calf with an oversized personality was born on our farm a few years ago. A green hillside dotted with black cows and new calves is a tranquil scene. It's almost impossible to tell one calf from another without getting close enough to read the numbers on their ear tags.

Except for Buck Rogers.

Within hours of birth, Buck Rogers, a Black Angus bull calf, hopped in circles around his mother with that peculiar tippy-toed new-calf gait, flipping his stubby tail and kicking at the sky with his hind legs. While most newborn calves wobble for a day or two, Buck Rogers bucked and kicked across the pasture with total disregard for his mother's whereabouts. An inexperienced first-

calf heifer, Mama lumbered behind, bawling out warnings about the dire consequences of not minding your mother.

We almost never name cattle. If you grow attached to them, you might find yourself a vegetarian with a bank account drenched in red ink. Buck Rogers was the exception. It was easy to spot him: He was the small black blur galloping through the peaceful scene.

Most folks who own animals will testify that the critters have distinct personalities. Samuel D. Gosling, a University of Texas psychologist, agrees. "Animals have personalities, emotions and thoughts, just as humans do," says Gosling, who has published several articles on the subject.

Across the garden fence one afternoon, we heard a tremendous clatter, something like an explosion in an aluminum pan factory. Buck Rogers, awakening from a nap under a cotton wagon, had launched into one of his outrageous bucking episodes, his head and back hitting the wagon's underside with all the force his 70-pound frame could muster. He finally bucked his way out and dashed off, leaving me wiping tears of laughter from my face. Crystal clear was the notion that the little fella lived with joy!

Like his namesake, a fictional space opera character from the 1930s, the bovine Buck Rogers awoke each morning bent on new adventures. Chasing guineas set off a raucous squawking chorus that seemed to amuse him. Although he never reached outer space as his cartoon namesake did, he sometimes attempted flight by leaping into the air from the top of a large mound of manure scooped from cow and horse pens.

Eventually he grew up and moved on to pastures elsewhere, but he brightened our days and made us think about the importance of living with energy and enthusiasm. ■

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Qualification: Advertised price requires credit qualification and 24-month commitment. Upfront activation and/or receiver upgrade fees may apply based on credit qualification. Offer ends 4/13/22. 2-Year Commitment: Early termination fee of \$20/mo. remaining applies if you cancel early. Included in 2-year price guarantee for additional cost: Programming package upgrades (\$84.99 for AT120+, \$94.99 for AT200, \$104.99 for AT250), monthly fees for upgraded or additional receivers (\$5-\$7 per additional TV, receivers with additional functionality may be \$10-\$15). Regional Sports: RSN Surcharge up to \$3/mo. applies to AT120+ and higher packages and varies based on location. NOT included in 2-year price guarantee or advertised price (and subject to change): Taxes & surcharges, add-on programming (including premium channels), DISH Protect, and transactional fees. Premium Channels: 3 Mos. Free: After 3 mos., you will be billed \$30/mo. for Showtime, Starz, and DISH Movie Pack unless you call or go online to cancel. Remote: The DISH Voice Remote with the Google Assistant requires internet-connected Hopper, Joey, or Wally device. Customer must press Voice Remote button to activate feature. The Google Assistant Smart Home features require Google account and compatible devices. Google is a trademark of Google LLC. Other: Netflix streaming membership required. All packages, programming, features, and functionality and all prices and fees not included in price lock are subject to change without notice. After 6 mos., if selected, you will be billed \$9.99/mo. for DISH Protect Silver unless you call to cancel. After 2 years, then-current everyday prices for all services apply. For business customers, additional monthly fees may apply. Free standard professional installation only. Indiana C.P.D. Reg. No. – 19-08615. ©2021 GoDISH.com. All rights reserved. Internet speeds, prices, and providers vary by customer address. \$40 price refers to widely available plan from multiple providers. Restrictions apply. Nationwide availability of 25 Mbps plan is subject to change without notice. The application of "Unlimited Data with no Hard Data Limits" varies by provider, but commonly mean that your access to the internet will not be stopped by going over a data limit, but that speeds may be lowered. Call for details. Internet not provided by DISH and will be billed separately.